

EQUITY FOR STUDENTS OF COLOR THROUGH PRACTITIONER  
ACCOUNTABILITY

by

Rashitta Z. Brown

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A Dissertation Presented to the  
FACULTY OF THE USC ROSSIER SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA  
In Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree  
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

December 2012

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## Dedication

## Acknowledgements

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### **Abstract**

The Center for Urban Education (CUE) at the University of Southern California develops equity oriented tools for the purposes of increasing equity for historically underrepresented racial-ethnic groups in higher education. This study investigated the characteristics of CUE's tools and action research processes, observed or reported changes in practitioners associated with CUE's tools, and factors that mediate changes or a lack of changes in practitioner's social interaction, behaviors and practices. The case study revealed that increasing racial-ethnic equity is a process that requires leadership, collective agency, knowledge, and accountability.

## Chapter One: Introduction

Higher education has always been viewed as a vehicle to social and economic mobility. Unfortunately, many students of color have not been able to gain equal access to higher education or gain from its benefits. Historically, students of color have been granted limited access to higher education, especially to four year colleges and universities, and, even when admitted to four year institutions, students of color have had lower persistence and completion rates than their white counterparts. A 2010 study conducted by Education Trust that focused on graduation rates found that, nationally, 60% of white students graduate from college within six years while 49% of Latinos and 40% of African Americans graduate within that timeframe. The consistently poor outcomes of students of color serve an indicator that higher education institutions will need to develop more effective practices to suit the needs of racial and ethnic minorities.

With consistently poor persistence and low graduation rates, questions regarding accountability are on the rise. These include questions regarding who should be accountable for the outcomes of students of color. Traditionally, institutions of higher education have placed the responsibility of student success solely on the student. Bensimon (2005) contends that the inequitable outcomes of students of color is an institutional problem that is a reflection of individual attitudes and beliefs of practitioners as well as a reflection of inequitable institutional policies and practices. Some scholars (Bauman, 2005; Bensimon & Dowd, 2009; Kezar, 2005) argue that institutional accountability can be addressed through organizational learning. Participating in an organizational learning process would provide practitioners with the opportunity to

reflect on institutional practices and policies that negatively affect students of color (Bensimon & Dowd, 2009; Kezar, 2005). Based on Bensimon's (2005) analysis, the poor outcomes of students of color reflect poor institutional practices and suggest a need for increased institutional accountability.

This chapter includes an overview of educational accountability nationally, within the California Community College (CCC) and the California State University (CSU) system. System-wide, institutions of higher education have failed to provide equitable access and outcomes for underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. This chapter discusses the need for accountability agencies such as the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) and Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) to include equity as a priority for post-secondary institutions. This chapter also covers policies and practices that perpetuate structural racism, such as executive order 665 in the California State University System and Basic Skills courses in the California community college. Consistent with the research conducted by Education Trust and others (Dowd, 2007; Shulock & Moore, 2010), this chapter discusses the low persistence and completion rates of students of color as well as barriers to degree completion for students of color within the CCC and the CSU. The concluding section of this chapter suggests that higher education practitioners will need to engage in action research to gain a better understanding of institutional practices that may be producing inequitable outcomes for students of color.

The barriers identified in the following sections suggest that institutions will need to become more responsible for the outcomes of students of color. Researchers from the

Center of Urban Education (CUE) at the University of Southern California (USC) suggest that it is possible for institutions of higher education to produce equitable outcomes for students of color with the assistance of tools and through a process of participatory action research. Action research allows practitioners to become researchers into their own practices and to increase internal accountability (Stringer, 2007).

Webster's dictionary defines accountability as "an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's own actions" (Merriam-Webster, 2003, p. 8). There are six requirements of accountability demands for "officials, agents, governments or public service organizations, including colleges and universities" (Burke, 2004, p. 2). First, "they must show that they have used their power properly. Second, they must show that they are working to achieve the mission set for their office or organization. Third, they must report on their performance" (Burke, 2004, p.2). Fourth, accountability requires efficiency and effectiveness, which entails accounting "for the resources they use and the outcomes they create" (Shavelson, 2000, as cited in Burke, 2004, p.2). Fifth, they must ensure the quality of the programs and services produced. Last, "they must show that they serve public needs" (Burke, 2004, p. 4). The word "accountability" poses several questions: "who is accountable to whom, for what purposes, for whose benefit, by which means, and with what consequences" (Burke, 2004, p.2). These are all important questions that higher education practitioners will need to ask of themselves as they reflect on their and institutional outcomes and practices. A lack of clarity or transparency is not uncommon at institutions of higher education. Burke argues, that "you can't have accountability without expectations" (Burke, 2004, p. 4) if you want to hold people

accountable you have to specify what you want (Burke, 2004). “Higher education does not lack accountability. Rather it lacks the right kind and is burdened with too much of the unproductive kind” (Burke, 2004, p.24)

The requirements of accountability that Burke defines are achievable, but they pose several challenges for higher education practitioners. First, in order to accept responsibility for one’s own actions, individuals need to be aware that their actions are causing harm, especially to particular groups of students. Using power properly requires that those who have it believe that they can positively affect student outcomes and that individuals make equity-minded decisions. Burke (2004) also suggests that institutions report on their performance. One of the challenges to this form of accountability is that institutions often report on overall student performance, which can mask the outcomes of students from racial and ethnic groups. Aggregated data does not provide institutions with an accurate picture of the realities of students of color. While Burke’s (2004) accountability requirements are needed within higher education what is missing are the steps to achieve sustained institutional accountability for the outcomes of students of color.

Accreditation is also a form of accountability. “Accreditation is the primary means of assuring and improving the quality of higher education in the United States” (CHEA, 2009). It is a voluntary system of self-examination in which institutions are evaluated by their peers. Although it is voluntary, there are negative consequences for institutions that are not accredited. Accreditation is required in order for students to receive federal and state funds. It is viewed as a symbol of legitimacy and quality

assurance in higher education. For example, the CCC is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) and the CSU is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). The ACCJC “accredits associate degree granting institutions in the Western region of the United States.” The ACCJC functions under WASC. In order to evaluate the quality of institutions, WASC asks institutions to prepare presentations that include system objectives, policies, and operations and that provides an analysis of educational effectiveness. The purpose of the ACCJC is to evaluate the performance of institutions to assure the general public, organizations, and agencies, that institutions have clearly defined objectives that are suitable to higher education. The ACCJC sets conditions for institutions to fulfill. Institutions must meet those conditions in order to meet accreditation standards. The ACCJC of WASC promotes institutional development and improvement through guidelines such as “institutional self-evaluation using the Accreditation Standards, Eligibility Requirements and Policies, as well as Midterm, Follow-Up, and Special Reports, and periodic evaluation of institutional quality by qualified peer professionals”(ACCJC of WASC Bylaws, 2011).

Accreditation has been useful in holding institutions accountable for resources and process standards such as curricula, faculty, qualifications, facilities, and student support services, but there is a brewing debate regarding the need for accreditation reform. Some scholars argue that traditional accreditation standards fail to promote continuous improvements and to consider outcomes (Schray, 2006). These standards

impede the organizational learning and change necessary to increase equitable outcomes for racial and ethnic groups in higher education

### **Accountability in United States Education**

Due to poor completion rates and disparate outcomes for racial ethnic groups in higher education, United States President Barack Obama put higher education at the forefront of his national agenda. According to the National Governors Board (2010-2011), the United States was once ranked first in the world, but lost its position, and the U.S. fell to 12<sup>th</sup> in the world in the number of students who complete degrees. The president publicly made a commitment to ensure that the United States returns to having the highest portion of college graduates by 2020. In order to return to its position as number one, U.S. institutions of higher education will need to evaluate their own practices and develop effective and efficient processes for organizational change to occur.

### **Accountability and Equity in California Community Colleges**

Historically, the community college has been the gateway to higher education for many racial and ethnic minorities. A close look at accountability as it is practiced in community colleges in California, the state that is the setting for the present study, illustrates how accountability is practiced in higher education. The California Community College (CCC) has served as hope for many to baccalaureate degree attainment. Serving more than 2.9 million students, the CCC is currently the largest higher education system worldwide. Consisting of 112 campuses, the CCC serves as a point of entrance to higher education for many minoritized students of color.

Unfortunately, while the CCC has provided open access to many students of color, it has

failed at helping students from racial and ethnic groups achieve equitable outcomes in transfer and degree completion (Dowd, 2007).

Moore and Shulock (2010) list several suggestions for improving student outcomes at California community colleges that focus on changing institutional practices and state and system policies. In order to improve institutional practices Moore and Shulock (2010) suggests that “institutions perform cohort analysis through milestones, by race/ethnicity” they also suggest a system of inquiry that requires practitioners to ask, “where do student get stalled, which students? And what patterns of success are they not following?”(p. ii). Their analysis includes student interviews, and data on use of student services. Moore and Shulock (2010) pose that colleges use data provided from their analysis to identify effective practices, to inform and implement new practices, and to identify barriers to implementing the new practices. In order to improve state and system policies the researchers suggest that stakeholders evaluate the standing performance levels with desired outcomes, study existing policies to examine they if impede or promote student success, and use practices from other states to benchmark and develop a new policy agendas (Moore & Shulock, 2010).

For many years, policies have focused on removing barriers to access. While access continues to be an issue for many students of color, there is also a need to focus attention on removing barriers to completion. The CCC has always been viewed as the gateway to upward mobility. Unfortunately, many state policies have acted as roadblocks instead of pathways to success for underrepresented minoritized groups (Dowd, 2007; Moore & Shulock, 2010). Access without completion is not only harmful for students,

but it is also harmful for the future of California (Moore & Shulock, 2010). While the community college has been successful at providing access to higher education, it has failed to translate that access into degree completion. “Access without degree completion gives California students a false sense of opportunity and jeopardizes the state’s global and competitive edge” (Moore & Shulock, 2007, p.4). Many studies have found that race and ethnicity often play a crucial role in student outcomes. African American and Latino/a students have lower completion rates than white and Asian students. In a study that examined the policy barriers to degree completion of 520,000 students in 1999-2000, Moore and Shulock (2007) found that 15% of African Americans, 18% of Latinos, 27% Whites, and 33% of Asian students completed degrees at CCC’s. These numbers are considerably low and have lasting negative implications for communities of color. One of the many barriers to degree attainment for students of color is developmental education. Students who test into or who are placed in these courses cannot move forward until they have met math and English remediation requirements.

Students of color overwhelmingly test into basic skills courses. The need for remediation has been one of the many barriers to degree completion for underrepresented students. A core function of the community college is assisting underprepared students in completing basic skills courses so that they are able to take the college level courses needed to transfer (Basic Skill Initiative). Over 50% of the students enrolled in CCC’s are in need of developmental education, and 70% to 80% require developmental English and mathematics. Many students have problems completing developmental coursework, and these courses often become a roadblock to degree completion. One of the foundational

goals of the CCC is access to higher education. With access at the forefront of its mission, outcomes went without much evaluation (Moore & Shulock, 2010). With President Barack Obama's recent agenda to increase graduation rates in the U.S. by 2020, institutions of higher education are now being held more accountable for student success and completion through policies such as California Assembly Bill 194 (AB 194). California AB 194 requires that CCC's report student basic skills outcomes. The CCC's "Chancellors office must publish an annual basic skills accountability report and provide the information to the Department of Finance and the Legislative Analyst's Office" (California Basic Skills Report, 2009). Through AB 194, community college districts receive supplemental funding for improving outcomes of students who enter a college needing at least one basic skills course or English as a second language. AB 194 is an incentive for CCC's to increase the number of students who complete basic skills courses. In 2004, Assembly bill 1417 called for the CCC system to develop and measure performance indicators for the CCC system. The ARCC is the official accountability system of the CCC. The ARCC is made up of a panel of national experts, the Legislative Analyst's Office, the Department of Finance, and the Secretary of Education (Accountability Reporting for the Community Colleges). The ARCC reports college performance using eight indicators. Three of the indicators focused on basic skills: Student Progress & Achievement, Completed 30 or More Units; Fall to Fall Persistence; and Vocational Course Completion, Basic Skills Course Completion, ESL Course Improvement, Basic Skills Course Improvement (ARCC Final Report-Focus on Results,

2011). These accountability metrics have brought problems of degree completion to the forefront, but what the report is lacking are the tools necessary for organizational change.

### **Accountability for Equity**

Although accountability measures have been put in place to increase institutional effectiveness, they do not clearly address equity issues. These measures have failed to use disaggregated data by race-ethnicity to inform decision making. Aggregated data is often too broad and can create a false depiction of educational outcomes of all students. Aggregated data does not provide practitioners with an accurate picture of students' outcomes, especially of those students from racial and ethnic groups who may not be performing at the same levels as their peers (Bensimon & Dowd, 2009). Identifying that a problem exists is one of the key functions of organizational change. Degree completion has been a major problem in both the CCC and the CSU. The consistently poor and inequitable outcomes of students of color in higher education suggests a need for data-driven institutional reform to increase the completion rates of CCC students and to address barriers to transferring to baccalaureate granting institutions.

There are several barriers to degree completion for CCC students. While 70% of students fail to complete a degree within six years, those who do meet transfer requirements continue to face hurdles to transferring to four-year institutions. A report from California's Legislative Office found the students who transfer from community colleges to the California State University (CSU) graduate with an average of 162 units, although the CSU only requires 120 units. Part of the problem was that many of the courses taken at the community college did not transfer to the CSU, even though they

were counted as transferable in many community college course catalogs. As a result, students who transferred from CCC's were forced to take additional courses to make up for courses that did not transfer (California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO, 2010). To address this issue, Senate Bill 1440 (SB 1440) was enacted. Senate Bill 1440 is the Student Transfer Achievement Reform (STAR) act. Under SB 1440, CCC's are required to grant an associate degree to any student who completes transfer requirements for a particular major. The CSU is required to allow those who meet the requirements to transfer as juniors with no additional course requirements. SB 1440 also requires that the CSU give CCC transfer student's priority consideration into the major of study received from the students' community college (CCCCO, 2011). As in the CCC, degree completion is also a major area of concern in the CSU system. There is a focus on the CCC and the CSU for two reasons. First, low-income students of color are most likely to attend these institutions. Secondly, there is a need to bring attention to the barriers to degree completion for students of color, especially African American and Latino students. These barriers contribute to the equity gap in both access and persistence of minority groups.

### **Accountability and Equity in the CSU**

Like the CCC, racial and ethnic equity is also an issue in the CSU system. With poor persistence and consistently low graduation rates, especially for students of color, questions concerning accountability are on the rise. The CSU strives toward efforts to bridge the gap in degree attainment through its implementation of the Graduation Initiative. Remedial or developmental education has also served as one of the many

barriers to degree completion for students from racial and ethnic groups within the CSU. With 23 campuses and over 412,000 students, the CSU is currently the largest university system. Over 50% of degrees granted to African Americans, Latinos, and Asians are provided by the CSU. The CSU faces a number of challenges. One of its primary challenges is its poor graduation rate. The CSU currently has a 46% graduation rate. These numbers are unduly low when considering that the CSU is the largest university system in the nation. In an effort to improve graduation rates, the CSU undertook a system wide lead in the Graduation initiative as part of a national initiative to increase graduation rates by 8% by 2016 (CSU Chancellors Office, 2010). One of the goals of the graduation initiative is to decrease the gap in completion between underrepresented students and their peers by 50%. One of the roadblocks to degree completion for students of color is remediation.

The need for remediation or developmental education automatically places many students at a disadvantage. It has been a barrier to higher education for many, and the problem has been most critical for minority students. In the fall of 2009, 37.6% of incoming CSU freshmen system-wide needed math remediation, and 49.1% entered the CSU system needing English remediation. These numbers were even starker for African Americans and Latinos. In the fall of 2009, the CSU regularly admitted and enrolled 2,532 African American students. Of these, 1,718 (67.9%) needed math remediation, and 1,804, (71.2%) needed English remediation. The CSU admitted 16,676 Latino students, and 8,637 (51.8%) of them needed math remediation while 10,565 (62.5%) needed English remediation. In the February of 1997, Executive Order 665 (EO665) was

implemented by the California State University System. Under EO 665, first time freshmen have one academic year to complete mathematic and English remediation. Students who fail to meet remediation are “stopped out” of the university, meaning students cannot return to the university until they have completed remediation at a community college (CSU, Chancellors Office, 1998). Policies like EO 665 are harmful to students of color and negatively affect CCC’s. Instead of finding ways to effectively assist students of color, the CSU sends the students they fail to remediate to CCC’s. African American and Latino students have been most negatively affected by EO 665.

Policies like EO 665 attempt to provide structural solutions, yet they fail to consider organizational changes necessary to address equity issues. To supplement EO 665, in 2010, the CSU implemented Executive Order No.1048 (EO 1048). Executive Order 1048 “is designed to facilitate a student’s graduation through changes in policies on fulfilling entry-level proficiencies in English and mathematics” (CSU Chancellors Office, 2010). Executive Order 1048 mandates that CSU admitted freshmen who have not demonstrated proficiency in mathematics and English begin remediation the summer before fall enrollment. Admitted freshmen who do not “address deficiencies in either English or math will not be permitted to enroll at the CSU campus of their admission” (CSU Chancellors Office, 2010) unless an exception has been granted due to extraordinary circumstances. In order to assist students with remediation, all CSU campuses were mandated to implement the Early Start program.

Early Start allows for new freshmen to get an “early start” at completing developmental courses. Executive Order 1048 “does not require that students

demonstrate proficiency at the end of summer, only that the remediation has begun” (CSU Chancellors Office, 2010). Executive Order 1048 poses major challenges for students who enter the CSU in need of remediation, especially low-income students of color. First, students need to buy books and pay for the summer program. Second, students have to devote a sizable portion of their summer to early start activities, meaning that they will miss out on prime employment hours and opportunities (E.O. 1048 Mandatory Early Start Plan for CSU Northridge, 2010). According to the CSU Northridge Early Start Plan (2010), one of advantages of the early start program is students from disadvantaged backgrounds who test into basic skills English courses have more opportunities for development.

While EO 1048 provides students with more opportunities to complete developmental coursework, like EO 665, it does not consider the need to investigate institutional practices such as teaching and tutoring or policies that negatively affect students of color who place into developmental courses. Like many other policies, it fails to hold institutions accountable for student outcomes. Burke (2004) argues that higher education institutions do not lack accountability; they lack the kind that produces desired outcomes of accountability. EO 665 and EO 1048 are clear examples of poor attempts to increase accountability. According to Stringer (2007), action research is essential to increasing organizational effectiveness, and it provides the opportunity for practitioners to become researchers into their own practices (Bensimon & Dowd, 2009).

## **The Center for Urban Education**

The Center for Urban Education conducts socially conscious research to increase equity and access to opportunities and outcomes for underrepresented groups (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012). This study focused on the impact of CUE'S Equity scorecard on higher education practitioners' beliefs, expectations, and practices. This study focused on racial and ethnic equity at Monarch State University (MSU), a predominantly white institution (PWI), and studied the process that MSU engages in to increase racial and ethnic equity.

The USC Center for Urban Education “creates remediating artifacts in the forms of tools for action inquiry and action research” (Dowd et al, 2012). These artifacts are presented in the forms of “numerical data, data displays, language, physical space signs and symbols” (Dowd et al, 2012). The Center for Urban Education's tools are designed to counter inequities in higher education for students of color. The Center for Urban Education's tools are designed with the purpose of increasing organizational learning and change by having an impact on practitioner beliefs, expectations and practices. The tools created by CUE are referred to as the Equity Scorecard tools. They include the Benchmarking and Student Success Tool (BESST), the STEM toolkit, and self-assessment inventories. Much of CUE's work focuses on the use of language in and through action research and action inquiry. The Center for Urban Education provides practitioners with race conscious language; practitioners are often socialized to be color blind, which can lead to failure to acknowledge the outcomes of certain groups.

The Center for Urban Education develops tools to assist practitioners be equity-minded. Equity-mindedness is characterized by an awareness of the environment and conditions of racial and ethnic groups at one's institutions. It is the willingness of individuals to use their position and status to act as agents and advocates, and is carried out in one's belief of one's own ability to reach equity goals. It is "manifested through genuine care, and a resolve to take action to address racial ethnic inequities" (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012; Dowd & Bensimon, 2009). This study evaluated the impact of CUE's research processes and assessment tools employed through CUE's Equity Scorecard process on assisting practitioners become equity-minded. One aspect of equity is equitable distribution of resources. From this framework, being equity-minded means being concerned about the impact of structural reforms of general education and early start and about whether changes in these areas create a fair or unfair distribution of resources. Often, research studies and theories that examine racial and ethnic gaps in student performance center on the capacity of students to navigate the opportunities and barriers of higher education. The Center for Urban Education's goal is to develop a better understanding of how practitioners' knowledge, beliefs, and practices affect student experiences and outcomes (Dowd & Bensimon, 2009).

Often, responsibility for student success is placed solely on the student. The goal of the Equity Scorecard process is to help practitioners become equity-minded and accountable for student outcomes. A desired outcome of the Equity Scorecard is to help practitioners understand that student success is not exclusively the students' responsibility and that it is also the responsibility of the institution. Unlike traditional

evaluation tools of student success, which have focused primarily on students' knowledge and behaviors, the Equity Scorecard focuses on the knowledge and behaviors of practitioners and institutions (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012). The tools and data practices employed through the Equity Scorecard process enable practitioners to take notice or become conscious of disparities in educational outcomes for minority groups at their institution (Bensimon, & Malcom, 2012).

One of the desired outcomes of the equity scorecard process is to increase equitable outcomes for minority students. The scorecard is a voluntary self-assessment process grounded in the belief that practitioners can make a significant difference in the outcomes of minority students if they develop the awareness that their current practices are not effective and if they participate in designed situated learning opportunities to build up the equity-minded funds of knowledge necessary for practice (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012). Advocates of the equity scorecard approach argue that participating in situated learning opportunities allows for practitioners to become aware of the inequities that exist in the knowledge that we draw on, consciously or unconsciously, as educators in our day to day practices. Situated learning opportunities are activities designed to address specific issues. These scholars assert that becoming more equitable requires active participation of practitioners as researchers into their institution's culture and practices (Dowd, 2007; Dowd & Bensimon, 2009; Reason, 1994).

Dowd (2007) suggests a call for institutional accountability through action inquiry. This requires problem identification, data collection, and reflection, which are not common practices among higher education practitioners and policy makers (Dowd,

2007). Organizational problems are often multifaceted. In order to address complex organizational problems, phronesis is necessary. Phronesis is a practice that includes professional researchers' knowledge (in this case, CUE action researchers) and the knowledge of local stakeholders (participating practitioners and institutions). These stakeholders work together to gain a better understanding of the problem develop actions needed to improve the problem, and, lastly, evaluate the actions. Only organizations that are willing to work with both insider expertise and outsider knowledge will be able to address complex issues (Dowd & Bensimon, 2009; Greenwood & Levin, 2005; Reason, 1994).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to understand an organizational learning and change process. The methodology involves the developmental evaluation of action research at a single case study site, Monarch State University (MSU). This study evaluated the impact of CUE's tools on the ways in which practitioners' beliefs, expectations and practices are changed by engaging in participatory action research facilitated by CUE. This study investigated the potential of CUE's tool to bring about organizational learning and change. This study also investigated the capacity of CUE's tools to influence institutional effectiveness and improvements and to increase racial equity in student outcomes.

### **Research Question**

This study sought to answer the following questions: First, *What are the characteristics of equity oriented artifacts*. Second, *what changes were observed or*

*reported by respondents in ways associated with CUE tools and activities, and, third, what environmental factors mediate changes or lack of changes in practitioners' social interactions, behaviors, and practices.* These questions are of importance because achieving racial and ethnic equity has been a longstanding issue for institutions of higher education. The research questions posed were designed to gain deeper insight into the challenges of increasing racial and ethnic equity for institutions of higher education and to shed light on practices associated with increasing equity

This research is focused on Monarch State University (MSU), a pseudonym adopted to protect confidentiality. Participants include faculty, staff, senior level administrators, and graduate students from various departments and disciplines across the institution. Unlike traditional research practices, practitioners from MSU worked alongside CUE as researchers of their own practices. This investigation is part of a linked set of studies at state and community colleges.

### **Importance of the Study**

The mission of this study was to evaluate an organizational change process at a state college. Historically, students of color have been poorly prepared for higher education and have been provided limited access. Additionally, institutional practices and policies have failed to produce the support needed for students from historically underrepresented minoritized groups. If higher education institutions are going to increase graduation rates and equitable outcomes, they must find effective ways to serve these students. This study evaluated the impact of CUE's action research processes on practitioners' attitudes, beliefs, expectations and practices. It allowed practitioners from

MSU and researchers from CUE to participate in a collaborative inquiry and reflection process not often common among higher education practitioners (Bensimon, & Malcom, 2012).

## **Chapter Two: Conceptual Framework**

The purpose of this study was to understand an organizational learning and change process. The methodology involves the developmental evaluation of action research at a single case study site, a state college in this case. This study evaluated the impact of CUE's tools on the ways in which practitioners beliefs, expectations and practices are changed by engaging in participatory action research facilitated by CUE. This study investigated the potential of CUE's tools to bring about organizational learning and change. This study also investigated the capacity of action research tools and processes to influence institutional effectiveness and innovations to increase racial and ethnic equity in student outcomes.

### **Organizational Learning and Change**

Racial and ethnic minorities in higher education have a history of inequitable outcomes in terms of persistence and degree completion. Participating in an organizational learning process can help higher education practitioners examine the structural and cultural barriers preventing the institution from producing equitable outcomes for racial ethnic minorities (Bensimon, 2005). Organizational learning is the process by which organizations learn and is usually associated with those in academia. Organizational learning focuses on how organizations learn and improve current processes and is concerned with internal accountability. Organizational learning includes obtaining knowledge, interpreting data, creating knowledge and sustaining acquired knowledge (Kezar, 2005). Knowledge is influenced by an individual's "experiences,

personal values, personal characteristics, and interactions with others” (Bauman, 2005, p. 31). In order to learn what others know, it is important to set up structures that encourage “social interaction for the purposes of sharing and creating knowledge” (Bauman, 2005, p.31). According to Bensimon (2005), unequal outcomes are a result of the attitudes, beliefs, values, and the practices of individuals. These factors often go unseen because institutions fail to provide opportunities for individuals to share their attitudes, beliefs and practices. Providing a forum for practitioners to share can make the “invisible, visible and the undiscussable, discussable” (Bensimon, 2005, p. 99). The process of sharing knowledge and beliefs can bring to the forefront the cognitive frames of institutional actors that may be impeding organizational change and contributing to the inequitable outcomes of underrepresented students.

Bauman (2005) suggests that “Acquiring new knowledge is one of the first steps toward learning” (p. 25). New knowledge raises new questions and ideas about institutional data and processes. Questioning existing processes and practices is not common among higher education practitioners. The organizational learning process provides a safe forum for the kind of dialogue needed for learning and change to occur.

The appropriate use of data has also been an issue among higher education practitioners. Collecting data is a common practice among higher education practitioners. However, the problem is that data is often collected in such a way that individuals cannot interpret the data, the data does not provide a clear picture of existing issues, or it is collected and never put to use (Julius, Baldrige & Pfeffer, 1999). Organizational learning is concerned with not only collecting data but with allowing practitioners to

work collaboratively to make interpretations and work together to make data driven decisions. The collaborative creation of knowledge is also a key tenet of organizational learning. It provides practitioners with the opportunity to challenge existing norms, and to develop shared values, and shared language (Kezar, 2005).

Learning is believed to be a critical function of higher education, but some scholars argue that, while colleges and universities effectively function as disseminators of knowledge, they have been less likely to apply that knowledge to their own practices (Kezar, 2005; Julius et al, 1999).

