GET REAL: EXPLORING EQUITY-MINDEDNESS AT A LARGE, URBAN, AND PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTION

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This dissertation considers the problem of practice concerning inequitable enrollments for Black and Latina/o graduate students, particularly in comparison to their White counterparts. In efforts to explore an effective way to alleviate such inequities, this study focuses on the development of equity-minded practitioners. As a result, the research is grounded in Bensimon's (2007) concept of equity-mindedness and the University of Southern California's Center for Urban Education components of equity-mindedness (2016), as well as the Equity Scorecard (EqS) framework (2012).

Taking a qualitative, case study approach to exploring the issue of inequitable enrollments for Black and Latina/o graduate students, I brought together a team of practitioners of higher education—faculty, staff, and doctoral students—to form a committee called GET REAL: Graduate Enrollment Targets Realized via Equity-Minded Approaches and Leadership. The context for this study and the GET REAL team was a large, predominantly White institution in the Northeastern part of the United States, and the committee's focus was primarily on the enrollment inequities within the graduate school where this study commenced. The committee met once a month for a year, discussing issues related to race and equity using disaggregated data sets by race that focused on admissions and enrollment. The GET REAL team also

considered various scholarly articles, videos, and images related to race and racial issues in efforts to better understand the concept of equity-mindedness, and how to use such a concept in practice, particularly as related to approaching the resolution of the existing racial enrollment inequities.

The five main themes that emerged include: the GET REAL team displayed, through words and actions, equity-minded ideals as consistent with Bensimon (2007) and the USC CUE (2016); the GET REAL team functioned primarily as a learning group; the designed group component of the GET REAL team was an important and contributing factor to the group's overall functionality and purpose; the equity-minded dialogue within the monthly team meetings was often in contrast to the deficit-minded dialogue in the outside presentations; and White people can, should, and need to engage in racial justice work. Implications for research and practice are offered.

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PREFACE

Thank you, Mark, my husband, my love, for supporting me unconditionally throughout this process. I am certain I would not have made it here without you. Thank you, Molly Kate and Matej, for continually inspiring me. I am so blessed to be your Mom. Thank you, Mom and Dad, for raising me to value inclusiveness and teaching me the importance of my voice. Thank you, Ben, for making me resilient, yet always complimenting that with brotherly love. Thank you, Dr. Garcia, for helping to shape this project into what it has become, and for your continual mentorship. And thanks to all of you who join me in the fight for equity and racial justice.

1.0   PROBLEM STATEMENT

A national issue facing higher education today is the inequitable access to graduate school across racial and ethnic groups. Such an assertion is obvious when examining national data surrounding White, Black, and Latina/o populations, particularly when comparing their statistical representations within the U.S. to their representations in graduate school. For example, the U.S. Census Bureau (2015) currently reports that 62.6% of the total U.S. population identifies as White. The Council of Graduate Schools recently reported that White students accounted for 62.4% of first-time graduate students enrolled in the fall of 2014 (Allum & Okahana, 2015). These statistics indicate that, in comparison to their broader representation across the U.S., White students are equally represented in graduate school. When comparing the same set of statistics to Black and Latina/o populations, however, inequities exist. While Black Americans account for 13.6% of the total U.S. population (US Census Bureau, 2015), Black students are reported as representing only 11.3% of the graduate student population (Allum & Okahana, 2015).   The statistics for Latinas/os show further disparities, as they make-up 17.1% of the total U.S. population (US Census Bureau, 2015), yet only 9.6% of the total graduate student population (Allum & Okahana, 2015). Indicative of these data, it can be determined that an ubiquitous and timely problem facing American graduate schools is the low and inequitable enrollments of Latina/o and Black students, particularly in comparison to their White classmates.

The problem of enrollment inequities can manifest within a phenomenon described as "diversity of convenience," which indicates that "supporting a cosmetic desire for inclusion … only serves to make the university appear inclusive but does not illustrate a true commitment to students of color" (Robertson, Bravo, & Chaney, 2014, p. 14). For example, while various strategic plans and mission statements often reflect the need to obtain a more racially diverse student body (Robertson et al., 2014), the current graduate enrollment inequities suggest that institutions continue to fall short in achieving alleged strategic initiatives. Taking a cosmetic and inauthentic stance in regards to diversity and inclusion not only reflects poorly on the university, but also indicates an extreme disservice to those populations it claims to be committed to serving. Such disservice is further reflected within the vast body of literature that documents the experiences of students of color at Predominantly White Institutions, or PWIs, (e.g., Engstrom & Tinto, 2010; Morrison, 2010; Robertson et al., 2104; Saufley, Cowan, & Blake, 1983; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007), which unfortunately demonstrates the often hostile experiences of students forced to navigate a culture that was not initially intended for them.

Practitioners and institutions subscribing to the "diversity of convenience" model reflect one of the countless reasons as to why higher education is lacking racial diversity. While the background literature explored within this study will consider various policies that serve to effectively counter such a stance, such as affirmative action and financial aid initiatives, these policies unfortunately carry with them the threat for potential disposal. It is therefore imperative that graduate practitioners and institutions authentically committed to increasing the enrollments of Black and Latina/o students also consider permanent alternatives to potentially disposable policies. While valuable alternatives can be found within best practices for recruiting students of color to graduate school, and will be further considered within the background literature, another

less obvious option is the development of equity-minded practitioners. Such a concept is central to this study and the alleviation surrounding the problem of enrollment inequities for Black and Latina/o graduate students.

1.1   PURPOSE OF STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The problem of practice I have selected is related to achieving equitable enrollments for Black and Latina/o graduate students through the development of equity-minded practitioners. Bensimon (2007) offers the following definition of equity-mindedness:

> Equity-minded individuals are more cognizant that exclusionary practices, institutional racism, and power asymmetries impact opportunities and outcomes for Black and Latina/o students. Equity-minded individuals attribute unequal outcomes among Black and Latina/o students to institution-based dysfunctions, while deficit-minded individuals construe unequal outcomes as originating from student characteristics. Thus, equity-minded individuals reflect on their own and their colleagues' role in and responsibility for student success (p. 446).

In essence, becoming equity-minded requires that the onus of enrollment disparities be placed on institutional actors and the structures in which they find themselves working. Thus, efforts to achieve equity-mindedness requires that individuals honestly scrutinize and confront their and their institutions' own practices in order to make the kind of considerable changes necessary to resolve current enrollment inequities.

The primary purpose of this study was to begin discussing the best approaches to alleviating enrollment inequities for Black and Latina/o graduate students through the

development of equity-minded practitioners. To work to fulfill such a purpose, this study examined the extent to which participation on an ad-hoc committee contributed to the equity-minded development of the team, which consisted primarily of practitioners of higher education, but also included doctoral students. The committee and its participants were dedicated to the purposes of unveiling enrollment inequities through the examination of disaggregated data by race and ethnicity, and engaging in conversations about race and racial issues through the use and discussion of scholarly articles, videos, and images.

The secondary purpose of this study was to use the experiences of, and expertise gained through participation on, the committee as a mechanism to leverage equity-minded recommendations and policies to the broader school community wherein the committee was situated. As part of their commitment to the team, each member had the opportunity to present disaggregated data and lead a subsequent discussion with their colleagues in the greater School community. Such a presentation aligned with the committee's mission to distribute data beyond the context of the team setting, providing an opportunity for the work of the group to be distributed more broadly, and in advance of the eventual recommendations to follow.

The committee/team under investigation in this study was entitled GET REAL: Graduate Enrollment Targets Realized via Equity-Minded Approaches and Leadership. Essentially, an examination of the GET REAL team allowed for the opportunity to discover how providing a forum to discuss issues of race and equity might be used as a mechanism to explore how the team displayed equity-mindedness throughout their time together as a group. Ultimately, I investigated the GET REAL team as they explored, presented, and discussed disaggregated data sets as well as various scholarly articles, videos, and images related to issues surrounding race and equity. As a result, I aimed to understand how such a group might use their experiences and

expertise as a way to leverage equity-minded recommendations to the greater School community. The inquiry question for examination was as follows:

1. How does the GET REAL team, as a designed group, display equity-mindedness over the course of twelve months?

Taking a case study approach to examining the team and their efforts, I aimed to discover, primarily through participant-observation (Yin, 2014), how GET REAL and our objectives allowed for displays of equity-mindedness on behalf of the team. With this project, I was not seeking to make a significant and/or instantaneous change in the enrollments of Black and Latina/o graduate students. Rather, this study and the development of equity-minded practitioners, was an integral piece meant to build the momentum that is necessary to effecting long-term change leading to the alleviation of racial enrollment inequities. Furthermore, because a key charge of the team was to serve as equity-minded leaders beyond the context of the monthly meetings, I also assessed their experiences, primarily through direct observation (Yin, 2014), in relation to their work and data presentations outside of the meetings. Finally, while it is recognized that individual team members displayed varying amounts of equity-mindedness, the primary focus of this study was to examine the team and how GET REAL, as a designed and collective group, demonstrated equity-mindedness over the course of one year.

To my knowledge, a specific instrument with which to measure equity-mindedness does not currently exist, and the purpose of this study was not to create such a tool. Rather, the extent to which the team displayed equity-mindedness over the course of twelve months was assessed in relation to both Bensimon's (2007) definition and the main principles that define equity-mindedness: evidence-based; race-conscious; institutionally focused; systemically aware; and equity advancing (Center for Urban Education at the University of Southern California, 2016).

1.2   SETTING OF STUDY

The institution wherein the GET REAL team was situated and where this study commenced was a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) in the northeastern part of the United States. Due to its proximity to a major U.S. city, the School for Cognition (SFC; a pseudonym) is set within an urban environment. The SFC is part of a larger institution that is internationally renowned, and represents one of fourteen schools embedded within the university structure. The SFC is primarily a graduate school and predominantly White, serving approximately 900 graduate students and 200 undergraduate students on an annual basis.

