

Running Head: Means of Enacting Equity-Mindedness

The Mediational Means of Enacting Equity-Mindedness among Community College  
Practitioners

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## The Mediational Means of Enacting Equity-Mindedness among Community College Practitioners

One of the most critical challenges facing institutions of higher education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is overcoming their limited capacity to produce equitable educational outcomes for African American and Latina/o students. We believe that a significant, but often overlooked, aspect of the problem is the inadequacy of practitioners' knowledge and practices that decrease their effectiveness with particular students. Our observations of college practitioners in a variety of action-oriented inquiry activities designed by researchers at the Center for Urban Education (CUE) demonstrate an urgent need for developing funds of knowledge that are grounded in local understandings of racial inequalities in educational outcomes and the belief that their elimination is an institutional responsibility (Bensimon, 2007).

According to Polkinghorne (2004) practitioners are not "locked into their socially transmitted backgrounds" and they can change or expand their practical knowledge by engaging in reflective inquiry. The data for this paper come from *Equity for All: Institutional Responsibility for Student Success* (EfA), a project that was designed as a year-long intervention (Cobb, Confrey, diSessa, Lehrer, & Schauble, 2003) to engage practitioners in an extended reflective inquiry activity and facilitate their development of equity-minded practical knowledge that they draw on when making judgments about students (Polkinghorne, 2004). Essentially, we created a structure and process to engage practitioners in situated learning activities that focused on making racial inequalities in educational outcomes visible and openly discussed.

Previous publications have described the background and specifics of EFA (and its predecessor the Diversity Scorecard), and have described in detail the theory of action, research methods, and impact on campus teams and individual participants (see Bensimon, 2004, 2007; Bensimon, Polkinghorne, Bauman, & Vallejo, 2004; Bensimon, Rueda, Dowd, & Harris, 2007; Harris III & Bensimon, in press). EFA has three goals for the practitioners who are engaged in the project. The goals are as follows: (1) to develop awareness of race-based inequalities in educational outcomes; (2) to learn to interpret race-based inequalities in educational outcomes through the lens of equity; and (3) to view inequalities in outcomes as a problem of individual and collective responsibility that calls for new knowledge, practices, and policies.

In this paper we focus on two EFA community colleges to illustrate the mediational means (Scollon, 2001; Tharp & Gallimore, 1998) through which we facilitate the three goals of the project.

#### Theoretical Perspectives on Practitioner Learning and Change

A fundamental aspect of EFA is that the improvement of postsecondary educational outcomes for African American and Latina/o students depends on practitioners becoming equity-minded, a concept discussed in more detail in the organizational learning and the critical race discourse analysis sections of this theoretical framework. The practitioner-oriented activities of the project as well as the research methods to document the process and outcomes are multidisciplinary and reflect the diverse theoretical and methodological backgrounds of the lead researchers. The dominant theoretical and analytical themes undergirding the project are practice theory, as recently elaborated by Donald Polkinghorne (2004) in relation to the caring

professions; sociocultural theory as elaborated by neo-Vygotskian scholars (Forman, Minick, and Stone 1993; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Moll 1990; Rogoff, 1991; Rogoff, Turkianis, and Bartlett 2001; Tharp and Gallimore 1988; Wenger 1991/1998; Wertsch 1998), principles of organizational learning (Argyris 1991; Argyris and Schon, 1996), and critical theories of race and discourse analysis (Pollock, 2001; West, 1993).

### *Practice Theory*

According to Polkinghorne (2004), the everyday practices of professionals are guided by socially and culturally acquired knowledge that functions below the level of consciousness. The premise of the *Equity for All* is that institutional practitioners have been socialized to expect autonomous and self-regulating students who take responsibility for their own learning. Consequently, the lower rates of success that are experienced by African American and Latina/o students, regardless of institutional selectivity, are far more likely to be attributed to students' individual characteristics or experiences than to educational practices or institutional culture. Attributing inequalities to students' academic preparation, motivation, help-seeking behaviors, or engagement casts them as predictable and unsolvable. Consequently, EFA was designed as an inquiry activity to make racial disparities in routine educational outcomes visible to practitioners and help them learn to interpret disparities as unnatural racial inequalities whose existence and elimination requires practitioners and institutional leaders to assume collective responsibility. Thus the aim is to create a structure and processes that enable practitioners to recognize the need for new knowledge and practices.

### *Sociocultural Theory*

To facilitate the development of equity-minded practical knowledge we drew on the sociocultural idea that: 1) learning is social; 2) learning is facilitated by assisted performance that is responsive; 3) learning is mediated by cultural tools and artifacts; and 4) learning takes place in communities of practice and is indexed by changes in participation within these communities. The primary means of implementing these principles is to convene practitioners who are involved in an institution's formal learning systems and/or who are viewed as key actors in informal institutional networks. These practitioners form a community of practice that is referred to as an "evidence" or "inquiry" team. Learning in the evidence teams is mediated by a "data tool" that facilitates the examination of disaggregated data on educational outcomes and helps participants discover the nature and extent of racial-ethnic student outcome inequities. Practitioners' analysis, interpretation and explanation of the racial inequalities are expressed in the naturally occurring talk (Perakyla, 2005) that goes on among the team members as they sift through data tables. While we cannot presume to deduce the practices of instructors, counselors, or administrators from their sense-making conversations, what is said as well as not said about racial inequalities indexes how success (and lack of it) in educational outcomes is produced (Pollock, 2004).

While most approaches to learning regard it as an individual accomplishment (or failure) that takes place "between the ears," a basic assumption of sociocultural perspectives is that learning is fundamentally a social process. From this theoretical perspective, learning is predicated on a collaborative relationship that allows the learner and "more competent others" to negotiate understanding, usually through discussion, sharing ideas, questioning, and other mediational means. Vygotsky (1978, 1987)

contended that learning occurs as individuals engage in culturally meaningful, productive activity with the assistance of these “more competent others,” who may be a teacher, peer, sibling, parent, or colleague.

Sociocultural theories place great emphasis on the importance of mediation in learning processes, especially in regard to higher order thinking. A strong focus of this perspective is how cultural practices and cultural resources mediate the development of thinking and learning. A major concern is to understand how culture, like other tools and artifacts, mediates thinking. Practitioners have been socialized into particular cultural practices, including language and other artifacts that become tools for thinking and interacting with others (Bensimon, 2007). We know the world through symbolic mediation, such as when we categorize people into ethnic, gender, or socioeconomic categories. However, in other instances our understanding is not automatic, but is based on constructed and shared meanings built up over time and in specific cultural contexts. An example of this is how we analyze data on student outcomes. As indicated previously, practitioners in higher education have attributed meanings to race-based inequalities that make them appear natural. Accordingly, in EFA the intervention consists of understanding and promoting equity-minded learning by introducing tools, artifacts, and cultural practices that reveal established meanings and facilitate the making of new ones.