### **Institutional Racism as a Cause of Racial Ethnic Inequities in Education**

Understanding the root causes of racial and ethnic inequities may provide higher education practitioners with better insight into the existing problem. This section discusses some of the underlying causes of racial inequities in higher education. The research of several scholars' concepts and ideas provide the foundation for empirical analyses. This chapter highlights the works of Jones (2000), who discusses the different levels of racism and how racism and discriminatory practices are perpetuated in our education system through the beliefs, practices and expectations held by practitioners. The work of Margolis (2008) explored the barriers to degree completion for students of color in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), Also discussed is the work of Gutierrez et al. (2009), who examined concepts of race, culture, and difference and the impact these ideas have on students from non-dominant communities. Margolis (2008), Jones (2000), and Gutierrez et al. (2009) all share a common theme in their ideas. That theme is that racism is a problem in education at all levels. If higher

education is to achieve equitable outcomes for students of color, colleges and universities will need to find ways to counter racism, especially for minority groups. The inequitable outcomes of racial and ethnic groups in access and degree completion have become a part of the accepted norm in higher education. According to Jones (2000), these inequities have been able to persist because of institutional racism. Institutionalized racism is defined as:

differential access to the goods, services, and opportunities of society by race. It is structural, having been codified in our institutions of custom, practice, and law so there need not be an identifiable perpetrator. Indeed, institutionalized racism is often evident as inaction in the face of need. Institutionalized racism manifests itself both in material conditions and in access to power. With regard to material conditions, examples include differential access to quality education, sound housing, gainful employment, appropriate medical facilities, and a clean environment. With regard to access to power, examples include differential access to information, resources, and voice. (Jones, 2000, p. 1212)

A study conducted by Margolis et al. (2008) demonstrates institutional racism in action. In *Stuck in the Shallow End*, Margolis (2008) examines why African American and Latino high school students are underrepresented in computer science courses. Margolis (2008) uses the analogy of swimming and computer science to provide a better understanding of the gap that exists between Blacks, Latinos and Whites in swimming and computer science. Margolis's (2008) study is guided by the article *Closing Swimming's Deadly Racial Gap*, from the New York Times. The article asserts that

African American children are three times more likely to drown than white children and suggests that the gap in swimming has origins in slavery and Jim Crow laws that prevented African American and Latino communities' access to quality swimming facilities (Margolis, 2008).

Margolis' (2008) study was conducted at three Los Angeles high schools considered "digital high schools." The first site is located in East Los Angeles, has a population that is almost predominantly Latino, and has been classified as "critically overcrowded." The second site is an "aerospace mathematics science magnet" that, ironically, does not offer any aerospace courses. It has a primarily African American population, and it is located in central Los Angeles. Both schools only offer introductory computer science courses. The third site is located in a wealthy white community, and its student population is racially diverse in that at least two thirds of its population consists of students of color from various communities in Los Angeles. While both schools with heavy Latino and African American populations only offer novice computer science courses, the school located in the wealthy white community offers an array of computer science classes, including higher level computer science. Although the third site requires that all students take at least one computer science course, African American and Latino students are severely underrepresented in advanced computer science courses (Margolis, 2008). The two schools with high minority populations were poorly funded and lacked quality teachers and resources, while the school located in a wealthy white community had a wealth of resources. This story is a clear depiction of the differential experiences of many students of color and white students. African Americans and Latinos often live in

poor communities and attend under-resourced schools, and white students often attend schools with a wealth of resources (Margolis, 2008, Stanton-Salazar, 2011). As a result of poor academic environment, students of color have poor outcomes, while the students who attend schools in wealthy white communities have more opportunities to reach their full potential (Margolis, 2008; Stanton-Salazar, 2011; Gutierrez et al, 2009).

In Margolis's (2008) study, institutional racism was manifested in differential access to quality education, resources, and opportunities. Although Margolis's (2008) study was focused on computer science in high schools, it does provide insight into barriers that prevent students of color from entering and completing degrees in STEM fields in college.

Several scholars developed interventionist strategies to counter racism. Some argue that Stanton-Salazar's (2010) research on institutional agency and its impact on students from poor communities has been essential for practitioners working with historically disadvantaged groups, but it is limited in that the focus is on individual agents and not organizational change. While several scholars have made efforts to counter racism, many of the strategies they have developed lack tools necessary for organizational learning and change. In an attempt to increase equity in higher education for racial ethnic groups, the Center for Urban Education developed the Equity Scorecard process to help practitioners re-mediate existing beliefs and deficit notions about students from racialized racial ethnic groups. The Equity Scorecard is an action research process that aims to provide practitioners with tools needed for action inquiry and reflection into their own practices, where inquiry is understood as a reflective process that allows

practitioners to look deeper into their current situation and ask questions such as, “How did we get here? It exposes misconceptions and misinterpretations about organizational practices and allows practitioners to work together to develop new practices and shared knowledge. The inquiry process involves collecting information and data, and using the data to analyze the problem under investigation (Stringer, 2007).

The Center for Urban Education’s research is guided by cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT), a sociocultural theory of learning that emphasizes the influence that history has on organizations. The Center for Urban Education’s work is also guided by action research. Reason (1994) poses that action research is necessary for organizational change. Dowd and Bensimon (2009) undergird the Equity Scorecard process and argue that concepts such as equity-mindedness and deficit-mindedness help to counter practices that are harmful for students from minoritized racial and ethnic groups. This case study evaluated the impact of CUE’s tools and action research processes on practitioner’s beliefs, expectations and practices and the ability of CUE’s tool to foster organizational learning and change. Some scholars argue (Reason, 1994; Dowd & Bensimon, 2009) that these concepts, if studied, learned and employed, have the power to produce change and increase equity in outcomes for racial ethnic groups. However, the empirical evidence to support this claim is limited.

Institutional racism exists at all levels of education for students of color and is an issue that must be addressed. The community college has served as both a gateway and a gatekeeper for students of color. As a gateway, it has provided open access to communities that have been traditionally denied access to four-year colleges and

universities. As a gatekeeper, the community college has failed at measuring the outcomes of students in general (Dowd, 2007; Dowd et al, 2012). As a result, students of color have gained access to higher education, but the completion and transfer rates of minority populations have been marginal.

### **The Equity Scorecard at Long Beach City College**

In a study facilitated by CUE with Long Beach City College (LBCC) that examined the outcomes of historically underrepresented students, researchers found that, out of a sample of 27,422 students, only 520 (2%) were transfer ready within 3 years, and, out of the 520, only forty transferred. “Transfer is a key component of California’s master plan, and community colleges are the cornerstone of that plan, and the gateway to social mobility” (Dowd, 2008; Dowd et al, 2012). After participating in CUE’s equity scorecard process, researchers found several factors that contributed to the poor transfer rates at LBCC. The study found that transfer requirements were not clear and were subject to change without notice. The specialized language used, such as “Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum” in transfer documents, was also confusing and unfamiliar for many students, especially those who were first generation college students and from historically underrepresented minority groups. They also learned that the ways in which they provided information and prepared students for transfer were not effective for all students, especially students from minority racial ethnic groups (Dowd et al., 2012). Adequate, accurate, and clear information is critical for members of racial ethnic groups, as it governs their access to baccalaureate granting institutions and the better life promised by more advanced degrees (Dowd et al., 2012). The factors contributing to poor transfer rates at LBCC have harsh consequences for students of color: “there is a systematic valuing of academic credentials that racial minorities groups cannot access in ways equal to students living in dominant communities with higher socioeconomic

status”(Dowd et al., 2012 p.17; Margolis, 2008). The study found that even students who were UC eligible did not transfer to a UC. They transferred to less competitive institutions instead. Out of 27,422 students, only 6 African Americans, 6 Asian Pacific Islanders, and 11 Latinos transferred to a UC. The original purpose of higher education was for the public good; instead, it has become a resource guarded by “bureaucratic protections” (Dowd et al., 2012, p. 17).

Some argue that students of color will reach more equitable outcomes when practitioners become more accountable for student success. Becoming more accountable means practitioners will have to become equity-minded and abandon deficit-minded views of the students they serve (Margolis, 2008; Bensimon & Dowd, 2009; Stanton-Salazar, 2011; Ogawa et al, 2008). As noted in Chapter One, deficit-minded views place blame for student outcomes solely on students (Bensimon & Dowd, 2009). Bensimon (2012) found that the deficit-minded approach is common among higher education practitioners, with comments such as low performing students don’t put in the effort, lack preparation, lack motivation, or they work too many hours. Too often, low performing students are stigmatized as “at risk”; this term contributes to deficit-minded thinking. The label “at risk” has severe consequences for minority students. It speaks to the expectations that practitioners and society hold for minority populations and gives practitioners little hope of their capacity to assist minority students (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012; Gutierrez et al, 2009). Labels such as “at risk” also serve as an out for some practitioners, if it is believed and accepted that certain students don’t have the “academic, social, and networking skills for success,” practitioners don’t have to put

forth the necessary effort to reach minority populations (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012; Stanton-Salazar, 2011).

Gutierrez et al (2009) suggests, that at risk notions, deficit notions, idea of differences, are just another way of “blaming the victim.” From deficit perspectives students with non-dominant discourse are viewed as a problem, “rather than viewed as someone experiencing a problem within the education system” (Gutierrez, 2009). It is this blame the victim mentality that is plaguing our schools. “From a Vygotskian perspective, academic failure or success of children is not a personal attribute of any child, nor a collective characteristic of any ethnic group, but a social phenomenon linked to historical and social conditions” (Gutierrez et al, 2009, p. 219). Researchers have developed several reasons why these “perceived” deficits exist, but Scribner and Cole (1973, as cited in Gutierrez et al, 2009) argue that, “there should be more of a focus on rethinking the social organization of education and its effects.” Gutierrez et al. (2009) assert that “searching for specific incapacities and deficiencies are socially mischievous detours” (p. 219). Deficit-minded approaches fail to consider the differential educational experiences of students from wealthy white communities, compared with those from poor communities with high minority populations (Bensimon& Malcom, 2012; Gutierrez et al, 2009).

Deficit-minded ideologies affect how practitioners view and academically engage their students. Gutierrez et al (2009) also found these same issues existed in literacy instruction. Intentional or unintentional labels such as “at-risk” perpetuate race based deficits about students of color and contribute to the stark underperformance of minority

populations in higher education (Bensimon, 2012). Bensimon (2012) contends that the focus on student deficits does not allow for practitioners to reflect on the failure of institutional practices and policies that reproduce racial inequities.

### **Race, Culture, Learning and Difference**

Race and culture are often treated as one and the same and, sometimes, interchangeably, but there is a difference between the two. Race is unchangeable while culture is produced and can be created in cultural settings and between people (Nasir & Hand, 2006). Grounded in the work of Lev Vygotsky, sociocultural theories view culture as “a system of meaning carried across generations” (Nasir & Hand, 2006, p. 458). Unlike race, culture can be changed. It is constantly created and re-created (Nasir & Hand, 2006). Sociocultural approaches have been used to understand how learning and development occur through the use of culture as a foundation of concern (Nasir & Hand, 2006). From the sociocultural perspective, “culture is carried by individuals and created in moment to moment interactions as individuals participate in and reconstruct cultural practices” (Nasir & Hand, 2006, p. 450). Early approaches to understanding culture, race, and learning were grounded in discriminatory philosophy. These approaches were supported by faulty research that attributed the underperformance of low status racial groups to biological differences. It was believed that Blacks were less intelligent than whites and that the incompetence plaguing black communities was inherent (Nasir & Hand, 2006). Soon after, biological models were replaced by deficiency models that posited that Blacks were not inherently disadvantaged, but that blacks were less intelligent due to poor living conditions and a history of enslavement that caused Black

families to become “socially disorganized and lacking in cognitive stimulation” (Nasir & Hand, 2006, p.451).

The seventies brought a new surge of researchers of color who argued that children of color were not deficient in their cognitive and social abilities. They were simply different from white children. The idea that black children were different from white children was supposed to provide an explanation for the disparate rates of achievement between the groups, but, instead, it contributed to existing deficit notions that black children were abnormal. Embedded in deficit driven notions, the difference framework puts forward that some populations are suffering from living in a culture of poverty or from cultural deprivation. Deficit-minded approaches are harmful because they suggest that low performing students fail due to their own internal deficiencies, and they fail to hold schools accountable for student success (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012; Gutierrez, 2006; Nasir & Hand, 2006; Stanton Salazar, 2010). Difference and comparative models are dangerous for working class minority students because they draw attention to what students of color are not. Minow (1990) notes that “to equal one must be the same, and to be different is to be unequal or even deviant” (as cited in Gutierrez, 2009, p. 222). These comparisons are problematic in that students from non-dominant communities are seen as different while those from dominant communities are viewed as normal.

This language is exclusory and suggests that there is something wrong with students who are not from dominant communities and helps to keep out from the

academic communities those students who need the most assistance. Gutierrez et al (2009) asserts:

Our biases and assumptions about difference are culturally organized; thus, our proclivity to identify and label students who perform poorly or differently, to assign them to particular treatments, to assess them in particular ways, and to make a diagnosis about their future performance in schools and often beyond, reveals habits of the mind that index our nation's history with difference— primarily, race and class differences (Gutierrez et al, 2009, 225).

Many scholars have documented that “racial or ethnic differences in communicative processes and ways of doing and knowing often operate in quiet ways to undermine the school performance of minority students” (Nasir & Hand, 2006, p. 452; Stanton-Salazar, 2011). Stanton-Salazar also posits that there is a dominant discourse, generally white male centered, that is accepted and deemed as normal. Studies have found that, when students behave and interact in ways that are different from the accepted norms and expectations of their academic institution, both learning and achievement suffer (Nasir & Hand, 2006; Stanton-Salazar, 2011).

Many researchers have argued that, in order to support the learning of students of color, practitioners will need to include multicultural education, cultural responsiveness, and culturally relevant pedagogy into their practices to promote the inclusion of minority ways of doing and knowing (Dowd & Bensimon, 2009; Stanton-Salazar, 2011). These ideas have not gone without criticism. Critics have argued that the classroom is not the only place to address the underachievement of minority students. Critical theorists

believe that addressing the underachievement of minority students has to go beyond the scope of the classroom; it will require a substantial change in both society and school organization (Nasir & Hand, 2006).

A 1997 study conducted by Bowles and Gintis (as cited in Nasir & Hand, 2006) found that there are differences in the ways which minority and white students are socialized in schools. The study found that schools in wealthy communities with predominantly white populations promoted autonomy, self-expression, and leadership (Margolis, 2008), while schools in low-income communities with high minority populations promoted compliance and the following of rules (Nasir & Hand, 2006).

### **The Importance of Individuals in Organizational Change**

Institutional agents are vital to the success of low status minority students in higher education. These students often enter higher education without the necessary social capital to gain access to key resources or the skills needed to successfully navigate the system (Stanton- Salazar, 2010). Institutional agents are non-related individuals who occupy high positions in society or within an institution. Institutional agents provide working- class minorities with both social and institutional support and are willing and able use their status to provide access to key resources.

Low-income minority students who attend higher education institutions often have to learn how live in several sociocultural worlds simultaneously. Stanton- Salazar (2010) believes that these students must go through a socialization process in which they learn the dominant acceptable discourse which is generally a white, middle class, male-centered discourse and how to live in and acclimate to these differing environments.

Stanton-Salazar (2010) suggests that “effective participation in each world requires adoption or execution of certain social identities, and effective accommodation to a system of values and beliefs, expectations, aspirations, ways of using language, and emotional responses familiar to insiders” (Stanton-Salazar, 2011, p.4 ). Low status youth and white middle class youth often have differing experiences. White middle class youth often have been exposed to different social worlds and cultural discourses. As a result, they are able to embody what is deemed as acceptable ways of being in the world. Working class minority youth often have to learn what is deemed acceptable discourse because the culture they have been exposed to and the culture at the institution often conflict. Because working class minority students are often unfamiliar with the dominant discourse, they must be taught by individuals who have already mastered the dominant discourse. “Learning multiple discourses requires active engagement with various agents within the differing social worlds” (Stanton-Salazar, 2011, p.4). Clearly, these ideas have important implications for study in higher education for faculty and staff and administrators.

For working class minorities, becoming skilled in the socially accepted discourse is imperative. It can lead to access to various resources, privileges, and rewards. “Practitioners often unconsciously gravitate toward and reward those students who demonstrate high- status characteristics and exhibit the dominant discourse” (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). These students are more likely to receive support from teachers and school personnel in the forms of high expectations, good grades, and academic encouragement. According to the status attainment model “socialization is aided by

processes of academic identity formation” meaning that individuals are influenced by the perceptions and beliefs of both teachers and peers, those who are viewed as high performers and who adopt and believe the perceptions of their teachers and peers are more likely to reach their educational aspirations (Stanton-Salazar, 2011).

What Stanton-Salazar (2010) suggests is that students need someone who will show them the acceptable way of being in order to survive in their environment. Unfortunately, “many working class youth never experience such engagement, especially those with low expectations and English language learners” (Stanton-Salazar, 2011, p.7). A study conducted by Stanton-Salazar and Spina (2003) that examined the social networks of 47 Mexican students with working class immigrant parents found only 20% of the participants identified with a non-kin adult in the community as an informal mentor. Unfortunately, many working-class youth lack access to non-familial relationships that lead to social mobility. “In contrast, in middle-class families, both parents and youth coordinate to incorporate nonparental adults into their social networks” (Stanton-Salazar, 2011, p.7), demonstrating that race and class do matter (Margolis, 2008). A criticism of the status attainment model is that it “fails to call attention to those institutionalized structures of class and race segregation that determine the quality of schools in different communities, the historic practice of curriculum tracking, and regular and facilitated access to high status cultural forms and institutions such as museums, theater, and exposure to the arts” (Stanton-Salazar, 2011, p.9).

Agency is more than providing students with access to key resources and showing them socially acceptable ways of being. It is about empowering students so that they

learn how to “gain access to key forms of resources and competencies necessary for gaining control over one’s life, and their own outcomes” (Stanton-Salazar, 2011).

Empowerment agents are those who are bold enough to “go against the grain” to enable the empowerment of working class minority students. Empowerment agents are those who are willing to counter what Jones (2000) refers to as institutionalized racism.

Institutionalized racism is manifested in differential access to resources, information, opportunities, and power by race and is often treated as normal (Jones, 2000).

Empowerment agents are not only concerned about challenging the established social structure to decrease inequities, but their goal is transform the consciousness of the students they serve, so that they, too, “become moral and caring agents dedicated to changing the world” (Stanton-Salazar, 2011, p.25). Stanton-Salazar (2011) stated:

Empowerment agents understand the power of institutional support and social capital in the lives of youth and students from historically oppressed communities, and they aim for a fair and just society, committed to the fair distribution of societal resources and to dismantling the structures of class, racial and gender oppression. (p.33)

In order to be an empowerment agent, one must believe in the capacity of students to perform well and must also believe in their own ability to help students reach their full potential. While empowerment agents are necessary for students from non-dominant communities, this type of work is focused on individuals and can be slow and non-conducive for increasing equity, organizational learning, and change.

Traditionally, the university has been a place of autonomy where individuals work in silos (Bess & Dee, 2008) and rarely collaborate across disciplines or departments, which can be potentially harmful for students who depend on institutional agents for support. In order to be effective, institutional agents must have a well-established social network and be knowledgeable of the resources that others in their network have to offer. From this perspective, institutional agents have to be willing to collaborate and build diverse networks with others. The social network of an agent will ultimately have an impact on their capacity to serve students and the quality of the support rendered. Establishing a network with one person can provide access to their network and so on. The quality of one's agency is dependent on one's ability to build bridges and relationships (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). In essence, the success of students is affected by both the student's and the institutional agents' social networks. In order for youth at all levels of schooling to successfully develop both academically and socially, they need "resource-full" relationships (Stanton-Salazar, 2011, p.4).

As shown in Figure 2.1, Institutional agents serve many roles for working class minority youth and provide multiple types of support including direct support, integrative support, system developer, and system linkage and network support

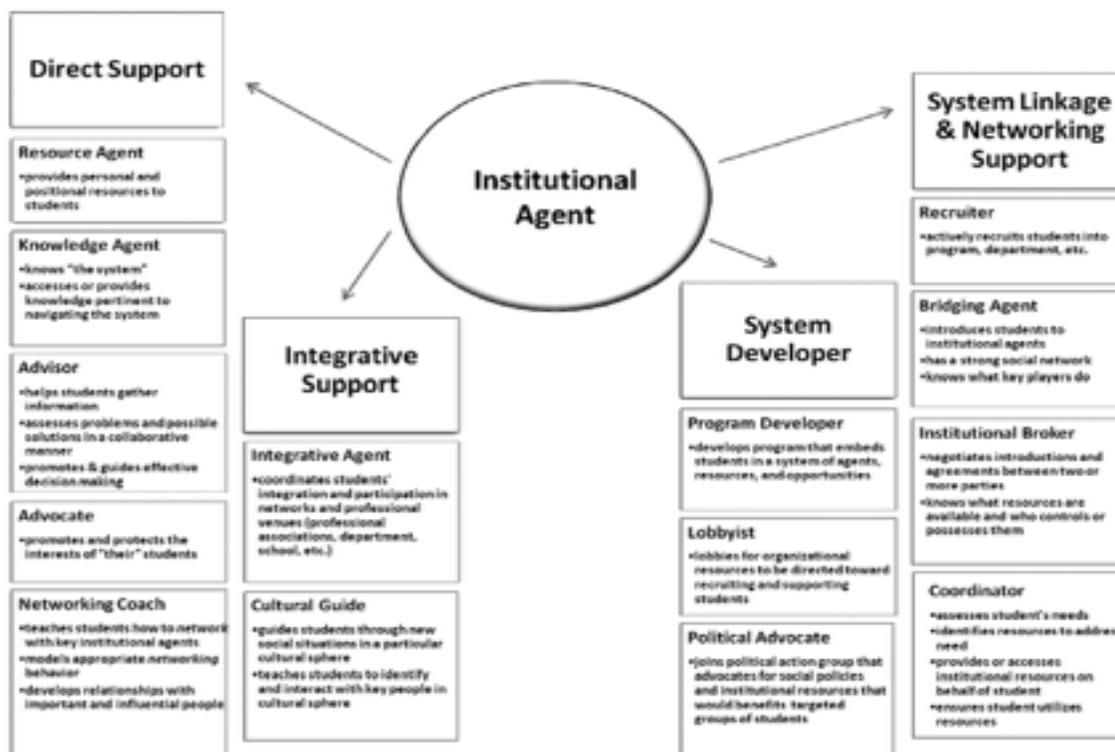


Figure 2.1. Stanton-Salazar's (2011, p. 16) Roles of Institutional Agents

**Direct support.** Based on the model above, institutional agents are expected to take on several roles in aiding students. They provide direct support by serving as a resource agent, knowledge agent, advisor, advocate, and networking coach. As knowledge and resource agents, institutional agents provide access to information and resources that students would not normally have access to without the support of the agent. Institutional agents advise students, help them solve problems and guide them through the decision-making process. As advocates, institutional agents act on behalf of students and promote and protect the interest of students. They serve as voice when students are voiceless and powerless. Direct support is also provided through modeling. As networking coaches, institutional agents teach students how to network and build

relationships with other key agents. This is accomplished by modeling the socially accepted discourse.

**Integrative support.** Institutional agents coordinate the successful “integration and participation” of students into academic and professional environments (Stanton-Salazar, 2011, p.16). For example, an institutional agent might introduce Black students interested journalism to the Association of Black Journalist or might encourage them to get involved with the campus newspaper. As a cultural guide, an institutional agent might prepare those students on how to behave and how to work interact with individuals in those environments.

**System Developer.** System developers develop programs, lobby, and serve as political advocates for racial and ethnic minority youth. As system developers, institutional agents are expected to develop student centered programs that provide students with various agents, resources and opportunities. An example is a program like the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) within the CSU. The EOP provides access to higher education to historically underrepresented, low-income, first generation, and educationally disadvantaged students. EOP-type programs usually provide students with mentors, grants, books and some provide summer bridge programs to assist students in their acclimation to the university. Institutional agents are expected to lobby for resources to support the recruitment and support services needed to retain students from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. As political advocates, institutional agents are expected to actively participate in “political action groups that advocate for social policies and institutional resources that would benefit targeted groups of

students” (Stanton-Salazar, 2011, p.16). For example, they might become members of the financial aid and scholarships committee or enrollment management or AB 540 Committee for undocumented students. It is important that institutional agents have a political presence. They are often the individuals who are the voices for students from minoritized groups. Without them, institutional norms prevail to the disadvantage of students of color.

**System Linkage and Networking Support.** As a system linkage and network support, an institutional agent acts as a recruiter, bridging agent, institutional broker, and a coordinator. They actively recruit students into programs that support the individual needs of the student. As a bridging agent, an institutional agent must have a strong network of agents. They are also expected to know what resources are available and who is in control of those resources (Stanton-Salazar, 2011)

### **Action Research as a Form of Accountability for Organizational Learning and Equity**

Action researchers argue it is a form of research to help promote change and create change agents. Action research is a participatory approach to investigate problems in local settings (Stringer, 2007). Unlike traditional research which focuses on generalizations, action research addresses specific problems within specific organizations (Stringer, 2007). It allows practitioners to investigate current practices through a systematic approach to inquiry. The purpose of inquiry in action research is to assist practitioners in developing appropriate solutions to issues within their institution. Through action research, organizations are able to learn about unproductive practices.

Reason (1994) suggests that tools are also needed to enhance organizational learning and effectiveness. For Example, the Center for Urban Education (CUE) at the University of Southern California (USC) developed tools to assist higher education practitioners in evaluating their own institution practices. This research was conducted with the University of Southern California's (USC) Center for Urban Education.

There are several benefits to participatory action research (PAR). According to Reason (1994), PAR allows for people to share an experience and, through that experience, people are able to develop a better understanding of present problems. PAR has two main goals. Its first goal is to produce knowledge and action through research, and its second is to empower people through the construction and use of their own knowledge. The goal is to generate phronesis, a process by which researchers and local practitioners from diverse areas of an institution come together as stakeholders to define a problem, conduct research to understand the problem, and develop a plan of action to address the problem. After the plan is implemented, together, stakeholders evaluate the outcomes of their work. If the desired outcome is not achieved, they go through the cycle again until the goal is met. Phronesis is a practice through which both researchers and local practitioners benefit from the outcomes. This study examined an organizational learning and change process through action research. It also evaluated the impact of CUE's tools on the facilitation of the action research process.

The Equity Scorecard process is rooted in the practice of action research. Action research is a participatory inquiry process in which individuals work collaboratively as researchers of their own practices. It is unlike traditional research which often excludes

subjects from the inquiry process. Action research allows participants to study themselves and determine their outcomes.

### **Applying Cultural-Historical Activity Theory to Organizational Change**

A number of scholars today use cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) to design strategies to re-mediate long standing beliefs and deficit notions about students from non-dominant communities (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012; Dowd & Bensimon, 2009; Margolis, 2008; Nasir & Hand, 2006). Dowd et al. (2012) argue that, to bring about equity, researchers should focus “on remediating the artifacts of professional practice in colleges and universities to achieve equity among racial and ethnic groups” (Dowd et al., 2012). CHAT is a sociocultural theory of learning that emphasizes the influence that history has on organizations. “Sociocultural theories study the role of social and cultural processes as mediators of human activity and thought” (Nasir & Hand, 2006, p. 458)

As described by Nasir and Hand (2006), there are four central premises of sociocultural theories:

1. Development occurs on multiple levels simultaneously (moment-to-moment changes in learning and development; change over months and years; and change over historical and phylogenetic time).
2. Cultural practices are an important unit of analysis for understanding developmental processes.
3. Cultural tools and artifacts (including ideational or symbolic artifacts) fundamentally influence learning and development and are mediators of psychological processes.

4. Social others and social interactional processes play a key role in learning and development and learning is constituted by changing relations in these social relationships and the social world. (Nasir & Hand, 2006 p. 458-459)

Based on CHAT's framework, people and their social environment are deeply connected to the past through tools, rules, and artifacts (Ogawa et al, 2008). This deep history may be a contributing factor to the continued existence of racial inequities. CHAT discusses how new learning occurs in organizations or institutions that are bound by their "historical legacies, language, and objects present within its culture." CHAT also considers how people conduct themselves based on the cultural artifacts present within an institution (Dowd et al., 2012).

There are four primary concepts of CHAT, and these concepts have the ability to promote or impede change within an institution. These include culture, history, activity, and activity settings. According to the CHAT framework, learning takes place in the context of culture. The way people think and the decisions they make are influenced by the expectations, values, norms, and assumptions of a culture. Culture is so powerful that it has the ability to shape "what we see or fail to see and what we do or chose not to do" (Dowd et al., 2012, p.6). Often, the customs and traditions of an institution's culture are so deeply seated that they go unrecognized and unquestioned. Because of this, it is important to address the cultural factors within an institution that impede or promote a desired change (Dowd et al., 2012).