Much akin to the larger problem area that represents racial enrollment inequities on a national scale, the SFC is struggling to achieve equitable enrollments for its Black and Latina/o graduate student populations. In the fall of 2015, the SFC enrolled 943 graduate students. Of those students, 692, or 73%, identified as White. In comparison to the national data, the SFC's White graduate student population, then, is overrepresented by more than 10%. In contrast, only 58 graduate students (or 6%) enrolled within the SFC identify as Black, whereas Black Americans represent 11.3% of the graduate student population in the U.S. (Allum & Okahana, 2015). Further enrollment inequities are apparent for those students who identify as Latina/o, who account for only 31 students, or 3% of the SFC's current graduate student population. This is less than one third of the national average. These comparative data, as visually presented in Figure 1, stand to illustrate and broadly situate the larger problem of inequitable enrollments within the local area for consideration in this study. Such national and local data are also representative of the fact that enrollment inequities are a significant problem to be explored and resolved within practice.
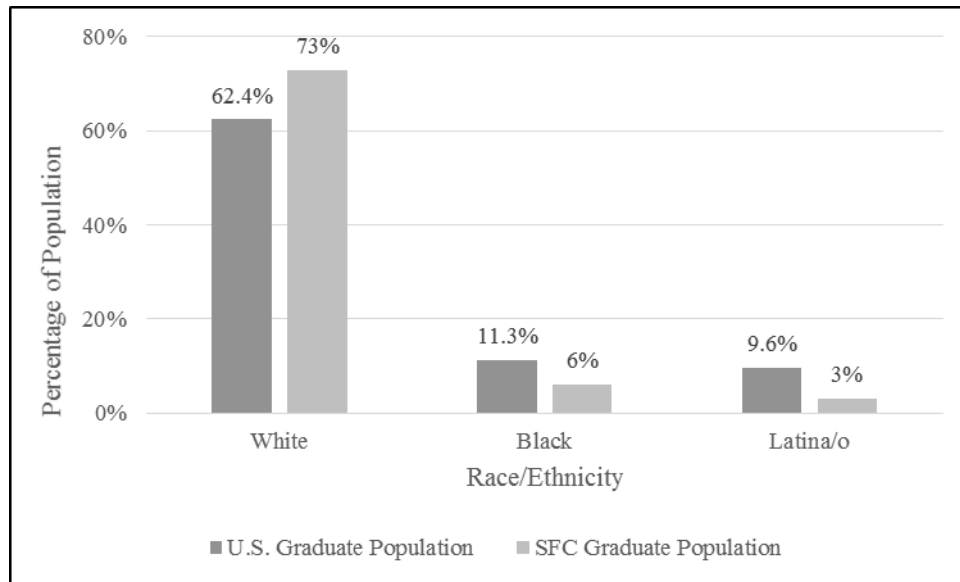
Figure 1. Comparison of U.S. and SFC graduate student populations by race/ethnicity (Allum & Okahana, 2015)

A reasonable way to begin to further understand this problem of practice is to briefly consider how it manifests itself within the local context where it was studied. In examining the problem in terms of SFC faculty who make admissions decisions, it is helpful to know that the admissions decision making process is both decentralized and varied. While each program and related faculty make decisions relatively independently through an online review system, some faculty review applications and make collaborative decisions in small groups. A minimum of two administrators—who are generally faculty but sometimes a mix of faculty and staff—are required to contribute to a decision before it can be finalized, although often more than two members comment on an applicant. It is important to note in examining this problem of practice, taking an equity-minded approach is equivalent to making race-conscious admissions decisions, as doing so indicates that the practitioner is taking an active role in working to resolve the current enrollment inequities. Such an approach is not meant to discredit the larger, more inclusive definition of equity-mindedness, but rather to allow for a more manageable scope to

obtain a preliminary understanding as to where the SFC faculty stand in relation to such an ideology.

Results of a small and exploratory survey that I administered to approximately 13% of full-time SFC faculty members prior to starting this inquiry indicated that race and ethnicity is not always considered as an important non-academic factor when making admissions decisions for the majority of graduate applicants. Because many faculty members are not making race-conscious admissions decisions, this poses an extreme barrier to the potential alleviation of the inequitable enrollments that currently exist for the SFC's Black and Latina/o graduate student populations. At the same time, however, further inquiry into the admissions decision making process also seems to suggest that the SFC faculty and administration are making strides toward becoming more equity-minded. For example, during a preliminary observation that I made at an admissions committee meeting for one of the over fifty programs within the School, immediate attention was given to various goals as related to diversity, one of which was race. Drawing attention to diversity goals indicates that the admissions committee was not only considering race, but, importantly, making it central to the decision making process; such attention indicates a race-conscious approach that is consistent with equity-minded ideals.

This brief glimpse into the admissions decision making processes of various members within the SFC provide dichotomous examples as related to taking an equity-minded approach, and is indicative of the need for developing an administration that is more race conscious in efforts to alleviate the problem of enrollment inequities. It is worth mentioning that such examples, while telling, are only representative of a fraction of the potentially competing mindsets within the SFC.

1.3   SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

There are countless reasons as to why the inequitable enrollments of Black and Latina/o graduate students is a significant problem worthy of investigation and alleviation. For one, the racial landscape of the U.S. is changing, and statistical evidence regarding such a declaration can be found within comprehensive reports that are reflective of a nation that is becoming increasingly racially diverse. For example, the most recent comprehensive report published in conjunction with the National Center for Education Statistics indicates that the White population within the U.S. has seen a consistent decrease over the course of approximately 30 years, going from 80% in 1980 to 66% in 2008 (Aud, Fox, & Kewal-Remani, 2010). On the other hand, the same report indicates that the Latina/o population in the U.S. has more than doubled over the past 28 years, increasing from 6.4% in 1980 to 15.4% in 2008 (Aud et al., 2010). While the Black population within the U.S. is not experiencing such rapid growth, those identifying as Black Americans have slightly increased from 11.5% of the population in 1980 to 12.2% in 2008 (Aud et al., 2010).

It is important for practitioners to mitigate enrollment inequities because the U.S. "has become one of the most diverse nations on the face of the earth" (Morrison, 2010, p. 987), and it is problematic that such diversity is not translating to substantial changes in the makeup of our graduate student population. In order for such changes to occur, there is the significant need to develop equity-minded practitioners, which is at the heart of my study. What a comprehensive review of the literature, combined with my own years of experience in higher education, have lead me to believe is that the most effective way to resolve the current racial enrollment inequities is to create opportunities for equity-minded development. The broader scope is that

such opportunities, and subsequent development, will ultimately lead to more equitable enrollments for Black and Latina/o graduate students.

The primary stakeholders who worked to address, create awareness, and offer resolutions for the issue of inequitable enrollments within the SFC were members of the GET REAL team. This committee was very intentionally designed and created with support from the Dean and central administration within the SFC, and met once a month for one calendar year. The team was guided by a principal investigator (me), my academic/research advisor, and 11 additional team members—two doctoral students, three staff members, and six faculty—who represented a broad range of programs, departments, and offices throughout the SFC. Chapter three gives further attention to the participants, including a table outlining demographics.

As members of the GET REAL committee engaged in data-driven conversations surrounding the sensitive topics of race and equity, they paid particular attention to how such issues were manifesting themselves within the SFC, as well as how they could be improved. The team dissected data in direct relation to efforts surrounding access for its Black and Latina/o populations, and will ultimately make informed recommendations to the greater SFC community based upon their findings. In addition, the team was presented with various scholarly articles, videos, and images related to issues of race and equity as a means to engage in discussions centered upon such issues. For many team members, engaging in a variety of race conscious discussions resulted in heightened levels of confidence in regards to confronting intra-and-interpersonal, institutional, and systemic barriers that may inhibit access for Black and Latina/o graduate students, which is, of course, consistent with equity-minded ideals and development. Finally, since part of the GET REAL team's charge was to extend recommendations and findings to the larger SFC community, there were (and are) several secondary audiences who have a stake

in working to resolve this issue of enrollment inequities within the School, namely, all constituents in the SFC—administration, faculty, staff, and students.

1.4   CONCLUSION

Inequitable enrollments for Black and Latina/o graduate students in American higher education is pervasive, making this an important issue to be addressed and resolved. A driving force of my study was to consider how the development of equity-minded practitioners and policies may ultimately alleviate enrollment inequities for Black and Latina/o graduate students. While this change will not occur immediately, the goal was to begin developing equity-minded practitioners and policies that will have long-term impact on enrollment in the SFC. An overview of the SFC data conveyed the current enrollment inequities that needed to be addressed. Moreover, a glimpse into the admissions decision making process for faculty within the SFC provided a brief overview into the preliminary reasons as to why equity-minded development was critical for the SFC.

While the importance of taking authentic approaches to diversity (i.e., beyond diversity of convenience) and implementing best recruitment practices (e.g., fellowships, bridge programs) will be examined, the core of this problem and its alleviation rests in the development of equity-minded practitioners. Although this study relied heavily upon Bensimon's (2007) ideology of equity-mindedness and the theories of action associated with the Equity Scorecard (EqS) process (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012), this study was not a traditional deployment of the trademarked EqS process. Neither I nor the SFC is contracted with Bensimon's team from the Center for Urban Education at the University of Southern California, and we did not seek such a contract in

efforts to implement such a process. Rather, I was interested in conducting a bounded case study to examine whether or not participation on the GET REAL team allowed practitioners the opportunity to display equity-mindedness that would, in turn, ultimately help to inform practice and policies within their context.

2.0   LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter one of this dissertation in practice provided an overview of the lack of racial diversity in American graduate education, as well as preliminary suggestions for how to increase racial diversity within this sector. To be clear, various policies, such as those related to affirmative action and financial aid, along with best practices for recruiting graduate students of color, should be considered in efforts to increase racial diversity. However, what a comprehensive review of the literature, in combination with several years of professional, administrative leadership experiences in the graduate recruitment field have indicated, is that the less obvious option of equity-minded development is a critical component to resolving the current enrollment inequities for Black and Latina/o graduate students. Such an approach requires individuals and organizations to look within themselves and institutional practices in efforts to affect substantial change (Bensimon, 2007; Bensimon & Malcom, 2012). This is central to this literature review as well as this study.

The review of background literature to follow will serve to answer the questions of: *what are some of the key reasons as to why graduate institutions of higher education are lacking racial diversity?* And, more importantly, *what proven policies and practices have effectively worked to increase racial diversity in graduate education?* In order to answer these questions, I will first review the literature surrounding mission statements and diversity; then, affirmative action and financial aid policies will be considered, each in relation to how such

polices serve to both reduce and increase racial diversity. Finally, I will close this chapter with specific attention to the academic theories and theories of action that encompass the Equity Scorecard (EqS) framework and how each component of the EqS process served as the theoretical framework for this study. Ultimately, the aim of this chapter is to provide a brief overview of the literature that will best serve to inform how to increase the enrollments of Black and Latina/o graduate students through the use of authentic mission statements, effective recruitment policies and practices, and, most importantly, the development of equity-minded practitioners and policies.

2.1   LACK OF RACIAL DIVERSITY IN GRADUATE EDUCATION

First I addressed the question: *what are some of the key reasons as to why graduate institutions of higher education are lacking racial diversity?* In doing so, the literature review drew upon a core tenet of the EqS framework, offering potential equity-minded interventions as a means to confront such implications.

2.1.1   Inauthentic Mission Statements and Diversity

Because of the changing demographics in the U.S. and the subsequent need to mitigate graduate racial enrollment gaps, higher education institutions often include the terms of diversity and inclusion within their mission statements. In fact, a recent study that included a sample of 80 higher education institutions across the U.S. indicated that 75% the institutions included the term "diversity" within their mission statements (Wilson, Meyer, & McNeal, 2012). Mission

statements, as defined by Ireland and Hurt (1992): "are intended to provide motivation, general direction, an image of the company's character, and a tone, or set of attitudes, through which actions are guided" (p. 35). If mission statements are intended to capture an authentic snapshot of the institution, it can be argued that the term of diversity is not only overused, but also misused, in many institutional mission statements. Furthermore, when comparing the overuse of such terminology to the gross underrepresentation of graduate students of color, it becomes even more unsettling and indicates a reason as to why graduate institutions of higher education are lacking racial diversity.

There is literature to support the importance of establishing institutional mission statements, often referencing the arduous process that accompanies such a practice (Ireland & Hurt, 1992), as well as literature dissecting how institutions of higher education use and define diversity within their mission statements (Meacham & Barrett, 2003; Wilson et al., 2012). However, there is minimal literature that attempts to examine the authenticity and effectiveness of institutional mission statements, although a study by Davis, Ruhe, Lee, and Rajadhyaksha (2007) examined whether or not espoused ethical values in business school mission statements actually contributed to the positive development of student and administrator character traits. In relation to efforts to increase the enrollments of Black and Latina/o graduate students, such mission accountability is necessary and should absolutely be considered.