Consistent with the sociocultural view that learning is fundamentally social, knowledge is seen as being created through active participation in various social contexts, and strongly influenced by what is valued in those contexts. In sociocultural terms, these are known as learning communities or communities of practice, which Wenger (1998)

defines as “...a locus of engagement in action, interpersonal relations, shared knowledge, and negotiation enterprises....” (p. 85). Simply put, a community of practice is a social group developed over time through ongoing purposeful endeavor (Wenger, 1998). These communities of practice help shape what Gallimore and Goldenberg (2001) describe as cultural models, or shared mental schema or normative understandings of how the world works, or ought to work, including what is valued and ideal, what settings should be enacted or avoided, who should participate, the rules of interaction, and the purpose of interactions.

### *Organizational Learning*

Sociocultural theories suggest that individuals learn and change as a consequence of collaborative engagement in a productive activity. Organizational theories of learning suggest that there are different types of learning and that not all learning results in transformative change. In fact, they suggest that most learning within organizations consists of single-loop learning, whereas change—whether at the individual or institutional level—requires double-loop learning (Argyris & Schon, 1996). Single-loop learning can be understood as operational learning that results in the revision of existing practices or the development of new ones (Kim, 1993). In contrast, double-loop learning is more akin to conceptual learning which results in the creation of new frameworks and ways of looking at familiar problems (Kim, 1993). The difference between single-loop and double-loop learning is that the former encourages individuals to view a problem functionally and search for structural or programmatic solutions, whereas in the latter learning entails the ability to reflect on a problem from within, in relation to one’s own values, beliefs, and practices (Coburn, 2003). The major distinction is that the single-

loop learner locates the problem externally and seeks to change others. Conversely, the double-loop learner is more apt to focus attention on the root causes of a problem and self-changes that need to be made in attitudes, values, beliefs, and practices to bring about enduring results (Bauman, 2002). Looking inward is the capacity to reflect on how practices (also beliefs and expectations) at the individual and institutional levels produce racial inequalities.

In particular, according to Argyris (1991), individuals “must learn how the very way they go about defining and solving problems can be a source of the problems in its own right” (p. 2). Argyris maintains that highly skilled professionals are very good at single-loop but bad at double-loop learning. The explanation he gives for this counterintuitive claim is that,

Because many professionals are almost always successful at what they do, they rarely experience failure. And because they have rarely failed, they have never learned how to learn from failure. So whenever their single-loop learning strategies go wrong, they become defensive, screen out criticism, and put the “blame” on anyone and everyone but themselves. In short, their ability to learn shuts down precisely at the moment they need it most (p. 4).

The development of equity-mindedness is a double-loop learning problem because it requires the willingness of practitioners and institutional leaders (1) to disaggregate data on student outcomes by race/ethnicity as a routine and necessary practice to self-assess progress toward equity in educational outcomes; (2) to identify equity in educational outcomes as an essential indicator of institutional performance and quality; and (3) to assume responsibility for the elimination of unequal results.

Double-loop learning (Argyris 1991, 1994; Argyris and Schon 1996) that reflects equity-mindedness is likely to be evidenced in



1. Changes in the interpretation of racial disparities in educational outcomes, from simply detecting the problem to questioning the values and beliefs that shape the way in which the problem is being articulated.
2. The willingness to reveal inequalities in outcomes rather than hiding them, (e.g., making information public)
3. Becoming aware of how racial and cultural assumptions, stereotypes, and biases are embedded in one's everyday actions.
4. Discussing openly the emotional or value-laden aspects of race and racism.

#### *Critical Race and Discourse Analysis*

In the context of the EFA project, achieving equity means achieving equal educational outcomes for college students from racial and ethnic groups that have a history of enslavement, colonization, or oppression in or by the United States, relative to groups that have not experienced such conditions. "Equity-mindedness" is a multidimensional theoretical construct derived from concepts of fairness, social justice, and human agency articulated in several disciplines, including critical race theory, feminist theory, and critical discourse analysis<sup>1</sup>. In essence, equity-minded individuals are more aware of the sociohistorical context of exclusionary practices and racism in higher education and the impact of power asymmetries on opportunities and outcomes for African Americans and Latinas/os. Individuals who are equity-minded attribute unequal outcomes to institution-based dysfunctions. Whereas deficit-minded (Valencia, 1998) individuals construe unequal outcomes as originating from student characteristics, equity-

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<sup>1</sup> We are grateful to Alicia C. Dowd for her insightful contributions to the definition of equity-mindedness.

minded individuals reflect on the roles they and their colleagues play and the responsibility they share for helping students succeed.

#### Equity for All: Background of the Project

EFA involved nine community colleges in Southern, Northern, and Central California. The participating colleges were selected because they met one or more of the following criteria:

- The percentage of enrolled Latino/a students was 25 percent or greater
- The enrollment of African American students exceeded the California Community College system wide average of seven percent
- The enrollment of Native American students exceeded the system wide average of one percent
- The total enrollment of non-Caucasian students was 50 percent or greater.

Upon agreement to participate in the EFA project, the presidents of the nine colleges were asked to create a campus “evidence team” (sometimes also referred to as an “inquiry team”) that included an institutional researcher and an individual designated as team leader. We expected the team leaders, in addition to having the interpersonal skills to facilitate collegial conversations and encourage the questioning of taken-for-granted knowledge, would also have easy access to their presidents and keep them informed and engaged throughout the project.

To assist the presidents in the formation of their teams we gave them guidelines, one of which was to include influential faculty members, particularly from English and mathematics; “boundary-spanners” such as administrative leaders who served on important campus wide committees such as retention, strategic planning, etc., and are

well situated to “spread” what they learned about equity in educational outcomes to other groups. We also recommended that the team include individuals with different opinions about issues such as affirmative action, the practice of disaggregating data by race, and the concept of equity in educational outcomes.

The nine teams had 89 members, most of whom were women (67%). White (N: 29) and Unknown (N: 25) were the largest racial/ethnic groups, followed by African Americans (N: 16), Latina/o (N: 14), and Asian American (N: 5). Faculty members consisted of the largest group (N: 29), which is unusual for projects of this kind<sup>2</sup>, the second largest group (N: 12) were counselors. The teams included 9 vice presidents and deans of academic affairs, and 12 institutional researchers. The other members were in student services or other administrative positions.