Reflecting on the history of an organization is also a primary concern of CHAT. Knowledge of an organization's history can expose why an organization may be

experiencing resistance to change. CHAT acknowledges that learning occurs in situated activities. A model activity setting is one in which individuals come together to participate in a shared activity and have equal input in the activity. Individuals may not always agree, but disagreement does allow for participants to co-construct new knowledge about the problem at hand. CHAT gives practitioners the opportunity to study the social construction of practice from a holistic and historical perspective. Providing practitioners with the opportunity to participate as researcher of their own cultures and practices may not only produce a change in individuals but a change in the overall system (Dowd et al., 2012; Greenwood & Levin, 2005; Ogawa et al, 2008; Reason, 1994). CHAT suggests that the best way to learn new information is through mutually engaged activities. CHAT informs this study not only in its research design but also in the action research activity settings.

An advantage of CHAT is that it is a model of human development in that it allows for individuals to engage in intellectual dialogue that investigates false beliefs and allows for individuals to co-construct new learning and meaning (Ogawa et al, 2008). This is an appropriate framework for this study because it provides a focus on learning and professional development among college and university practitioners. CHAT recognizes that there are several factors that influence the social and cognitive development of individuals; these factors also have the power to influence how people relate and interact with each other. The CHAT framework identifies six elements of an activity system: object, subject, mediating artifacts, community, rules, and division of

labor. These elements are inseparable and one cannot be considered without including its connection to the others:

[T]he object is the purpose behind an activity. The subject is the person who is working toward the object. The relationship between objects and subject are enabled by mediating artifacts or tools, these mediating tools produce opportunities for social interaction, communication and, ultimately activity. Object, subject, artifact relationships occur within communities. Communities are characterized by shared sets of rules that emphasize certain objects and the use of particular artifacts, and communities are characterized by division of labor. (Ogawa et al, 2008 p. 85-87)

Prior sections discussed a study conducted at LBCC that found only 2% of their minority population students were transfer-ready within three years. This section illustrates the value of action research as a change process and also highlights how practitioners at LBCC and facilitators at CUE worked together to investigate the possible barriers to transferring for students of color. There are several reasons for the use of external facilitators, as “practitioners do not always see their own practices, habits of interaction are unconscious and are deeply seated in professional culture, errors are not tolerated or viewed as opportunities for learning, and in-house training programs often perpetuate the existing culture” (Tharp and Gallimore, 1988, as cited in Dowd et al. (2012). Providing practitioners at LBCC with the opportunity to study their own data gave them knowledge that a problem exist, and it motivated members of the research

team to do more to understand how to address the problem and to improve the colleges transfer effectiveness more generally (Dowd et al, & Malcom, 2012).

According to the CHAT framework, “in order to remediate practice, it is necessary to remediate the artifacts that are the tools for the social construction of practice” (Dowd et al., 2012, p.25). “One of the ways to remediate the roles in communities of practices is to ask practitioners to become researchers of their own practices” (Dowd et al., 2012, p. 29). A key element of action inquiry is reflection. Reflecting on one’s own practices can be a tough but necessary process. It allows practitioners to discover practices that may not be effective for all students. Throughout this process, practitioners have to find ways to not become defensive. In the case of LBCC, an evidence team was established; they set out to discover how the college was doing based on indicators from disaggregated data. Generally, institutional outcomes are monitored using aggregate measures of student outcomes. These measures are often “too high above the ground to help define problems in ways that college administrators and faculty can tackle” (Dowd et al., 2012, p.10). Disaggregating data by race allows practitioners to clearly see the disparate outcome of students of color. “Outcome data are more likely to be reported for all students or for underrepresented minorities compared with Whites, which reinforces the norms of being racially diverse without being racially conscious” (Dowd et al., 2012, p.10).

The LBCC process illustrates how action inquiry can enhance organizational learning. The evidence team set out to discover how many students were transfer-ready in three years, how many of the 520 actually transferred and whether they qualified for

admission to a UC, and, if so, where they transferred to. A major concern of the evidence team was that only 2% of their sample was transfer-ready in three years, which brought about questions about the types of services the other 98% of the population experienced in regards to transfer opportunities. The evidence team set out to examine their own transfer culture and to understand the kinds of information, counseling and academic support the 98% who were not transfer-ready experienced. They conducted observations and interviews with students, colleagues, to gain a better understanding of their institution from the perspective of students:

By focusing on the content and quality of institutional practices the team of practitioner-researchers acknowledged, the possibility that accepted and long standing routines of providing transfer information and preparing students for transfer might not be effective for all students, and most particularly for members of minority racial and ethnic group, in this way, institutional practices, rather than students, became the focus of remediation. (Dowd et al., 2012, p. 9)

LBCC's is an example of how an institution can learn about itself through action inquiry or through gathering data to answer questions. The activity setting facilitated by CUE and completion of the Equity scorecard assisted in remediating the roles of all the individuals involved. According to Dowd et al. (2012) Action research is necessary for organizational learning and change to occur.

A structured environment, when committed individuals meet on a consistent basis, can provide the opportunity for a better understanding of race within groups.

Dowd et al (2012) suggest that such a process can be assisted by an outsider whose role

is to help practitioners develop racially intentional language as well as to help them examine their own assumptions about student outcomes in a safe and deliberate environment. In this process, participants must be prepared and willing to actively engage in exploring racial inequities and engage in conversations about race. Practitioners must then acknowledge that inequities exist and be willing to identify and change policies and practices that contribute to the gap (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012; Dowd & Bensimon, 2008; Dowd et al., 2012; Greenwood & Levin, 2005; Reason, 1994).

One of the primary methods of CUE's work, which provides the field setting for this study, is increasing the capacity of higher education institutions to carry out action inquiry by bringing practitioners together from various areas to engage in "collaborative assessment activities." These activities provide practitioners with a structure (Dowd et al., 2012). Action research and action inquiry activities are designed to bring established and deep seated knowledge to the forefront a practitioner's attention. Because practitioners are not always aware of the social context of their practices, collaboration with peers in well-structured assessment activities allows for hidden issues to surface. "Accountability initiatives are most beneficial when they engage participants in meaningful and productive activities in professional settings, purposefully designed as activity setting for social learning" (Dowd et al., 2012). The culture of a setting can be redefined when reflection occurs (Dowd et al., 2012). Reason (1994) argues that action research is needed for organizational change to take place. It allows participants to become creators of their own knowledge and allows them to study practices that may be impeding a desired goal or outcome. Action research tools assist practitioners in

observing more closely the material and social conditions of their practice. (Gutierrez & Vossoughi, 2010, p. 100). Dowd et al. (2009) argue that action research is essential to counter the inequitable outcomes of racial ethnic groups and promote sustainable organizational change.

### **Chapter Three: Research Methodology**

The previous chapter explored the concepts and theories that informed the present study. To review, this study examined the impact of action research on learning and change among higher education practitioners. Many contemporary action research facilitators believe in action research's potential to transform locally situated understandings and practice (Burns, 2007; Greenwood & Levin, 2005; McArdle & Reason, 2007; Stringer, 2007). They strongly believe it is transformational to the individuals and organizations involved. Burns (2007) asserted that, by integrating "learning by doing" with deep reflection, action research simultaneously informs and creates change. Change is considered an intended outcome of action research. This change, however, is not revolutionary, but, rather, can be characterized as "subtle transformations brought by the ... modifications to existing practices" (Stringer, 2007, p. 208). Greenwood and Levin (2005) pinpointed action research as an activity that facilitates development and cultivation of knowledge enabling practitioners to take appropriate actions to achieve their goals. Finally, McArdle and Reason (2007) provided a precise metaphor in considering action research and organizational development close cousins.

This study was part of a larger research agenda carried out by researchers at USC's Center for Urban Education (Baldwin et al, 2008; Bensimon et al., 2004; Bensimon et al, 2007; Bensimon et al., 2010; Bustillos, 2007; Dowd, 2005; Dowd & Bensimon, 2009; Dowd et al., 2007; Dowd et al., press; Enciso, 2009; Salazar-Romo,

2009). Specifically, it examined the impact of CUE's action research processes and tools and the facilitation of action inquiry using CUE's tools on the attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and practices of a small sample of faculty, counselors and administrators at a single institution where CUE's tools were used. The findings were drawn primarily from the researcher's data collection and were supplemented by pooled data collected by collaborating researchers at other field sites during the same period this study was conducted. The multiple field sites involved in this collective study were purposefully sampled based on their relationship with CUE. College and university faculty and administrators at each of the field sites engaged in action inquiry facilitated by CUE researchers. The field site for this study was a public state university in California with selective admissions practices and an emphasis on science and technology education.

Figure 3.1 illustrates the relationship of this study, which uses developmental evaluation methods, in relation to other types of research conducted by CUE researchers. Developmental evaluation informs the development of CUE's action research tools, which are designed to foster equity among racial and ethnic groups in higher education experiences and outcomes. More broadly, this study informs institutions of higher education about incorporating action research into the assessment of institutional effectiveness and equity.

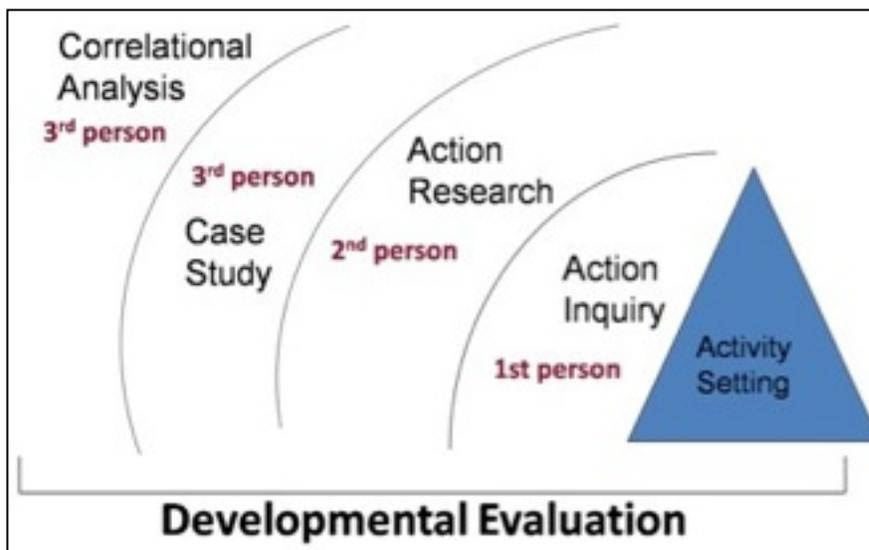


Figure 3.1. Developmental Evaluation Methods Inform Multiple Modes of Research

The unit of study was constituted by the “activity settings” in which action research was conducted (Tharp & Gallimore, 1998). As illustrated in Figure 3.1, the activity setting represents the workshop or various other meetings where action research is conducted. For this study, the meetings include faculty, administrators and staff who have become practitioners researching disaggregated data from their own institution using a variety of CUE’s tools, including, for example, the Benchmarking Equity and Student Success Tool (BESST) and document analysis protocol (Syllabus Reflection Tool and Document Analysis Self-Assessment for Culturally Inclusive Practices are examples). The practitioners come to these meetings with their own values, beliefs, and assumptions. Analyzing the data from their institution allows for social interaction by collaboratively discussing what is needed for change. This is the *1st person* action inquiry stage, where an individual or group engages in study for reflective practice. The

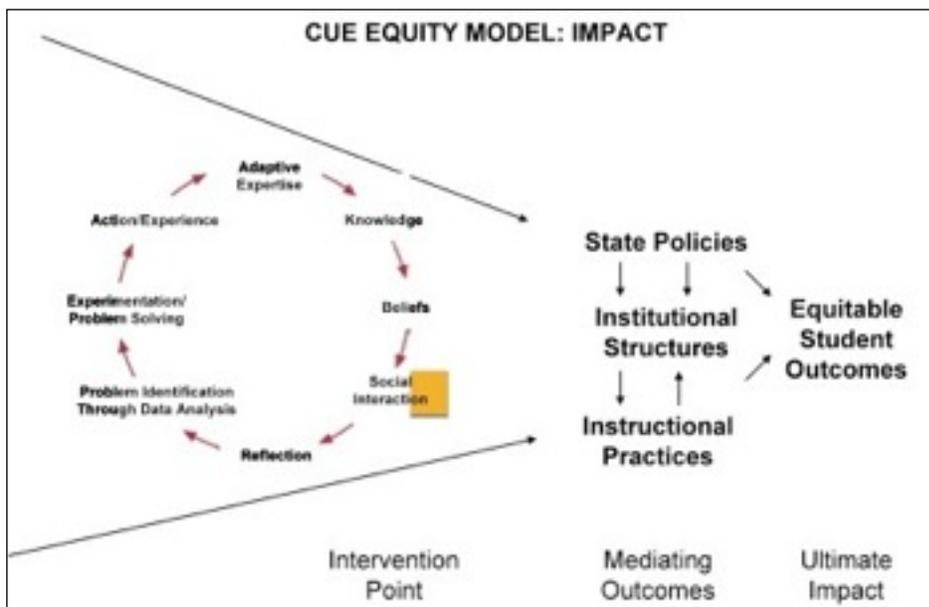
BESST Tool allows the data to be manipulated to show how changes in one milestone can influence greater student outcomes. The Syllabus Reflection Inventory helps faculty members explore and reflect on their syllabi; thus facilitating their learning to become culturally responsive agents.

The Center for Urban Education engages higher education practitioners in that action inquiry process through participatory action research. The *2nd person* action research stage in Figure 3.1 represents CUE's relationship with practitioner colleagues in this work. As institutional outsiders conducting action research, CUE researchers "create processes and assessment tools for action inquiry on the part of institutional insiders, who use them to assess their own practices" with the purpose to address inequities (Dowd & Bensimon, 2009, p. 2). Dowd and Bensimon (2009) found that it is this outsider status that can orchestrate this dynamic process in ways that insiders cannot.

In this respect, as illustrated in Figure 3.1, as a developmental evaluator conducting *3rd person* case study, the researcher worked in relationship to a larger CUE Evaluation Study Team. The team had two main goals: first, to develop CUE's evaluation capacity by improving the validity of the inferences drawn from evaluation questionnaires and, second, to enhance CUE's effectiveness in conducting action research for the purpose of improving equity in higher education. This case study provides CUE researchers with a more nuanced understanding of the experiences of the action inquiry team participants. That means better understanding of the reactions, attitudes, reflections, and action steps taken by practitioner participants in ways that create a positive impact in their students' lives (Bensimon, et al., 2010).

The Center for Urban Education uses action research to facilitate practitioner inquiry. For the purposes of this study, it is important to understand the types of changes that might come about through action inquiry and the types of activities through which these changes might arise. As action researchers, CUE creates activity settings with the aim of remediating educational practices that are harmful to racial and ethnic equity. Tharp and Gallimore (1998) emphasized that problem solving and learning cannot be “understood outside the complex social context” (p. 91). They explained that designing learning experiments should include assistance performance activities with peer consultants. The Center draws on this notion and explains that, in CUE projects, “learning and knowledge are socially constructed through joint productive activity” (Dowd & Bensimon, 2009, p. 13). In joint productive activity settings, the members of a group are not sharply divided into novices and experts, but, rather, are a combination of people with different competencies that work together in a manner where an individual member will assist others in the group depending on his or her own areas of knowledge and skill (Tharp & Gallimore, 1998).

Similarly, the CUE research model theorizes that *critical point of intervention* is driven by social activity (Dowd & Bensimon, 2009). Therefore, the CUE approach uses social activities as a critical point of intervention for organizational change in colleges and universities.



*Figure 3.2.* Reflective Practice (Inquiry) as Driver of Racial and Ethnic Inequity in Postsecondary Education

As shown in Figure 3.2, the action research inquiry model is cyclical in that adaptive expertise is acquired through a social inquiry experience. The first part of the figure demonstrates the cycle of reflective practice and shows how practitioners examine their knowledge and beliefs. The social interaction creates a forum for practitioners to be open to “different perspectives and problem framing through data analysis” and allows for them to engage in experimentation and problem solving (Dowd & Bensimon, 2009, p. 6). Action research contextualizes the problem and is intended to support a broader range of professional actions and, therefore, of experiences, which are the source of adaptive expertise. Through the systematic use of observation and data analysis in this reflective inquiry cycle, untested assumptions can be tested in ways focused on problem-solving.

Experimentation is valuable because it opens up possibilities for new ways of seeing and acting. (Dowd & Bensimon, 2009, p. 6).

The tenets of practice theory and social learning theory assert that the cycle of inquiry creates a way for practitioners to examine their beliefs (such as deficit-minded beliefs) and, in this process, they can un-learn old modes of thinking and participate in learning activities that lead to new knowledge (Dowd & Bensimon, 2009, Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). In this study, the social intervention point occurs during the learning activity where practitioners as a group use CUE tools to “collect, observe, interpret, and make meaning of institutional data in new ways that ideally provide impetus for reflection, problem identification, experimentation, etc.” (Dowd & Bensimon, 2009, p. 13). It is difficult to definitively measure the impact of equity-based inquiry activities, but Figure 3.2 illustrates the logic model for the expected impact of this social activity when practitioners use knowledge gained through the cycle of inquiry to make changes to institutional structures and practices. If positive change occurs, practitioners will create environments that are more equitable. However, social learning is not the only point of impact on student outcomes. Figure 3.2 also illustrates state policies and institutional structures and practices also play a role in changing practitioner behavior, even if it is just as a reaction to stay in compliance with rules or mandates.

### **Developmental Evaluation**

According to Patton (2002), the best way to decide which type of evaluation to use is to be clear about the purpose of the study. Once the primary audience is established, researchers can make a specific design study to gather data and analyze

decisions that address the issues. Summative and formative are the traditional forms of evaluation. Summative evaluation encapsulates information to make judgments regarding programs or practices in order to decide whether they should be continued or not. It is used to determine a program's effectiveness. Formative evaluation asks questions that enable researchers to inform decision-makers about ways of improving effectiveness.

This study evaluates the effectiveness of CUE's tools in creating change of attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviors in practitioners, so the form of evaluation needs to be an on-going process. This allows researchers the opportunity to analyze for continuous improvement. Patton (2011) defines developmental evaluation as: the,

[The] processes and activities that support programs, projects, products, personnel and/or organizational development (usually the latter). The evaluator is part of a team whose members collaborate to conceptualize, design and test new approaches in a long-term, on-going process of continuous improvement, adaptation and intentional change. The evaluator's primary function in the team is to facilitate organizational discussions and enable data-based decision-making in the process. (p. 317)

Developmental evaluation is instrumental for social innovators who are trying to bring about change. In creating agents of change, there is a need to realize that change does not follow a linear path. There are dynamic interactions, unexpected, unanticipated divergences, and tipping points, and the traditional evaluation approaches do not fit these situations very well (Patton, 2011). Developmental evaluation tracks any emergent and changing realities using findings in real-time as well as adapting to complex dynamics

rather than trying to impose order and certainty into an uncertain world. Developmental evaluation is designed to nurture developmental, emergent, innovative and transformative processes. It tries to make sense of what emerges under conditions of complexity.

In trying to create change, it is necessary to move beyond just identifying the problem and finding a solution. That is called single-loop learning (Argyris & Schon, 1989). Developmental evaluation allows participants to dig deeper into the assumptions, policies, practices, values and system dynamics that led to the problem in the first place and intervene in ways that involve the modification of the underlying system relationships and functioning (Argyris & Schon, 1989; Patton, 2011). This process allows practitioners to examine the effects of their actions and become accountable by reflecting on important questions: *Are we walking the talk? Does it work? How do we know? What are we observing that is different, that is emerging?* Dowd and Bensimon (2009) posed further questions regarding intervention e: *Are these tools leading individuals to adopt equity-minded perspectives that will allow them to address the diverse needs of students? Does this work lead campuses to adopt equity-minded practices? Does it work in helping individuals and institutions become more effective in educating underrepresented students? Does it work in producing more equitable student outcomes?* While it does depend on the individuals and institutions that are involved, developmental evaluation allows assessment to be an ongoing process that builds organizational capacity to carry out innovative work.

Patton (2011) explained that organizations that become involved in developmental evaluation are usually more willing to ask these difficult questions and

identify their shortcomings and failures. Kruse (2001) explained that the development of continuous improvement planning that takes place in schools is a form of collaboration centered on student outcomes and that creating a culture of collaboration leads teachers to engage in problem-solving. Developmental evaluation is the process that measures and may encourage continuous improvement. In order to implement change, an organization incorporates ongoing assessment and a solid evaluation plan (Bensimon, Dowd, Daniel & Walden, 2010). Patton (2011) reiterated, “The concept of developmental evaluation isn’t a model. It is a relationship founded on a shared purpose: development” (p. 313).

### **Sample and Field Site**

The sample for this study and for the collective CUE developmental evaluation study (of which this study is one part) were recruited from among participants in CUE’s action research projects. The Monarch State University participants for this case study were five student services professionals and a faculty member. The inquiry team was comprised of individuals from the Diversity and Inclusion Initiative, University Housing, the Disability Resource Center, Multicultural Programs and Services, and the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry. To protect the confidentiality of participants, the racial and ethnic identities of participants are not provided.

Table 3.1

*Summary of Position, Focus, and Home Department of Leadership Team*

<b>Position</b>	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Home Department</b>
Student Services Professional	Student Affairs	Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives
Student Services Professional	Student Affairs	University Housing
Student Services Professional	Student Affairs	University Housing
Student Services Professional	Student Affairs	Disability Resource Center
Professor	STEM Faculty	Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry
Student Services Professional	Student Affairs	Multicultural Programs and Services

Table 3.2 outlines all of the field sites that were a part of this larger study and details the name of the institution, type of institution, and the tools used at each field site. Again, Monarch State University is just one of several field sites. Although one of the field sites in the collective study is engaged in a multi-year action research project with CUE, the remaining field sites were involved in shorter-term projects (in duration of one year or less) consisting of a series of planning meetings and workshops. The workshops were conducted by CUE under a variety of circumstances consistent with the Center's mission and typical practices. These shorter-term projects involved many of the aspects of action research, such as an integrated planning, inquiry, problem framing and solution

generation process, but they are best characterized as *design experiments* because of their shorter duration. In effect, they are not full-fledged action research projects, because the time span is not sufficient to support a complete cycle of inquiry.

Cobb et al. (2003) articulate that design experiments entail both “engineering” particular forms of learning and studying those forms of learning with the context, subject to test and revision (p. 9). In this study, CUE action researchers sought to “engineer” the environments where practitioners learn how to counter institutionalized racism and marginalizing practices in higher education. For Bannan-Ritland (2003), design experiments are at the front of research efforts constructing “persuasive narratives involving processes of iteration, feedback loops” (p.21)

Given the definitions provided by various scholars, design experiments can be summarized as having the following unique features. First, design experiments in education blend empirical educational research with the theory-driven design of learning environments (the Design-Based Research Collective, 2003, p.5). The second “crosscutting” feature is the highly interventionist nature of the design research (Cobb et al., 2003, p. 10). The goal is to explore the possibilities for improvement by bringing about new forms of learning in order to study them.

Third, design experiments are characterized by iterative design (Bannan-Ritland, 2003; Cobb et al., 2003; The Design-Based Research Collective, 2003). This iterative design process features continuous cycles of design, enactment, analysis, and redesign. The fourth feature of design experimentation emphasizes focus on authentic settings and interactions that refine understanding of the learning issues involved (The Design-Based

Research Collective, 2003, p.5). Finally, in design experiments, practitioners and researchers “work together to produce meaningful change in contexts of practice” (The Design-Based Research Collective, 2003, p. 6). The size of the sample and research team as well as researchers’ expertise may vary depending on the purpose and the type of the experiment (Cobb et al., 2003). Table 3.2 outlines the fields sites, type of institutions and tools CUE used at each particular site in the collective study.

Table 3.2

*Field Sites of the CUE Developmental Evaluation Study*

<b>Campus Pseudonym</b>	<b>Type of institution</b>	<b>CUE Tools Used</b>
Amarillo Community College	Community College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defining Equity CUE Module</li> <li>• Benchmarking Equity and Student Success Tool (BESST)</li> </ul>
Dynamic Community College	Community College (Hispanic Serving Institution)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CUE Modules</li> <li>• Benchmarking Equity and Student Success Tool (BESST);</li> <li>• Syllabus Reflection Protocol</li> </ul>
Las Flores Community College	Community College (Hispanic Serving Institution)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benchmarking Equity and Student Success Tool (BESST)</li> </ul>
Monarch State University (MSU)	Selective Public Institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benchmarking Equity and Student Success Tool (BESST);</li> <li>• Action Planning Tool</li> <li>• Document Analysis Protocol</li> <li>• The Racism Cartoon</li> <li>• “Who helped you through college”</li> <li>• Microaggressions informational handout</li> </ul>

This developmental evaluation aimed to contribute to the body of knowledge about the ways participation in action research (1) provides a forum for reflection of

practitioners, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors regarding historically underrepresented students and (2) influences subsequent attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. Participants in this action research project engaged in the cycle of inquiry as shown in figure 3.2 to further understand how to address issues of equity.

The research questions outlined in Table 3.3 serve as general guidelines for the collective study. This study focused on three research questions:

1. What are the characteristics of equity oriented artifacts?
2. What changes were observed or reported by respondents in ways associated with CUE tools and activities?
3. What environmental factors mediate changes or lack of changes in practitioner's social interactions, behaviors, and practices?

The equity oriented cultural artifacts that were used and developed in this design experiment include the Benchmarking Equity and Student Success Tool (BESST). The Document Analysis Self-Assessment for Culturally Inclusive Practices, the "Who Helped You in College?" exercise, the Racism Cartoon, and the Racial Microaggressions Informational Handout.

The Center for Urban Education's Document Analysis Self-Assessment for Culturally Inclusive Practices was designed to help higher education practitioners conduct a self-assessment of culturally inclusive practices to assist underrepresented students, particularly Latino and African Americans.

## Data Collection

**Participant Recruitment.** All participants in this study were provided with a letter that outlined the study's ethical commitments for interactions with human subjects (Appendix A). The letter provides an overview of the study and explains that all data collected from the participants will be treated confidentially and anonymously.

Two professors from Monarch State University initially recruited study participants in Fall 2010, and both served as inquiry project co-facilitators. The composition of the other team members included deans, faculty, student services personnel, and college of education graduate students. Departments and colleges represented at the planning meetings were:

- School of Education
- College of Science and Math
- College of Liberal Arts
- College of Engineering
- Admissions and Recruitment
- Academic Success Office
- Office of Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives

After initial planning meetings, four more leaders were added to the leadership team.

Table 3.3 provides a summary of the inquiry leadership team members at Monarch State University.

## Research Questions

Table 3.3 outlines the research questions for this case study and broader sub questions of the collective research study. Monarch State University was one of several campuses selected as part of a larger study that took place across multiple campuses in California. The larger sample included California Community Colleges and one state university. The sample size for this case study was six respondents, but the larger data set available through the collective study included approximately 100 respondents. Participants were observed and interviewed across multiple points on interactions.

Table 3.3

### *Research Questions and Sub Questions of the Collective Research Study*

<b>Research Questions</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the characteristics of equity oriented artifacts?</li> <li>2. What changes were observed or reported by respondents in ways associated with CUE tools and activities?</li> <li>3. What environmental factors mediate changes or lack of changes in practitioner's social interactions, behaviors, and practices?</li> </ol>
<b>Sub-Questions</b>

- a. What are practitioners' attitudes towards action inquiry as a strategy for equity-oriented organizational change?
- b. What beliefs do practitioners hold about racial and ethnic equity?
- c. What are practitioners' beliefs about action inquiry for the purposes of equity-oriented organizational change?
- d. How do practitioners behave in social interactions where attention is given to racial and ethnic inequities?
- e. What artifacts (language, media, tools) mediate attention to racial and ethnic inequities?
- f. What social interactions (roles, rules/norms, communities, division of labor, power relations, racial relations, ethnic relations) mediate attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors related to racial and ethnic inequities?
- g. What environmental factors mediate social interactions, behaviors, and educational practices related to racial and ethnic inequities?