The importance of mission authenticity and accountability, particularly as it relates to diversity, has received some of the necessary attention it deserves. For example, EqS has been implemented in recognition of the "disconnect between diversity as an espoused value and as a driving force behind the structure, planning, and practices of the institution" (Armstrong, Clemons, Fissinger, & Sauceda, 2012; p. 77). A central concept of EqS is the development of

equity-minded practitioners; fostering equity-mindedness is an effective way to ensure that the importance of racial diversity is not only recognized, but also valued and intimately connected to individual and institutional practice and purpose. Creating equity-minded practitioners can also work in efforts to confront the challenges that affirmative action policies have posed to increasing racial diversity; such challenges and subsequent suggestions for improvement will be discussed next.

2.1.2 Challenges to Affirmative Action

When taking affirmative action in making admissions decisions first became an intentional part of actively recruiting graduate students of color in the 1960s and 1970s, many institutions implemented race-conscious and/or race-based admissions decisions and/or procedures (Lipson, 2011; Stulberg & Chen, 2014). A central tenet of equity-mindedness is, in fact, race-consciousness. Because equity-mindedness is an effective way to confront a lack of racial diversity in graduate education, it's inevitable that the onset of affirmative action in admissions marks a time when related policies designed to increase the enrollments of Black and Latina/o students were most effective. While the recent landmark *Fisher II* (2016) decision is a clear exception, various legal challenges reveal that the momentum has unfortunately shifted since the initial phases of policy implementation (Garces, 2014). Such a shift is indicative of key reasons as to why graduate institutions are lacking racial diversity.

Garces (2014) asserts that: "an exploration of racial diversity in graduate studies is not complete without considering how legal decisions and state laws have shaped the discourse on diversity at postsecondary institutions" (p. 459). When taking affirmative action began and making race-conscious admissions decisions through a variety of ways were permitted, the

discourse surrounding racial diversity was very transparent. Such transparency is critical to equity-mindedness, which requires practitioner attention to: "exclusionary practices, institutional racism, and power asymmetries" (Bensimon, 2007; p. 446) in efforts to affect outcomes for Black and Latina/o students. Likewise, the onset of taking affirmative action reflects similar transparency, stating intentions to: "remedy inequities and address the effects of societal discrimination" (Garces, 2014, p. 460) for people of color. However, a review of the Supreme Court decisions involving affirmative action policies in admissions reveals a considerable shift in the discourse on diversity, and, in turn, reflects not only implications for increasing the enrollments of Black and Latina/o graduate students, but also further discord with taking an equity-minded approach.

As a result of the major legal challenges to affirmative action policies in admissions, eight states—Arizona, California, Florida, Michigan, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, and Washington (Garces, 2014)—have already banned its use. What this means for resolving the issue of enrolling an equitable amount of Black and Latina/o graduate students has been somewhat underexplored within the literature, but recent research has suggested a direct correlation between affirmative action bans and declining graduate student enrollment for such populations. For example, Garces' (2012) study indicates that such bans: "have … reduced the enrollments of … students of color by about 12.2% across graduate programs" (p. 122). This is particularly disconcerting when considering that a main objective in initially implementing affirmative action policies in admissions was to address such exclusion, and is also reflective of the fact that substantial change has not necessarily occurred at high levels of production since the onset of related policy implementation (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009).

A brief overview of the legal challenges to affirmative action policies in admissions indicates that with each Supreme Court decision and subsequent state bans comes further removal from both initial policy intentions and the idea of equity-mindedness. Furthermore, and in spite of the recent *Fisher II* (2016) victory, such challenges are stark reminders of the unfortunate threat for potential disposal of affirmative action policies altogether. However, it is also appropriate to be reminded that although the legal challenges are representative of a conflict with equity-mindedness, unlike affirmative action policies, such an ideology is perpetual; once practitioners become equity-minded, they will always observe and act through such a lens, and thus approach related issues with such a mindset (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012). Additional implications for increasing the enrollments of Black and Latina/o graduate students are presented when reviewing financial aid policies.

2.1.3   Complications with Graduate Financial Aid

Federal, state, and institutional financial aid options for graduate students are often more restricted than such opportunities for students at the undergraduate level, and as a result, "financing graduate education can take many forms" (McWade, 1995; p. 51), and arguably, cause many complications. Embedded within such complications lies a potential reason as to why graduate institutions are lacking racial diversity. For example, because prospective Black and Latina/o students are forced to navigate the complex variety of forms that graduate financial aid can take, a lack of understanding of such forms can arguably create frustrations that, in turn, implicate the agenda for increasing diversity. However, "equity-minded individuals reflect on their own and their colleagues' role in and responsibility for student success" (Bensimon, 2007; p. 446); therefore, one way that equity-minded practitioners can work to confront such

complications is to take personal and institutional responsibility to ensure that prospective Black and Latina/o graduate students have achieved an understanding of financial aid policies throughout the recruitment process.

An additional complication surrounding financial aid policies for Black and Latina/o graduate students is that available federal and state aid opportunities are largely related to specific fields of interest, with more fellowship and grant-related opportunities for students pursuing work in the sciences as opposed to the humanities (McWade, 1995). An example of such an opportunity would be the *Bridges to the Doctorate* program, which is funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and awarded to students interested in pursuing a terminal research degree in the biomedical sciences field (National Institute of General Medical Sciences, 2015). However, the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields represent some of the most inequitable enrollments regarding students of color in graduate education (Orfield, 2014). Such an observation thus unveils another key reason as to why graduate education is lacking racial diversity—the available options are not necessarily targeting and/or encouraging potential Black and Latina/o students to pursue terminal degrees. Efforts to confront this particular outcome though the lens of equity-mindedness may need to occur at the high school or undergraduate levels, forcing questions as to what individuals and institutions can do differently in efforts to encourage more Black and Latina/o students to pursue majors in the STEM (or any) fields.

Another, and often more likely, form of financial aid that graduate students receive at the federal level is need-based support; unfortunately, the policies surrounding such aid reflects another key reason as to why graduate institutions are lacking racial diversity. For example, whereas undergraduate students have the opportunity to receive grants based on need, such

support for graduate students almost always comes in the form of loans. A serious concern for many graduate students is the large amounts of debt they will accrue as a result of program completion (McWade, 1995; Orfield, 2014). Understandably so, federal financial policies based on "need" often inhibit the ability to successfully recruit Black and Latina/o graduate students.

2.2   INCREASING RACIAL DIVERSITY IN GRADUATE EDUCATION

Next, I answered the question: *what proven policies and practices have effectively worked to increase racial diversity in graduate education?* This question was addressed through the lens of equity-mindedness, and as a way to compliment individual and institutional practices.

2.2.1   Positive Outcomes of Affirmative Action

At the time affirmative action policies began appearing at the national level, the literature suggests that such policies were essentially implemented in efforts to address years of oppression that were inherent to segregation and other exclusionary laws in the U.S. (Garces, 2014; Harper et al., 2009). As affirmative action began making its way into admissions policies, the literature reflects similar sentiments and results, indicating that: "The affirmative action policies of the mid-1960s dramatically increased educational opportunities for African-Americans, particularly at PWIs" (Harper et al., 2009; p. 400). The use of affirmative action admissions policies has resulted in improved access to higher education for students of color, and therefore stands as proof to its effectiveness in working to increase racial diversity.

It is important to note the likeness of policy examples to equity-mindedness, which indicates that: "exclusionary practices [and] institutional racism … impact opportunities and outcomes for Black and Latina/o students" (Bensimon, 2007; p. 446). Although the examples referenced are in direct relation to early policy implementation, to be sure, taking affirmative action in making admissions decisions is still lawful in the vast majority of the U.S.; therefore, equity-minded practitioners need to ensure that such practices are implemented in continued recruitment efforts aimed at increasing racial diversity in graduate education. While various landmark decisions have resulted in a myriad of changes to and implications for practicing affirmative action in graduate admissions, implementation of such admission policies are still a valid way to increase the enrollments of Black and Latina/o graduate students. Furthermore, the recent *Fisher II* (2016) decision, wherein the Supreme Court determined "that American colleges and universities can consider race as one factor in a holistic admissions review," (Espinosa & McDonough, 2016) presents an opportune time for institutions and admissions offices to capitalize on the momentum stemming from a landmark decision and victory for both social justice and equity-mindedness.

2.2.2 Effective Federal Programs and Financial Aid

The literature surrounding graduate financial aid is also reflective of a dichotomy between positive and negative impacts regarding efforts to increase the enrollments of Black and Latina/o graduate students. A practical example of such a contrast can be identified in comparing the aforementioned *Bridges to the Doctorate* program, which does not appear to be effective in increasing racial diversity graduate education, to the federal TRIO programs.

The federal TRIO programs "have been successfully serving underrepresented populations for more than fifty years," (Garcia & Okhidoi, 2015) and have thus demonstrated effective policies in working to increase racial diversity in higher education. While the majority of such programs are focused on undergraduate populations, two (of seven) initiatives have a direct relation to serving graduate students of color. Student Support Services (SSS) is a retention policy that takes a variety of forms in not only helping undergraduate students complete their degrees, but also assisting them in the transition to graduate school (McElroy & Armesto, 1998). The Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program is specifically designed to mentor outstanding undergraduate students into the doctoral pipeline, providing support in such areas as research and practical-based experiences (McElroy & Armesto, 1998). The McNair Program also continues to support participants beyond their enrollment in graduate school, ensuring communication and related services to such students until graduate degree completion (Grimmett, Bliss, & Davis, 2015; McElroy & Armesto, 1998).

A brief summary of the federal TRIO SSS and McNair programs are indicative of an equity-minded approach, as each places individual practitioner and collective institutional responsibility as central to ensuring the success of Black and Latina/o students. Therefore, it would not only behoove graduate admissions professionals to emulate such an approach in practice, but also to form partnerships with schools involved in these particular TRIO programs as they work to increase the enrollments of Black and Latina/o graduate students.

2.3   IDENTIFYING GAPS AND MOVING FORWARD

The literature review unveiled notable gaps including but not limited to: a considerable disconnect concerning general mission statement research and the necessary, albeit largely missing, accountability piece to determine the true effectiveness of such statements, as well as a lack of literature surrounding the negative effects of affirmative action on the enrollments of graduate students of color. In spite of these and additional gaps, the literature review adequately framed why the development of equity-minded practitioners is an essential part of working to resolve the issue of increasing enrollments of Black and Latina/o graduate students. As Garcia (2015) reminds us: "understanding issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion is an important competency for all practitioners" (p. 1); this chapter will now turn to an effective way to begin developing such an understanding in presenting the theoretical framework for EqS.