The EFA project lasted from June 2005 to July 2006. During this period there were 91 two-hour team meetings that took place across the nine teams. At the conclusion of the project each team completed an institutional report on their findings and presented it to various groups, including trustees, presidents’ senior staff, academic senates, English and mathematics departments, and in specially organized retreats and professional development activities.

The colleges and team members were not compensated for their participation and the time they dedicated to the project was voluntary. The major benefit to the colleges was access to new inquiry methods and tools that enabled them to transform existing data into new and useful knowledge. We theorized that not compensating the EFA team

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<sup>2</sup> Equity for All was very successful in involving faculty members and gaining their support. The project is appealing to faculty members because it engages them in new research activities that are relevant to their classroom experiences.

members or colleges, as is typically done in similar projects, increased the likelihood that the work would continue after the project came to an end.

To accomplish the three goals of the project-- awareness of racial inequalities, equity-minded interpretations, and the assumption of institutional responsibility for their solution--we created an activity setting that involved teams of practitioners in the analysis and interpretation of routine student outcome data disaggregated by race and ethnicity. The culmination of the activity was the completion of an Equity Scorecard that consists of four perspectives: *academic pathways, retention and persistence, transfer readiness, and excellence*. The teams, with guided assistance from a CUE researcher, selected numerical indicators and goals for each of the four perspectives. For example, “the percentage of first-time students, by racial and ethnic categories, who transfer to the UC within three years,” was an indicator of excellence selected by several of the participating colleges. Similarly, “increasing transfer to the UC among African Americans within three years by a specified percentage” could be an excellence goal.<sup>3</sup>

The construction of the Equity Scorecard consisted of a series of mediated actions (Scollon, 2001), e.g., completing the vital signs data tables, collaborative sense-making, asking for more data to answer new questions, creating indicators to populate the equity scorecard framework, writing and editing reports, making campus presentations on the project, participating in the teams’ monthly meetings, participating in training sessions, etc.

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<sup>3</sup> The technical aspects of the Equity Scorecard are discussed in Harris III and Bensimon (in press) and available online at [www.usc.edu/cue](http://www.usc.edu/cue).

Sociocultural researchers are uniquely concerned with the use of tools and mediators in specific contexts and in understanding and promoting learning. These tools and artifacts enable new meaning making, in essence helping to “re-mediate” one’s understanding. Unlike the traditional notion of remediation which focuses on the amelioration of specific deficits, the notion of “re-mediation” refers to changing the nature and type of mediation in order to promote the creation of new understandings and knowledge, e.g., equity-minded interpretations of data (Rueda & Marquez, 2007).

In this paper we describe the mediational means we introduced into the project to facilitate equity-minded analysis, interpretation, and explanation of race group specific unequal outcomes. We illustrate the mediational means by providing excerpts from conversations among team members within two of the EFA campuses. Three questions frame our discussion of mediational means:

1. What were the mediational means of facilitating equity-mindedness among practitioners?
2. How were the mediational means of equity-mindedness enacted and by whom?
3. In what ways did participants respond to the mediational means of equity-mindedness?

#### Cultural and Social Mediational Means of Facilitating Equity-Mindedness

In the context of EFA, the "mediational means" are the social and cultural processes (and other members of the teams) through which EFA brings about new learning about race-based disparities in outcomes at the participating colleges. The mediational means include artifacts like the scorecard, the team meetings, and the

questions, comments, and feedback that are exchanged within the team meetings. As such, mediation is what produces the learning, but it is not learning in and of itself. Sociocultural theorists contend that all action and learning are mediated by language, by interaction with others, and by one's own thoughts and feelings. In essence, EFA served to "re-mediate" learning that had already taken place by assisting practitioners in developing new ways to think about racial inequities in student outcomes at their institutions. Five mediational means were enacted in the EFA project to facilitate equity-mindedness among team members: 1) Equity-minded discourse, 2) guided analysis of data on educational outcomes, 3) criteria for the composition of the campus teams, 4) artifacts and tools, and 5) activity settings. In the sections that follow, we elaborate further on each of these mediational means and demonstrate them with qualitative data from the EFA team meetings.

### *Equity-Minded Discourse*

Deficit and diversity talk are ways of discussing racial and ethnic minorities in higher education. For example, it is not uncommon for practitioners and researchers to interpret the consistency of unequal success among some racial and ethnic groups in the language of deficit. The discourse of deficit can be compassionate, e.g., "these students have many personal responsibilities that take precedence over school" or judgmental, e.g., "these students don't take advantage of all the resources the college provides." It is also not unusual for practitioners to construe racial and ethnic minorities in the language of diversity, "we [the college] are like the U.N."

The discourses of deficit and diversity are more often than not used in well-intended ways; nevertheless, they can be disadvantageous to the academic achievement

of underrepresented students. In the discourse of deficit inequality is represented as a condition produced by outside circumstances, making it practically unpreventable. In the discourse of diversity the social justice language of the Civil Rights act, e.g., achieving “equality as a fact and equality as a result<sup>4</sup>” shifted in the 1980’s to the relational language of interracial communication and understanding; and, more recently, in response to the legal attacks on affirmative action, there has been a shift to the language of assessment, e.g., measuring the cognitive benefits that are derived by students who attend racially diverse colleges.

In contrast to the narratives of student deficit and diversity EFA introduces practitioners to a discourse of equity. The characteristics of equity-minded discourse that the project promotes are as follows:

- Being color-conscious (as opposed to color-blind) in an affirmative sense. To be color-conscious means noticing and questioning patterns of educational outcomes that reveal unexplainable differences for minority students; viewing inequalities in the context of a history of exclusion, discrimination, and educational apartheid.
- Being aware that beliefs, expectations, and practices can result in negative racialization. Examples of racialization include attributing unequal outcomes to students’ cultural predispositions and basing academic practices assumptions about the capacity or ambitions of minority students.
- Being willing to assume responsibility for the elimination of inequality. Rather than viewing inequalities as predictable and natural, allowing for the possibility

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<sup>4</sup> Address given by Lyndon B. Johnson at the 1964 Howard University commencement as cited in Bensimon, 2005, p. 1.

that they might be created or exacerbated by taken-for-granted practices and policies, inadequate knowledge, a lack of cultural know-how, or the absence of institutional support.