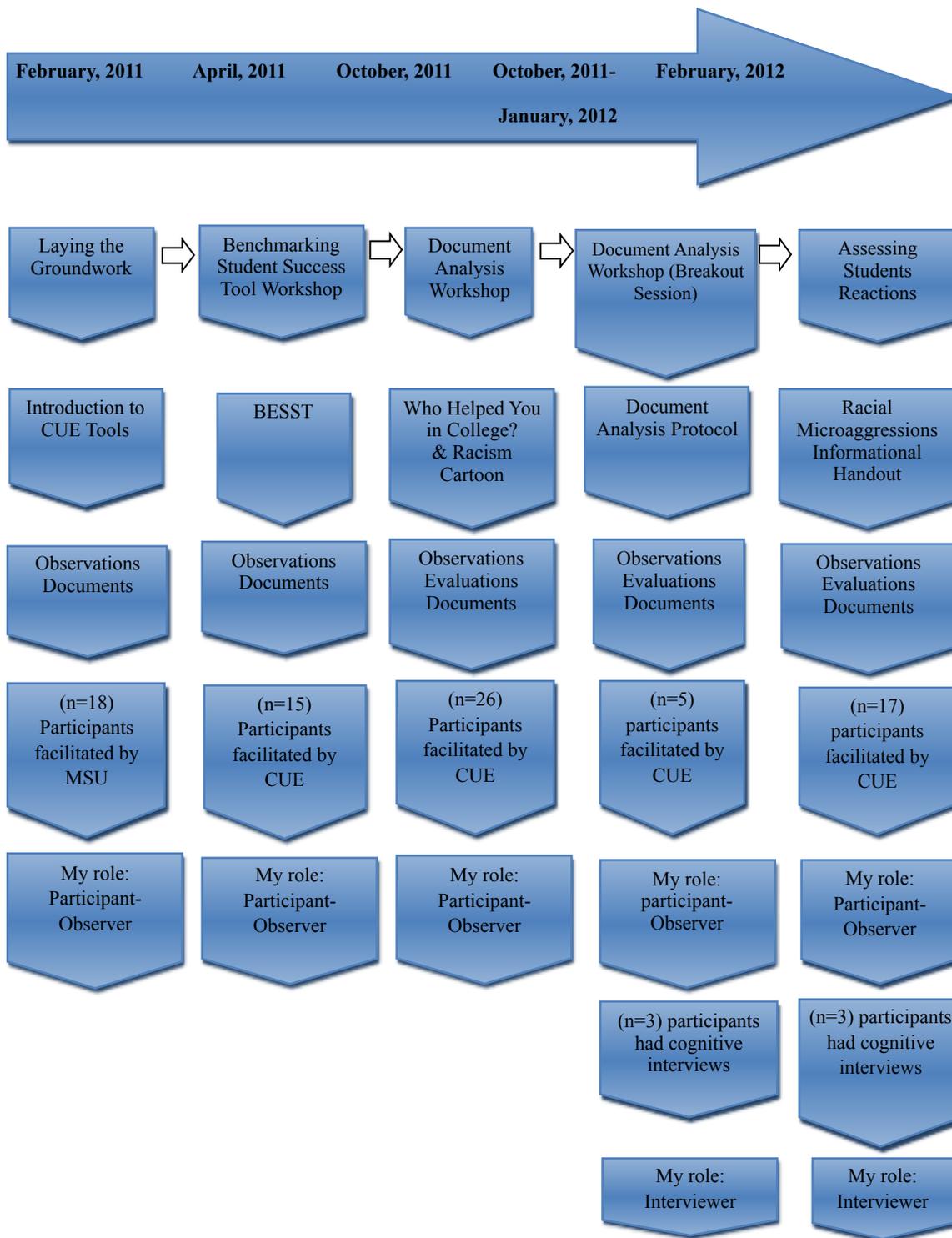
### **Study Timeline**

This developmental action research project was conducted over a twelve month period, beginning in February of 2011 and concluding in February of 2012. The study was designed to evaluate the impact of CUE's tools and action research process on practitioners' attitudes, beliefs and practices. One of the objectives was to further develop the capacity of CUE's tools to increase racial and ethnic equity for underrepresented groups in higher education. Figure 3.3 provides the timeline for this project.

Figure 3.3, MSU Field Site Timeline, Activity Settings, and Data Collection is separated into five columns and multilayered rows that include the date, the activity that occurred, the CUE tools used in each activity setting, the data collected, the number of participants, the facilitator, and the researcher's role in the activity settings. The activity

settings included the Laying the Groundwork workshop (February 2011), Benchmarking Equity and Student Success Tool workshop (April 2011), the Document Analysis workshop (October 2011), and the Assessing Students Reactions Webinar (February 2012). The Document Analysis workshop and the Assessing Students Reactions Webinar were followed by cognitive interviews and served as the primary activity settings for my data collection. More detailed descriptions of the activity settings are provided in chapter four.

As shown in figure 3.3, data collection occurred through observations, evaluations, documents, and cognitive interviews. The number of participants varied in each workshop, and most events were facilitated by CUE, with the exception of the initial meeting. The researcher primarily served as a participant-observer and interviewer.



*Figure 3.3.* MSU Field Site, Timeline, Activity Settings, and Data Collection

### **Data Collection Methods and Instruments**

The following describes the data collection methods that were used for this study. Table 3.4 illustrates the variety of data that were collected and how the different forms of data provided evidence to answer the research questions. The first column of Table 3.4 outlines the data sources, which fall into five categories: (a) observations; (b) evaluation questionnaires; (c) cognitive interviews; (d) documents; (e) individual interviews; and (f) emails. The second and third columns illustrate the type of data represented by each source and the timeline in which it was collected. The majority of the data was collected in the summer and fall of 2011, with follow-up activities occurring in late Fall 2011 and Spring 2012. The fourth column in Table 3.4 explains how the data collected from the various sources were summarized. Most data, with the exception of observations, were summarized using descriptive text, categorical summaries, and/or tabular summaries. Observational data were subjected to deductive and thematic analysis.

Table 3.4

*Summary of Data Collection Methods*

<b>Data Source</b>	<b>Data Represents</b>	<b>When Data Were Collected</b>	<b>How Data Were Summarized</b>
Documents	Policies Discourse Espoused beliefs Environmental factors	Throughout study (Summer/Fall 2011, Spring 2012)	Descriptive text
Observations in activity settings (“workshops”)	Behaviors Social interactions Norms Discourse Knowledge	During workshop (Summer/Fall 2011)	Deductive and thematic analysis;
Workshop evaluation form	Attitudes Beliefs Practices (self-reported)	Immediately after workshop (Summer/Fall 2011)	Descriptive text
Post-workshop cognitive interview with activity setting participants	Attitudes Beliefs Practices (self-reported) Knowledge	2 weeks after workshop (Summer/Fall 2011)	Categorical summaries; Summary tables and text
Individual interviews with activity setting participants	Practices Policies Behaviors (self-reported) Behavioral changes over time (self-reported) Knowledge	Following data collection; During interpretation and thematic analysis (Fall 2011/Spring 2012)	Informs revision of descriptive text for factual accuracy
Focus group with activity setting participants	Changes in practices (self-reported) Environmental factors Social interactions Norms Discourse Changes in discourse	2 to 3 months following workshop (Fall 2011/Spring 2012)	Descriptive text and thematic summaries

Coded data was summarized relative to the expectation that CUE action research has an impact on practitioner attitudes/beliefs, behaviors, and practices. The workshops, cognitive interviews, observations, and individual interviews facilitated by CUE provided practitioners at Monarch with both the opportunity and the resources to use CUE's tools. As these tools are designed to promote equity, the desired outcome is to increase equitable outcomes for racial and ethnic groups. In this case study, code categories such as attitudes/beliefs were summarized to investigate if CUE's tools had an impact on practitioner attitudes/beliefs, behaviors, and practices in ways expected to positively affect equity in racial and ethnic outcomes.

**Document Collection.** Documents are a rich source of cultural and historical data of institutions and programs (Patton 2010; Stringer, 2007). Documents provide the researcher with information that cannot be observed and can “reveal things that have taken place before the evaluation began” (Patton, 2001, p. 293). Documents allow a researcher a better sense of processes and culture not readily evident in traditional fieldwork and may be able to provide information to guide the future inquiry paths that can be pursued later through direct observation and interviewing (Patton, 2002). The document data collected for this study included meeting notes, institutional reports or newsletters, electronic communications, website information, syllabi, admissions and student services brochures or handouts, and other organizational literature. One example of a document that was reviewed was the meeting notes from a diversity initiative council meeting. Review of these meeting notes allows for a deeper understanding of culture, context, and institutional goals or decisions that the researcher would not otherwise be

privity to (Patton, 2002). Other sample documents like syllabi were analyzed in terms of language used and their analysis served as a platform for self-evaluation and self-reflection during inquiry activities.

**Observations.** Observations are an important feature of this study and were used to record interactions of the study team members and research group. Observational data provides the researcher with a more comprehensive understanding of the interactions between study team members in a natural setting (Patton, 2002). Observations were collected using the Observational Data Collection Template protocol (Appendix C) developed by CUE. In accordance with the protocol, the observational notes included detailed descriptions of Site, Mood, “Task” Performance, Social Context, Environmental Constraints and Reflections. Importantly, observations regarding “Task” Performance allow for a way to capture ways in which joint productive activity in the form of social interaction, mutually negotiated values and goals, and actions bring about learning and change in the individuals involved (Dowd & Bensimon, 2009; Tharp & Gallimore, 1998). Patton (2002) notes that observation allows the researcher to understand more fully the program of study “to an extent not entirely possible using only the insights of others obtained through interviews” (p. 23). Observations occurred at all meetings and workshops where Monarch State University faculty and administrators were engaged as practitioner-researchers in inquiry activities. In these settings, the group is referred to as an *inquiry team* (Bensimon, Harris III, Rueda, 2007). Observations allowed the research team to take descriptive field notes to observe patterns of behavior and culture through the analysis of verbal and non-verbal cues.

**Evaluation Questionnaires.** At the end of an inquiry activity, participants were given an evaluation questionnaire to complete (Appendix B). The evaluation questionnaires used throughout the study were designed by CUE. The questionnaires ask respondents to answer questions based on their reactions, beliefs, and experiences during an activity setting as well as intended behaviors afterwards. Questionnaires are a way to capture a respondent's thoughts and feelings at a specific, static moment in time (Patton, 2002). While the opinions of participants about their experiences in inquiry activities are important, this dissertation study also focused on studying more in depth the patterns of change in thoughts and beliefs over a period of time. Therefore, questionnaires also serve as the reference point for the cognitive interviews that were conducted.

**Cognitive Interviews.** Cognitive interviews are a method of data collection that developers of surveys can use to assess the transfer of information. The Center developed evaluative surveys and questionnaires to improve the validity of their conclusions about their effectiveness and impact in carrying out action research. This process is an example of conducting *3rd person* research, as denoted in Figure 3.1. The cognitive interview is a way to “study the manner in which targeted audiences understand, mentally process and respond to materials we present” (Willis, 2005, p. 3). The cognitive interviews for this study prompted participants to think aloud as they answered evaluation questionnaire items. Traditional surveys where respondents answer questions independently can produce response errors that occur for any number of reasons including questions’ being difficult to understand, misinterpretation of scales, and respondents’ not remembering

information presented to them. The cognitive interview was used to understand how these errors can occur.

On a conceptual level, the data from cognitive interviews allowed CUE researchers to assess if the evaluation questionnaire measured what they wanted to measure in the ways they wished to measure it. It is difficult to assess practitioner beliefs and experiences if evaluation questionnaire questions are not clear. The cognitive interviews inform researchers if all responses accurately represent the learning outcomes the survey designers intended (Ouimet, Bunnage, Carini, Kuh, & Kennedy, 2004; Willis, 2005). Cognitive interviews can help with identifying survey items' logistical problems such as wording and flow, but, on an analytical scale, it can also assess the clarity in the presentation of information, practitioner beliefs, and a respondents' awareness of their cognitive frames.

Using CUE developed Cognitive Interview protocols (Appendix D), the research team interviewed members of the inquiry team. In this respect, the cognitive interviews assisted CUE with future correlation analyses, based on standardized question items, to assess the impact of CUE action research projects.

**Individual Interviews.** Another way of obtaining data was through individual interviews. Individual interviews gave participants a way to describe their experience and present their perspectives. An individual interview “provides all participants with extended opportunities to explore and express their experience of the acts, activities, events, and issues related to the problem investigated” (Stringer, 2007, p. 58). They enable the observations of group dynamics as related to the research purpose. For

example, they can illuminate understanding as to how inquiry team members develop concepts and how those are mediated by discussions with peers and by the use of artifacts. Individual interviews allowed the researcher to obtain a variety of perspectives (separate from the problem solving experience of the inquiry team) and also served as another method to increase confidence in previously collected data (Patton, 2002). Unlike one on one interviews, participants were able to hear what others have to say and the data collected is “in a social context where people can consider their own views in context of the views of others” (Patton, 2002, P. 386). Individual interviews focused on expanding the understanding of practitioners’ realized or intended changes in beliefs, behaviors, and/or practices. Individual interviews took place at the culmination of the study and were guided by questions from initial evaluation questionnaires, observations, and cognitive interviews.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

During Spring 2011, the main focus of the project was the testing and development of instruments for data collection during workshops and for cognitive interviews. The researcher was introduced to the project team listed in Table 3.3 as a graduate student researcher and the researcher’s presence at planning meetings was as a participant observer. The majority of the Spring 2011 semester was spent gaining familiarity with action research procedures at CUE workshops.

The months of Summer and Fall 2011 were used to recruit individual participants for this study (Appendix A). The participants in the collective CUE developmental evaluation study played a variety of roles at their institutions, including administration,

faculty, admissions personnel, and student services personnel. The participants in this study were primarily student services personnel from various departments including University Housing, Disability Resource Center, and Multicultural Programs and Services and a faculty member from the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry. Data was collected during activity settings, inquiry teams meetings, and CUE workshops which took place during a twelve month period from February 2011 through February 2012.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Figure 3.2 illustrates the learning and change model informing CUE's action research methods. However, the change model is also informed by the theoretical frameworks described in Chapter 2, including practice theory and cultural historical activity theory (CHAT). Practice theory calls attention to a cycle of inquiry among individual practitioners as well as the role of social interactions in shaping opportunities for practitioner learning and experimentation with new educational practices. Other inquiry studies often take a constructivist, interpretive approach to research. These studies focus on meaning-making, examining interactions, and enriching our understanding of social situations. They are rich with descriptions and provide an understanding of the social realities of individuals and social context (Phillips, Bain, McNaught, Rice & Tripp, 2000).

Kruse and Louis (1997), for example, conducted several constructivist, interpretive studies that dealt with issues that teachers and administrators encounter in the K-12 education system. Kruse and Louis (1997) examined interdisciplinary teacher

teaming to investigate if teaming produces opportunities for a professional community to form. They found that, while teaming was beneficial for those members within a team, teams often operated separately, and members formed close bonds with individuals on their teams but often worked in isolation from other teams.

In another study, Kruse and Louis (1997) investigated the “reflective thoughts of teachers,” examining how teachers use reflection to inform practice. In another constructive interpretive study, Stillman (2011) examined “factors that support equity-minded teachers to navigate accountability-driven language arts reform, barriers that impede teachers from serving marginalized students, particularly, English language learners, and how particular environmental factors mediate teachers responses to accountability pressures”(p. 133). These studies have several commonalities that are reflective of constructivist, interpretive paradigms. While constructivist-interpretive studies can help bring organizational issues to the forefront, they tend not to address areas which need change (Phillips et al., 2000). Constructivist-interpretive studies do not provide practitioners with direct opportunities for learning or the opportunity to experiment with new educational practices.

This study differs from these constructive studies of inquiry. This study is a mixed methods developmental evaluation study. While some of the methods for conducting research such as interviews and observations are the same, there are several dissimilarities in the purposes and methods in this study compared to the studies conducted by Kruse and Louis (1997), and Stillman (2011). The purpose of this study was to understand an organizational learning and change process as catalyzed through

action research. The methodologies used to employ these studies also differ. In traditional studies, researchers often act as outsiders studying the participants. In this case, CUE researchers simultaneously served as researchers and collaboratively worked with participants by providing tools developed by CUE to facilitate the action research process. In traditional studies, researchers generally study individuals, groups or phenomena. Instead, this study required that participants also serve as researchers into their own practices. The participants worked collaboratively with CUE facilitators to develop the tools necessary for organizational learning and change and for increasing institutional effectiveness. This process allowed for an inquiry process to occur, giving practitioners the opportunity to take a deeper look at institutional practices and policies that could be hindering institutional change.

Cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) calls attention to the role of social interaction and cultural artifacts in shaping educational practices. Chat emphasizes the influence that history has on organizations. Using CHAT as a framework allows CUE researchers and practitioners at the focal institution to examine how the institutions' culture and history may be impeding organizational change. Culture can often be invisible. Bess and Dee (2008) assert that uncovering cultural assumptions requires a joint effort between insiders and outsiders. In this case, the joint effort involved practitioners at Monarch State University and CUE researchers (p. 112). Unlike the studies conducted by Kruse and Louis (1997) and Stillman (2011) this study examined the organization's past to understand its present situation.

**Coding.** Data analysis took place once data had been collected from all sources. The data were used to provide a better understanding of the structures that hinder or promote organizational learning and change. Codes for thematic coding were selected based on prior CUE evaluation studies. Data analysis involved the generation of deductive and inductive themes. Deductive themes are pre-determined and are often quantitative. Inductive codes are qualitative and were developed based on the data collected. Inductive codes were generated after the data were examined to identify typical responses and range/variation in the meaning of the responses. The deductive codes for data analysis in this study included Attitudes/beliefs; Knowledge; and Social Interactions in activity settings, including non-CUE related mediating artifacts, language, roles, rules/norms, community and division of labor. Reflection; Problem Identification; Experimentation/Problem Solving and Action Experience were also used to analyze the impact of CUE's tools.

***Attitudes/Beliefs.*** In this study, attitudes/beliefs were examined using Ajzen and Fishbein's (1975) expectancy-value model. From this framework, attitudes are developed from the beliefs individuals hold about an object or stimuli. Together, attitudes and beliefs influence behaviors and outcomes (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1975). Data regarding attitudes/beliefs were collected through observation of activity settings and through the verbal and non-verbal language used during activity settings.

***Knowledge.*** One of the tenets of CUE's work is to assist practitioners in developing the knowledge needed to increase equity for students of color. It is not that practitioners do not want to increase the student success outcomes of students of color. It

is possible that they lack the knowledge necessary to increase outcomes for racial and ethnic groups. Knowledge is constructed through collaborative and “productive activities” (Bensimon & Dowd, 2009). The tools developed by CUE assisted practitioners at Monarch to facilitate inquiry and developing new knowledge.

***Social Interaction.*** Social Interactions refer to how people participate or choose not to participate and how they interact with others. Social interaction occurs at three levels; the personal plane, the interpersonal plane, and the community/ institutional plane (Nasir & Hand, 2006, as cited in Rogoff, 1995). Nasir and Hand (2006) stated:

The personal plane includes individual cognition, emotion, behaviors, values and beliefs. The interpersonal plane involves communication, role performances, dialogue, cooperation, conflict, assistance, and interaction. The third plane, community/institutional involves, having a shared history, language, rules, values, beliefs and identities.” (p.459)

All of these concepts were included to analyze social interactions in this study.

***Reflection.*** Reflection is a thought process that occurs when practitioners examine their practices. Some argue that reflection is necessary for individuals to become more skillful (Nasir and Hand, 2006), and it is also needed for organizational learning and change (Bensimon & Dowd, 2009).

***Problem Identification.*** Problem identification occurs when practitioners identify an issue that needs to be addressed at their institution.

***Experimentation/Problem Solving.*** Experimentation/Problem Solving is when practitioners began developing solutions to address current issues at their institution.

**Action Experience.** Action Experience takes place when participants can relate their own experiences directly or indirectly to the problem at hand.

**Evaluation questionnaire data.** The CUE evaluation questionnaire asks respondents to use a four point Likert scale to provide feedback on the workshops. The basic descriptive statistics were collected from the evaluation questionnaires. The data was non-identifiable, pooled, site- and activity-specific respondent experiences and impact (strength, direction, mode, range) obtained from a collaborating researcher.

### **Standards of Review**

**Credibility.** Credibility of research process, defined as “the plausibility and integrity of the study,” is a fundamental issue in action research (Stringer, 2007, p. 57). Credibility of action research is based on the standard of acceptance of the results of the study by users in the setting and is measured by their willingness to act on those results, “thereby risking their welfare on the “validity” of their ideas and the degree to which the outcomes meet their expectations” (Greenwood & Levin, 2005, p. 54). It means that knowledge co-generated by researchers and local stakeholders is considered credible and valid if it gives rise to actions on changes in practices or policies (Greenwood & Levin, 2005).

The users of the present study are two: CUE and practitioners in the field setting. As mentioned previously, the study informs CUE of the development of evaluation questionnaires and of enhancement of its efficacy in conducting action research. It also informs Monarch State University practitioners in the creation of self-assessment activities using action inquiry to initiate the change process for more equitable outcomes.

The potential audiences who may be interested in the credibility of the present study include other action researchers and CUE action researchers, higher education assessment professionals at similar and different institutions, and higher education accountability policy makers. To meet the expectations of those audiences, the study established credibility by way of four strategies that are proposed by Stringer (2007): data triangulation, referential adequacy, researcher triangulation and debriefing.

First, the credibility of the study was enhanced by using data triangulation incorporating a range of sources of information available over time. The observations of inquiry team members during the workshops were the primary source of data. This study relied on evaluation questionnaires, cognitive interviews, document analysis, and data from member check interviews. The inclusion of perspectives from different sources “enables the inquirer to clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomena are being perceived” (Stringer, 2007, p. 58).

Referential adequacy was another technique employed to amplify credibility of the study. Referential adequacy, proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1986), refers to “an activity that makes possible checking preliminary findings and interpretations against archived “raw data” (p. 301). In regard to referential adequacy, Stringer (2007) states that, in action research, concepts and ideas within the study should reflect the experiences and perspectives of participating parties and results should be drawn on their terminology and language. To ensure that the study reflects the perspectives of participants, the researcher identified a portion of data to be archived (not analyzed) and conducted

analysis on the remaining data to develop preliminary findings. The archived data was later analyzed as a way to test the validity of the findings.

Next, peers and CUE researchers, who served as facilitators, were additional sources of insight in making sense of potential inconsistencies in data. Researcher triangulation - discussions of diverse interpretations and perspectives were utilized in a larger research team to establish credibility. In addition, individual interviews were conducted to gain a better sense of participant/researchers' attitudes and beliefs. Thus, peers and researchers questioned, challenged, and supported interpretation of the data. Finally, the research team shared results with inquiry team participants, welcoming their feedback and reactions.

**Transferability.** In general, action inquiry outcomes are applicable only to the particular groups and contexts that were part of the study (Stringer, 2007). However, Stringer argued that it is not to say that nothing can be generalized to others. In order to enhance transferability of research, he suggested reporting "detailed descriptions of the context, activities, and events" (p. 59) as part of the research outcomes. Greenwood and Levin (2005) framed transferability in action research as "necessitating a process of reflective action rather as being based on structures of rule-based interpretations" (p. 55). They suggested that the key to transferring context bound knowledge to a different setting is to understand contextual conditions under which knowledge was created and those of a new setting.

Given both perspectives, thick descriptions of the action research processes and tools, the setting itself, and the social interactions provided in the present study allow its

audiences mentioned above to infer relevance for their own practice settings. For example, the outcomes of this study may be transferable to other public universities that are interested in improving their instructional and administrative practices to better serve students from racial and ethnic groups. It is important to understand, however, that the motivational intent of practitioners to adopt knowledge generated in the study were shaped by their beliefs about the legitimacy of action inquiry activities and their perceptions of self-efficacy and collective efficacy to carry out similar projects.

**Dependability and Confirmability.** According to Stringer (2007), “dependability focuses on the extent to which people can trust that all measures required of a systematic research process have been followed” (p. 59). Dependability of the study was strong because detailed descriptions of all research procedures were presented.

Confirmability, or “ability to confirm that the procedures described actually took place” (Stringer, 2007, p. 59), was established through an audit trail. It included the data collected, field notes, instruments, tools, and other artifacts related to the study. As Kane and colleagues (2002) asserted:

An audit trail provides the reader with evidence of trustworthiness in that she or he can start with the raw data and continue along the trail to determine for her- or himself if, in fact, the trail leads to the outcomes claimed by the researcher. (p. 199)

The items above and the analysis of the inquiry project provided an audit trail, which made them easily accessible for systematic review of the evidence to ensure that the study is trustworthy.

## **Limitations**

Stringer (2007) noted “human inquiry, like any other human activity, is both, complex and always incomplete” (p. 179). This study may have several limitations arising from the realities of investigation. First, the sample for this study was small and consisted of only six MSU practitioners, five student services professionals and a faculty member. Such a small sample may not be representative of the institution as a whole. Second, to protect the identities of participants in the study, findings are reported as race neutral. Reporting the findings as race neutral provides an additional limitation because it does not allow for insights into the racialized experiences of the participants of color as they relate to institutional norms. Third, the evaluation questionnaires data used in the study represent self-reported beliefs, attitudes, and practices, which may be inaccurate. Direct observations of the practitioners and their practices in the context of their student services offices or their classrooms would provide richer data for triangulation. In addition, data was not collected from students, and their experiences also could have suggested evidence about real changes in the practitioner’s practice.

Fourth, some cognitive interviews were done by telephone, which is not quite as efficient due to the lack of non-verbal cues. Fifth, the short duration of the study is another limitation because the inquiry cycle was not completed in this study. Finally, the study was conducted under the guidance and recommendations of a chair who holds a leadership position in CUE. As a result, it could lack researcher independence and conflict of interest.

## **Data Reporting**

Data was reported from observations, cognitive interviews, and individual interviews, as shown in Table 3.4. Observational data reports included descriptions of the activity settings and of the CUE tools. Activity settings were in the form of CUE led meetings, inquiry team meetings, and breakout team meetings. The Center for Urban Education's tools included the BESST and the Document Analysis Self-Assessment for Culturally Inclusive tool. Descriptive text, tabular summaries based on categorical data were used to conduct deductive and thematic analysis. Table 3.5 illustrates code categories from Table 3.4 with examples of data that the codes represent.

Table 3.5

*Deductive Data Analysis Codes*

<b>Code Category</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Attitudes/ Beliefs (A/B)	“Success is entirely possible”
Knowledge (K)	“We already know all of this (low success/ transfer)...we’ve known this for three years.”
Social Interaction (SI)	“Your questions are so great!”
Reflection (R)	“What are we doing wrong in the classroom to help these students?”
Problem Identification (PI)	“We haven’t paid attention to the first generation students.”
Experimentation/ Problem Solving (EXP)	“This is nosebleed information...what I want to focus on is the SLO.”
Action(Inaction)/ Experience (A/ E)	“It’s really time to have a cautious conversation...we’re missing those conversations.”
Other (not coded above)	

**Summary**

In summarizing, participants for the activity settings were chosen through sampling. Purposeful sampling is significant when selecting information-rich cases that will illuminate the questions under study (Patton, 2002). The workshops and various other activity settings were designed as joint ventures that allowed the practitioners to interact and collaborate on issues including equity (Moll, 2000; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). These settings have become the cultural devices for thinking and learning (Moll,

2000) in which teaching and assisted performances occur (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). The goals of the activity setting direct the action and collaborative interaction towards developing a structure that encourages a common understanding of equity-mindedness.

Dowd (2005) explained that activities that facilitate a culture of inquiry, characterized by professionals who “identify and address problems through purposeful analysis of data about student learning and progress,” allow faculty members to gather, analyze, discuss, and reflect on data disaggregated by race and ethnicity. Various workshops were held at the participating institution featuring CUE’s tools, such as the BESST Workshop, the Document Analysis Self-Assessment for Culturally Inclusive Practices, and others. The BESST Workshop allows participants to become practitioner-researchers who, in turn, become experts on the culture and climate of their institution. Analyzing the disaggregated data permits the practitioners to see a snapshot of their school. The interactive tool is able to show, with a few clicks of the mouse, that changes in one place may have great effect on student outcomes.

The Document Analysis Self-Assessment for Culturally Inclusive Practices is a protocol designed by CUE for faculty to analyze their syllabus or other documents given to their students. The Center for Urban Education’s researchers created tools that call attention to equity-based indicators of effective practice in providing course content on a syllabus (Bensimon, Dowd, Daniels & Walden, 2010). Students may understand the language differently than was intended by the instructor. Since language is the cultural artifact that creates meaning, it is necessary to clarify the information being presented. Other document analysis tools may be used as well.

The data for this study was collected from triangulation of observation notes taken from the workshops or other activity settings, document analysis and cognitive interviews. Observation protocols enabled attention to be paid to the site, including the room, the set-up, the climate and culture of the participants. Cognitive interviews were also used to gather information that may give clarification to information that has been interpreted differently. This procedure offers much more insight into attitudes and beliefs as the practitioners are able to share their opinions or perceptions on the topic, thereby addressing any of the working hypotheses.