2.4   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE EQUITY SCORECARD

The EqS process disaggregates institutional data by race and ethnicity in efforts to identify gaps in student outcomes/success (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012). The EqS process is distinct from the majority of student success models in that it takes an anti-deficit approach, placing primary responsibility for success on the institutions and the individuals who work within them, as opposed to focusing attention and possible interventions on the individual students (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012). A key factor and further distinction within the EqS framework requires that practitioners develop an expert level of race-consciousness, and thus places the idea of being equity-minded as central to its approach (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012).   As demonstrated

throughout the literature review, an important aspect concerning how the development of equity-minded practitioners can help to alleviate the issue surrounding the disparate enrollments of Black and Latina/o graduate students is associated with the permanence factor of equity-mindedness. Once an individual obtains the capacity to become equity-minded, he/she will always observe and act through such a lens, and thus approach related issues with such a mindset (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012). The following subsection will consider how to begin cultivating equity-minded practitioners by way of succinct exploration concerning the core theories embedded within the EqS framework.

2.4.1 Academic Theories and Theories of Action

In efforts to achieve the level of equity-mindedness that ultimately allows for institutional transformation, EqS relies on the ideologies of learning and change as primarily informed by the following academic theories: sociocultural activity setting theory, practice theory, organizational learning theory, and critical theories of race (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012). As illustrated in Figure 2 and as derived from Bensimon and Malcom (2012), each academic theory maintains a specific theory of action that implies a desired outcome related to creating equity-minded practitioners and will be discussed in further detail throughout the following subsection.
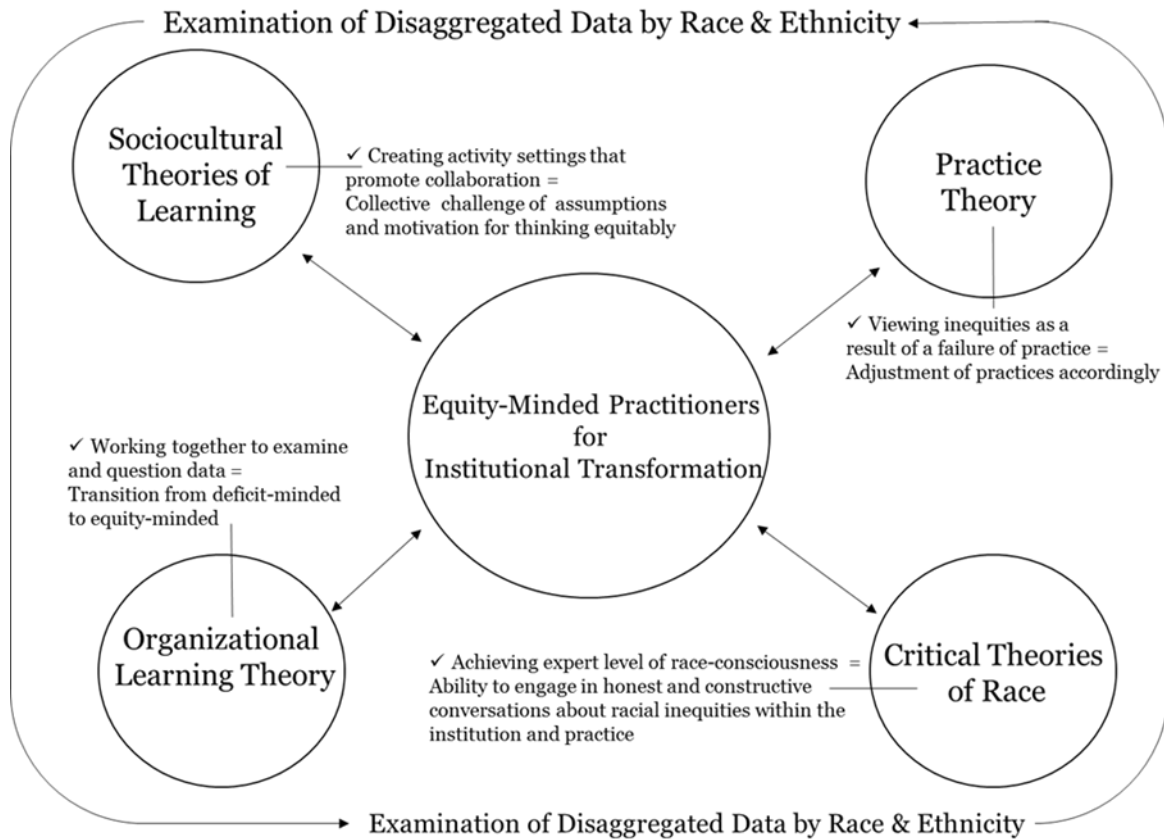
Figure 2. Academic theories and their implied theories of action as embedded within the Equity Scorecard framework (As derived from Bensimon & Malcom, 2012).

2.4.1.1 Sociocultural Activity Setting Theory

Sociocultural theories of learning assert that: "practitioners learn and change through their engagement in a joint productive activity" (Bensimon, 2012; p. 30). A key component in implementing EqS is creating an activity setting, or inquiry team, in which institutional practitioners can collaborate to examine disaggregated data by race and ethnicity (Bensimon, 2012; Harris & Bensimon, 2007). The makeup of inquiry teams is also a critical factor in successful implementation. Documented literature on outcomes associated with institutions that have implemented EqS indicate a variety of administrators such as faculty members, student and academic affairs staff members, and an institutional researcher (Kezar, Glenn, Lester, &

Nakamoto, 2008). The theory of action as it relates to equity-mindedness is that practitioners will work together to dissect the data in efforts to challenge assumptions and motivate each other to think through an equitable lens as they work to increase enrollments of Black and Latina/o graduate students. My study borrowed from this concept in that the committee and its associated meetings served as a forum with which to discuss disaggregated data and race and racial issues, and, in turn, such discussions led to not only learning, but also and for most, an opportunity to display equity-mindedness.

2.4.1.2 Practice Theory

Practice theory asserts that: "Inequity in educational outcomes is characterized as an indeterminate situation produced by a failure of practice" (Bensimon, 2012; p. 30), and thus requires practitioners to look within themselves in efforts to address disparities and alleviate issues (Bensimon, 2012; Harris & Bensimon, 2007). Such a reflection is unique in that it deviates from the often standard practice in higher education, which is to place blame and associated burdens on the students themselves; this is in opposition to the ideology of practice theory, in that it requires taking a deep pulse of what's going on within individual and institutional practices to address the need for change. As practitioners begin to evaluate inequities as a failure of personal and institutional practice, the theory of action is that they will begin to adjust their practices accordingly, contributing to the development of an innate sense of equity-mindedness that can work to increase enrollments of Black and Latina/o students. My study borrowed from this concept in that I constantly challenged members to consider what we, as practitioners and a School, could do to improve our practice to meet the needs of students of color throughout the recruitment process.

2.4.1.3 Organizational Learning Theory

Building from principles of practice theory, organizational learning theory asserts that: "Practitioner-led inquiry is a means of developing awareness of racial inequity and self-change" (Bensimon, 2012; p. 30). As practitioners implement EqS, working collaboratively in questioning individual and institutional practices as the disaggregated data examination process allows and continues, the theory of action is that they will begin to see considerable changes in themselves and their practice. In doing so, practitioners individually and collectively move away from a deficit-minded approach and move toward an equity-minded approach (Bensimon, 2012); such a transition is a key component of the organizational learning ideology. Taking a deficit-minded approach assumes that the student is the primary and sole agent of his/her own success, and views inequities in outcomes as a result of student deficiencies (Bensimon, 2007, 2012; Kezar et al., 2008). In contrast, an equity-minded approach considers the institution/practitioners as the primary agent of success and views inequities in outcomes as a result of institutional/practitioner deficiencies (Bensimon, 2007, 2012; Kezar et al., 2008). Taking an anti-deficit approach cultivates equity-mindedness and ultimately allows for considerable and long-term change to occur. My study borrowed from this concept in using not only data, but also various articles, images, and videos as mechanisms to invoke individual and collective learning and to promote personal and professional change as related to approaching racial issues and inequities.

2.4.1.4 Critical Theories of Race

Critical theories of race assert that: "Equity-minded practitioners are race-conscious" (Bensimon, 2012; p. 36). Assuming that the previously mentioned theories are enacted throughout the EqS implementation process, the theory of action is that practitioners are able to achieve a level of

race-consciousness that allows for open and constructive conversations about the racial inequities that exist within institutional practices and structures (Bensimon, 2012). Engaging in such conversations are essential to institutional change efforts related to increasing enrollments of Black and Latina/o graduate students, as they allow for an opportunity to disrupt the racial hierarchies that exist within higher education. Finally, it is also appropriate to add that achieving equity-mindedness results in less nebulous conversations about diversity—such as current affirmative action policies require—and encourage honest conversations about race and racial inequities and what practitioners can do to promote and achieve equal outcomes for all students. My study borrowed from this concept in that a primary charge of our committee was to establish trust between members, each of whom came from a variety of backgrounds, so that we could engage in candid discussions about race and racial issues in efforts to come together to alleviate inequities within the SFC.

2.4.2 Potential Challenges and Expected Successes

While a close look into the theoretical framework surrounding EqS and related initiatives has suggested that developing equity-minded practitioners will undoubtedly help to alleviate the issue of increasing enrollments of Black and Latina/o graduate students, it does not come without challenges. Such challenges have been documented in relation to EqS and also comparable interventions, and may include but are not limited to: individuals' lack of concern for or resistance to learning about institutional practices that contribute to racial disparities in student outcomes (Armstrong et al., 2012; Kezar et al., 2008); fear of exposure and/or embarrassment on behalf of themselves or their institutions (Armstrong et al., 2012; Kezar et al., 2008); practitioners' inability to understand and effectively respond to the cultural lives of their students

(Bensimon, 2007); lack of time to devote to the project and no monetary reward for participating (Peña & Polkinghorne, 2012); conflicting priorities and poor coordination among team members, as well as a lack of or unwillingness to share information across institutional boundaries (Kezar et al., 2008); inability to access a rich amount of meaningful data that is manageable to interpret and distribute (Dowd, Malcom, Nakamoto, & Bensimon, 2012: Kezar et al., 2008).

Despite these and other potential challenges, the expected outcomes that are associated with successful implementation efforts—the development of equity-minded practitioners coupled with the fact that new policies and programs must be implemented in the name of equitable outcomes—make such an initiative clearly worthwhile. For as Bensimon (2007) notes, "The problem of inequality is typically construed as an impossible problem without a solution. By making practitioner knowledge and institutional practices the focal point of racial disparities in educational outcomes, there is a greater possibility for change" (p. 456). Bensimon (2007) reminds practitioners that equitable outcomes are possible and, as this chapter has suggested and as Bensimon (2007) has reinforced, the most effective way to influence such outcomes is from within individual and institutional practices and, in turn, the development of equity-minded practitioners.

2.5   CONCLUSION

This chapter addressed the importance of working to increase the enrollments of Black and Latina/o graduate students through the use of authentic mission statements, effective recruitment policies and practices, and the development of equity-minded practitioners. As a result of this chapter, my study, which aimed to begin discussing the best approaches to alleviating enrollment

inequities for Black and Latina/o graduate students through the development of equity-minded practitioners, was appropriately situated within the corresponding literature and theoretical framework.