### *Guided Analysis of Data on Educational Outcomes*

Researchers<sup>5</sup> from the Center for Education were assigned to campus teams and their role was to purposefully enact the discourse of equity by means of critical questioning and probing, modeling critical analysis of data, reinterpreting attributions of individual and cultural deficits, instructing, reframing, explaining, challenging, and providing feedback<sup>6</sup>. Specifically, three means of equity-minded discourse were enacted: 1) *Critical probing*: entails questioning or calling attention to hidden patterns of inequality, 2) *racial reframing*: entails a critical race response to counter interpretations that evade or fail to notice racial inequalities in educational outcomes, and 3) *institutional accountability reframing*: entails a critical response to data that reinforce the role of institutions (in general) and institutional agents (in particular) in redressing race-based inequities/disparities in student outcomes. These means were employed when race-based inequalities made evident by student outcome data failed to catch team members' attention or engage them in sense-making; when team members attributed unequal outcomes to students' characteristics, predispositions, and cultural values; when unequal outcomes were framed as culturally justifiable; or when team members' sense-making

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<sup>5</sup> E. M. Bensimon, A.C. Dowd, F. Harris III, and R. Rueda were the lead researchers.

<sup>6</sup> At the outset of the project we did not specify the strategies of enacting a discourse of equity. The researchers and assistants met almost weekly during the duration of the project to discuss the implementation of the project, report on the teams' activities, review field notes through the theoretical perspectives that informed the project. The discourse strategies we were enacting became clear in the review of meeting transcripts and the naming of these strategies was inspired by Tharp and Gallimore's (1988) description of means of assisting performance in a teaching and learning situation.



redirected the analysis away from racial inequalities. Researchers also used these strategies to assist and reinforce equity-mindedness among members of the team.

### *Criteria for the Composition of Campus Teams*

Equity-mindedness is both an individual and distributed characteristic of a group of people. At the micro level the aim of the project is to facilitate the development of equity-mindedness as a shared schema among the members of the evidence team. At the macro level our goal is for the members of the team to foster equity-mindedness at the institutional level. Consistent with principles of organizational learning, individuals learn on behalf of their organizations (Huber, 1991) and share their learning with other organizational members in committees, meetings, reports, participation in institutional governance, and through changes in their own practices.

To increase the likelihood of teams having members who embodied the qualities of equity-mindedness, we provided the campus presidents with guidelines on who to include in their evidence teams. In addition to specifying racial diversity, we also recommended the inclusion of individuals with different opinions about issues such as affirmative action, the practice of disaggregating data by race, and the concept of equity in educational outcomes. Our expectation was that each team would have at least one member who would “naturally” display equity-mindedness in the analysis, interpretation, and explanation of the data and thus assist in the enactment of EFA’s specialized discourse.

### *Artifacts and Tools*

The project provides various special artifacts and cultural tools including “vital signs” protocols, the Equity Scorecard framework, reports templates, new constructs,

equity index quantitative formula, resource notebooks, and examples of graphic displays to help make data easy to decipher. Each of these tools and artifacts serve to facilitate the analysis, display, and reporting of race group-specific data. Artifacts and cultural tools, which can be physical, conceptual, or ideational, help us see things differently than before.

### *Activity Setting*

A key aspect of sociocultural approaches is that the focus or analytic unit needs to go beyond the individual learner. Thus, the key focus is the activity setting, not the learner in isolation. Activity settings can be seen in the “who, what, when, where, why, and how” of the routines which constituted the creation of the Equity Scorecard. The activity settings of the nine participating colleges evolved differently based on their composition, the interpersonal and organizational skills of team leaders, the attitude of institutional researchers toward the data requirements of the project and their skills in making data (see Dowd, Malcom, Nakamoto, & Bensimon, 2007) accessible in non-technical ways, and the relationships among the members. Power differences, whose voices were heard, and the relationship between the team and the CUE researchers also influenced the activity setting.

EFA created a special type of activity setting that is constituted to create new types of knowledge and thinking about equity, particularly in relation to the educational outcomes of African American and Latinas/os. Activity settings specifically designed to promote organizational learning are scarce or non-existent in most academic organizations (Garvin; Dill,).

The activity setting encompassed the evidence teams, their actions, and the mediational means to facilitate learning and change. Our observation and subsequent analysis of the activity settings at two EFA colleges serve as the focus of this paper.

### The Veeder Community College and Gillroy Community College Equity for All Activity Settings

In this paper the focus is on the enactment of cultural and social mediational means of equity-mindedness in the activity settings of two community colleges to which we refer by the pseudonyms Veeder (VCC) and Gillroy (GCC). To protect the identity of the colleges and maintain the confidentiality of the team members, we provide general, but informative, descriptions of VCC and GCC.

VCC and GCC, located in California, are urban community colleges that enroll approximately 25,000 full time equivalent students. Both campuses serve racially/ethnically diverse student populations. Collectively, African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Latino, and Native American students comprise more than 75 percent of the campuses' total student enrollments. The colleges are engaged in a range of initiatives, and offer support programs and services that aim to facilitate students' achievement of successful outcomes. Yet, in spite of these interventions, racial/ethnic disparities on basic indicators of student success exist on both campuses. For instance, a critical mass of students of color is concentrated in non-degree credit basic skills programs, few of which ever matriculate to college-level coursework. In addition, African American, Latina/o, and Native American students earn degrees and certificates at significantly lower rates in comparison to their White and Asian/Pacific Islander peers.

These disparities persist among transfer indicators as well. GCC and VCC are considered among the top feeder colleges to California's four-year institutions. For example, in a recent year, VCC and GCC collectively transferred to the UC more than 500 Asian Pacific Islanders and almost 200 White students; however, they transferred fewer than 100 Latinas/os, and fewer than 20 African Americans.

Collectively, a total of 20 practitioners served on the VCC and GCC EFA teams. Eight (8) were full-time faculty members, five (5) were program directors, three (3) were senior administrators (e.g., Dean or Vice President), two (2) were counselors, and two (2) were other administrators. Both teams were ethnically diverse and balanced on the basis of gender (nine men and eleven women). We now turn to a description of the methods we used to identify and examine the mediational means in the VCC and GCC activity settings.

## Research Methods

### *Data Collection*

The data on which this paper is based is comprised of ethnographic field notes and transcribed audio recordings that were collected and maintained during the VCC and GCC EFA evidence team meetings. During the course of the project, the VCC team held eight team meetings at which a CUE facilitator was present and field notes were collected. The GCC team held seven meetings. Verbatim statements that were made by team members in discussing the data were captured in the field notes, as were their non-verbal expressions and physical activities of the meetings. Prior to the first team meeting, all team members were informed of our purposes in collecting field notes and asked for their informed consent to observe and document team meetings at which they were present.