Three goals of CUE's work were under investigation throughout the activity settings, observations, exercises and interviews. These are: (1) when practitioners are engaged in activity settings using CUE's tools, their attitudes and beliefs will be challenged and influenced towards equity-mindedness; (2) participating in action inquiry and reflection will influence a willingness in behavioral changes; (3) the practitioners, who have become experts at their institution, will become agents of change regarding equity in policies and procedures at their institution.

Observation notes collected at workshops and various activity settings were analyzed and coded, as multiple observations allow participants to model various attitudes, moods, comments and behaviors. Data analysis code sheets were used to help to assign codes to the observations. At the end of each activity setting, an analytical memo section summarizes the overall feel of the meeting. Notations that stood out may be placed here for quick reference at a later date (Table 3.5). The interviews were analyzed and coded for developing, evolving or emerging trends and patterns. The codes

were analyzed and constructed into themes that reflect on aspects of the research questions and hypotheses.

The triangulation of observations, document analysis and cognitive interviews is significant to the credibility and validation of the study. These methods, especially when combined, help researchers to observe the attitudes and beliefs of the practitioners and measure any changes through this process. Developmental evaluation was used to measure these changes. It also enabled researchers to document the actions that are engaged in, the short-term results and consequences of these actions, as well as identify any emergent outcomes or processes that arise (Patton, 2010). Emphasis on this change is instrumental because beliefs are important drivers of behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2010; Patton 2011). The activity settings and practitioner-researchers, along with CUE's tools are the cultural hearth of a new equity framework for educational change (Gutierrez, 2006). The findings of this study are not designed to be used as generalizations due to the nature of action research and to focusing on a specific problem concerning people and the organization (Patton, 2002). However, this study contributed to the understanding of how CUE's tools enable practitioners to assess their practices, to think about changing their practices to better serve historically underrepresented students and to advocate for changes towards equity-mindedness in policies and procedures at their institution.

## Chapter Four: Findings

This study was aimed at understanding an organizational learning and change process facilitated through action research. Chapter four presents the results of this action research project and evaluates the impact of CUE's tools and action research processes on the ways in which practitioners' beliefs, expectations, and practices are changed by engaging in participatory action research facilitated by CUE. The study investigated the potential of CUE's tools to bring about organizational learning and change to increase equity in higher education for historically underrepresented students, in this case at the field site of Monarch State University.

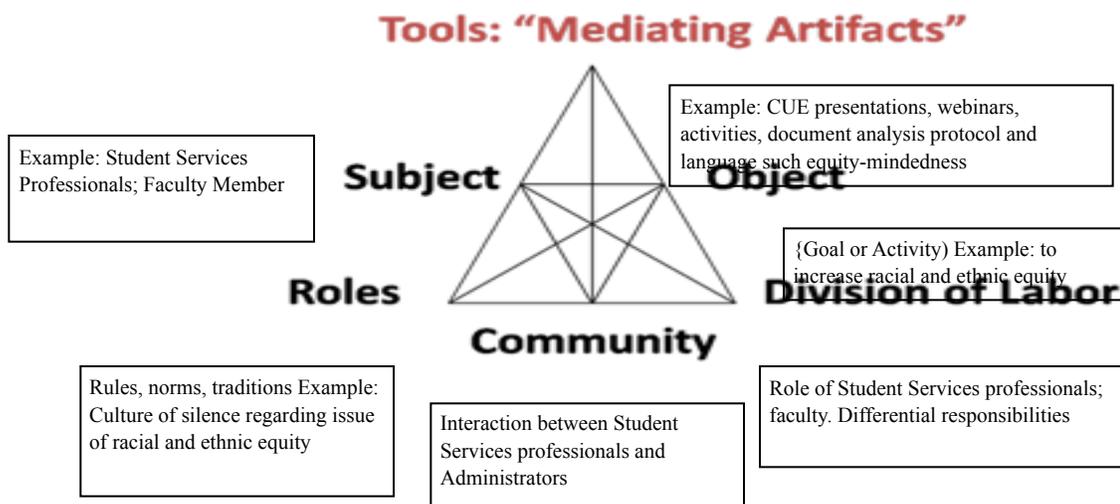
There were several key findings of this study. The first findings relate to the ways practitioners in the study interact with the particular characteristics of equity-oriented cultural artifacts that aim to remediate change among practitioners. The design of the project provided practitioners with the opportunity to engage in situated learning activities related to racial-ethnic equity. The process promoted reflection and social interaction through action inquiry activities. Action inquiry activities included tools such as the BESST and the Document Analysis Self-Assessment for Culturally Inclusive Practices. The analysis of equity oriented cultural artifacts in this study provided particular insight into the research question, *what are the characteristics of equity oriented cultural artifacts*. The equity-oriented cultural artifacts included workshops, presentations, webinars, equity oriented tools, and equity-minded language. These artifacts were used to facilitate discussions, activities, and institutional self-assessment.

The second finding suggests that, when MSU practitioners engaged in social interactions surrounding racial and ethnic equity facilitated by CUE, they were more comfortable discussing racial and ethnic issues with their colleagues. While there was a positive change in the level of comfort, respondents did not report changes in institutional behaviors and practices. These findings answer the research question *what changes were observed or reported by respondents in ways associated with CUE's tools and activities*.

Although participants indicated a higher level of comfort discussing racial and ethnic issues when facilitated by CUE, respondents reported high levels of discomfort and a lack of support from institutional leadership. Examining institutional norms and practices related to racial and ethnic equity addresses the third research question, *what environmental factors mediate changes or a lack of change in practitioners social interactions, behaviors, and practices*. Data collected showed that practitioners at MSU believed that there was a risk associated with addressing equity issues on their campus. This perceived norm served as a barrier to change for Monarch practitioners.

This chapter provides a description of the institutional context as it relates to diversity as well as descriptions of CUE's equity oriented tools and activity settings. These settings include planning meetings, workshops, and webinars designed to increase equity for underrepresented students in higher education. Then, several themes that emerged are discussed and analyzed using theories from the Reasoned Action Model and Practice Theory. These findings offer insight into the challenges to increasing racial and ethnic equity at Monarch State University.

The findings are summarized relative to the expectation that CUE tools and action research processes have an impact on practitioner attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and practices. According to Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior, behaviors are influenced by intentions, attitudes, beliefs, and by a person's perceived control in performing the desired outcome. This theory is of significance to this study because MSU practitioners did not believe that they had the power to positively influence racial and ethnic issues campus-wide. This disbelief stemmed from the perception of MSU practitioners that the institutional leadership did not value racial and ethnic equity. As a result, there was no visible change at MSU institution surrounding equity during the period of this study.



*Figure 4.1. Chat in Action*

The findings in the second section were generated through data analysis using CHAT. As noted in Chapter Three, the object is the purpose behind an activity. In this study, the object or goal is to increase racial and ethnic equity at MSU. The subject is the person who is working toward the object. The subjects in this study are the five student

services professionals and the one faculty member who were in the sample, selected among a larger group of participants in the collective study. The relationship between object, which is to increase racial and ethnic equity, and subject, the student services professionals, is enabled by mediating artifacts or tools such as the document analysis protocol or presentations given by CUE. These mediating tools produce opportunities for social interaction, communication, and, ultimately, activity. Object-subject-artifact relationships occur within communities. Communities are characterized by shared sets of rules. In the case of MSU, an unspoken rule or norm is the lack of discussion surrounding racial and ethnic inequities. Communities are also characterized by division of labor (Ogawa et al, 2008 p. 85-87). The division of labor and differential responsibilities of those in high level positions, such as administrators, often meant that they could not fully participate in the activity settings. Administrators sometimes had to leave early or come late to workshops. This reinforced the perceived lack of support from institutional leadership.

As stated in Chapter Three, a cycle of inquiry creates a way for practitioners to examine their beliefs, un-learn old modes of thinking and participate in learning activities that lead to new knowledge (Dowd & Bensimon, 2009, Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). In this study, the social intervention point occurs during the learning activity where practitioners as a group use CUE tools to make meaning of institutional data, reflect, and identify problems. The cycle of inquiry was evident in the Document Analysis Self-Assessment for Culturally Inclusive Practices workshop. During the workshop, two practitioners who worked in an office designed to assist underrepresented students realized, after

completing the Document Analysis Self-Assessment for Culturally Inclusive Practices tool, that they never state in their documents that they serve underrepresented students. During this equity oriented learning activity, practitioners collected documents given to students by their office. They observed and interpreted the document using the indicators provided in the Document Analysis Protocol. Reviewing their document caused them to reflect and ask themselves why they had been omitting such vital information from their documents. For example, during a CUE activity, a male participant asked “why are we not saying these things, or mentioning racial and ethnic diversity.” A female added, “Proposition 209 stunted a lot of things.” Proposition 209 prohibits the discrimination of individuals or groups on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in public employment, public education, or public contracting. “One time, I received a negative call with someone asking is this program for just for Latinos?” The woman noted Prop 209 may affect the intent of documents. “We noticed that we were playing it safe in our documents. There are no pictures of students in our documents; I guess we thought of it as just being practical by not adding pictures.”

This example illustrates how, during the Document Analysis Self-Assessment for Culturally Inclusive Practices, MSU practitioners became aware that their documents could possibly be contributing to the inequities on their campus. This new knowledge caused them to examine their practices and ask themselves “why questions.” Such as, why they were not saying they served underrepresented students in their documents. Inquiring about their own practices also brought awareness to the beliefs perpetuating those practices. They believed that, by not mentioning that they serve underrepresented

students, they were in compliance with proposition 209. By “playing it safe,” it is possible that underrepresented students who could have benefited from their services did not get the help needed because the department did not identify the populations that they serve. The Document Analysis Self-Assessment for Culturally Inclusive Practices workshop allowed the student services professionals to discuss equity issues on their campus using the indicators in the Document Analysis Self-Assessment for Culturally Inclusive Practices Protocol. This activity setting facilitated by CUE provided a safe space for social interaction and reflection around equity issues, a topic often avoided at MSU. While reflecting on their practices, they identified a problem, reflecting on the problem caused them to examine state policy proposition 209 and how their interpretation of the policy was negatively affecting underrepresented students. Through findings such as these, this chapter illustrates how Practice Theory guides practitioners through a cycle of inquiry. However, one of the objectives is that, through inquiry, practitioners will become aware of practices that are not working and make changes needed for more equitable outcomes (Bensimon and Dowd, 2009). Unfortunately, there were no documented changes that took place in practices of the sample of student services professionals in this study.

There were several barriers to change at MSU. Barriers are provided through themes. These themes include that MSU practitioners felt a lack of institutional support. As a result, despite feeling a sense of individual agency, they did not have a sense of collective agency. This was due to the perceived risk that the MSU practitioners associated with increasing racial and ethnic equity at their institution. Other perceived

forms of risk stemmed from a lack of knowledge needed to address racial and ethnic issues, knowledge of the appropriate language for discussing racial and ethnic diversity, and knowledge of how to address the needs of underrepresented students from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds. Although there were several barriers to increasing equity at MSU described below, practitioners at MSU highlighted that perceived risk decreased during workshops facilitated by CUE. A detailed description of the activity settings, action research processes and tools used at MSU is provided for deeper insight into the findings.

### **Institutional Context of Monarch State University**

The mission statement of the university highlights a commitment to academic excellence and educational quality and, to that end, the institution boasts only a 32% admission rate for first time freshmen. The university website highlights high test scores and grades as a part of the admissions process. In 2009, transfer students made up 15% of the nearly 4,000 new students who entered that year.

The following information reported is from the Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), but, to avoid reporting the exact school in the study, statistics are rounded. Monarch's primary educational programs award bachelor degrees, but it does also provide master's degrees.

The university had several trends that set it apart from peer institutions (institutions that include California State Universities and other public state universities with similar Carnegie classifications). For one, while peer institutions reported an average of 30% of students receiving Pell grant aid, Monarch reports only 10%. Second,

compared to the ethnic composition of other university peer groups, Monarch's ethnic representation showed marked differences. For instance, peer institutions, on average, had a student population of 45% white while Monarch's white student population is over 60%. Latinos or Hispanics make up 16% of the student population at peer institutions, but they represent only 12% at Monarch. Peer institutions have Black student populations of about 7% and Asian populations of about 5%, but Monarch's percentages are 1% and 11%, respectively. These differences in ethnic composition highlight a tension that is prevalent in this study. The institution prides itself on its commitment to educational excellence, which the university has translated as requiring high academic standards. Yet, this focus on high test scores and grades in the admissions process, which can be characterized as a selectivity agenda, may conflict with the institution's pursuing an equity agenda. Although Monarch lacks diversity in its enrolled student body, its mission statement claims that cultural and intellectual diversity are valued by the institution.

In a speech addressing the campus community, Monarch's president announced that increasing racial diversity among both faculty and students is imperative, stating, "How will Monarch students be able to succeed in a multicultural society if they don't have real world experiences on campus." In order to move forward, he suggested that the campus community would need to engage in more conversations on improving ethnic diversity and suggested that the institution needed to move forward quickly with this agenda. The president also addressed the outside community's dissatisfaction with Monarch's diversity, stating, "Multiple industry partners of ours have stressed to me their belief that our relative lack of diversity is Monarch's Achilles' heel." Jones (2002) would

consider the institution's failure to address racial and ethnic issues as institutional racism, "It is often evident as inaction in the face of need." Although the president openly pronounced his commitment toward increasing the diversity of both students and faculty, many MSU practitioners still felt that his comments were more rhetoric than reality. In both interviews and evaluation questionnaire feedback, respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the institutional leadership's ability to increase racial and ethnic equity. This inaction is evident in the responses from Monarch practitioners' comments that "we have been talking about race for ten years and nothing ever gets done" and "Monarch is all lip service and no action."

In addition to their work with CUE, Monarch State University was already participating in self-reflective activities and evaluative research projects that focused on diversity and equity issues at the campus. For example, the university put together an advisory council made up of faculty, administrators, and students to exclusively focus on providing recommendations to the university president about how to improve equity and diversity in areas such as admissions, retention, curriculum, and campus climate. Other initiatives on campus also included a pilot study on improving teaching and learning in science, technology engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines as well as a learning experiment involving the engagement of engineering students. Both of these initiatives have implications for diversity in terms of gender and ethnicity. In efforts to increase racial and ethnic equity, Monarch and CUE partnered together in engaging in a yearlong process. The following sections describe the themes that emerged throughout

the duration of this study. The emerging themes provide deeper insight into the challenges MSU practitioners face in their efforts to increase racial and ethnic equity

### **Leadership, Agency, and Risk**

Three themes emerged from analysis of the data collected from interviews, observations, workshops, and webinars. As noted in Chapter Three, the data collected from the interviews with five student services professionals and one faculty member were interpreted as providing confirming or disconfirming evidence for the themes. Table 4.1 summarizes the confirming and disconfirming data for the three themes. The first, “*Lack of Support from Leadership*” emerged because participants had a hard time believing that changes in racial and ethnic diversity would occur. This was due to a lack of perceived support and direction from MSU administrators. In the interviews, four out of six respondents expressed that they have talked about issues regarding race at Monarch for many years without significant change. Comments included “we have talked about diversity for years with no change in structures to support diversity.” The second concerned *risk*. Participants who had been at the institution three or more years expressed discomfort at having discussions about racial inequities with their colleagues. Four out of the six respondents interviewed had been at MSU three or more years. While participants expressed not being comfortable discussing racial ethnic issues with their colleagues individually, they were more comfortable discussing these issues in the workshops facilitated by CUE.

Finally, the third theme concerns *agency*. Five of the six respondents felt a sense of *individual- agency* that they could make a positive difference to reduce racial and

ethnic inequities in their department, but not campus-wide. This reflects weaknesses in CUE's Action Research design experiment and tools as implemented at MSU to bring about change in institutional culture and practices. While many of the participants felt that the research processes and tools that were facilitated by CUE were helpful, five out of six expressed that they lacked clarity and direction from CUE. Another barrier that emerged to a growing sense of agency to increase racial and ethnic equity at Monarch was insufficient knowledge. Participants expressed a desire to increase inequities but felt that they needed more knowledge to have a significant impact. Each theme is described in the following sections with participant responses. Table 4.1 summarizes the overall analysis. The text below draws on data collected from interviews, workshops, webinars, and evaluation feedback from questionnaires to triangulate and place the interview data in a clear context.

Table 4.1

*Quotes from Practitioners Contributing to the Themes Regarding Racial and Ethnic Issues at MSU*

Themes	Quotes from MSU Practitioners
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<b>Lack of Support from Leadership</b>	<p>“We talk a great deal about increasing equity, but there is little action for change in infrastructure. Students of color experiences are not positive. There is no significant change, no proactive planning. And we don’t discuss issues unless the issues arrive.”</p> <p>“Monarch is a lot of talk and very little action”</p> <p>“I think when our team is all on the same page we do good work. However, we have not been at a point on campus in which we have been led on the same page toward equity.”</p> <p>“I just started last year; I’m not clear of the initiatives, not sure if people are just spinning their wheels. I heard nothing gets done regarding diversity from my colleagues. People say we have been talking about diversity for ten years and nothing changes.”</p> <p>“I have been through these meetings before, and been let down by the lack of follow through by administrators. But, I still am highly engaged, because I understand that this will be a life long struggle.”</p> <p>My engagement would have been higher if “Monarch decision-makers had been present at the meeting.”</p> <p>Participation would have been higher, but “The right people, in terms of real change, were not in the room.”</p> <p>“Before the meeting, I kind of felt like, "here we go again, another failed attempt to workshop the problems at Monarch. I have become cynical, because many of the administrators who are supposed to care about racial diversity have never experienced it in their personal lives.”</p>
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Table 4.1, continued

<b>Individual Agency</b>	<p>“It’s just a general philosophy that I have; you have to start in your own field, classroom, and department. I know that I can make that impact.”</p> <p>“As a person, I can make a positive difference, but not on my campus. In my area we strive to be inclusive. I don’t do that in other areas because people are not okay with differences. People don’t take feedback well.”</p> <p>“I found myself thinking deeply about my classes, and things I can do, to improve my interactions.”</p> <p>“I’m not sure if having similarly minded colleagues is always a good thing that’s part of the problem here. Everyone thinks the same and if someone expresses a different opinion they are met with a strong response,” adding “the richness is in our differences.”</p>
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<p><b>Risk</b></p>	<p>“I think equity would look like people being able to have conversations without fear that what they might say could somehow be used against them or hurt them later. It would look like people gathered in spaces with different sorts of opportunities related to matters of diversity and political and social justice issues, it would look like a group of folks who would be able to do those things without worry that they would be misunderstood.”</p> <p>“During one of our staff meetings while discussing the internationalization of our campus. One of the faculty members stated “what are we trying to do Jap out the campus” according to the participant, no one responded to the faculty members comment.”</p> <p>We have to “make it okay to say that I have a problem with that statement.” Another participant responds, “okay, you say that, then the room goes flat, what happens then?”</p> <p>“We have a culture of silence here at monarch.” A female interview participant stated that she appreciated the male participants’ idea of stating that it’s okay for staff to say “I’m offended.” “We need to make that okay. People say things that are insensitive.”</p> <p>“I’m not comfortable discussing issues here at Monarch. People have trouble dealing with difference of opinion. It’s ok to share your opinion as long as it’s what other people want to hear. Everyone thinks the same way. If you challenge that you will get a strong response.”</p> <p>“There is more of an interest in people being comfortable than addressing the issues, The people who work on campus are more uncomfortable discussing racial and ethnic issues than the students, I think that students would be okay, if we were.” “I always feel comfortable talking to my colleagues about race, but I’m not sure if my colleagues feel comfortable”</p>
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**Rhetoric and Reality. A Lack of Institutional Support and Direction.** One of the most prominent findings was the lack of faith/trust that practitioners at Monarch had in the upper level administration to lead the institution toward sustainable change in increasing racial and ethnic equity. Many felt that initiatives regarding racial and ethnic equity were only rhetoric with no action. Comments included:

We talk a great deal about increasing equity, but there is little action for change in infrastructure. Students of color experiences are not positive. There is no

significant change, no proactive planning. And we don't discuss issues unless the issues arrive.

One respondent simply stated, "Monarch is a lot of talk and very little action."

Another mentioned, "I think when our team is all on the same page we do good work. However, we have not been at a point on campus in which we have been led on the same page toward equity." Even people who were new to the campus had already been informed of the institution's slow moving agenda toward equity. "I just started last year; I'm not clear of the initiatives, not sure if people are just spinning their wheels. I heard nothing gets done regarding diversity from my colleagues. People say we have been talking about diversity for ten years and nothing changes." Another stated, "I have been through these meetings before, and been let down by the lack of follow through by administrators. But, I still am highly engaged, because I understand that this will be a life long struggle." Although many Monarch practitioners expressed a desire to address racial and ethnic inequities on their campus, the lack of leadership in this area has left many doubting that change will ever come. Monarch practitioners had trouble believing that leadership could help them move forward with increasing equity at their institution.

One of the problems that were identified by questionnaire respondents in the Document Analysis Self-Assessment for Culturally Inclusive Practices Workshop was the lack of visibility at meetings or events surrounding equity. The absence of the leadership in these meetings and events caused Monarch's practitioner to believe that the leadership does not care and even influences the efforts put forth by practitioners at MSU.

Participants in the Defining the Problem-Benchmarking Student Success Tool Workshop

and Document Analysis Self-Assessment for Culturally Inclusive Practices Workshop stated that engagement would have been higher if “Monarch decision-makers had been present at the meeting.” Another stated that their participation would have been higher, but “The right people, in terms of real change, were not in the room.” One of the interview participants characterized Monarch as promoting Kumbaya moments, but people get frustrated when the people who count are not present.

The results in Figure 4.2 below are a reflection of the lack of confidence practitioners at MSU had in moving forward towards issues of racial and ethnic equity on their campus. Out of the 19 respondents at the Document Analysis Self-Assessment for Culturally Inclusive Practices Workshop 63% (N=12) were somewhat optimistic that the participants would continue to work together to promote equity on campus, 32% (N=6) were completely hopeful and 5% (N=1) of respondents did not believe that the participants would continue to work together at all to promote equity. The results show that, while people wanted to believe that they would continue to move forward, most participants had some doubt.

I am optimistic that the participants in this workshop will continue to work together to promote equity on my campus				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Not at all		1	5%
2	Somewhat		12	63%
3	Definitely		6	32%
	Total		19	100%

Data Source: Respondents to the Document Analysis Self-Assessment for Culturally Inclusive Practices Workshop Question 16 “I am optimistic that the participants in this workshop will continue to work together to promote equity on my campus”

*Figure 4.2. Optimism That Participants will continue to Promote Equity*

**Individual Agency.** While many Monarch participants expressed a lack of trust in the leadership and their colleagues campus-wide, five out of six Student Services Professionals interviewed believed they could make a positive difference to reduce racial and ethnic inequities at Monarch through their own daily behavior. The following quotation is typical: “It’s just a general philosophy that I have; you have to start in your own field, classroom, and department. I know that I can make that impact.” Another believes that, while she can make a difference in her department, she does not believe that she can have a positive influence campus-wide. She stated, “as a person, I can make a positive difference, but not on my campus. In my area, we strive to be inclusive. I don’t do that in other areas because people are not okay with differences. People don’t take

feedback well.” Beliefs are also a factor in achieving intended outcomes (Ajzen, 1991). According to Ajzen and Fishbein’s (1976) Reasoned Action Model, beliefs influence attitudes, and attitudes toward certain behaviors. For example, when people do not believe that their behavior will have a positive outcome, the likelihood of them performing that behavior decreases. This was evident in the woman’s statement that she does not believe or even attempt to make an effort to have an impact on equity campus-wide because she does not believe that her colleagues would be receptive.

In questionnaire data one of the participants’ expressed his frustration, responding to an open-ended question:

Before the meeting, I kind of felt like, "here we go again, another failed attempt to workshop the problems at Monarch. I have become cynical, because many of the administrators who are supposed to care about racial diversity have never experienced it in their personal lives. So how can they create something that they have never experienced? But, after the meeting, I went home washed my car and found myself thinking deeply about my classes, and things I can do to improve my interactions.

Although he was frustrated in the institutional leadership’s lack of experience with diversity, he was focused on what he does have control over. This is evident in his statement, “I found myself thinking deeply about my classes, and things I can do, to improve my interactions.” The focus was shifted from the institution to his own individual responsibility. The sense of individual agency that Monarch practitioners in this study felt is evident in figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3 is reflective of the sense of individual agency of MSU practitioners. Ten out of eleven respondents had a strong sense of personal responsibility surrounding racial and ethnic issues at their campus. Only one respondent disagreed with having a strong sense of personal responsibility.

I have a strong sense of my own personal responsibility surrounding racial and ethnic issues on my campus.				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly Disagree		0	0%
2	Disagree		1	9%
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree		0	0%
4	Agree		5	45%
5	Strongly Agree		5	45%
	Total		11	100%

Data Source: Respondents to Assessing Students Reactions to Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Workshop Question 12 “ I have a strong sense of my own personal responsibility surrounding racial and ethnic issues on my campus”

*Figure 4.3. Personal Responsibility Surrounding Racial and Ethnic Issues*

The table below also reflects the sense of agency many of the Monarch participants had along with their similarly-minded colleagues. Out of 11 questionnaire respondents, 90% (N=10) believed that they had the ability to positively affect racial and ethnic equity at Monarch. While 9% (N=1) neither agreed nor disagreed.

My similarly minded colleagues and I have the ability to make a positive impact surrounding equity at my institution				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly Disagree		0	0%
2	Disagree		0	0%
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree		1	9%
4	Agree		5	45%
5	Strongly Agree		5	45%
	Total		11	100%

Data Source: Respondents to Assessing Students Reactions to Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Workshop Question 13 “”

*Figure 4.4. Ability to impact Equity with Colleagues*

Based on the above data, despite the lack of leadership, MSU practitioners had a strong sense of responsibility toward racial and ethnic issues. Many also believed that, along with their likeminded colleagues, they can make a difference at their institution. However, one interview participant felt having similarly-minded colleagues could be problematic. She stated, “I’m not sure if having similarly-minded colleagues is always a good thing. That’s part of the problem here. Everyone thinks the same and if someone expresses a different opinion they are met with a strong response.” She added “the richness is in our differences.” According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, one of the

factors that predict behaviors is subjective norms, which is social pressure to perform or not perform the behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

Another participant said that he believed that he, along with his similarly-minded colleagues, can positively affect racial equity, but he also felt that it was usually he and his similarly-minded colleagues that lead the charge on issues of equity at MSU. He stated, “it’s like preaching to the choir, and these meeting often serve as choir gatherings, in which people have their Kumbaya moment until it’s time for the next feel good event.”

Attitudes and beliefs have the ability to influence behaviors in both positive and negative ways. This was the case for many MSU practitioners. Although they believed that they had the ability to positively affect racial and ethnic equity on their campus, their experiences invoked negatives beliefs toward achieving the object to increase equity.

**The Cost of Equity-Risk.** Of all of the barriers to increasing equity at Monarch, the one that was most prevalent was the risk that Monarch practitioners associated with addressing racial and ethnic inequities. The fear of being judged or cast out by colleagues was a roadblock for many. Among the six interview respondents, four mentioned risk as a barrier to increasing equity at MSU. When asked what positive differences would look like at Monarch, one respondent said:

I would think it look like people being able to have conversations without fear that what they might say could somehow be used against them or hurt them later.

It would look like people gathered in spaces with different sorts of opportunities related to matters of diversity and political and social justice issues, it would look

like a group of folks who would be able to do those things without worry that they would be misunderstood.

This quote is particularly salient because it is reflective of the existing rules and norms at Monarch. During the Assessing Students Reactions to Culturally Responsive Pedagogy webinar, one of the male participants described an incident in which a faculty member used a derogatory term to in reference to Japanese students: “During one of our staff meetings while discussing the internationalization of our campus, one of the faculty members stated, ‘what are we trying to do? Jap out the campus?’ According to the participant, no one responded to the faculty member’s comment. He stated that a few people even added to the faculty members comments with “yeah! What are we trying to do?” It sends a message that this behavior is ok.” Later, the participants were asked how we can make sure that students do not have these experiences. The same male who provided the example suggested “making it okay to say that I have a problem with that statement.” This seemed to make some of the participants uncomfortable. A female participant responded, “okay, you say that, then the room goes flat, what happens then?” The male participant suggested, “well, I guess I would imagine, perhaps, there would be some type of dialogue. I think it less about the conversation had and more about making it okay to say to I have a problem with that. We have a culture of silence here at Monarch.” Many people in the room nodded their in agreement.