3.0   METHODOLOGY

Taking a case study approach to examining the GET REAL team and their efforts, I aimed to discover, primarily through participant-observation (Yin, 2014), whether or not the team and our objectives contributed to a display of equity-mindedness on behalf of the participants. A primary goal of the GET REAL team was to act as equity-minded leaders and, ultimately, offer recommendations to the School for Cognition (SFC) based upon their findings. In addition, the team members were asked to participate in this research study, of which the GET REAL team was the primary unit of analysis. Particularly, I explored how the team—through the examination and discussion of disaggregated data and various scholarly articles, videos, and images—displayed equity-mindedness over the course of their twelve month commitment to the team. Yin (2014) posits that: "the tentative definition of your case (or of the unit of analysis) is related to the way you define your initial research questions" (p. 31). Because the GET REAL team served as the primary unit of analysis for my study, I developed the following inquiry question while keeping the team and its charges in mind.

1. How does the GET REAL team, as a designed group, display equity-mindedness over the course of twelve months?

The GET REAL team, as the unit of analysis in this study, was not a naturally occurring phenomenon. Rather, the team was intentionally designed to bring constituents together with the goal of examining enrollment inequities and discussing race and racial issues using a particular

philosophy, or equity-mindedness (Bensimon, 2007). As such, I provided several, premeditated opportunities for the team to display equity-mindedness, including the examination of SFC enrollment data that has been disaggregated by race; discussions about various scholarly articles, images, and videos that related to race and racial issues; and participant-led presentations of, and reflections on, disaggregated data to SFC constituents outside of the GET REAL team and context. As a result of creating such opportunities for the team, I tried to understand which of the provided activities prompted the team to display equity-minded ideals as consistent with Bensimon's (2007) definition as well as the five main components of equity-mindedness as outlined by the Center for Urban Education at the University of Southern California (2016).

3.1   INQUIRY SETTING

The SFC is an urban institution situated in the northeastern part of the United States, and is classified as a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). The SFC is part of a larger institution that is an internationally renowned, public research university with approximately 25,000 students, nearly 4,500 full-time faculty, and over 7,000 staff members. While the university has multiple campuses throughout the state wherein it is located, the SFC is embedded within the flagship campus, and serves as one of fourteen different, specialized schools at said campus. The SFC has five departments with approximately 35 programs and over 50 different degree and certification options.

The SFC is struggling to achieve equitable enrollments for its Black and Latina/o graduate student populations. The enrollments of White, Black, and Latina/o students in the SFC as compared to graduate student enrollments of the same racial/ethnic groups on a national scale

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show that the School is underrepresenting Black and Latina/o students, yet over-representing White students. To further illustrate how the problem is manifesting itself within the setting for consideration in this study, it is important to consider how enrollments within the SFC compare to enrollments within other graduate schools of the same discipline. While graduate schools within the same discipline as the SFC currently enroll 64.8% White students on a national scale (Allum & Okahana, 2015), 73% of graduate students enrolled in the SFC are White. While 13.4% of graduate students within the same discipline on a national scale identify as Black (Allum & Okahana, 2015), only 6% of graduate students within the SFC are Black. Latina/o graduate students make up 10.3% of the national graduate student population within the discipline (Allum & Okahana, 2015), whereas only 3.0% of graduate students within the SFC are Latina/o. These comparisons are visually depicted in Figure 3.
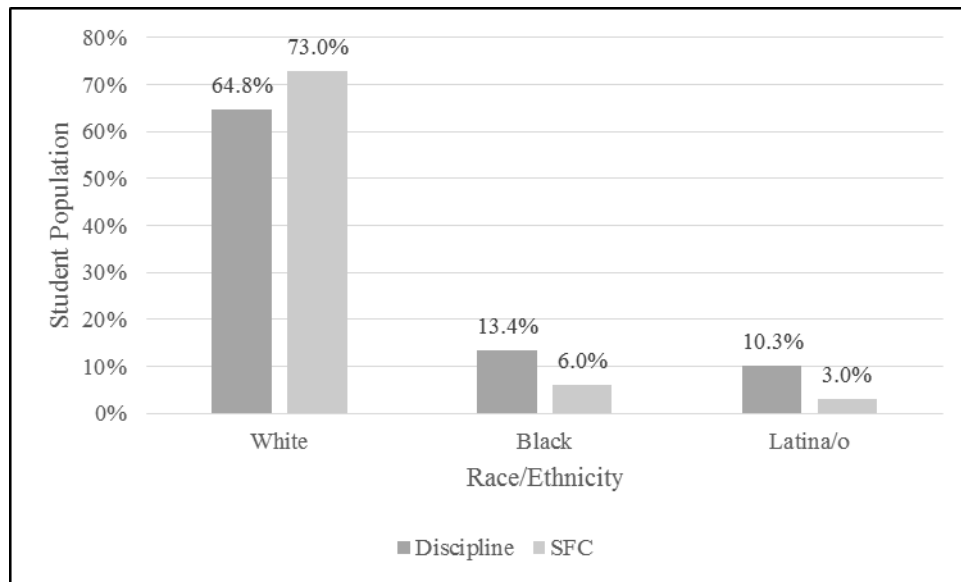
Figure 3. Graduate enrollment comparisons by race/ethnicity, 2015: National (by discipline) and the SFC (Allum & Okahana, 2015).

In practice I have noticed that when SFC constituents, primarily faculty members, are presented with preliminary data surrounding the enrollment inequities of its Black and Latina/o populations, a common response is that the SFC is significantly a local and/or regional school, and thus the local and regional populations must be considered in such comparisons and discussions. In the city wherein the SFC is located, 64.8% of the population is White (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015); thus, in comparison to those who identify as White within the city, the White graduate student population within the SFC is over-represented by 8.2%. City residents who identify as Black makeup 25.8% of the local population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015), which would mean that, in comparison to the SFC graduate enrollments, Black students are underrepresented by 19.8%. The Latina/o population within the city is 2.3%, which closely aligns with 3.0% of SFC graduate students who identify as Latina/o. When considering these data, the claims of the constituents indicating that the SFC enrollments, when disaggregated by race and ethnicity, are reflective of the city it serves are largely unwarranted. In addition, such claims are inconsistent with the equity-minded ideals of being evidence-based and race-conscious (Center for Urban Education at the University of Southern California, 2016), and are therefore further indicative of the need for equity-minded development within the SFC.

As for the regional statistics, averages of both the county wherein the SFC is located, along with those of surrounding SFC counties, indicates that approximately 84% of the population is White, approximately 11% is Black, and approximately 1.5% is Latina/o (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). With the exception of the population who identify as Black, which, in comparison to the regional average is still underrepresented by 5% in the SFC, an initial comparison of the White and Latina/o populations for the surrounding region, in conjunction with their representation in the SFC, might be considered a small success in terms of equitable,

albeit notably regional, enrollments. However, in an area where one of the city papers recently recognized that, statistically and comparatively speaking, "It would be hard for any metropolitan area to be whiter than [said city]," such nominal success is instantly overshadowed by the broader evidence which reflects a region that, nationally speaking, is not necessarily diverse. Furthermore, arguing the local and/or regional standpoint in response to the inequitable enrollments presented forces the conversation away from the equity-minded ideals of being institutionally focused, systemically aware, and equity advancing (Center for Urban Education at the University of Southern California, 2016), again proving this an ideal setting to work on developing equity-minded practitioners. Figure 4 provides a visual depiction of the regional statistics and enrollment comparisons.
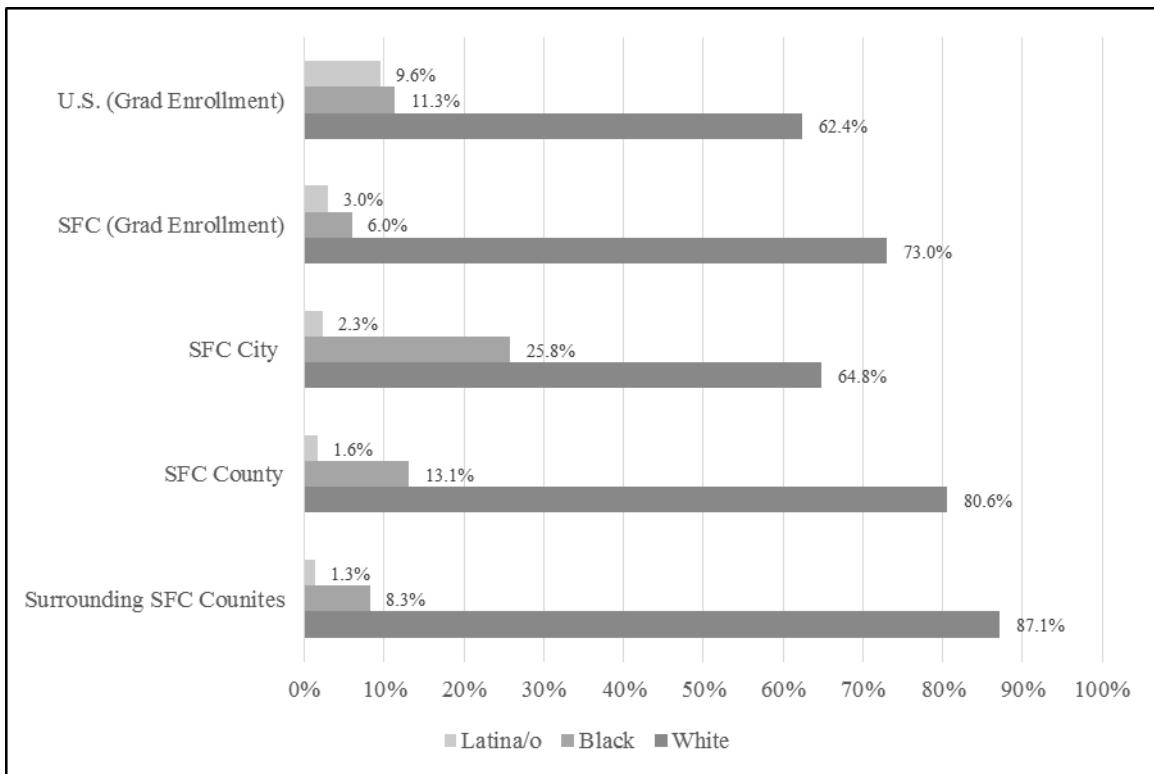
Figure 4. U.S. & SFC graduate student enrollment by race/ethnicity in comparison to population of city and surrounding areas (Allum & Okahana, 2015)

3.2   EPISTEMOLOGICAL APPROACH

In conducting this study, I took a constructivist approach to my research and analysis, which is consistent with qualitative methodology (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014).   Mertens (2010) offers the following in reference to such an approach,

> The basic assumptions guiding the constructivist paradigm are that knowledge is socially constructed by people active in the research process, and that researchers should attempt to understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it. The constructivist paradigm emphasizes that research is a product of the values of researchers and cannot be independent of them (p. 16).

As the composition of my research question suggests, by focusing on the GET REAL team and their experiences as members of a designed group, I looked to understand how they displayed equity-mindedness over the course of their participation. Because I sought such understanding from the perspectives of participants who were actively involved in my research, I thus viewed their potential for displaying equity-mindedness as knowledge that was socially constructed. Finally, as further consistent with the constructivist paradigm and as previously mentioned, I did not claim to take an objective view to approaching my research. I brought my own values and viewpoints to my research, and feel that such an approach was not only necessary, but also served to strengthen my work.