## *Data Analysis*

Our analysis of the data was informed by the case study qualitative methodological tradition (Stake, 1995). The formal analysis of the data occurred in two phases. During the first phase, we carefully read the raw field notes and analyzed them by applying major code concepts and categories that were derived from the project's conceptual framework. Our purposes in phase one of the analysis was to evaluate the project's effectiveness in achieving the learning and instrumental goals that were described previously in this paper. In doing so, we applied three sets of codes: 1) those that captured team members' beliefs, attitudes, and reactions to the data and patterns of race-based inequities in student outcomes; 2) those that captured observations of the institution's context, culture, practices, and policies that seemed to have meaningful impact on equity and mediated the range of options available to address the inequities; and 3) those that captured team dynamics, interactions, and the strategies team members relied upon to fulfill both formal and informal team roles.

During the second phase, we assumed a more narrow and focused approach to our analysis of the data. Here we sought greater depth in understanding the mediated means that were applied within the activity settings and how the means facilitated equity-minded sense-making about observed outcome inequities among team members. We examined the coded field notes and meeting transcripts from the VCC and GCC teams and coded instances in which the five mediational means (described above) of enacting equity discourse were evident. In addition, we noted the: 1) team members who consistently employed the mediational means during team meetings, 2) other team members' responses and reactions to the mediational means; and 3) shifts in the team's discourse

and sense making about student outcome inequities that can be attributed to the mediational means. We used the Atlas.Ti qualitative data analysis software program to code, organize, and maintain the data.

In conducting our analyses, we relied upon both “direct interpretation” and “categorical aggregation” (Stake, 1995). In using direct interpretation, a discrete instance serves as the unit of analysis. For example, we often observed philosophical disagreements or contentious exchanges between two or more team members that occurred during the meetings. Elaborated discussions amongst the team in which important decisions were made also captured our attention. In these instances, we made sense of the data by “pulling it apart and putting it together again more meaningfully” (Stake, p. 75). Again, we paid close attention to the actors involved, responses and reactions from other team members, and the noticeable effects these interactions had on team dynamics. Categorical aggregation involves the “emergence of meaning from the repetition of phenomena” (Stake, p. 76). By using categorical aggregation, we arrived at meaning by identifying and analyzing themes and patterns that consistently emerged over the course of the eight VCC meetings and the seven GCC meetings.

### *Trustworthiness*

We established trustworthiness by way of two strategies that are proposed by Patton (2002). First, in our review of the field notes we sought “alternative themes, divergent patterns, and rival explanations” that challenged our interpretations of the data. For example, we periodically came across statements in which team members attributed outcome disparities to student characteristics. Rather than immediately coding these

statements as reflections of “deficit thinking,” we considered other reasonable interpretations.

We also used triangulation to establish trustworthiness. Patton (2002) suggests “comparing and cross-checking the consistency of information” derived from one source with other sources. The meeting field notes were our primary source of data. However, we also relied upon our observations of team members during the course of the project as well as the aforementioned artifacts to triangulate our findings. When we arrived at inconsistencies, we sought to understand the contextual factors that may have accounted for these differences. Our co-researchers who served as facilitators to the VCC and GCC teams were also key sources of insight in making sense of inconsistencies. We regularly presented our interpretations of the data during bi-monthly EFA research meetings. During the meetings, our co-researchers questioned, challenged, and supported our interpretations of the data. In the next section we describe the five mediational means as used in the activity settings at VCC and GCC.

#### The Enactment of Mediational Means within Two Activity Settings

To illustrate each of the mediational means of equity-mindedness we will present situations in which team members are interpreting data that depict a racial/ethnic group experiencing a specific unequal educational outcome. Inequality in the EFA project was based on proportionality as well as in comparison to other groups. The only measures that were used were numbers and percentages. Although the focus of this paper is not on the quantitative data findings, we provide a brief description of the data examined by both teams to make it easier to envision the activity setting.

Some EFA teams decided to use snapshot data, others focused their attention on a single cohort of first-time students who enrolled in a particular year (e.g., 1999) or multiple cohorts who enrolled over three to four years (e.g., 1999-2001, 1997-2000). Other teams concentrated their attention on students who had completed a specified number of credits or college-level courses. The VCC team analyzed the educational outcomes for a single-year cohort of first-time students disaggregated into eight categories: African American, Asian/Asian American, Filipino/Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino, Native American, Other, European Caucasian, and Declined to State.

The VCC team, like most other teams in the project, examined data on (1) educational goals, (2) enrollment and success rate in developmental and college-level English and Mathematics, (3) transfer rates to a four-year college within three years, (4) transfer rates for selective and less selective four-year colleges, (5) degree and certificate completion within three years; (6) semester-to-semester persistence; (7) and enrollment in advanced level courses in science and mathematics.

The percentage for African Americans in the VCC study cohort saying that “transfer to a four-year college” was their educational goal in the admissions application was higher than for all the other groups. However, the data on successful transfer to four-year colleges within three years of starting at VCC showed African Americans as well as Latinas/os as experiencing the greatest inequality in transfer rates to all colleges, regardless of selectivity. No African Americans and just one Latina/o transferred to the state’s selective public institution. In comparison, Asian Americans represented 75 percent of all the transfers to the selective institution.



Over the 12 months of the project, the VCC team engaged in many interpretive conversations about the transfer inequality being experienced by African Americans and Latinas/os. These conversations allowed for our observation of the project's mediational means within the activity setting.

We will present four conversation excerpts, each one selected to foreground one of the five mediational means. However, within each of the four excerpts other mediational means are being used besides the one that is foregrounded. For example the mediational means highlighted in the first Veedeer CC excerpt is "artifacts and cultural tools"; however, it also shows the CUE facilitator using "guided analysis" to bring out implicit meanings in the interpretations being offered to explain the racial and ethnic differences in transfer rates.

#### *Artifacts and Cultural Tools*

This excerpt shows Veedeer's Team Member 1 (VTM1) at the first meeting of the team noticing ("jumps out") race group-specific ("disproportionately Asian") differences in transfer outcomes and sharing this knowledge with the other members of the team. The noticing by VTM1 of large racial/ethnic disparities in transfer patterns to the most prestigious public university is facilitated by EFA's data practices: disaggregating data by race and ethnicity and reporting the results in numbers and percentages for each group in a manner that makes comparisons across groups easy to grasp; determining whether outcomes are at, below, or above equity based on population proportionality rather than using whites or Asian Americans as the norm. In the excerpt VTM1's learning is facilitated by the format in which the data are presented which make patterns of inequality clear. Additionally he makes sense of the data by means of "proportionality",

one of EFA's cultural tools to facilitate the noticing of unequal outcomes and their magnitude. By focusing on proportionality VTM1 compares whether transfer outcomes for each group are proportional to their percentage in the student population and is able to describe the evidence of inequality very specifically. Proportionality helps him determine that the transfer outcomes for whites are proportionally equitable, Asians comprise the largest group of transfers numerically and the percentage of transfers is proportionally larger than their overall population, e.g., they are well above equity. In contrast, VTM1 points out that Hispanics, who comprise 13 percent of the population, represent only 8 percent of the transfers and the same holds true for African Americans.