To further explore the risk theme, the interview participants were asked about their take on this concept. A female interview participant stated that she appreciated the male participants’ idea of stating that it’s okay for staff to say they were offended. “We

need to make that okay. People say things that are insensitive.” She added, “I’m not comfortable discussing issues here at Monarch. People have trouble dealing with difference of opinion. It’s ok to share your opinion as long as it’s what other people want to hear. Everyone thinks the same way. If you challenge that you will get a strong response.” Based on observations and interviews, it was clear that MSU practitioners did not want to offend their colleagues or make them feel uncomfortable. However, this need to make their colleagues feel comfortable was negatively affecting their ability to address racial and ethnic equity. One of the interview participants stated, “there is more of an interest in people being comfortable than addressing the issues, The people who work on campus are more uncomfortable discussing racial and ethnic issues than the students, I think that students would be okay, if we were.”

In a questionnaire, participants were asked to rate their comfort discussing issues of race and ethnicity with their colleagues. The questionnaire revealed that of 19 respondents, only 53% (N=10) of the participants felt comfortable discussing issues of race and ethnicity sometimes, 26% (N=5) always felt comfortable, and 21% (N=4) of the participants rarely felt comfortable.

I generally feel comfortable talking about issues of race and ethnicity with my colleagues				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Never		0	0%
2	Rarely		4	21%

3	Sometimes		10	53%
4	Always		5	26%
	Total		19	100%

Data Source: Respondents to the Document Analysis Self-Assessment for Culturally Inclusive Practices Workshop Question 7. “I generally feel comfortable talking about issues of race and ethnicity with my colleagues”

*Figure 4.5. Comfort discussing Race with Colleagues*

Interviews with the Student Services Professionals brought clarity to some of the reasons Monarch practitioners were uncomfortable discussing these issues. They were asked, “what factors add to your comfort or discomfort when talking about these issues?”

One interview participant commented:

It’s ok to talk about difference as long as it’s not at the expense of the majority.

When I hear ‘we can’t just do that for black students’ I feel locked in... It’s more of a let’s not do anything if it’s not for everyone.’ Sometimes people have to have unique experiences.

Referring to the anti-affirmative action Proposition 209, the respondent added, “It’s a 209 approach.” Talking about racial and ethnic issues seems to be taboo at Monarch among practitioners. One interview participant stated, “colleagues across the board, even colleagues of color don’t even talk about this.”

***Lack of Knowledge.*** Lack of knowledge contributed to the risk factor for Monarch practitioners in addressing racial and ethnic issues. In a discussion about microaggressions in the February 2012 webinar, a female faculty member expressed her discomfort with discussing issues of race in her classroom. “I feel odd saying this

researcher says this about African American families because I don't have enough background. How do I know that I am not perpetuating other kinds of stereotypes?" In addition to intention as a motivational factor, Ajzen (1991) found that people are more likely act upon an intended behavior when they have the resources and opportunities to perform the desired behaviors. This woman's lack of knowledge toward increasing equity served as an inhibitor to change.

Figure 4.6 represents the beliefs that MSU practitioners held about their own knowledge and their ability to have an impact on equity based on the knowledge that they possess. Figure 4.6 demonstrates the doubt of many MSU practitioners. Out of 19 respondents, 53% (N=10) somewhat believed that they had a lot to learn before they could have an impact on racial and ethnic equity on their campus. Thirty-two percent (N=6) believed that they definitely had a lot to learn, and 16% (N=3) felt that they did not have a lot to learn before they could have an impact on racial and ethnic issues at MSU.

I feel that I have a lot to learn before I can impact racial/ethnic equity issues on my campus.				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Not at all		3	16%
2	Somewhat		10	53%
3	Definitely		6	32%
	Total		19	100%

Data Source: Respondents to the Document Analysis Self-Assessment for Culturally Inclusive Practices Workshop Question 6 “I feel that I have a lot to learn before I can impact racial/ethnic equity issues on my campus”

*Figure 4.6. Knowledge to Impact Racial Equity*

In another interview, a male discussed a different kind of risk: a risk to students. He argued that there is a fear factor/ risk factor that is involved in bringing in more racially diverse students because the institution will need to provide resources for funding those underrepresented groups. For example, “Native Americans students may want to have a Pow Wow or say we want more ethnic studies. You have to provide the resources to meet the needs of the students you bring in.” People may be afraid to bring in these groups because they fear that they will not know how to service them, or they may not know how to meet the needs of underrepresented students.

Language was also mentioned as a barrier to agency. Some practitioners felt they did not have the language needed to reduce racial and ethnic inequities at Monarch. In a participant interview, one of the practitioner stated that he could make a positive impact difference to reduce racial and ethnic inequities on campus through talking about diversity, stating, “We have to create comfort and dialogue regarding diversity.” Asked to explain further, he responded, “like calling Black students Black, feeling comfortable saying gay instead of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Transgender), referring to people as needed. Because we don’t have the language, it’s been the stumbling block to true change.”

***Opportunities for Social Interaction Alleviates Risk.*** While many practitioners at Monarch State University felt uncomfortable talking about race and ethnicity with their colleagues individually, most expressed that they felt comfortable discussing racial and

ethnic issues on their campus in workshops facilitated by CUE. Out of 19 respondents, 74% (N=14) said they definitely felt comfortable, 16% (N=3) felt somewhat comfortable, and 11 % (N=2) were not comfortable at all.

I felt comfortable talking about issues of race and ethnicity with my colleagues at the workshop.				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Not at all		2	11%
2	Somewhat		3	16%
3	Definitely		14	74%
	Total		19	100%

Data Source: Respondents to the Document Analysis Self-Assessment for Culturally Inclusive Practices Workshop Question 8 “I felt comfortable talking about issues of race and ethnicity with my colleagues at the workshop”

*Figure 4.7. Comfort Talking about Race at CUE Workshops*

Practitioners at Monarch mentioned several benefits of social interaction and collaboration with their colleagues. Being provided the opportunity to discuss and address racial and ethnic issues seem to have a positive impact on MSU practitioners and helped to alleviate the discomfort described by many Monarch practitioners. When asked if the Document Analysis for Self-Assessment of Culturally inclusive Practices provided a useful starting point for a meaningful dialogue with colleagues, interview participants commented, “The tool, it’s a safe way to connect everybody together. Not any one’s personal agenda. That’s what makes it a safe way.” A female interview respondent stated, “I don’t often have the opportunity to collaborate and across the hierarchy. I wouldn’t

usually have the chance to work with higher ups. This gives the opportunity to work with others.” Another said, “Our small group had plenty of time to flush out points; people wanted to make points and were comfortable.” The workshops, cognitive interviews, observations, and webinars facilitated by CUE provide practitioners at Monarch with both the opportunity and resources to discuss issues of race in a safe environment through the use of CUE’s tools, as these tools are designed to promote equity and increase equitable outcomes for racial-ethnic groups.

The above section focused on themes that emerged throughout the duration of this study. The following sections provide a detailed description of the activity settings and equity oriented tools and action research processes employed by CUE in its efforts to increase equity. The descriptions highlight the elements of the design experiments and how their design and implementation may have influenced the issues of leadership, agency, and risk. The purpose is to understand their implementation and the experiences and reactions of participants in these settings. The followings sections also provide deeper insight into the research questions, *what are the characteristics of equity oriented cultural artifacts? What changes were observed or reported by respondents in ways associated with CUE’s tools and activities? And what environmental factors mediate changes or a lack of change in practitioner’s social interactions, behaviors, and practices.*

### **Laying the Groundwork**

In the Laying the Groundwork workshop, CUE and practitioners from various departments at Monarch came together to discuss the current state of racial and ethnic

inequities at MSU. The discussion was focused on policies, admission criteria, recruitment, a welcoming campus environment and racial ethnic diversity. Practitioners at Monarch were welcoming but were a bit reluctant that change would take place at their campus. To further examine the current state of racial and ethnic equity at MSU, the group participated in an equity oriented exercise that asked them to reflect on the existing inequities and to envision what equity would look like at their campus. Participants were divided up into small groups and assigned a category. Categories included Admissions, Recruitment, Policies, and Campus Climate. Next, participants were given a set of index cards and markers and were asked what racial–ethnic equity would look like based on the category assigned. For example, one group was charged with identifying what racial ethnic equity would look like in admissions; another group was asked what racial ethnic equity would look like on the MSU campus. A third group addressed what would equity look like in recruitment and policies. After the exercise, the female faculty member facilitated a discussion based on what the participants wrote on the index cards. Based on the cycle of inquiry, reflection is necessary for change to take place.

Participating in situated learning activities provides practitioners with the opportunity to reflect (Bensimon and Dowd, 2009). While participants were able to envision what equity would look like at their campus, many seemed frustrated with perceived barriers to achieving equity. Barriers included a lack of support from institutional leadership, having highly selective admission criteria, campus climate, and policies such as Proposition 209. At the conclusion of the meeting, the group discussed next steps and set a tentative agenda for the next meeting, which took place in April.

## Benchmarking Student Success Tool Workshop

The purpose of the initial meeting between the Monarch practitioners and CUE was to define the problem. During this meeting, the Benchmarking Equity and Student Success Tool (BEEST) was introduced. The BEEST is an equity oriented cultural tool that allows practitioners to look at institutional data disaggregated by race and ethnicity. The data is then used to help practitioners identify equity gaps among differing racial and ethnic groups. The discussion at the meeting was around equity and equity-mindedness. Equity-mindedness is a language tool utilized by CUE to assist practitioners in having discussions about race.

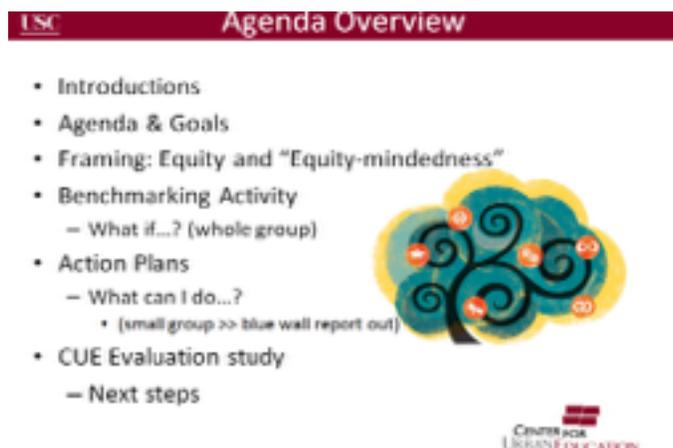


Figure 4.8. Introductory Slide

The co-director of CUE began by talking about Margolis's (2008) *Stuck in the Shallow End: Education, Race and Computing*. As stated in Chapter Two, the article asserts that African American children are three times more likely to drown than white children and suggests that the gap in swimming has origins in slavery and Jim Crow laws

that prevented African American and Latino communities' access to quality swimming facilities (Margolis, 2008). During the presentation, she provided several photographs to demonstrate the discrimination faced by both African Americans and Latino/as.

Figure 4.9 demonstrates this discrimination. First is a picture of African American men standing in line to swim and being denied access by several white males holding a sign that says "Private Pool Members Only." Second is a sign that says "Public Swimming Pool-Whites Only." The third image states, "We Serves Whites Only No Spanish or Mexicans," and the fourth image is a picture of an all White swimming facility. The co-director of CUE used these pictures and theories from CHAT to discuss the history of discrimination of racial and ethnic groups in education and how those legacies continue to inequitably impact underrepresented students today.

During the discussion, a practitioner from Monarch raised his hand and told the group that seeing those pictures and the discussion reminded him of when he was a member of an all Black swim team in college. He told the group that he recalls his team being denied access to many swimming facilities and not being able to compete in some arenas. Coaches of White teams did not allow their players to interact with their Black team. The man's story provided deeper context to the discussion and people seemed to be actively listening. As a participant observer, the researcher gained a better understanding of the social norms contributing to the reluctance of MSU practitioners to have open dialogue around race. According to CHAT, reflecting on the history of an organization can expose why an organization can be experiencing resistance to change. Based on the reaction of the participants, it was clear that the man had never shared this story with his

colleagues. His sharing brought a sense of closeness and community to the discussion. Learning that one of their colleagues had experienced racism and discrimination seemed to make the conversation more real for workshop participants. The cultural tool or mediating artifact helped to facilitate a discussion that would not usually occur at MSU.

This is a demonstration of CHAT in action. It was clear that the man had never shared his experience as a swimmer. CHAT considers how people conduct themselves based on cultural artifacts present within an institution. It is possible that the man would not have shared his personal story at any other time, in the absence of CUE's introduction of these PowerPoint slides. The presentation with pictures of African Americans being denied pool access served as a mediating artifact. The climate surrounding racial and ethnic issues at MSU may have never provided the opportunity to address racial and ethnic issues. The presentation served as a mediating artifact to bring about awareness of inequities. It also provided an opportunity to build community through social interaction. This example demonstrates how important it is for organizations to provide opportunities for individuals to share knowledge. According to Bauman (2005), knowledge is influenced by an individual's experiences, personal values, personal characteristics and interactions. The theory of organizational learning and change also supports the need for social interaction for the purposes of sharing and creating knowledge.



*Figure 4.9.* Discrimination in Swimming

Another equity oriented tool presented was a picture the co-director saw while visiting an institution in Illinois that has a history of a low number of African American applicants. The picture was hung in the lobby of one of the buildings. She used this tool to demonstrate how what we see happening at many institutions today is often linked to its historical legacies. This tool was relevant because of the history of racial discriminatory practices at MSU. It read, “Everyday at Six.”

The phrase “every day at six” comes from the history of Villa Grove, a town in east central Illinois. For decades, there was a whistle mounted on the town’s water tower and every day at 6:00 p.m., it sounded. Villa Grove was one of many Illinois towns where blacks were not allowed to own or rent property, and this daily signal warned black laborers that it was time to head home. There are a surprising number of towns in Illinois that utilized similar alarms, some even until the late 1990s. These places were commonly called *sundown town*.

Joel Ross (2007) *Sundown Town*

Moving forward, she discussed general statistics of underrepresented minorities who work in STEM fields, underrepresented minorities who are full-time professors in STEMS fields, and provided the group with trend data from the National Science Foundation of underrepresented minorities who have earned bachelor's degree in science and engineering. After looking at general data enrollment trends, participants were provided with local disaggregated data from Monarch. The disaggregated data brought clarity to the equity gaps in admission for underrepresented students, especially African American and Latino/a students. After viewing their institutional data, MSU practitioners participated in an activity focused on institutional agency. The tool below in Figure 4.10 was used to facilitate the discussion. For this exercise, Monarch practitioners were divided into small groups, given index cards, and asked to write down actions they could take to bring about equity at Monarch and to post their responses to a blue sticky board.

**LSC**

What actions could you take to bring about equity at Monarch?

Beyond reach \_\_\_\_\_

With a stretch \_\_\_\_\_

In reach

**Institutional Agents**

Apply Admit Enroll Persist +1yr Persist +2yr Persist +3yr GRAD 5yr

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LSC Monarch School of Education

Figure 4.10. Institutional Agent Activity

One of the desired learning outcomes was that practitioners would see themselves as institutional agents. Practitioners were asked to write down actions they could take to bring about equity during the application, admissions, and enrollment process. They were also asked what actions they could take to increase persistence during the first, second, third year, and until students graduate. Many responses were posted, but, due to time constraints, we were not able finish the discussion. The findings in the first section of this chapter illustrate that many of the MSU practitioners already felt a sense of individual agency but not of collective agency. This activity was designed to help practitioners see beyond their individual departments. That is why it encompassed the whole student experience from admissions through graduation and asked practitioners how they could bring about equity at Monarch as an institution.

**Invitation to Student Services Professionals.** On August 19<sup>th</sup> the researcher, along with another researcher who is part of this collective study, introduced a new group of Students Services Professionals to the partnership between CUE and Monarch State. The participants in this meeting were brought together by the practitioner who shared his experience as a swimmer. None had participated in prior meetings with CUE. The researcher explained that Monarch had embarked on a process to increase racial and ethnic equity and that they were partnering with CUE because CUE creates tools to increase positive outcomes for underrepresented students in higher education. The practitioner that brought the group together then explained to the group that August 19<sup>th</sup> was our third visit to Monarch and explained what we had done in prior meetings. The Student Services professionals were invited to be a part of the process. The other

researcher explained that we were doctoral students conducting a developmental evaluation under the guidance of the co-director of CUE and that we were evaluating the impact of CUE's tools. Participants were given a handout with the invitation as well as the biographies the Co-director of CUE of the other Ed.D. students participating in developmental evaluation at different higher education institutions in the collective study.

The Benchmarking Equity and Student Success Tool (BESST) was then introduced. To demonstrate how the BESST is used, participants were given a handout with screenshots of the BESST with Monarch data for transfer students from 2010. After explaining the BESST and sharing Monarchs' data, the Document Analysis Self-Assessment for Culturally Inclusive Practices was introduced to the participants. An exercise was done using a document from a California State University to demonstrate how the tool worked. Participants were then given a copy of the tool and asked to analyze one of their documents using the indicators provided in the tool. Participants were invited to participate in the upcoming Document Analysis Self-Assessment for Culturally Inclusive Practices workshop. They were asked to bring the documents from their department that they analyzed using the tool to the workshop. The Student Services Professionals seemed excited to participate in the developmental evaluation. The data shared in the BEEST focused on the admissions of transfer students and was disaggregated by race and ethnicity. According to the data provided by MSU, only five African American transfer students were admitted in the fall of 2010, but four out of the five enrolled. The Student Services Professionals were not surprised by the data. A male participant even joked, "I think that I can name the four," and expressed that he thought

this was problematic. This comment was indicative of the low admissions of African Americans as a norm at MSU.

### **Document Analysis: Self-Assessment for Culturally Inclusive Practices Workshop**

The workshop took place at Community Hall near MSU. As participants signed in, they were given a name tag to put around their necks and a folded name card to sit in front of them on the table. Participants were also given a small flag button with two lowercase letter E's connected, an artifact created by one of the research assistants in the CUE group. The E's stood for equity and excellence. The flag was used to help participants locate their starting point in the project. The storyboards depicted the journey that CUE and MSU practitioners had embarked on to increase equity.

The storyboards represented a chronology of interactions with MSU. The first storyboard marked the beginning of the journey and was a picture of the school of education at Monarch and the school of education at USC where CUE is located. The second illustrated the February 25<sup>th</sup> first planning meeting at Monarch in which we discussed what equity would look like at Monarch. The third storyboard was the April meeting. It displayed the book cover of Margolis's (2008) *Stuck in the Shallow End: Education, Race and Computing* and a screenshot of the Benchmarking Equity and Student Success Tool (BESST). There was also text about the August 19<sup>th</sup> meeting. The fourth storyboard was the October 7<sup>th</sup> workshop. The fifth board had the word "Vision" written at the top.

The meeting started with a welcome from two female faculty members who briefed participants about the purpose of the workshop and the work that Monarch and

USC had embarked on and their efforts to increase equity for racial ethnic groups at Monarch. There were several new participants at the workshop. The co-director briefly discussed all the past meetings to bring the group up to date. A PowerPoint presentation was given to explain CUE's work and concepts such as equity-mindedness and deficit-mindedness. These concepts are used by CUE in their efforts to increase equity for students from underrepresented backgrounds.

Then, a professional staff member from CUE asked the group participate in an activity called, "Who helped you through college" with the individuals at their table. The researcher's table consisted of a Latino male graduate student, a white female, a white male, an African American male who appeared to be multiracial, and the researcher, an African American female. In the sharing of differential experiences, it became clear the Latino male and the researcher, the African American female, were both first generation college students and had received help from a mentor on their respective college campuses. The white female said that she could not think of anyone who had helped her, stating, "I helped myself through college...my father paid for it, but I did all the work, I guess I could say my father helped me financially." She then mentioned that it was expected for her to go to college in her family. The researcher shared that she was the first in her family to go to college, and was from a low-income family, adding, "college was not an expectation. My family could not afford to finance my education." The mixed race participant mentioned having a family member who always gave him books to read growing up, which helped him prepare for college level material. The graduate student said that his friends helped him through college. The Latino male and the researcher

made it through college with the assistance of institutional agents. As stated in Chapter Two, these non-kin individuals provided the support needed for degree completion.

To further demonstrate the differential experiences of students from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups and whites, the professional CUE staff member shared the structural racism cartoon in Figure 4.11 with the group. This equity oriented cultural tool illustrated structural racism in the form of laws, housing, and career opportunities. Someone in the audience brought up the concept of white privilege, stating “people are not often aware that privilege exist when they are they are the beneficiary.” Based on the questionnaire results, most MSU participants found this tool helpful in the discussion on structural racism.



Figure 4.11. Structural Racism Cartoon

Many believed that the cartoon was beneficial to the discussion. Out of 19 questionnaire respondents, 68% (N=13) agreed that the comic strip added a necessary

dimension to the discussion. Sixteen percent (N=3) respondents somewhat agreed.

Eleven percent (N=2) somewhat disagreed and 5% (N=1) disagreed.

The comic strip highlighting the ways individuals benefit from structural racism added a necessary dimension to our discussion				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Disagree		1	5%
2	Somewhat disagree		2	11%
3	Somewhat agree		3	16%
4	Agree		13	68%
	Total		19	100%

Data Source: Respondents to the Document Analysis Self-Assessment for Culturally Inclusive Practices Workshop Question 15 “”

*Figure 4.12.* Structural Racism Cartoon Added to the Discussion

After the presentation, the groups split up into smaller pre-assigned groups. Group A consisted of STEM faculty, Group B was comprised of non-STEM faculty, Group C consisted of special programs administrators and student affairs professionals, and Group D consisted of administrators. A CUE researcher and this researcher co-facilitated group C. Our group consisted of a white male, Latino male, a Latina, an African American male, a white woman, and the researcher. The white woman, a leader in her department, missed part of the meeting because she had to attend several other meetings that day. This seemed a common issue for those who occupied leadership roles at MSU. Leaving the meetings early also contributed to the perception that MSU’s leadership was not committed to racial and ethnic equity.

The CUE researcher went over the guidelines of the tool and asked the group about their overall impression of the protocol. Comments from the white male included, “It made me look at documents more critically. Our documents state that we expect students to treat staff respectfully. I would add the statement that we would treat students with respect.” He added that he noticed that there was no validation of racial ethnic diversity, or gender, or economic status but there was an emphasis on working together.

A male and female who worked in the same office decided to analyze the one of their program documents. “First, we looked at the intent of the document. It is intended for low-income and first generation students.” In a moment of reflection, the male realized that they never mention in their documents the population that they serve and began to inquire into their own practices. They also noticed that their documents did not contain any pictures of students. The Latino male suggested, “I guess we thought of it as just being practical by not adding pictures.” Their document had several target shaped circles and on the cover there was a small picture of a graduation cap and the name of the department.

The white female believed that her department was “pretty intentional about diversity” based on the first ten indicators of the protocol, but she acknowledged that there was still work to be done. She demonstrated where on her document she highlighted examples of indicators of culturally inclusive practices. The document stated, “Perhaps the best part about working at Monarch is the opportunity to interact with students.” It also mentioned a Monarch staff member, “Monarch Students are

motivated, hardworking, and focused on academics, like no other student population I have ever seen.”

Another participant, who joined the in the Aug 19<sup>th</sup> meeting but could not attend the October 7<sup>th</sup> event, sent her document with another participant in the group. He read her feedback aloud to the group. “I felt like the document was not transferable to websites, diversity was over used and undefined. I wanted to know what diversity is.” Although there were some changes that needed to be made, such as defining terms more clearly, the tool provided MSU practitioners with indicators to bring awareness to inequitable practices that had been invisible prior to their use of the tool. The lack of clarity of some of the terms speaks to the need for improvement of the tool for CUE.

Towards the conclusion of the discussion, the CUE researcher asked the group about possible next steps. Comments included a need to look at documents for accessibility, a need to have a discussion about what the intent of the document is and who is the target audience is , a call to use the tool with staff responsible for communications and marketing and perhaps putting a team together to place the tool online. Others mentioned maybe heading a division for communication, looking at other methods such as adding videos or adding pictures, and using the tool for professional development and for new professionals. Suggestions for improving the tool included clearly defining and explaining terms such as diversity and validation and modeling how to use the tool. One participant suggested that we have a tool that ask questions such as, how often one works with Latino students, so people can rate themselves using the tool. The larger group reconvened and discussed themes that had emerged during the smaller

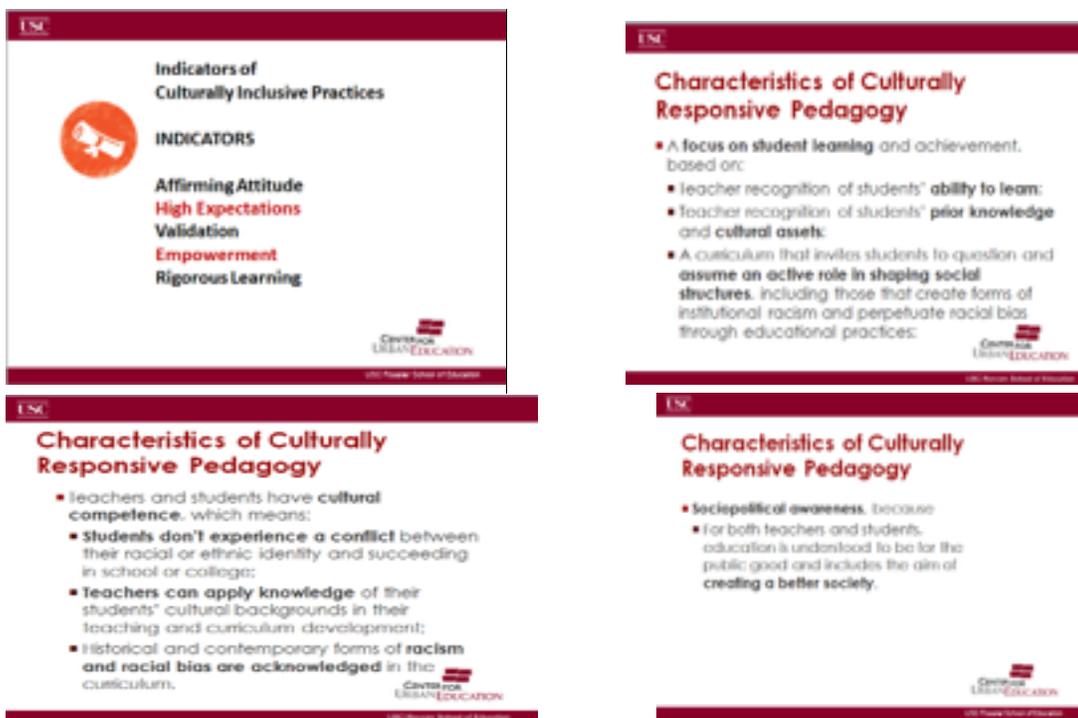
group discussions. An MSU female faculty member ended the meeting by discussing possible next steps. One of the next steps was to open an invitation to start more dialogue about racial equity and being committed to change. These next steps are important because they address the commonly avoided practice of not discussing race.

### **Assessing Student Reactions to Culturally Inclusive Pedagogy Webinar**

The fourth work was a webinar facilitated by CUE and a MSU faculty member. Although it was a webinar, the researcher joined the MSU practitioners at their institution. The Co-director began the presentation by sharing preliminary results from previous events. Results were based on findings from interviews conducted by another Ed.D. student participating in the study. The interviews were with faculty and focused primarily on CUE's Document Analysis Self-Assessment for Culturally Inclusive Practices Protocol. Based on the findings from the interviews conducted, a new document was developed and made available to webinar participants. The webinar was centered on the role of culturally inclusive pedagogy in STEM, student's reactions to culturally inclusive pedagogy, and racial microaggressions. The syllabus assessment form, a form that allows students to assess faculty syllabi was also introduced. Prior to the webinar, two student services professionals were asked to provide examples of racial microaggressions that had been shared with them by MSU students. After going over the agenda, the CUE co-director shared the Ed.D. students' findings. According to the findings, all of the responding STEM participants who attended the Document Analysis Self-Assessment for Culturally Inclusive Practices workshop were glad to be involved in the project, shared that using the protocol helped them to reflect and view their syllabus

with “new eyes,” and agreed that Monarch had room for improvement regarding racial and ethnic equity. Six out of eight participants felt they needed more knowledge to make relevant changes in their classrooms, and all believed they had the power of agency in their classrooms, but did not perceive collective agency. This lack of collective agency was attributed to the perceived risk associated with racial and ethnic equity at MSU.