3.3   RESEARCHER'S REFLEXIVITY

Jones et al. (2014) describe researcher positionality as: "the relationship between the researcher and his or her participants and the researcher and his or her topic" (p. 26). I am a White woman who engages in racial justice work, and believe it is critically important to have a distinct awareness of, first and foremost, my racial identity, but also my gender identity as I approach my research.   Mertens (2015) calls attention to M.L. Anderson's (1993) study, indicating that Anderson, as a White woman who studied African American women, made it clear that she adopted a race-conscious approach to her research. Furthermore, due to Anderson's own racial identity as a member of the dominant group, the author rejected the idea of taking an unbiased, objective approach to one's research and the knowledge gained as a result of such research (Mertens, 2015). I approach my work with a stance that is reminiscent of what Mertens (2015) describes of Anderson, such that I bring my own racial identity as a member of the White, and therefore socially privileged, class to my work. To ignore my racial identity and position as a member of the dominant group would be a disservice to not only the work in which I am engaging, but also and most importantly, the long-term goal of attaining more equitable enrollments for Black and Latina/o graduate students as a result of this study.

As chair of the GET REAL team and principal investigator of this study, as well as a full-time staff member within the SFC at the time it was conducted, I was balancing multiple roles that included: employee, colleague, supervisor, and student researcher. This balance, while at times challenging, had several advantages. Having served as the director of an SFC unit, I was in a unique position that enabled me to effectively carry out this study, as I had access to copious amounts of rich and complex data sets. It has been noted that qualitative research involves immersion in a context, so as to be attuned to what goes on within said context (Jones et al.,

2014), and that the relationship between the researcher and their participants helps to facilitate the focus of their analysis (Marvasti, 2014). Having worked as an administrator within the SFC for over seven years, I went into this study with an innate understanding of the context. My experiences as a staff member also afforded me the opportunity to establish relationships with most of my participants prior to the conceptualization of this study. Therefore, my research and analysis ultimately benefited from the unique position with which I approached my study.

3.4   INQUIRY APPROACH

This inquiry aimed to explore equity-mindedness within the GET REAL team. I took a qualitative, case study approach to my inquiry and the question for consideration. Jones et al. (2014) define a purpose of qualitative research as a way "to use new understanding for emancipating purposes" (p. 11). I approached this research with the intention of garnering an understanding as far as the extent to which serving on the GET REAL team allowed for a display of equity-mindedness. Assuming that the team and our discussions allowed for a considerable display of equity-mindedness, such an approach can, as evidenced by the supporting literature along with a breadth of personal experiences in higher education administration, suggest an effective yet untraditional way to alleviate enrollment inequities for students of color. Thus, the purpose of this study aligned well with a defining purpose of qualitative research as outlined by Jones et al. (2014).

Yin (2014), in part, defines the scope of a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in depth and within a real-world context" (p.16). The phenomenon, or case, that I investigated was the GET REAL team. In conducting

this study, I strived to obtain a deep understanding as to whether or not their participation on the GET REAL team provided opportunities for the members to display equity-mindedness, particularly as related to issues of race and how to approach alleviating inequitable enrollments for Black and Latina/o graduate students within the real-world context of the SFC.

The decision to choose case study as the method to explore the GET REAL team and its purpose was further justified by the composition of and goals associated with my research question. My question aimed to garner an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon for investigation (or the GET REAL team), which has been suggested as an appropriate hallmark for choosing a case study approach (Yin, 2014). Furthermore, bounding the case to the GET REAL team, which is also considered a defining characteristic of taking such an approach (Jones, et al., 2014; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014), allowed for a more thorough investigation of this particular phenomenon. While the results associated with this case study aimed to effect more dramatic, long-term, and permanent change as related to a more equitable racial landscape for the SFC, the immediate goals were bounded to the GET REAL team and how they displayed equity-mindedness over the course of twelve months.

3.4.1 Data Sources

The primary data sources for this study were participant observations at the monthly GET REAL team meetings and direct observations at various meetings outside the context of the team setting. In conducting a series of participant and direct observations, I ultimately analyzed my data in direct connection to my research question, and, in order to do so, relied heavily on the two observation protocols I created, each of which are presented in Appendix A and B. The purpose of each protocol was to examine the observations and subsequent data collected in direct

relation to the theoretical framework that guided this study, as well as the inquiry question for consideration. Establishing a connection to the research question has been suggested as a conventional approach to interpreting and analyzing data (Jones et al., 2014). With this in mind, my research question will be reintroduced with attention to its intimate connection to my data sources and analysis.

The inquiry question for exploration was: *How does the GET REAL team, as a designed group, display equity-mindedness over the course of twelve months?* Participant observations during the monthly meetings was the main form of data collection in working to answer this question. Having served as chair of the ad-hoc committee, I was immersed as a true participant. This direct and engrossed form of participation in the research allowed me to fully absorb the experience, drawing upon my own feelings and understandings as an intimate part of the team, which ultimately allowed me to make informed conclusions throughout all stages of the data collection and analysis process (Patton, 2002).

I also accompanied individual team members to their data presentations outside the GET REAL setting and conducted direct observations in these meetings. I wanted to capture the team members' reactions and responses to the various data sets that were presented to them, as well as their reactions and responses to their colleagues when presenting the data outside of the monthly meetings. Patton (2002) indicates that one of the many values of direct observations "is the chance to learn things that people would be unwilling to talk about in an interview," and particularly when the topics of discussion are sensitive in nature (p. 263). Conducting a direct observation of each team member in a setting that was, in most cases, habitual, such as a regularly scheduled faculty meeting, allowed for a more comfortable space to solicit discussion on the sensitive topics of race and the current enrollment inequities. As a result of observing

within and creating such an environment, the opportunity for more honest and brazen discussion and, importantly, data collection, occurred.

In both the participant and direct observations, I ultimately wanted to examine how the individuals within the team displayed, through words and actions, equity-minded ideals as consistent with Bensimon (2007) and the USC Center for Urban Education (2016). In particular, and as outlined in the protocol found in Appendix A, I wanted to explore what kind of activity—examining disaggregated data, discussing a scholarly article, or reflecting upon a current event, etc.—triggered more equity-minded responses within the group, as well as what those responses entailed. I was interested in understanding how participation on the GET REAL team, and the various activities with which we engaged, shaped participants' expressions of equity-mindedness.

Because this was a data-driven effort as directly related to enrollment inequities, a secondary data source was archival records (Yin, 2014), that took the form of various data sets related to historical patterns in SFC enrollment. In order to fully address my research question, I had to spend a considerable amount of time gathering, analyzing, and presenting data sets that enabled me to provide reliable and understandable information regarding enrollment inequities to the team as well as the greater SFC community.

3.4.1.1 Sample

The GET REAL team, and more specifically, the individuals agreeing to serve on said team, was the proposed sample for this study. Working in conjunction with the SFC Dean and my research advisor, we developed a team reflective of the purpose of this study, which has been suggested as a critical strategy when selecting participants (Jones et al., 2014). Participants were invited to serve via a two-step email process, each of which are included in Appendix C**.** The first email

involved an initial announcement from the SFC Dean that briefly outlined the committee and its connection to my research, encouraging those who are invited to agree to serve. The second email was a formal invitation from me and my advisor, requesting each individual's participation on the committee, and offering further information as to the goals of the team.

Participants were purposefully selected and invited to serve as members of the committee and subsequent research study. Selection criteria included attention to forming a diverse group of participants according to race/ethnicity; gender identity; department and program affiliation; and faculty, staff, or student status, all of whom presumably have varying levels of equity-mindedness in thought and practice. Being decisively vague in efforts to protect the confidentiality of the research participants, the demographics of the sample are reflected in Table 1 below. In the department-program affiliation column, the first letters (A through H) are representative of the participant's department, and thus reflect the broad range of departmental affiliation across the team. The second letters (A-C) are, as applicable, representative of the participant's program affiliation within the department. Thus, if there is more than one person from the department (E, for example), the additional letter represents a further breakdown of their program affiliation within the department.

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Participant	Race/Ethnicity	Gender Identity	Dept.-Program	Personnel Status
Lily*	White	Female	A	Faculty
Marika	Black/White Biracial	Female	B(Staff)E-A(Stud.)	Staff & Student
John	White	Male	C	Faculty
Natalie	White	Female	D	Staff
Antonia	Latina	Female	E-A	Faculty
Calvin	Black	Male	E-B	Student
Jasmine	Latina	Female	E-B	Student
Ed	White	Male	E-C	Faculty
Kelly	White	Female	F	Faculty
Ava	White	Female	G	Staff
Wendy	White	Female	H-A	Faculty
Izzie	White	Female	H-B	Faculty

Pseudonyms are used throughout to further protect the identities of the participants

In addition to the more specific selection criteria as outlined above, I was also cognizant of my professional relationship with each individual when identifying the sample for this study. As Jones et al. (2014) note: "the relationship between the researcher and participants is one of the hallmarks of qualitative inquiry" (p. 120). I therefore wanted to ensure that I had a relatively close working relationship with each of the participants prior to beginning the study, and one that could be built upon throughout the course of their participation on the team. Such a connection is not only important to the type of inquiry in which I engaged, but also to the overall functionality and rapport of the team and its efforts.

Because the aspect of race was critical to this research project, it is important to call specific attention to that demographic category, which will not only offer further insights as to the context of this study, but also my own positionality in conducting this research. In addition to my White racial identity as principal investigator of this project and chair of the ad-hoc committee under investigation, it is necessary to further highlight that eight of the twelve

participants/committee members are also White. The remaining four racially identify as Latina (2), Black (1), and Black/White Biracial (1).

While the inclusion of people of color in this study was both very intentional and remained very important to carrying it out, it can be suggested that White people, due to their position of racial privilege in education and society, are arguably much less versed in considering race and racial issues than their counterparts of color. Therefore, it can be reasoned that White participants are likely to have experienced heightened levels of equity-minded development as a result of their participation on a team such as this, which may in turn, aid in disrupting the current racial enrollment inequities in graduate education. However, it should also be noted that the overrepresentation of White people on this team is a direct reflection of the context wherein this study is situated. While this study focuses specifically on the inequities as related to the graduate student population within the SFC, it is noteworthy to mention that, if this study were to focus on the racial makeup of SFC faculty and staff, similar, and heightened, patterns of inequity would be revealed.

The patterns of inequity as described above are not, of course, isolated to this particular PWI. Such an observation sheds light upon an important underpinning at the core of this study and its contribution to the larger body of work it serves to inform, and that is the idea that White people can, should, and need to engage in diversity work. Owen (2009) reminds us that:

> The purpose of diversity leadership ought to be about increasing the degree of inclusiveness and equity in the organization by challenging and altering the policies, practices, and beliefs that form the organizational system, and this should be everyone's concern, both Whites and persons of color, both men and women (p. 194).

This study is reminiscent of what Owen (2009) describes, in that it seeks to disrupt patterns of inequity within higher education through the development of equity-minded practitioners, policies, and practices. Furthermore, as a White woman committed to racial justice work, my positionality brings a perspective that is important to the continuation of a united fight toward equity in higher education.

3.4.2 Data Analysis

The data analysis relied heavily upon two specific observation protocols (Appendix A and B). Yin (2014) asserts that: "A case study inquiry benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis" (p. 17). In addition to each of the protocols being closely connected to my research question, they were also guided by Bensimon's (2007) definition of, and theoretical framework as related to, equity-mindedness, as well as the five main components of equity-mindedness as outlined by the USC Center for Urban Education (2016).