Below we provide the conversation excerpt that starts out with VTM1's proportional analysis and is followed-up by comments from other members of the team. The excerpt brings out the various ways in which team members make sense of the new knowledge revealed by the data. Following the excerpt, we will provide additional discussion of what mediational means are in use.

*VTM1: One thing jumps out at me transfers to Research University are disproportionately Asian. White transfers reflect the student population [they are proportionally equal]. Asian number is higher than overall student group. Hispanics are about 13% of the population but only 8% transfer and the same holds for African Americans.*

*VTM2: Black students may go to Historically Black Universities and so their transfer rates may actually be higher. Can we get private school transfer [data]?*

*VTM3: I have asked my students and they say that if they major in liberal arts they will not be able to transfer to Research University... Many of my students are going into science and engineering or mathematics or even business. I always ask students what their major is and very few Asian students say, 'My major is liberal arts.'*

*VTM1: I think that's a function of the students you are seeing. They are the cream of the crop.*

*VTM4: It's a good question, but based on my experience with students a lot of decisions about majors are based on economics. Also, since Prop 209 African American and Latino students were not applying to Research University and I think only now they are just recovering from that.*

*VTM3: I can see that you need the income to go to Research University as opposed to State College.*

*CUE Facilitator: I'm not sure I understood VTM3's point about students being in the right major to transfer.*

Although EFA's cultural practices around data analysis facilitated VTM1's learning about transfer inequality for Latinas/os and African Americans his fellow team members respond with explanations about the causes for the inequality. The explanations, although unintended, make the racial transfer patterns brought to their attention by VTM1 appear circumstantial rather than an indication of inequality in opportunity.

Team Member 2 (VTM2) offers the possibility that African Americans are going to Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Team Member 3 (VTM3) thinks that Asian Americans by selecting majors outside liberal arts increase their chances of transferring to the selective university. Although unsaid, VTM3's line of reasoning implies that African Americans are more likely to choose liberal arts majors and, as a consequence, have a reduced chance of transferring to the selective university. Even though VTM4 recognizes the inequalities evidenced in the transfer data she attributes them to external circumstances that are beyond the influence of VCC.

In saying, "I'm not sure I understood VTM3's point about students being in the right major to transfer", the CUE facilitator employs mediational means of "guided

analysis” (critical probing) to call attention to the improbability that inequalities in transfer patterns are created by Asians choosing the “right” majors and African Americans and Latinas/os choosing the “wrong” majors. However, the CUE facilitator’s use of critical probing did not elicit responses that exemplify equity-minded learning within the moment of this conversation.

### *Guided Analysis*

One important element of the EFA project is that each team is supported with a CUE researcher whose charge was to model for team members how to analyze data from an equity perspective, and to infuse the discourse of equity-mindedness and institutional accountability into the team’s conversations and sense-making. By raising critical questions about the data (e.g., “Why is it that disproportionately fewer African American and Latino students have transferred to Research University?”) and responding to assertions and interpretations of the data that absolve practitioners of responsibility for student outcomes, the CUE facilitator modeled critical sense-making approaches. One effective strategy that was used often by the CUE facilitators was to direct team members’ attention to patterns of inequity that were reflected in the data but overlooked by the team. This strategy reflects the use of “guided analysis” as a means of enacting equity-mindedness.

The excerpt below took place during VCC’s second meeting in which the team members discussed whether the Asian-African American disparity in transfer rates that had been pointed out by VTM1 at the first meeting might be a reflection of unequal sample sizes, rather than unequal opportunity. In this excerpt VTM3 and VTM4 are having a discussion about the effect of sample size, namely whether the small size of the

African American student population makes it appear as if there is an inequality where there is not one. Although both VTM3 and VTM4 are speaking about equity in terms of proportionality VTM3 does not appear to be persuaded. The CUE facilitator provides guided assistance that specifically focuses on VTM3's concern about sample size. She points out that the Hispanic student sample is much larger but even so they experience a similar pattern of inequality as do African American students. The CUE facilitator guides the analysis by calling attention to a data pattern that refutes the sample size argument.

*VTM3... but the issue here is that the enrollment of African Americans is very low and that makes it hard to actually see things clearly. If the success rate is proportional to those in other groups, then there doesn't seem to be any problem at all, right?*

*VTM4 ...but we can say that even though the number is small, proportionally the success rate is out of whack. I think that's kind of the way we've been going at this [referring to the project's focus on proportionality as a measure of equity]is to say even though there's a small group of African Americans, they're like 4 percent of the population as compared to Asian students that are like what, 38 percent of the population...I don't have it right in front of me...but the Asian students...about 50 percent of those students transfer to Research University...that's a little high...*

*VTM3: What I'm saying is actually it may not be that different. If you have 100 African American male students and only four of them transfer and if you have 10,000 say Caucasians and 400 transfer, that's the same proportion.*

*VTM4: Exactly exactly. But do we really have that issue?*

*VTM3: My concern is the population. It's 37 percent Asian, only 3 percent African American ... That's the issue: small sample size.*

*CUE Facilitator: But what about Hispanics for example? Where you have a larger sample size, but once again, a relatively low percentage.*

In this excerpt we also see VTM4 drawing on EFA's principle of proportionality to persuade VTM3 that the transfer rates for African Americans are truly "out of whack."

However, VTM3 does not seem to hear her and continues insisting that the issue is not inequality but small sample size. Unconvinced, he asserts “*that’s the issue, sample size*”, at which point the CUE facilitator guides the analysis to assist VTM4’s effort to maintain the focus on transfer inequalities.

*Equity-minded discourse*

The last two excerpts come from Gillroy Community College. Like the Veedeer team this team looked at the educational outcomes for a specific student cohort. While most of the Veedeer members seemed comfortable with the language of equity and disaggregating of data, some of Gillroy’s team members expressed considerable discomfort with the notion of equity and with the display of data disaggregated by race and ethnicity.