The Co-director acknowledged Monarch for their feedback and shared results from three other campuses in the collective study. One of the prominent themes at the three campuses was that people were convinced that race was something that they should be paying attention to, but they wanted to know how they should go about it, especially in science and math. Some respondents in the collective study wondered if racial issues should be addressed in STEM classes and asked if students should be getting that in science courses. The co-director acknowledged that CUE develops the tools to support the process of addressing issues of race in STEM. She then shifted the discussion to characteristics of culturally responsive pedagogy. The slides in Figure 4.13 were presented to further demonstrate what culturally inclusive practices look like in action.



Data Source: Assessing Students Reactions to Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Workshop Presentation

Figure 4.13. Indicators of Culturally Inclusive Practices

She stated indicators of culturally inclusive practices include having an affirming attitude, having high expectations, validating, empowering students and providing a rigorous learning environment. Characteristics of culturally responsive pedagogy were also discussed to provide participants a deeper understanding of what culturally inclusive practices look like in action. Figure 4.13: Indicators of Culturally Inclusive Practices provides a more detailed description.

A study by Harper and Hurtado (2011) in which they examined research that had taken place over a fifteen year period on Racial Campus Climates was introduced. The study found nine themes that consistently emerged at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). These nine themes were relevant because MSU is a PWI like many of the

institutions in Harper and Hurtado's (2011) study. The co-director shared the Figure 4.14: Recommendations for Improving Campus Racial Climates to explain the nine themes and the recommendations for change given by the authors: 1) institutional negligence of issues pertaining to race, 2) Race was an avoided topic, 3) Students self-reported racial segregation, but desired to build relationships with students from racially different groups but said they did not know how, 4) Students had differential experiences with the social environment of their institution and African American students were the least satisfied, 5) the PWI's in the study had a history of discrimination and racism, 6) White students overestimated the satisfaction of minority students, 7) the curricula, activities and space were pervasively white, 8) Racial/Ethnic minority staff were reluctant to bring attention to the issues of race due to feeling powerless and fearing political backlash, and 9) the institutions had never conducted any formal campus climate assessments. Many of these themes were prevalent at MSU. Three were that the perception of institutional negligence pertaining to race, that race was an avoided topic, and that ethnic minority staff were reluctant to engage in issues related to race.

**USC**

### Nine Themes in Campus Racial Climates and Recommendations for Institutional Transformation

- **Theme 1:** Cross-Race Consensus regarding Institutional Negligence
- **Theme 2:** Race as a Four Letter Word and an Avoidable Topic
- **Theme 3:** Self-Reports of Racial Segregation
- **Theme 4:** Gaps in Social Satisfaction by Race
- **Theme 5:** Reputational Legacies for Racism
- **Theme 6:** White Student Overestimation of Minority Student Satisfaction
- **Theme 7:** The Pervasiveness of Whiteness in Space, Curricula, and Activities
- **Theme 8:** The Consciousness-Powerlessness Paradox among Racial/Ethnic Minority Staff
- **Theme 9:** Unexplored Qualitative Realities of Race in Institutional Assessment

**Recommendations**

- Practitioners should consider their roles in the cycle and reproduction of racism as institutional negligence.
- Dialogue and strategic efforts must be made to address the nuances of racial segregation that inhibit rich learning that occurs in cross-racial engagement.
- Practitioners should intentionally construct culturally affirming environments and experiences that facilitate the cultivation of racially diverse friendship groups.
- Include diversity in the curriculum, particularly in the first two years.
- Greater transparency regarding racial environments at especially at PWI's.
- Practitioners and institutional researchers must proactively audit the racial campus climate and culture to determine the need for change.
- Senior Administrative support, collaboration, and visible action are among the core elements for transformational change in higher education.

The information on this handout is from Harper, S.R. & Hurtado, S. (2011). "Nine Themes in Campus Racial Climates and Implications for Institutional Transformation".

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Data Source: Assessing Students Reactions to Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Workshop Presentation

*Figure 4.14. Recommendations for Improving Campus Racial Climates*

Harper and Hurtado (2011) suggested several recommendations for PWIs to address the nine themes in racial campus climates. Some of the recommendations included:

Practitioners' consider their role in the reproduction of racism and institutional negligence. Practitioners should intentionally construct culturally affirming environments and experiences that facilitate the cultivation of racially diverse friendship groups, Include diversity in the curriculum, proactively audit the racial campus climate and culture to determine the need for change and provide senior Administrative support, collaboration, and visible actions. (Harper and Hurtado, 2011, p. 213-214)

The Co-director acknowledged that there are many types of diversity but asked the group if it was okay to focus on racial ethnic diversity, adding, "based on theme 8, we should not depend on faculty or staff of color solely when it comes to issues of race." She then turned the presentation over to the researcher and two MSU student services professionals, a male and a female, to discuss racial microaggressions. The researcher provided the group with the definition of racial microaggressions, "Racial microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicates hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group" (Sue et al, 2007, p. 271). Then, the researcher shared a worksheet with examples of microaggressions. An

examples of microaggressions is the ascription of intelligence which includes statements such as telling a person of color that “they are a credit to their race.” According to Sue et al. (2007), such statements send the message that people of color are not generally as intelligent as Whites, or that it is unusual for a person of color to be intelligent. Another example is the assumption that a person of color is a criminal, and the Myth of Meritocracy, which includes statements such as affirming that everyone can succeed if s/he works hard enough. Statements such as this send the message that people of color are lazy or incompetent and need to work harder (Sue et al, 2007)

To go along with the theme of assessing students' reactions to campus climate, the two student services professionals were asked a week prior to the meeting to provide the group with examples of microaggressions shared with them by MSU students. The female provided an example of a white female student who came into her office, a student center, and asked students to share their experiences in terms of being a student of color at Monarch because she needed to interview someone for a class. An African American male shared his experiences with the female student. The next week, the student found his story on the front page of the school newspaper. According to the woman, this was a traumatic experience for the African American student. Another example given was that, when students of color report incidences of racism such as racist remarks or having had things thrown at them, their reports and experiences are often minimized by school officials and campus police with comments such as, “Those are just words.” There was also a report that African American students are often assumed to be athletes by campus staff. According to the woman, “it implies that they are not here

because of their academic prowess.” Students of color also mentioned whenever conversations come up about race in class that they either get nods of approval or sometimes people completely avoid making eye contact with them. The man then provided an example of a staff member making a racist comment in a meeting and no one addressing his comment. The woman argued that some MSU practitioners were interested in racial and ethnic equity but did not know or even have the vocabulary to do so. The Co-director provided the group with more examples of racial microaggressions and added the best way to avoid microaggressions is to not engage in them. The group was provided with the worksheet in figure 4.17 with information about microaggressions. After the discussion about racial microaggressions, the group took a five minute break.

During the break, one of the participants apologized to the researcher for an interaction that occurred earlier that morning. Earlier that day, she introduced the researcher to another Black woman on campus and mentioned that the woman might have been a good resource for my study. After talking about racial microaggressions, she thought that she had been offensive or used a racial microaggression because she assumed the researcher would want to talk with the woman because she was African American as well. The researcher reassured her that her effort to help would not be considered a microaggression. The cycle of inquiry and CHAT framework provide deeper insight into participants’ experiences with the racial microaggressions tool. After the microaggression discussion, the woman assumed that she had been offensive. The microaggression tool served a mediating artifact for social interaction. It was during this social interaction that the woman began to reflect on her interaction earlier that day.

While reflecting, she identified what she believed was a problem and immediately took action to it.

In reconvening for the webinar, we were asked to form smaller groups. The group that the researcher joined was still having a conversation about microaggressions. It was clear that more time was needed for the discussion on this topic. A female faculty member in particular seemed very bothered by the discussion, stating “I feel really, really stupid. I have said some of these things before. I didn’t realize how they may be received.” Shaking her head, she was physically upset.

A few others around nodded their heads in agreement. The researcher reminded the participant that the group was currently in a space where these discussions could take place and that reflection and awareness were part of the process. People seemed to be more comfortable having the discussion on microaggression in a smaller group. Another female expressed being bothered by the term “microaggression.” She suggested, “it should be macro-ignorance because that’s what it is. It’s a lot tougher to correct someone if you think they are ‘aggressing’ you, than if you think that they are ignorant.” A male participant added, “I think it should be macro-aggressions. The examples described don’t seem micro at all.” It was clear that people wanted to spend more time discussing microaggressions, but there was not enough time to finish the discussion and get through the entire agenda for the webinar. It was obvious that more time was needed for the discussion on microaggressions, and, based on the emotional response of the woman who was physically upset, there was also a need for a smaller group discussion.

During the microaggression discussion, the tool served as a mediating cultural artifact and the intervention point for many of the participants. The social aspects of the use of the tool in this instance caused the upset woman to reflect on her own practices and identify a problem. The qualitative data used to report examples of microaggression from MSU students suggested to this woman that she might be contributing to the negative experiences of MSU students. It was clear from her response that those were not her intentions. The discussion and experiences with MSU practitioners in that activity setting gave the impression that the microaggression discussion added a necessary dimension to the conversation on race. However, later analysis of participant responses regarding the racial microaggressions discussion revealed on the evaluation questionnaires contradicted my interpretation of the observational data.

When asked if the concept of racial microaggressions helped MSU practitioners reflect on the campus learning environment, 75% (N=6) out of 8 questionnaire respondents strongly disagreed. Twenty-five percent (N=2) of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

The concept of microaggressions helped me to reflect on my campus' learning environment				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly Disagree		6	75%
2	Disagree		0	0%
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree		2	25%
4	Agree		0	0%
5	Strongly Agree		0	0%
	Total		8	100%

Data Source: Respondents to Assessing Students Reactions to Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Workshop Question 13 “”

*Figure 4.15.* Microaggressions Concept Helped Me Reflect on MSU Learning Environment

The results of this evaluation added another dimension for consideration that differed from the observed emotional responses of the MSU practitioners. One of the open-ended responses revealed some deeper insight in that “there seemed to be a disconnect between the objectives of the webinar and what some of the participants discussed. In particular I found the discussion by the staff members of examples of microaggressions to be off target and misguided.” The part of the discussion the participant believed was misguided is unclear. It is possible that this response may have

come from one of the participants who is a leader of one of the departments described in the examples where students of color had experienced microaggressions. This leader may have felt singled out in one of the examples provided by the male and female practitioners.

An interview with a female respondent provided insight into her experience with the racial microaggression exercise. She commented, “On the microaggressions stuff we need to challenge ourselves. If we pull that, people will think that we are getting too picky. I would have never tied meritocracy to racial microaggressions. Some are too refined.” The Myth of Meritocracy includes statements which assert that race does not play a role in life successes. While the female participant believed that some of the types of microaggressions listed were too refined meaning “too picky,” or too sensitive to small (perceived and perhaps not real) slights, the research literature that provides the foundation for the racial microaggression themes is based on documented real life experiences of students of color (Sue et al, 2007). The Myth of Meritocracy assumes that everyone has equal access to resources that would allow them achieve at similar rates. Many researchers (Margolis, 2008, Bensimon & Dowd, 2009, Stanton-Salazar, 2011) would disagree. Viewing the racial microaggressions as “too picky” minimalizes the experiences of students of color. However, the tool will be ineffective at remediating practices such that they become more inclusive of students of color if the concepts of microaggressions are not accepted by practitioners. This suggests the need for revisions to the instructional design and activity settings employed to introduce these concepts.

Based on interview responses and evaluation feedback racism is often a tough topic for MSU practitioners. The questionnaire responses illuminate two challenges; first, MSU practitioners may not have been ready to be confronted with such vivid examples of the student of color experience. Second, the discussion about microaggressions was not facilitated in productive manner.

As the webinar came to an end a female faculty member who helped facilitate the webinar asked the participants to share culturally inclusive practices they incorporated after participating in the Document Analysis Self-Assessment for Culturally Inclusive Practices workshop. A male faculty member highlighted changes he had made:

After last meeting in October I decided to do things differently in one of my courses, I started talking about how people come from different backgrounds and experiences in the sciences, and told the students if there is anything interesting that they wanted me to be aware of as their instructor to let me know. I handed out index cards gave them the option or write it down and give it to me in class or to come by my office and tell me. I certainly saw a lot more students in office hours and noticed that students were more open to sharing background information in when I opened the invitation.”

A female faculty member used the Document Analysis to make changes to her syllabus. In the syllabus I mentioned “I know you are all coming from different backgrounds,” I also gave a survey about the syllabus in ensure that they all read and understood it. At the conclusion of the meeting the female faculty facilitator asked the co-

director if she had any recommendations for next steps. She provided some recommendations and told the participants that they had the expertise for next steps.

### **Discussion**

The activity settings, cognitive interviews, observations, and questionnaire data provided a deeper understanding of the barriers to increasing racial and ethnic equity at MSU. The lack of institutional leadership, and risk associated with racial issues, inhibited the ability of many MSU practitioners to make significant changes campus wide. MSU faces several challenges in increasing racial and ethnic equity and will need to make changes to reach their desired goal.

The activity settings in this chapter provided insight into the first research question “*What are the characteristics of equity oriented artifacts?*” Characteristics included data disaggregated by race and ethnicity through the BESST. The BESST brings awareness to inequities often hidden in aggregated data. It gives practitioners the opportunity to examine existing problems, and provides the opportunity for practitioners to use the tool to develop a vision of possible steps needed to address inequities. Equity oriented tools also consisted of language such as equity-mindedness and deficit-mindedness, pictures, cartoons that addressed racial issues, and tools such as the Document Analysis Self-Assessment of Culturally Inclusive Practices protocol, a tool that provided indicators that require practitioners to assess and inquire into their own practices.

The equity oriented tools used in the activity settings were developed to provide participants with a deeper understanding of the historical legacies of racism and the

present day impact. The characteristics of equity oriented tools are data disaggregated by race and ethnicity, presentations that include historical legacies of racism, and activities that cause reflection on attitudes, beliefs, and practices that may be contributing to inequities. CUE's equity oriented tools also bring awareness of the past, present, and future state of racial equity.

While respondents did report positive changes in their level of comfort talking about race with their colleagues when facilitated by CUE, there were no reported changes in institutional behaviors and practices. These findings answer the second research question, *what changes were observed or reported by respondents in ways associated with CUE's tools and activities?* There were several barriers to achieving equity at MSU. \One of the most prevalent barriers was the perceived risk that MSU practitioners associated with addressing racial and ethnic issues. Although many MSU practitioners who participated in the workshops expressed a desire to increase racial equity, the fear that they would be negatively received by their colleagues inhibited needed change. Throughout the study, Monarch practitioners did mention that tools brought an awareness that did not exist prior to their work with CUE but the increased awareness about inequities did serve as a catalyst for change at MSU.

Examining institutional norms and practices surrounding racial and ethnic equity at MSU offered answers to the third research question, *what environmental factors mediate changes or a lack of change in practitioners social interactions, behaviors, and practices?* In this study, factors that contributed to the lack of change at MSU included the absence of institutional support from the leadership on issues related to equity. With

just a couple of exceptions, MSU leaders did not participate in events surrounding equity and had not taken any visible actions to address racial inequities. Another factor and that inhibited change was the perception of risk. MSU practitioners feared that they would be outcast or met with hostility by their colleagues in their efforts to increase equity campus-wide. They also feared making their colleagues uncomfortable. As a result, many MSU practitioners avoided conversations related to race. This risk/fear was driven by insufficient knowledge concerning racial and ethnic issues. A positive change noted by MSU practitioners was an increase in comfort discussing racial and ethnic issues in workshops facilitated by CUE. The findings provide insight into the third research question; the factors that mediated a lack of change in this study were the lack of leadership and support and the perceived risk associated with racial and ethnic issues. It was clear that many of the participants wanted to increase equity, but their desire for change was inhibited by the lack of leadership and the perception of risk.

The next chapter provides recommendations for Monarch practitioners, CUE and other Action Researchers, and for the field of higher education to address the findings of this study.

## Chapter Five: Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to understand an organizational learning and change process aimed at increasing equity in higher education for historically underrepresented students at MSU. This study aimed to gain a better understanding of CUE tools and action research processes through seeking answers to three research questions: *What are the characteristics of equity oriented artifacts, what changes were observed or reported by respondents in ways associated with CUE tools and activities, and what environmental factors mediate changes or lack of changes in practitioner's social interactions, behaviors, and practices.* The findings indicate that the characteristics of CUE's equity oriented artifacts are data driven, and encourage practitioners to engage inquiry. The Center for Urban Education's tools also provide practitioners with a historical understanding of past and present race relations through presentations and activities. Other characteristics include tools that help practitioners assess practices that may have a negative impact on racial and ethnic equity. During this study, no sustainable changes were observed to increase racial and ethnic equity. The factors that contributed to the lack of change at MSU included a lack of support from institutional leadership, lack of knowledge to address racial and ethnic issues, and the perception of risk associated with addressing racial and ethnic issues at MSU. Understanding these factors better will facilitate the design of more effective organizational learning and change processes in the future.

This chapter discusses the findings and the context in which the findings emerged. Based on the findings, several recommendations are provided and, discussed in the following sections, to improve efforts to improve racial and ethnic inequities. The findings included that MSU practitioners lacked support from the institution's leadership, had individual agency but not collective agency, and that MSU practitioners perceived there were risks associated with addressing racial and ethnic issues. To address these issues, there are four recommendations. The first is that MSU leaders take visible actions to demonstrate that racial equity is a priority and to gain the confidence of MSU practitioners. The second recommendation is for the Center for Urban Education and other action researchers to conduct risk assessment prior to the initial meeting with institutions to gain a better understanding of the institution's needs. The third recommendation is for the field of higher education to consistently conduct audits of campus racial climate, the fourth is for policy makers to include accountability for racial equity as part of the accreditation process. The following section briefly describes the context in which the findings emerged and provides a deeper understanding of how the findings characterize the conditions of practitioner agency in relation to the racial and ethnic inequities at MSU.

The first finding is that MSU practitioners involved in this action research perceived a lack of support from the institution's leadership in addressing racial and ethnic inequities. The leadership gained a reputation for not taking actions to address issues related to race. While the participants in this study found CUE's efforts to increase equity necessary, years with no perceived support from the institution's leadership limited

behavioral changes toward increasing equity. The institution's leadership had also been unsuccessful at building structures to meet the needs of a racially diverse student body. Diversity was highlighted as an espoused value but was not visibly apparent in access to the institution. The perception of inadequate support was reinforced in the workshops facilitated by CUE because MSU leaders were often absent or left workshops early to attend other meetings. As noted in Chapter Four, practitioners at MSU felt that there had been several espoused initiatives towards increasing equity, but they had never witnessed changes.

The second finding was that MSU practitioners who participated in this study took pride in being individual agents. Participants expressed having a sense of personal responsibility surrounding racial and ethnic issues but only in their designated departments or units and not campus-wide. As a result, some participants made isolated efforts to address racial inequities. The isolation of these efforts negatively affected the transformational change needed at MSU. Although working in isolation is not atypical for higher education practitioners, once organizations begin to work in silos, they tend to only work toward the goal of the unit and not the organization as a whole, often losing sight of the organization's mission (Bess & Dee, 2008). This was evident at MSU.

The third finding was that participants perceived that there were risks associated with issues related to race at MSU. Factors contributing to the perception of risk included race being an avoided topic among MSU practitioners, a perception of intolerance for differing opinions, insufficient knowledge and language about how to address equity issues, and not wanting to make their colleagues feel uncomfortable,

which, in part, created a culture of silence. While participants communicated the desire to address racial and ethnic inequities, the perceived lack of support from the institution's leadership, their colleagues, and the risk associated with racial issues inhibited MSU practitioners from making changes.

While no behavioral changes took place among participants in my study, the findings reveal that inquiry took place. (Also, it is important to note that behavioral changes were noted among participants at MSU who were included in the samples of collaborating researchers at the same field site.) It was during the social interaction stage of the cycle of inquiry that MSU practitioners began to reflect on their own practices and identify how their practices contributed to racial and ethnic inequities. The recommendations in this chapter are informed by the findings and provide suggestions for MSU practitioners, CUE and other action researchers and for the field of higher education.

### **Recommendations for Monarch State University and Practitioners**

In order to address the perceived lack of support surrounding racial and ethnic inequities among MSU practitioners, the institution's leadership will need to take visible actions. Visible actions are noticeable changes (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). "Activities surrounding racial and ethnic equity must be visible and promoted so that individuals can see that change is still important and continuing" (Kezar and Eckel, 2002, p.441). For MSU leaders, visible action should consist of making changes to policies and structures that perpetuate inequities. Visible action should also consist of speaking at and attending events related to racial and ethnic issues at MSU to demonstrate that addressing racial

inequities is a priority. Financially investing in efforts to increase equity would also demonstrate a commitment towards equity. According to Barr (2002) one can tell an institution's priorities based on where it allocates its resources. Visible actions are also important so people can see that their efforts are leading to changes (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). In the findings, MSU practitioners expressed frustration because their efforts were not producing results. Visible actions are necessary for MSU's leadership to gain the confidence and trust of those they lead. As noted by Eckel and Kezar (2002b), "Senior administrative support, collaboration, and visible actions are among the core elements for transformational change in higher education" (as cited by Harper and Hurtado, 2011 p. 214). A study conducted by CUE found that, when practitioners receive needed support, significant changes can be made to increase institutional effectiveness (Bensimon & Malcolm, 2012).

In a study conducted by CUE researchers with Loyola Marymount University (LMU), researchers found that LMU practitioners who participated in the Equity Scorecard felt hopeless in their efforts to increase racial equity. During the partnership, the assistant to the president became a leader of the institution's evidence team and was able to gain the support of the president. Once the LMU practitioners gained the support of the university president, LMU was able to make significant changes to increase racial equity (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012).

To address risk, another recommendation is professional development surrounding racial and ethnic issues for all MSU practitioners. One of the factors that contributed to the risk perceived by many MSU practitioners was insufficient knowledge.

People wanted to address equity issues but did not know how to go about it. Professional development would need to include how to be culturally inclusive, language needed to comfortably discuss race, and a history of race relations and structural racism. Inequitable outcomes are a result of attitudes, beliefs, and practices of individuals. Attitudes, beliefs, and practices that contribute to unequal outcomes prevail because institutions fail to provide practitioners with opportunities to share (Bensimon (2005). As noted in Chapter Two, providing a forum for practitioners to share can make “the invisible, visible and undiscussable, discussable” (Bensimon, 2005, p. 99). This was evident in the findings of this study.

A third recommendation is that MSU provide safe opportunities for its practitioners to talk about racial and ethnic issues through professional development. Professional development will provide practitioners with the opportunity to develop shared norms and shared funds of knowledge to increase institutional effectiveness surrounding racial equity. According to the State of Vermont’s Department of Education (2011), practitioners have the power to have a positive impact on student outcomes:

Research has shown educator quality to be the most important influence on student achievement. High quality professional development is essential to increase educators’ knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs so that they may enable all students to learn at high levels. Professional development that is most effective in improving educator practice is results-oriented, data driven, constructivist in nature and job embedded. (State of Vermont, Department of Education, 2011)

The professional development workshops should be guided by disaggregated data and should provide practitioners with the opportunity to reflect critically on their practices (Bensimon & Dowd, 2009; Darling- Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995).

Effective professional development involves:

- Engagement in concrete task, assessment, observation, and reflection
- Must be grounded in inquiry, reflection, experimentation, and is participant-driven
- It must be collaborative, and includes sharing knowledge in communities of practice
- It must be connected to and derived from teachers work with their students
- It must be sustained, ongoing, intensive, and supported by modeling, coaching, and the collective solving of problems of practice.
- It must be connected to other aspects of school change

(Darling- Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995, p. 598)

While Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin's (1995) research focused on teachers, characteristics of professional development described are also applicable for all practitioners. Professional development should also address the lack of comfort that practitioners experience when talking about race. MSU practitioners expressed that they felt most comfortable talking about race in the workshops conducted by CUE. An outside facilitator can be used to guide this process until MSU practitioners feel safe enough to address these issues on their own. During the Document Analysis for Self- Assessment of Culturally Inclusive Practices workshop, participants mentioned that the tools employed

by CUE provided a “safe way to talk about race.” Professional development around equity issues would promote collective agency.

While individual agency is necessary, individual agency can be slow in producing equity and organizational change (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). Collaborative knowledge is one of the primary tenets of organizational learning, CHAT, and practice theory. As noted previously, creating knowledge together provides practitioners with the opportunity to challenge existing norms and develop shared values and language (Kezar, 2005).

Professional development should also address the isolated efforts put forth by MSU practitioners. According to Stanton-Salazar (2010), an agent’s capacity to serve students is linked to his/her networks; therefore, agents must be willing to collaborate and build diverse networks with others to effectively assist students. Based on the findings of this study, there are agents who already exist at MSU. A professional development community would serve as catalyst to develop a system of agents who work together to increase equity in outcomes for underrepresented students.

### **Recommendations for the Center for Urban Education and other Action**

#### **Researchers**

The perceived risk associated with addressing issues of race at MSU was one of the primary factors that impeded change. These beliefs about risk did not surface until interviews were conducted after the Document Analysis for Self-Assessment of Culturally Inclusive Practices workshop. It is possible that, with prior knowledge regarding the existing perception of risk, CUE could have used tools to address the issue in earlier workshops. As a result, a recommendation is that CUE conducts a Likert Type

Scale “risk assessment” to be completed by partnering institutions prior to their first workshop with CUE. Survey items could include:

1. I feel comfortable talking about racial and ethnic equity with my colleagues?      Never      Rarely      Sometimes      Always  
Why or why not?
  
2. I feel confident in my skills and ability to effectively talk about race.  
Strongly disagree    Neither Agree nor Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree  
Why or why not?
  
3. Race is an avoided topic at my institution.  
Never      Rarely      Sometimes      Always  
Why or why not?
  
4. I am knowledgeable about issues of race.  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neither Agree nor Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree
  
5. Most of my colleagues are open to differing opinions surrounding racial issues.  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neither Agree nor Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree
  
6. I am often insecure about to how to refer to individuals from varied racial and ethnic groups.  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neither Agree nor Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree
  
7. I am concerned being viewed as problematic for addressing racial and ethnic inequities.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

8. Please specify your race/ethnicity

American Indian or Alaska Native

Asian

Black or African American

Latina/a or Hispanic

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

White

9. I am comfortable being at the forefront of conversations surrounding race.

Never Comfortable Rarely Comfortable Sometimes Comfortable Always

Comfortable

10. My race/ethnicity has an impact on my level of comfort being at the forefront of conversations surrounding race.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

11. I believe that it is my responsibility to address racial and ethnic inequities on my campus.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

Conducting risk assessments would provide CUE with a better understanding of its partners and the tools needed to address the risk associated with racial and ethnic issues. According to the CHAT framework, learning occurs in situated learning activities. This was the case at MSU. During the workshops, CUE's meditating tools produced the

opportunity for social interaction. Social interaction served as the intervention point during the cycle of inquiry. It was during the social interaction that participants began to identify the problem. Participating in inquiry helped MSU practitioners develop a better understanding of the factors inhibiting institutional change. Conducting a risk assessment is also important because it is possible that practitioners in a setting are unaware that the perception of risk even exists. Culture is powerful, often goes unquestioned, and has the ability to shape what people see or fail to see (Bensimon, 2009).

One of the exercises that seemed to leave MSU practitioners uneasy was the conversation about racial microaggressions at the Assessing Students' Reactions to Culturally Inclusive Pedagogy Webinar. During the webinar, two practitioners provided examples of racial microaggressions shared with them by students. As noted in Chapter Four, racial microaggressions "are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicates hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group" (Sue et al, 2007, p. 271). After the exercise, many of the practitioners were still talking about it and one was visibly upset. Two recommendations ensue; first, CUE must develop this exercise in a way that allows people to be actively involved in learning about racial microaggressions.