The monthly GET REAL meetings were audio-recorded and personally evaluated, and so the analysis process began rather directly. Because I was looking for very specific and predefined elements throughout the evaluation process, I therefore worked to extract patterns and create codes using a deductive method, relying primarily upon the theoretical framework for this study and my research question to carefully code the data (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The data was evaluated in direct conjunction to the protocols, each of which were grounded in the ideology of equity-mindedness and the inquiry question for consideration. As such, I looked for patterns of evidence of equity-mindedness from the team in response to the disaggregated data, as well as the various articles, images, and videos presented for discussion (Appendix A);

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in response to each team member's reflection of their data presentations to the greater SFC community outside the context of the GET REAL team (Appendix A); and in direct response to their greater SFC colleagues to whom they presented data outside of the GET REAL team (Appendix B).

As my protocols reflect, the codes I sought to extract throughout the analysis phase were directly related to Bensimon's (2007) definition of equity-mindedness, as well as the five components of equity-mindedness as outlined by the USC Center for Urban Education (2016). For the participant-observations I conducted, there were eleven GET REAL committee meetings, and each meeting lasted one and a half hours. What I tried to understand was what type of activity elicited more equity-minded responses, as well as what type of activities provoked responses that were more deficit-minded. I also explored whether or not the team, in direct relation to their responses to the activities, displayed a more distinct level of equity-mindedness as their time together progressed throughout the twelve month period.

The direct observations I conducted allowed me to analyze how the GET REAL team members displayed equity-mindedness in a context outside of the team meetings. I conducted ten direct observations of team members presenting to their SFC colleagues, which ranged in time from thirty minutes to one hour in length. Because a key charge of the GET REAL team was to act as equity-minded leaders, conducting data presentations to the greater SFC community afforded them the opportunity to display equity-mindedness in a context separate from that of our regular committee meetings. It also allowed for the work of the team to be distributed more widely, which was also a key charge of the committee. The data analysis of these direct observations were sensitive to the issue of time. Realizing that members presented data outside of GET REAL, and then in turn, reported back to the GET REAL team at different times

throughout the course of the twelve month period, lessons learned from such reflections had an effect on the degree to which a team member displayed equity-mindedness in their presentations. With that in mind, I also looked to explore what type of patterns emerged from the outside presentations that allowed for subsequent presentations to be more effective in creating a space that more closely aligned with the charges of the GET REAL team.

I did not use data analysis software to extract patterns and create subsequent codes; rather, I relied upon the playback of the various audio-recordings of the monthly meetings, along with extensive field notes and headnotes from both the monthly meetings and the participant presentations, to carefully code the data in direct conjunction to my protocols. I developed a distinct notetaking system that ultimately allowed me to determine what key indicators, over the course of our time together, solicited more distinct displays of equity-mindedness on behalf of the team and our charges. As a result of these findings, I arguably produced a final piece that, while certainly distinct to the SFC context, might also be used more widely among practitioners who desire to perform a similar intervention within their own contexts as they work to create a more equity-minded environment for higher education.

3.5   LIMITATIONS OF THE METHOD/APPROACH

There were certain limitations associated with my method and approach. Patton (2002) indicates that: "the effects of observation vary depending on the nature of the observation, the type of setting being studied, the personality and procedures of the observer, and a host of unanticipated conditions" (p. 326). As related to the nature and setting of my methods, I conducted participant-observations, while, at the same time, worked to lead the committee and our

discussions during the monthly meetings. Even though I audio-recorded the meetings, it was difficult to take detailed field notes in real time, while also being attentive to leading the team as we engaged in sensitive conversations about enrollment inequities, race, and racial issues. Although I designed my protocols so that they could be completed during the evaluation phase of my analysis and therefore after the meetings in real time, implementing such a procedure, as Patton (2002) alludes, may have had unanticipated effects on my methods and therefore pose an additional limitation.

As further related to the nature and setting of my methods, another limitation surfaced when conducting my direct observations. Given, at the time, my dual position of administrator and student researcher, it was difficult for me to enter any space within the SFC as a true observer. Furthermore, when considering the nature of my professional position in conjunction with the nature of the data to be presented for discussion at these observations, it was a near impossibility to assume the role of direct observer. The faculty and other SFC constituents included in these settings had a difficult time separating my role as student-researcher from that of professional staff, and as a result, included me in the discussions, therefore presenting another limitation within my methods.

As for limitations in my methodological approach, using a case study always presents the challenge of findings not translating as easily into different contexts (Yin, 2014). Because I was not aiming for generalizability in my study, I viewed this as an opportunity rather than a limitation as it relates to my approach. Ultimately, I tried to understand whether or not participation on the GET REAL team, within the specific context of the SFC, resulted in the equity-minded development of the team. Furthermore, keeping the sample small and the context

limited is consistent with bounding the case and, in turn, helped to define and manage my data and the unit of analysis I was researching (Yin, 2014).

Finally, and with particular attention to my positionality and epistemology, I had to be careful to avoid bias when completing my case study. Yin (2014) notes that "case study researchers are especially prone to this problem because they must understand the issues beforehand" (p. 76), and such an understanding may likely involve a bias toward particular ways of thinking or feeling about the issues for consideration. Yin (2014) also notes that bias can cause the researcher to focus on supportive evidence and ignore contrary evidence. Because I approached my study with an awareness of bias and the limitations it can present, I took heed of Yin's (2014) advice to include evidence that not only supports but also challenges my stance concerning the issues of enrollment inequities for Black and Latina/o graduate students and the development of equity-minded practitioners.

3.6   CONCLUSION

I used a case study approach to explore the GET REAL team, examining how the designed group displayed equity-mindedness over the course of twelve months. Taking this approach was appropriate because I sought to garner an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon that was bounded to a specific context. My data sources, which were primarily participant and direct observations, but also archival records in the form of historical enrollment data, were integral to examining my inquiry question. My reflexivity as a White woman, SFC staff member, and student researcher, coupled with my constructivist epistemological approach, were also critical components to carrying out this study and will continue to encompass my work.

Importantly, I ultimately secured permission from the SFC's IRB (Appendix D) to conduct this

study.

4.0   FINDINGS

The findings to follow relied almost exclusively upon the playback, select transcription, and deductive coding of approximately sixteen hours of audio resulting from eleven participant observations, along with the field notes and headnotes from nine direct observations totaling an additional estimated six hours of observation time. My data analysis was done in direct conjunction with the protocols as found in Appendix A, B, and C, each of which were grounded in Bensimon's (2007) definition of equity-mindedness and the USC Center for Urban Education's (2016) five components of equity-mindedness. The findings worked to answer the inquiry question for consideration—*How does the GET REAL team, as a designed group, display equity-mindedness over the course of twelve months?*—while accurately depicting the story of the GET REAL team and our journey together as a group.

The GET REAL team consisted of twelve members, thirteen including me, all of whom were part of the School for Cognition, but represented a diverse group of departments, programs, administration, and students. There were eleven total GET REAL meetings, and each team member had the opportunity to conduct one data-driven presentation outside of the GET REAL meetings. The average number of meetings attended across membership was eight, and 10 of 12 completed presentations outside of the GET REAL group context. Overall, and despite some variation in participation, members of GET REAL displayed persistent forms of commitment to the team and our charge to unveil enrollment inequities for our Black and Latina/o graduate

student populations within the SFC, and to work on various ways to improve upon such inequities. As I stated in one of our earlier team meetings:

> This is us. We are the GET REAL team. The last part of the acronym, this is really our charge. To take equity-minded approaches and become equity-minded leaders and to develop into that so that we can help affect change within the context of this School. The top part [of the acronym], based on the research that I've done and what I believe, will come naturally once we become more equity-minded in our approaches and leadership.

The first part of our team acronym, or Graduate Enrollment Targets Realized, while critically important, was neither the outcome of my study nor the focus of my findings. What my findings unveiled is how the GET REAL team, as a result of their participation, learned to be equity-minded; and, due to such learning, how the team members continuously displayed equity-mindedness. While, at times, such learning and displays were fraught with various obstacles to becoming equity-minded, my study demonstrates that members of the GET REAL team were able to overcome such obstacles in taking equity-minded approaches that will ultimately foster their capacities to become equity-minded leaders in practice.

4.1   LEARNING HOW TO BE EQUITY-MINDED

The monthly team meetings provided a place for learning, debriefing, and growing. In efforts to provide opportunities for the GET REAL team to learn how to be equity-minded, I worked to create a variety of activities that allowed them to engage in varying discussions about race and racial issues. The team participated in activities such as: the examination of disaggregated data by race and ethnicity; the debriefing and discussion of a team member's presentation of

disaggregated data to various SFC stakeholders outside the context of the GET REAL meetings; discussion surrounding various articles, videos, and images related to issues of race and equity; and finally and only toward the end of our time together, the development of ideas for a larger recommendation document to be presented to the new SFC Dean resulting from our experiences as a committee. Table 2 outlines the activities and the frequency with which the GET REAL team engaged in each type, and the subsections to follow will breakdown each activity and the subsequent opportunities for learning how to be equity-minded that occurred as a result of such engagement.

Table 2. Activity Type and Frequency of Engagement within Monthly Meetings

Activity Type	Number of Times	Total Time
Outside Presentation of DD*	7	4 HR 35 min 40 sec
Disaggregated Data	2	19 min 12 sec
Articles	3	1 HR 19 min 42 sec
Images	1	21 min 55 sec
Videos	2	46 min 20 sec
Recommendations	2	2 HR 00 min 38 sec

*Disaggregated Data

Creating such an environment and designing the group in this intentional way is consistent with the theoretical framework that encompassed my study, The Equity Scorecard (EqS) (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012). EqS calls attention to specific academic theories and theories of action, such as organizational learning and practice theories, that, when implemented in practice, can contribute to the development of equity-minded practitioners for institutional transformation. Most team members seemed to appreciate the collegial yet challenging nature of the team meetings, as evidenced in comments such as the following from Kelly, "It's a learning group, not just a working group (a lot of agreement from team). A learning group. Which is why it's really cool." And, at the last meeting Izzie expressed, "I learned a lot. To tell you the

truth I learned a great deal." The following will show how the team, as an intentionally designed group encompassed by the ideology of equity-mindedness (Bensimon, 2007) and the EqS framework (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012), learned to be equity-minded while participating in the various activities during the monthly GET REAL meetings.

4.1.1 Outside Presentations and Disaggregated Data

As evidenced in table 2, GET REAL spent the majority of our time together discussing the outside presentations and the disaggregated data that accompanied such presentations. Because the examination of disaggregated data by race and ethnicity is a hallmark of EqS (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012), such a concentration is therefore consistent with the theoretical framework that guided my study. As far as some particulars of the outside presentations, I would prepare data visuals for each team member in advance of their presentations. The data prepared were relevant to SFC enrollment—applications; admitted and denied status; and so on—and was disaggregated by race. The data were directly related to the department and program to whom the team member presented. As an example, Appendix E provides a snapshot into some of the data that John used to present at his faculty meeting.