Over the course of the seven GCC team meetings, an issue that received considerable attention was the reliability of students’ self-declared goal as a baseline indicator of student success. Some members of the team compared the high percentage of underrepresented students whose self-declared educational goal was to transfer to a four-year college to the very low percentage who actually transferred and viewed it as a sign of inequality. Other team members felt that the large gap between espoused aspirations and actual outcomes exposed the unreliability of self-declared goals. They felt that students made uninformed choices when selecting from among the long menu of options on the admission application because they “had no idea what they wanted to do.” Accordingly, students chose goals based on their perceived popularity and social desirability.

The excerpt below captures the discussion prompted by a team member's suggestion that self-declared goals are not reliable. From a research perspective, he argued, it would be more accurate to infer students' goals from their course-taking patterns. The excerpt focuses on the mediational means enacted by GTM1 and the CUE facilitator, both of whom reframe the problem as one of institutional responsibility, rather than the truthfulness of students' goals.

*GTM1: I could be wrong. I don't have the research [refers to himself as not being a researcher] but I don't think it's fair to say it's not accurate. Why am I able to say that this is not an accurate goal for them when this is actually what they have indicated that is their desire? The reality however, is that they are not attaining that, why are they not attaining that? That's what I would want to know...*

*GTM2: That's got to be one of the first questions...*

*GTM1: ...if I know that Latinos make up 41% of the population, and their numbers reflect pretty consistently the goal of transfer, but they only transfer at a 2% rate, again it's not that it's not an accurate goal that they describe for themselves, it's just that they're not attaining it. So how can we impact that?*

*GTM3: I think that's a very good point...*

*GTM4: That's a very good point and we should not get away from seeing what the student goals are ...there are African Americans who have the transfer goal and yet there is something that's blocking...*

*GTM3: I think from an administrative point of view... they found that students were just picking the first choice. So, from that, people were assuming that educational goals weren't a true picture of what they wanted. But that's a good point, that's a good question. Is there a true and untrue picture of what they want irregardless of what they achieve?*

*GTM2: I would think that would have to be one of the first questions for us to consider.*

*CUE Facilitator: If I were sitting in your shoes I mean the big thing I would be worried about is: what is the role of the institution? I think it's important to just lay on the table that the purpose of the project is not to blame institutions or compare institutions but if it turns out that 41% say they want to transfer and only*

*2% are, then whatever the reasons are, you know, what can the institution do to fix it, I think that's really important, without saying we're doing a horrible job.*

In most community colleges there is an enormous gap between students' self-reported aspirations and actual outcomes, which can make the institution appear badly in the eyes of trustees and policymakers concerned with issues of efficiency and accountability. Understandably there is a reluctance to compare transfer outcomes to transfer aspirations as most institutions would fare poorly if judged by this measure. Consequently, community colleges prefer to construct the transfer pool based on course-taking patterns because in leaving out the thousands of basic skills students it increases their rate of success substantially.

GTM1 enacts equity-minded discourse by noting the inherent unfairness of not taking students' goals seriously because many are unable to attain them. GTM1 thinks it is more important to consider why students are not attaining their goals and what can be done about it (*So how can we impact that?*), than discarding them (*it's not that it's not an accurate goal that they describe for themselves, it's just that they're not attaining it*).

GTM1 models equity-mindedness by the use of words that connote values, e.g., fair; questioning the rightfulness of invalidating students' goals; and by placing the responsibility for students' goals at the institutional level.

Sensing that some team members may be more worried about what the data reveal about the institution than about the implications for students, the CUE Facilitator reminds them that the purpose of the project is not to blame institutions but to find ways of being more responsive to the inequalities experienced by some students (*what can the institution do to fix it*).



Equity-minded modeling by GTM1 encouraged GTM4 to voice the importance of understanding what might be “blocking” African American students. In contrast, GTM4 while agreeing that GTM1 has a good point, continues to view students’ goals in terms of “true” and “untrue” and is interested in finding out whether goals represent “something they [students] want to do” or “something they picked out of the air.”

### *Composition of the Campus Teams*

Sociocultural theorists view learning as a social process that occurs between individuals and groups within a community of practice. Similarly, a key principle in organizational learning theory is that individuals learn on behalf of the organization. Building on these concepts, we theorize that equity-mindedness is a shared property of groups that can be learned by individuals when they participate in equity-oriented activity settings. The guidelines for composing the EFA teams included criteria to increase the likelihood that on each team there would be at least one individual who espoused the awareness, values, and critical knowledge associated with equity-mindedness. Having at least one team member who embodied these qualities increased likelihood that equity-mindedness would be present and manifest during the team’s discussion of the data.

The interpretive event we focus on to demonstrate how team composition can serve as a mediational means of enacting equity-mindedness took place on the fourth meeting of the Gillroy team. The team was reviewing a draft of their report to the president on the Academic Pathways perspective of the Equity Scorecard. The report (an EFA cultural artifact) consisted of tables and graphic displays with data on a cohort of students, disaggregated into racial and ethnic categories (African American, Asian American/Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Mexican American, International, and White), who

had completed a specified number of units and based on their course-taking patterns they were identified as being on a pathway to transfer. The data showed that African Americans, followed by Latinas/os had the lowest percentage of students in the pathway to transfer and International and Asian students had the highest. The conversation starts with a team member trying to make sense of why there is such a large difference in course-taking patterns among racial and ethnic groups.

*GTM5: What I think it informs me is that there might be some cultural differences in the goals of students. And that just on this data alone, clearly not enough to make that kind of assumption, but it's possible that some students have different goals based on their culture. For example, we might assume that Latino and African American students come here, perhaps, to improve their academic skills but not get a degree. Whereas there is a cultural bias in Asians to get a degree. Is that the kind of thinking that you get from this? For example, 4 out of 10 Asians are behaving as if they want to get a degree and transfer where only 1 out of 4 African Americans are.*

*GTM3: That's what I think about it.*

*GTM1: I don't see it that way.*

*CUE Facilitator: Why is that?*

*GTM5: Yeah I'd like to hear another opinion.*

*GTM1: I would suggest...let's look at Latinos. Culturally, they would probably value a degree as much as the Asian students but there are other roadblocks hindering them, academic preparation being the first one. They are not in [college-level English or math] so they can't be transfer intent, right? Because that's part of the definition.*

*GTM5: They have to attempt [college-level English and math to be considered an aspiring transfer student].*

*GTM1: They have to attempt it. And many of them, a high proportion, a disproportionate number of them, Latino and African American, are placing into [basic skills English and math]. I mean, that's across the board . . . and they aren't passing those classes either. Culture can be one aspect, but that wouldn't be my first thought. My first thought is academic preparation, limited knowledge of higher education, those kinds of...navigating the system [issues].*

GTM5 attributes unequal participation in the transfer pathway to cultural predispositions that result in different educational goals. He speculates that Asians might be “culturally biased” to transfer and earn a baccalaureate, whereas African Americans and Latinas/os might be more “culturally biased” toward improving their basic skills rather than earning a degree. Minority students “behave” like basic skills students and Asian students “behave” like degree-seeking students. The data demonstrate different behavioral and choice patterns for different groups.