The second recommendation is that this exercise is revised to allow for smaller group discussions facilitated by trained practitioners at the partnering institution. During this exercise, participants seemed less likely to share in the larger group but were more open to talk when in smaller groups. Participants also seemed to have strong feelings

about the exercise. Some expressed feelings of guilt and/or shame. The Center for Urban Education should train several individuals at partnering institutions to facilitate discussions in smaller groups about racial microaggressions. This would provide practitioners with the knowledge and skills to facilitate race-based discussions. Hearing about the experiences of students of color from MSU from the two practitioners who participated in the Assessing Students' Reactions to Culturally Inclusive Practices workshop was helpful, but people did not have enough knowledge to fully grasp the concept. Sharing the students' experiences should come near the end of the agenda, instead of at the beginning, to provide more contexts for the participants. The examples provided by the male and female practitioner were helpful, but some of the examples included made people feel attacked, and that is not the goal of CUE's work. It may be helpful if, after the exercise is facilitated, CUE provides all participants with the opportunity to share examples of racial microaggressions shared with them by students. This would allow participants to reflect on their experiences with students. Appendix E provides an example of suggested revisions to the racial microaggressions exercise. The revisions include step by step instructions for facilitators, and it is designed to produce social interaction with the purpose of assisting practitioners in developing shared knowledge. The tool used in the Assessing Students' Reactions to Culturally Inclusive Pedagogy webinar provided a list of the kinds of messages that racial microaggressions send students. The revised tool asks practitioners to develop their own list of the kinds of messages that racial microaggressions send students. The original tool provides answers, while the revised tool allows practitioners to develop a shared knowledge and

understanding of racial microaggressions. Step by step instructions were developed so that the exercise can be facilitated in small groups.

### **Recommendations for the Field**

Increasing equity for underrepresented students in higher education means that colleges and universities will have to make changes to institutional practices and policies that perpetuate structural racism. This change will not happen automatically, and it will require institutions of higher education to become accountable for the outcomes of students from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. I recommend that institutions, who desire to increase racial and ethnic equity, do so through their accreditation self-study processes. As noted in Chapter Two, accreditation is a form of accountability. “Accreditation is the primary means of assuring and improving the quality of higher education in the United States” (CHEA, 2009). Although it is a voluntary system of self-examination in which institutions are evaluated by their peers, there are negative consequences for institutions that are not accredited. Accreditation is required in order for an institution to award students federal and state funds. It is viewed as a symbol of legitimacy and quality assurance in higher education. According to Chun and Evans (2010), “Accreditation is a major driver of accountability” (Chun & Evans 2010, p.1).

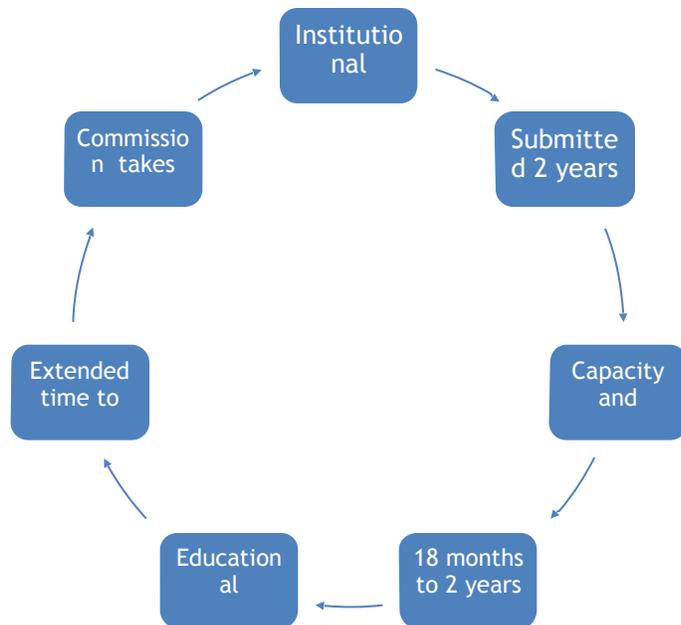
The process of accreditation provides institutions with a holistic approach to improving institutional effectiveness. Accreditation allows institutions to align their priorities with the four standards established by WASC. The first standard requires that institutions define their purpose and align their educational objectives with the institution’s purpose. Institutions seeking accreditation or candidacy must have a clear

sense of the institution's value, character and relationship to society. Under the guidelines of the first standard, an institution must be what it claims to be. For example, if an institution claims to be a technical institution, it must deliver a curriculum and have clearly defined objectives that relate to its purpose. Once an institution has defined its purpose, the second standard asks that it demonstrates it achieves its educational priorities. Standard two focuses on outcomes. Institutions must provide both qualitative and quantitative evidence to illustrate that priorities are being met through functions such as teaching and learning. The third standard is centered on the institution's capacity to develop and apply the organizational structures and resources needed to ensure sustainability. Resources include faculty and staff along with fiscal, physical, and informational resources. Organizational structures encompass decision-making processes for administrators and faculty. The fourth standard requires that "institutions demonstrate a commitment to learning and improvement through evidence based discussions, and an evidence based decision making process centered around the institutions educational objectives" (WASC 101), capacities that are well supported by practitioner inquiry.

Institutions that desire to increase racial-ethnic equity should make equity a priority for accreditation. The accreditation process requires that institutions take responsibility for achieving their objectives and provides external accountability. The accreditation process requires a process by which various departments within an institution work collaboratively to identify and improve institutional problems.

An institution seeking to reaffirm accreditation or candidacy must participate in a three-part institutional review process illustrated in Figure 5.1. Part one is the

Institutional Proposal, part two is the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) and includes the first site visit for the institution. Part three is the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER), which involves a second site visit. The Institutional Proposal is the first step in the process and the entire review.



*Figure 5.1.* Institutional Review Process for WASC

**The Institutional Proposal.** In the Institutional Proposal, institutions connect their context and priorities with standards of accreditation. The proposal serves as the primary basis for the institution’s self-review and the evaluation team’s review. It is in the Institutional Proposal that institutions define their priorities. The proposal process provides practitioners at institutions like MSU with the opportunity to work collectively to identify key issues that need improvement, such as addressing racial-ethnic inequities. The proposal requires the entire campus to be involved in the accreditation process. One of the barriers to increasing equity at Monarch State University was that only a few

people were involved in equity efforts, which impeded efforts towards increasing equity campus-wide. The Institutional Proposal would assist an institution like MSU in gaining broad support among faculty and staff for addressing equity issues. Having broad institutional support would increase buy-in, lead to a sense of ownership, and would promote collective agency. The proposal also requires that institutions develop a clear vision with specific outcomes, meaning the institution would not only have to provide a vision, but it would also have to set goals or milestones to achieve that vision.

Another barrier to increasing equity at institutions like MSU is not having a well-established vision or goals for improving equity. This lack of vision at MSU contributed to the belief that the institution lacked leadership. Allowing departments campus-wide to assist in the development of the vision would broaden the responsibility to achieve the institution's goals. The final steps of the proposal require that institutions develop a data driven plan of action and provide the resources needed to carry out the plan. It is hard to move an agenda forward without a plan of action that encompasses the resources needed to successfully meet institutional goals. In part, this lack of vision may have resulted from the emergent and flexible project design as CUE engaged with MSU partners in a series of design experiments to develop more effective action research strategies.

**Capacity Preparatory Review.** The second step in the institutional review process is the Capacity Preparatory Review (CPR). The CPR verifies and evaluates the reports and data in the institutional proposal using the standards of the WASC commission. The CPR includes a site visit to the institution by a WASC evaluation team. The "CPR evaluates the capacity of the institution's infrastructure to carry out the items

in the institutional proposal (WASC 101). Thorough engagement in this process with a focus on equity would be valuable for MSU and institutions like MSU seeking to decrease racial inequities. Without a strong infrastructure to support the desired change institutional improvements are not sustainable.

The site visit is generally conducted by a team of individuals who are considered experts in the area under review. Receiving expert guidance to increase racial equity is essential for MSU and institutions like MSU, but expert instruction alone will not close equity gaps. Institutions must have leadership and work collectively to achieve desired equity goals. Increasing equity also requires that institutions talk about issues of race. Harper and Hurtado (2011) suggest “using the data gathered from campus racial audits to guide conversations and reflective examinations to overcome discomfort with race” (p. 213).

After the CPR is complete, the commission cites areas in need of improvement before the next step, which is the Educational Effectiveness Review. This process is necessary for institutions seeking to increase equity. It requires that institutions consistently refine efforts to increase equity and provide a process for continuous internal and external accountability. According to the practitioners at MSU, they have talked about equity for many years, yet no significant change towards increasing change had occurred. The accreditation process requires institutions to make progress towards achieving their objectives. Institutions that fail to make progress may require additional sites. Institutions must successfully pass the CPR phase of accreditation before moving to the next phase of the accreditation, the EER.

**Educational Effectiveness Review.** The Educational Effectiveness review allows the commission to evaluate how well an institution has fulfilled its objectives. The EER focuses on results, and an institution's ability to sustain progress. The EER emphasizes the assessment of both student and organizational learning and improvement. Organizational learning allows practitioners to inquire into structural and cultural barriers to gain a better understanding of practices that may be negatively affecting underrepresented students (Bensimon, 2009). Organizational learning and action research encourages practitioners to make inquiry a routine practice.

During the EER site visit, the "team evaluates the institution's ability to sustain evidence-based inquiry into educational effectiveness that leads to institutional improvements." The action research process requires institutions to learn about their practices for the purpose of increasing institutional effectiveness. Similar to the Equity Scorecard process, the WASC team also follows-up on issues and recommendations made during the CPR review. Following the EER, the commission reviews both the CPR and EER to determine if the institution met core commitments represented in the standards (WASC 101). The accreditation process is focused on continuous improvement and results. This data driven accountability process would be beneficial at institutions like MSU because it provides a systematic way to develop greater understanding of racial inequities through the use of data. Further, it provides standards for self- review and external review, engages the entire campus community, and most importantly it requires that institutions meet their priorities. If increasing equity is a priority for an institution like MSU, the institution will hold itself accountable both internally and externally.

I recommend that higher education institutions engage in institutional self-assessments to gain a better understanding of their practices, policies and structures that contribute to institutional ineffectiveness. According to Chun and Evans (2010), accreditation is the single most powerful lever that will drive change and ensure accountability, it is valued by institutions of higher education because it represents the seal of approval by higher education peers. Linking equity goals with accreditation standards will increase support for addressing equity and create pressure on higher education institutions to take action. Accountability for increasing equity would mean that post-secondary institutions would have to provide data disaggregated by race and ethnicity, provide a plan to address gaps in access, retention, and graduation rates for students of color, and demonstrate that changes have taken place.

It is not enough to know that inequities exist, practitioners, policy makers, and institutional leaders must do something to address racial and ethnic inequities. Institutions that aspire to increase racial and ethnic equity should make it a priority for accreditation. Institutional transformation and change is largely affected by leadership. Many institutional leaders may lack the knowledge and tools needed to increase racial and ethnic equity. Accreditation involves action research and organizational learning. It defines a holistic process to assist institutions in achieving their priorities and involves the whole campus in the process so that the responsibility for increasing equity is a collective effort.

## **Discussion**

This study contained several implications for the field. Internal and external accountability is vital for institutions seeking change. Organizational learning is the key to change (Kezar, 2005). Institutions that fail to examine existing practices, policies, and structures that affect the outcomes of students from racial-ethnic backgrounds contribute to the equity gap in outcomes. Investigating practices will require that institutions use qualitative and quantitative data disaggregated by race and ethnicity and use that data to gain insight into the problem. Participatory action research can be a useful approach for institutions seeking to increase organizational learning, but addressing key issues requires support from institutional leadership, collective agency, and that institutions address factors that may impede change, such as the discomfort talking about race at MSU.

Action research allows for people to develop a better understanding of present problems through shared experiences. It is through this shared experience that practitioners produce knowledge. Action research also empowers people through the construction and use of their own knowledge. While action research provides practitioners greater clarity of institutional issues and the production of knowledge, change often requires that practitioner acquire new knowledge to address issues. The findings in this study suggest that drawing solely on one's own knowledge may not be enough to increase racial inequities, especially if that knowledge is limited.

The goal of action research is to generate phronesis, a process by which researchers and local practitioners from diverse areas of an institution come together as stakeholders to define a problem, conduct research to understand the problem, and develop a plan of action to address the problem. After the plan is implemented, together,

stakeholders evaluate the outcomes of their work. If the desired outcome is not achieved, they go through the cycle again until the goal is met. Institutions seeking to increase racial-ethnic equity must continuously engage in organizational learning and action research. Working collectively, with support from institutional leadership will enhance an institution's ability to improve the outcomes of students from historically underrepresented.

If the United States is to meet President Obama's goal of having the highest number of college graduates by the year 2020, institutions of higher education will need to develop the capacity to overcome barriers to addressing racial and ethnic inequities. Colleges and universities cannot assume that practitioners already know how to address issues of race and will need to provide opportunities for practitioners to develop the competencies needed to increase racial and ethnic equity for underrepresented students. Closing the equity gap in the higher education for underrepresented students requires leadership, collective agency, equity oriented tools, the use of disaggregated data, action research and accountability.

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## Appendix A

### Recruitment Text and Ethical Commitments for Interactions with Human Subjects

Dear Colleague,

The Center for Urban Education (CUE) at the University of Southern California is currently conducting a developmental evaluation study. The study has two main goals. First to develop our evaluation capacity by improving the validity of the inferences we draw from our workshop evaluation forms and other evaluative processes and, second, to improve our effectiveness in conducting action research for the purposes of improving equity in higher education. Therefore, we are interested in gaining a more nuanced understanding of the experiences of workshop participants and Equity Scorecard evidence team members who engage with us in action research projects.

As a participant in a CUE workshop or evidence team, you may be asked to take part in an interview or a focus group conducted by a doctoral student who is part of the CUE Evaluation Study research team. The doctoral students will also collect observational data at workshops and team meetings. You can decline to participate in an interview or a focus group, or request to be omitted from the data collected during workshop and team observations.

That said, I am hopeful you are willing to support and contribute to CUE's developmental evaluation study and our goal of better understanding you and your colleague's reactions, experiences, reflections, and action steps and the extent to which these were facilitated through our action research processes and tools.

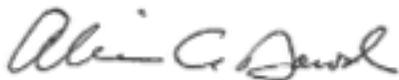
In conducting this study, we make the following commitments:

- To respect your professionalism and privacy by conducting the study in a confidential and ethical manner.
- To use your time wisely and well, and to minimize the "response burden" on any one individual.
- To report findings anonymously to external audiences, for example in dissertations or evaluation reports.
- To share findings with you and your colleagues in ways informative to your learning process. We will not report findings in ways that would reveal the experience of any one individual (for example based on his or her race, ethnicity, gender, or position). Instead, we will draw on findings from multiple participants on your campus or aggregated across different field sites to communicate themes or issues that are pertinent in your setting.

Should you have any questions or concerns, or should any arise as we conduct this study, please contact me by phone or email: 213.740.5202, [alicia.dowd@usc.edu](mailto:alicia.dowd@usc.edu).

Thank you for your consideration!

Yours sincerely,



Associate Professor

Co-Director

Center for Urban Education

University of Southern California • Rossier School of Education • Waite Phillips Hall, Suite 702

Los Angeles, CA 90089-4037 • T 213.740.5202 • F 213.740.3889 • <http://cue.usc.edu>

## CUE's Developmental-Evaluation Study—At a Glance

*Q. If I participate in this study, what would I be asked to do?*

A. You would be asked to do one or more of the following:

- Complete an evaluation form at the conclusion of a workshop or evidence team meeting in which you were a participant (approximately 15 minutes)
- Participate in one or more individual telephone or in-person interviews following a workshop or team meeting (approximately 40 minutes each)
- Participate in a focus group (approximately 1.0 to 1.5 hours long)
- Provide non-confidential materials from your work to illustrate professional practices on your campus (e.g. a syllabus, an application form, an assessment form, a campus report) and changes that take place over the course of the study.

*Q. What if I participate in one of the activities indicated above, but don't want to participate in the others.*

A. That is fine. You may decline to participate at any time.

*Q. What methodology are you using?*

A. Our study is best characterized as developmental evaluation<sup>1</sup>, a methodology that is appropriate when the organization conducting the study operates in a complex, dynamic environment and is interested in developing innovative and responsive processes that will function well in those environments.

Developmental evaluators use a variety of methods, data, and analysis techniques. We will triangulate data from evaluation forms, observations, interviews, focus groups and documents. The interviews will take a particular form called “cognitive interviewing.” These are “think aloud” interviews where you explain how you interpreted and answered the questions on the evaluation form. This will enable us to improve the quality of the data we collect from this simple and quick evaluation tool.

*Q. Who else is involved in this study?*

Currently, faculty, administrators, and counselors at twelve community colleges, two state universities, and two liberal arts colleges (all in California) are being invited to participate. We anticipate having 10 to 30 participants per site at 10 of these sites, with the number depending on the total number of participants in CUE workshops or evidence teams. It is not necessary for everyone who has participated in a workshop or team meeting at a particular campus to participate in the evaluation study.

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<sup>1</sup> See Patton, M. Q. (2011) *Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use*. New York: Guilford Press.

## Appendix B

### Observational Data Collection Template

<b>TIME PERIOD/TASK</b>	<b>(#)</b>
<p><b>Site</b></p> <p>(room temp, equipment, environment, “artifacts”)</p> <p><b>Mood</b></p> <p>(emotions, general attitudes, personality traits)</p> <p><b>“Task” Performance</b></p> <p>(CUE Tools; knowledge base for engagement with presentation or tool; expressed attitudes towards or beliefs about tool; e.g. use or value or design)</p>	

<p><b>Social Context</b></p> <p>(Who is there (social markers), positions/ authority relations; race relations; interactions, who talking)</p> <p><b>Behavioral Intentions</b></p> <p>(expressed next steps, plans, norms)</p> <p><b>Environmental Constraints</b></p> <p>(expressed concerns or hopes, perceived limitations of self, team or resources)</p>	
<p><b><i>Reflection/ Analysis</i></b></p>	

## Appendix C

Cognitive Interview Protocol: Monarch State University Evaluations October, 2011

Instructions to be Read to the Participant (Willis, 2005):

-Either read these instructions in their entirety or paraphrase them. However include elements from each item.

*“Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. Let me tell you a little more about what we will be doing today.”*

1. *We’re evaluating the survey items you completed at the symposium on June 10th, as well as your experience throughout this process.*
2. *I’ll ask you questions and you answer them, just like a normal survey.*
3. *However, my goal here is to get a better idea of how the questions are working. Therefore, I would like you to think aloud as you answer the questions, in other words tell me everything you are thinking about as you go about answering them.*
4. *At times I’ll stop and ask you more questions about the terms or phrases in the questions and what you think a question is asking about. I will also be taking notes.*
5. *Please keep in mind that I want to hear all of your opinions and reactions. Do not hesitate to speak up whenever something seems unclear, is hard to answer, or doesn’t seem to apply to you.*
6. *Finally, we will do this for 30 to 40 minutes, unless I run out of thing to ask you before then.*
7. *Do you have any questions before we begin?*

## Cognitive Interview Protocol

Date: Interview # : Interviewer initials:

Start Time of Interview:

1. *My institution's commitment to racial/ethnic equity should be prioritized as...*

*Not a priority Low priority Moderate priority High priority*

Probes:

How did you arrive at your answer?

What do you believe is meant by “commitment to...equity”?

What is meant by “racial-ethnic equity” on your campus specifically?

Additional notes:

3. *My institution is doing all it can to support the **success** of Students of Color.*

*Disagree*

*Somewhat Disagree*

*Somewhat Agree*

*Agree*

Probes:

How did you arrive at your answer?

How did you define “success” when answering this question?

Additional notes:

4. *I can make a positive difference to reduce racial and ethnic inequities on campus through my daily behavior.*

*Disagree*

*Somewhat Disagree*

*Somewhat Agree*

*Agree*

Probes:

How did you arrive at your answer?

What type of “daily behaviors” came to mind when you answered this question?

What would these “positive differences” look like on your campus?

Additional notes:

5. *At my institution, the changes needed to improve racial/ethnic equity are...*

*Not Under My Control*

*Somewhat Under My Control*

*Under My Control*

Probes:

How did you arrive at your answer?

What changes do you feel are under your control?

What changes do you feel are not?

What are possible constraints for these types of changes on your campus?

6. *I feel that I have a lot to learn before I can impact racial/ethnic equity issues on my campus.*

*Not at all*

*Somewhat*

*Definitely*

Probes:

How did you arrive at your answer?

What types of learning do you feel you or your colleagues need to accomplish in order to make an impact?

Additional notes:

*7. I generally feel comfortable talking about issues of race and ethnicity with my colleagues.*

*Never            Rarely            Sometimes            Always*

Probes:

How did you arrive at your answer?

What factors add to your comfort or discomfort when talking about these issues?

Additional notes:

*11. CUE's document analysis protocol provided a useful starting point for a meaningful dialogue with my colleagues.*

*Disagree                      Somewhat Disagree                      Somewhat Agree                      Agree*

Probes:

How did you arrive at your answer?

If you agreed, in what ways did the protocol contribute to the dialogue?

If you disagreed, why?

In what ways could the protocol be improved upon?

Additional notes:

*15. The comic strip highlighting the ways individuals benefit from structural racism added a necessary dimension to our discussion.*

*Disagree*

*Somewhat Disagree*

*Somewhat Agree*

*Agree*

Probes:

How did you arrive at your answer?

If you agreed, what type of dimension was added? If you disagreed, why?

Additional notes:

*Lastly, is there anything else you can remember regarding your own thinking processes while completing the evaluation?*

*During the workshop, what was your reaction to (BLANK: fill-in an incident, context, etc., from your observational notes)?*

*What was your own thinking during this incident/activity/etc?*

*Is there anything else you would to share regarding your own processing during the workshop?*

(Paraphrase if you prefer) Thank you for taking the time to help CUE improve our work with Cal Poly. Do you have any further questions or concerns?

## Appendix D

### Cognitive Interview Protocol: Monarch State University Webinar

February, 2012

Instructions to be Read to the Participant (Willis, 2005):

-Either read these instructions in their entirety or paraphrase them, however include elements from each item

“Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. Let me tell you a little more about what we will be doing today.”

1. We're evaluating the survey items you completed from the webnair/workshop survey as well as your experience throughout this process.
2. I'll ask you questions and you answer them, just like a normal survey.
3. However, my goal here is to get a better idea of how the questions are working. Therefore, I would like you to think aloud as you answer the questions, in other words tell me everything you are thinking about as you go about answering them.
4. At times I'll stop and ask you more questions about the terms or phrases in the questions and what you think a question is asking about. I will also be taking notes.
5. Please keep in mind that I want to hear all of your opinions and reactions. Do not hesitate to speak up whenever something seems unclear, is hard to answer, or doesn't seem to apply to you.
6. Finally, we will do this for 20 to 30 minutes, unless I run out of thing to ask you before then.
7. Do you have any questions before we begin?



What did you prefer or not prefer about the webinar?

Additional notes:

Q5. The group activity encouraged an environment of reflection for most of my colleagues.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Probes:

How did you arrive at your answer?

What do you believe is meant by “reflection”?

If you agreed, in what ways did the activity encourage group reflection?

Additional notes:

Q6. Prior to attending today's webinar/workshop, I have reflected on ways to make my pedagogical materials as culturally inclusive as possible.

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Quite Often
- Very Often

Probes:

How did you arrive at your answer?

What do you believe is meant by “culturally inclusive?”

What do you think is meant by your reflection of your own materials, specifically?

Additional notes:

Q7. Overall, today's workshop caused me to reflect in new ways on my own pedagogical practices.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Probes:

How did you arrive at your answer?

What are “new” ways of reflection that could be generated from a single workshop?

Additional notes:

Q9. I found CUE's Syllabus Analysis Tool to be valuable to my own work.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Probes:

How did you arrive at your answer?

What do you believe is meant by “valuable” to your own work, specifically?

Additional notes:

Q10. I believe that culturally inclusive changes I make in my classroom can have significant effects on my students' success.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Probes:

How did you arrive at your answer?

What do you believe is meant by “culturally inclusive changes in your own classroom”?

What is meant by “significant effects” for students?

Additional notes:

Q11. I have a strong sense of my own personal responsibility surrounding racial and ethnic issues on my campus.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Probes:

How did you arrive at your answer?

What do you believe is meant by “personal responsibility”?

What would this look like on your campus specifically?

Additional notes:

Q12. My similarly minded colleagues and I have the ability to make a positive impact surrounding equity at my institution.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Probes:

How did you arrive at your answer?

What do you believe is meant by “similarly minded colleagues”?

What is meant by “positive impact” on your campus specifically?

What would an “impact surrounding equity” at your institution look like?

Additional notes:

*Lastly, is there anything else you can remember regarding your own thinking processes while completing the evaluation?*

*During the workshop, what was your reaction to (BLANK: fill-in an incident, context, etc., from your observational notes)?*

*What was your own thinking during this incident/activity/etc?*

*Is there anything else you would to share regarding your own processing during the workshop?*

(Paraphrase if you prefer) Thank you for taking the time to help CUE improve our work with Cal Poly. Do you have any further questions or concerns?

## **Appendix E**

Revision to Microaggression Exercise



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## **Racial Microaggressions Exercise**

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Purpose: This exercise sheds light on the experiences that students of color encounter in their daily lives.

“Racial microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicates hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group” (Sue et al, 2007, p. 271)

“Microaggressions are often unconsciously delivered and these exchanges are so pervasive and automatic in daily conversations and interactions that they are often dismissed and glossed over as being innocent and innocuous. Yet, microaggressions are detrimental to persons of color because they impair performance in a multitude of settings by sapping the psychic and spiritual energy of recipients and by creating inequities” (Sue & Constantine, 2008, p.137).

**Step 1:** Ask someone to read the definition of racial microaggressions aloud. The CUE facilitator would then provide the participants with the different racial microaggression themes.

**Step 2:** Ask participants to work in a small group of three or four to discuss Racial Microaggression Activity Worksheet in Table 5.1. Participants would review the themes and examples and work collaboratively to develop a list of the kinds of message that each theme sends to students.

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*Racial Microaggression Activity Worksheet (Sue et al, 2007, p. 276-277)*

<b>Theme</b> do these statements	<b>Examples</b>	<b>What messages</b>
		<b>send</b>
<b>students ?</b>		

<p><b>Ascription of intelligence:</b> Assigning intelligence to a person of color on the basis of their race</p>	<p>“You are a credit to your race.”                  “You are so articulate.”                  Asking an Asian person to help with a math or science problem.</p>	<p>People of color are generally not as intelligent as Whites. It is unusual for someone of your race to be intelligent. All Asians are intelligent and good in math/sciences.</p>
<p><b>Color Blindness:</b> Statements that indicate that a White person doesn’t not want to acknowledge race.</p>	<p>“When I look at you, I don’t see color.”                  “America is a melting pot.”                  “There is only one race, the human race.”</p>	
<p><b>Criminality/assumption of criminal status:</b> A person of color is presumed to be dangerous, criminal, or deviant on the basis of their race.</p>	<p>A White man or woman clutching their purse or checking their wallet as a Black or Latino approaches or passes.                  A store owner following a customer of color around the store.</p>	
<p><b>Denial of individual racism:</b> A statement made when Whites deny their racial biases</p>	<p>“I’m not a racist. I have several Black friends.”                  “As a woman, I know what you go through as a racial minority.”</p>	
<p><b>Myth of Meritocracy:</b> Statements which assert that race does not play a role in life successes</p>	<p>“I believe the most qualified person should get the job.”                  “Everyone can succeed in this society, if they work hard enough.”</p>	

<p><b>Pathologizing cultural values/ communication styles:</b> The notion that the values and communication styles of the dominant/White cultural are ideal</p>	<p>Asking a Black person: “Why do you have to be so loud/ animated? Just calm down.”          To an Asian or Latino person “Why are you so quiet? We want to know what you think. Be more verbal. Speak more.”          Dismissing an individual who brings up race/ culture in work/ school settings</p>	
<p><b>Second-class citizen:</b> Occurs when a White person is given preferential treatment as a consumer over a person of color</p>	<p>Person of color mistaken for a service worker          Having a taxi cab pass a person of color and pick up a White passenger</p>	
<p><b>Environmental microaggressions:</b> Macro-level microaggressions which are more apparent on a systemic and environmental level</p>	<p>A college or university with buildings that are all named after White heterosexual upper class males          Television shows and movies that feature predominantly White people, without representation of people of color          Overcrowding of public schools in communities of color</p>	

**Step 3:** Ask participants to share out loud their responses to the worksheet, use the following questions to guide the discussion.

### Guiding Questions

- 1) If you were this student how would you interpret these comments?
- 2) If this statement was made by a faculty person what do you think this student would feel?
- 3) Have you had any of your students experience something similar? What did you say & or do to help them through this experience if anything was done?

**Step 4:** Once participants have completed their discussion, end the activity by asking them to share what they learned from the exercise.

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