While one of the team members agrees that transfer pathway outcomes may be culturally determined, GTM1 disagrees and the CUE facilitator encourages him to elaborate. GTM1 explains that Latinas/os may be as culturally predisposed to value a degree as Asians but they face many obstacles. They do not “behave” as if they want a degree because they are in basic skills courses. GTM1 reframes the problem as academic preparation and lack of college knowledge, which prevent the majority of these students from “behaving” like degree-seeking students. The effects of GTM1’s equity-minded interpretations on GTM5 and the other members of the team are unknown, based on the field notes. However, even if GTM1’s remarks had no immediate observable effects, the significance of his interpretations are noteworthy in two respects. First, he is the only member of the team to challenge GTM5’s assertion that students’ cultural backgrounds are the contributing factors of the transfer inequities that were revealed in the data. Thus, in this instance GTM1 was the lone source of equity-mindedness within the team. Second, by suggesting that African American and Latinas/os may be experiencing inequities because of institutional barriers and difficulties in “navigating the system” GTM1 introduces factors that can be addressed institutionally in response to race-based

inequities in the domain of transfer. Simply stated, GTM1 facilitates a shift in the team's discourse from a focus on cultural stereotypes to a focus on institutional responsibility and accountability.

### Discussion and Conclusion

To illustrate the mediational means of enacting equity-mindedness we analyzed team talk on two topics that adversely impacted African Americans and Latinas/os: unequal transfer outcomes and the phenomenon of very high transfer aspirations and very low transfer outcomes. Both topics recur, in one manner or another, in the 15 meetings held by the Veedeer and Gilroy teams; they were also very much in evidence in the discussions that took place in the teams of the other seven campuses.

On both teams the data elicited de-racialized interpretations that justified, normalized, or circumvented unequal outcomes among African Americans and Latinas/os. From an organizational learning perspective (Argyris, 1991), de-racializing inequality represents single-loop learning. In the context of this study, single-loop learning resulted in participants defining the problem in a manner that diminished the possibility of a conscious and careful examination of how race is implicated, for example, in data practices (e.g., not counting students' self-declared goals), beliefs (e.g., the notion that culture determines outcomes), academic culture (e.g., avoiding value-laden conversations).

Within the two teams there was at least one member who, along with the CUE Facilitators, employed the cultural and social tools of EfA to mediate awareness of unequal opportunity in the educational patterns of African Americans and Latinas/os and

to develop a sense of responsibility for change. From a socio-cultural perspective action is successfully mediated when our understandings correspond. While the conversations demonstrated the various ways in which mediational means were used by CUE facilitators and team members to counteract deficit and de-racialized analyses, these conversations did not provide extensive evidence that the mediational means assisted equity-minded learning.

There are several reasons we can offer to explain the apparent lack of response to the mediation of equity-mindedness. Equity-mindedness was well defined at the level of data practices and artifacts, but the discourse practices were underdeveloped. The reporting of data broken-down by race and ethnicity, the focus on racial equity, the methods of calculating equity, and the various data and report templates were fully-developed. The data practices were effective in facilitating the noticing of inequalities comprehensively. Moreover, the project was effective in demonstrating how routine data that are highly accessible can create new knowledge when they are organized and reported with a specific learning goal in mind (see, Dowd, Malcom, Nakamoto and Bensimon, 2007).

In the very beginnings of this work, the project relied primarily on the theory and literature of organizational learning (Argyris 1991, 1994; Argyris and Schon, 1996). Organizational learning was very helpful in guiding the design of team structures and data practices to facilitate collaborative sense-making; and in developing our understanding of equity as a double-loop learning problem. However, the literature on organizational learning does not address the means of facilitating learning, particularly the means of facilitating double-loop learning. Similarly, critical race theories while

helping us delineate the qualities of equity-mindedness does not provide the means of facilitating it.

It was not until we turned to socio-cultural theories of learning that we began to define the project's data practices, data tools, structures, and critical discourse as mediational means purposefully designed to enact equity-mindedness. The turn toward socio-cultural theory came after the project was implemented and although we, as Facilitators of the evidence teams, were well-grounded in the values, practices, and discourse of equity-mindedness and were clear that our role within the teams was to facilitate its enactment, we did not specify the actual discourse practices, when and how to use them, or how to assess their effect. Simply put, we were conscious of modeling the discourse of equity-mindedness but we did so more intuitively than strategically.

The conversational excerpts demonstrate that the CUE Facilitators and team members modeled equity-mindedness through a variety of mediational means, for example by asking questions, reinforcing the principle of institutional responsibility, redirecting team members' attention to unnoticed inequalities, and by providing support to team members who viewed the data through the lens of equity. Our enactment of equity-mindedness was not sufficiently attentive to "scaffolding" equity-mindedness. Sociocultural theorists (Vygotsky, 1978, 1987; Tharp & Gallimore, 1987; Lave & Wenger, 1991) point out that the learner must be engaged at a level that produces learning and induces development, that is, within the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD). This is defined as the range between the level of difficulty at which an individual can perform independently and the highest level at which she/he can perform with assistance. If the assistance is at a level that is either above or below a learner's current

level of performance, learning will not be facilitated. However, when the assistance is within the learner's zone, it is said to be "responsive" and is thought to produce learning.

It is possible that the mediational means by which we enacted equity-mindedness were not responsive to the ZPD of the participants. For example, the project has an orientation session for the teams and training sessions for team leaders and institutional researchers but the focus of these is on the activities, products, and data practices of the project and how to facilitate them. These sessions do not address the concept, meaning, and practices of equity-mindedness directly. Nor do they introduce team leaders and institutional researchers to the means of assisting team members in developing awareness of inequities, how to view data through the lens of equity, and how practitioners collectively can assume responsibility for producing equitable outcomes.

Without a more structured approach, the equity discourse we enacted in team meetings may be too nuanced to bring about equity-mindedness in others. Moreover, to be equity-minded requires that inequality be viewed as an indication of ineffective practice or lack of knowledge. The admission of ineffective practice or lack of knowledge may be particularly difficult in institutional contexts that actively discourage the examination of failure and where the leadership cultivates an institutional image of quality, innovation, and high performance. Both institutions had developed a reputation as high transfer institutions and team members from time to time reacted defensively to the data.

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