As evidenced in the amount of time spent reflecting upon outside presentations within the monthly team meetings, the debriefing and discussion of a team member's presentation of disaggregated data to various SFC stakeholders was an extremely important and valuable team activity. Doing so not only helped us to conceptualize and reflect upon where we stand from an equity-minded perspective across the broader SFC, but also helped us to determine, in an immediate sense, what might contribute to more successful outside presentations by our GET

REAL teammates. And, from a more long-term aspect, what might assist us as we continually learn to be equity-minded practitioners in hopes of creating a more equitable SFC.

Antonia was among the first GET REAL team members to engage in an outside presentation of disaggregated data, and, as previously alluded, contributed to the team's sense of not only what to expect, but also how to potentially combat some of the responses of our colleagues. Colleagues who, notably, do not have the advantage of participating in this type of learning group. The following is reminiscent of such efforts, as Antonia reflects,

> I had to keep interjecting [to my faculty colleagues during my presentation]: 'At a national level, the federal government recognizes Black, Latina, and Native Americans as historically underrepresented minorities. And that's what we're focusing on.' I had to have that knowledge. I had to be able to combat that. I had to be able to pick up on that. … Something we can all fall back on when we're making presentations is that we're actually looking at racial inequities. … So don't be afraid to fall back on race because we can. That's what this project is. That's what we're bounded by within the GET REAL team.

Antonia's recollection of her presentation not only offered insights as what to expect, but also offered tangible information and tools for her fellow teammates to utilize as they go out and perform their own data presentations. Antonia also reminded her teammates as to one of the central components of equity-mindedness (USC CUE, 2016) as well as focus of this group, and that is the issue of race and being race conscious. At the same time, Antonia's knowledge of historically underrepresented groups indicates that she is systemically aware, which is also a central component of equity-mindedness (USC CUE, 2016).

The outside presentations were the main method of disaggregated data analysis and related activities, however, and as outlined in table 2, there was other, albeit minimal, activity around disaggregated data analysis. In such cases, I would continue with the practice of putting enrollment data together for the team and presenting it at the monthly meetings to initiate conversations, but such data may or may not have been limited to the SFC context. But as illustrated and for the most part, the data we analyzed and discussed as a team was specific to the SFC context, and typically in direct relation to the outside presentations.

4.1.2 Articles

In efforts to further develop our understanding of the ideology of equity-mindedness and how the actual implementation of such an ideology might look in practice, I assigned various scholarly articles for reading and discussion. Each of the three articles selected were directly related to the concept of equity-mindedness and the idea of creating interventions within institutions of higher education using such a concept.

The articles provided a unique opportunity for the team to "reflect on their own and their colleagues' role in and responsibility for student success" (Bensimon, 2007, p. 446), and to use the literature as an opportunity to learn from others who have participated in similar interventions. One such opportunity is reflected in the following from Jasmine, who, in response to an article for discussion, stated,

> Bensimon speaks to this in her article. That people of color's strengths, or the types of social/cultural capital that they have just aren't valued in a positive way. So it's not only about assistance but also about changing ideology altogether, and what is valued in a positive way and what is not.

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As evidenced in Jasmine's response to the article, she was not only reacting to and learning from the points as presented by the author, but also reflecting on how we might use such points to initiate equity-minded change within our own practice and context.

4.1.3   Images

Although the GET REAL team only discussed one image throughout our time together, the timeline for such a discussion and the dialogue that surrounded the image are worthy of mention. Both Natalie and Marika, on separate occasions, brought this image to my attention, and so I thought it would be a good idea to distribute it to the rest of team and, in turn, open the floor for discussion surrounding the image. In terms of timeline, this image was discussed at our second meeting together as a group, in February 2016. I think this context is important because it may help to explain some of the dialogue that ensued as a result, since we, as a team at this early juncture, had not yet had the opportunity to spend a great deal of time considering and learning from the equity-minded ideology as well as each other.

As for the discussion surrounding the image, there was a substantive amount of equity-minded conversation happening, such as Natalie commenting that, "Equality is everybody gets the same. Equity makes it the same, whatever it takes to do that, gets everybody at the same level." And Wendy offering, "I think we've come to this idea that equality and fairness is right for everybody, and so I think we have a long way to go to realize that really isn't what's equitable or fair." Both Natalie and Wendy offered reflections that bring light to the importance of thinking and approaching practice through an equity-minded lens.

As the discussion surrounding the image continued, there were also conversations such as the following thread, which demonstrated some back and forth, and particularly in terms of what might be considered equity-minded versus deficit-minded perspectives.

Calvin: The tall person gave something up for the small person. I think that's a mindset that a lot of people have about equity. That I have to give something up for you when in fact you're not really giving anything up because it's not really hurting you.

John: I'm not sure that's really true. Some would argue that privilege is a thing you have to give up. There's going to be some loss.

Calvin: I think a conflict with equity is that people think they're giving up more than they're actually giving up.

John: I agree.

Calvin: You said you're giving up privilege. I get that because you can still see the game; maybe your view of the game isn't quite as good it used to be; but, at the same time, in an equitable situation everybody has a better view.

In the back and forth between Calvin and John, you can see initial opposition in terms of opinions, and both participants were challenging each other's perspectives. By the end of the thread, there is also a validation of each perspective on behalf of both participants; at the same time, it also appears that Calvin was able to further solidify his perspective with a distinct argument as it relates to equity. This conversation is also reflective of the idea that such challenges were both encouraged and expected within the context of the GET REAL team as we worked together to learn and to grow. Such growth helped us to take more equity-minded approaches outside of the monthly meetings, which is critical to helping alleviate the enrollment inequities for our Black and Latina/o graduate students.

4.1.4 Videos

The GET REAL team also spent time discussing videos related to race and racial issues. One particular video, which was viewed at our June 2016 meeting and therefore at the halfway point of our journey together as a team, sparked interesting discussion and reflection. The video we viewed, which notably and for the second time, was sent to me for consideration to distribute to the team by Marika, was of Donovan Livingston's Harvard Graduate School of Education Student Speech/Spoken Word Piece (Harvard Education, 2016). Marika's willingness to engage beyond our general team assignments further demonstrates her commitment to not only her own, but also our collective learning and growth as a team.

The responses to this video were reflective of a GET REAL team that had matured beyond our second meeting and the discussion surrounding the image. They were reflective of a more equity-minded team. For example, Wendy said, "The pressure he's [Livingston's] felt his entire life. Being a quota. Being a person of diversity. What stress that feels like when you're constantly pigeonholed into these terms." And Ava followed with a similar thought, stating, "That feeling of being marginalized and the stress that puts on you long-term. You felt his [Livingston's] anger, his sense of isolation. And you felt that's coming from so many angles. So many buckets." What both Wendy and Ava expressed in their responses are consistent with Bensimon's (2007) definition of equity-mindedness, which calls attention to the idea that, "Equity-minded individuals are more cognizant that exclusionary practices, institutional racism, and power asymmetries impact opportunities and outcomes for Black and Latina/o students" (p. 446). Wendy and Ava demonstrated such cognizance in their responses to this video.

In preparation for the discussion surrounding Livingston's (2016) piece, I also asked the team to consider the following questions:

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If you had to pick one line/part from this poem that most resonates with you, which one would it be and why? Furthermore, if possible, can you also speak to how such a line/part might be connected to your view of equity-mindedness?

The following quote from Calvin poignantly demonstrates an answer to both questions posed, as well as presents an interesting challenge to equity-mindedness and our growth as a team.

I thought he [Livingston] made a subtle critique, and this is a longstanding critique really, for a lot of Black sociologists and philosophers. Are you more interested in my body or are you more interested in my mind? I think the diversity critique pointed to that—are you just interested in me being here, so you can say I'm here, or are you more interested in what happens to me when I'm here? … When we talk about equity and equity-mindedness, we talk a lot about what we do for bodies, but we also really have to think about the mind, the psychology, the emotion, the emotional aspect, the implications that has, when you're talking about being equity-minded.

In his response to the questions for consideration, Calvin ultimately provided his own critique in astutely suggesting that we, as equity-minded learners and leaders, need to carefully consider our roles in providing holistic care for our most vulnerable students. In doing so, Calvin called for us, as Bensimon (2007) suggests, to: "reflect on their own and their colleagues' role in and responsibility for student success" (p. 446). In his response, Calvin also referenced the emotional aspect, which was also reflected in the earlier responses as shared by Wendy and Ava. As demonstrated in the narrative surrounding this video, the responses from the GET REAL team were grounded in equity-mindedness, and are therefore evidence of the fact that the team consistently and progressively learned how to be equity-minded throughout the course of our time together.

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4.1.5 Recommendations

The activity of conceptualizing recommendations to offer to the broader SFC as a result of our experiences as a team came much later in our time together, and occurred in person at our October and November 2016 meetings. Such conversations also happened online throughout the course of October, November, and December of 2016. Ultimately, our recommendation document will be finalized, signed by all members of the GET REAL team, and presented to the new SFC Dean shortly after their start date, which has been set for late summer of 2017.

Waiting until the end of our time together to formulate recommendations was intentional, as it allowed the team to maximize our time to learn and to grow, and, as a result, were arguably able to offer recommendations that were grounded in such equity-minded learning and growth. As John mentioned,

> A lot of the work of this committee has been turned inward and trying to understand where this School is, and I think that part of that story should be captured as well as the recommendations. This is what happened, this is what we learned, these are the kind of things that came up, and, based on all of that work, here's the vision that we see and here's some steps that came out of that.

John's quote speaks to the journey of the GET REAL team, and the importance of respecting that journey through recognition of the process as part of the larger recommendations to be provided to the SFC and their new Dean. John also called attention to the learning that occurred as a result of our time together as a group. Furthermore, John's sentiments were consistent with Bensimon (2007), who reminds us that internal and institutional reflection are critical components toward success efforts for Black and Latina/o students.

4.1.6 Further demonstrations of learning and growth

While a close examination into various team activities concluded that members of GET REAL learned how to be equity-minded as a result of their participation in a variety of team activities, the following will further explore the idea of learning in taking a more individualized approach to demonstrating how such growth occurred. For example, the racial demographics of the region were often conveyed as an answer, or excuse, to the inequities surrounding the disaggregated data presented to both the GET REAL team and the greater SFC. To highlight this idea, consider the following exchange between team members, which occurred during the February 2016 meeting:

> **Ava:** It's going to be hard to get those Latina numbers up just because of the regional demographic.
>
> **Maggie (me):** I would push back on that because it's not an equity-minded answer. To be equity-minded is *not* about, 'Well, there are no students to choose from.' To be equity-minded would be, 'Where do *we* go to get these students? How do *we* change what *we're* doing to make those numbers change?'
>
> **John:** To Ava's point … the SFC has this history of, even more so in the past, pulling from the region.
>
> **Antonia:** No. No, no, no. Beyond the region. We are a graduate school. There are two graduate students in the room and neither of them are from [this city]. Graduate schools don't typically, necessarily, pull from the region.

As evidenced in this exchange, both Ava and John are relying on the idea of the racial demographics of the region as a reason, or excuse, as to why the SFC is lacking Latina/o students. As further evidenced, I, as the facilitator of the group, was able to intervene and

explain why such reasoning was in conflict with taking an equity-minded approach to understanding the problem of enrollment inequities for our Latina/o students. Then, when John reverts back to a more deficit-minded explanation, Antonia presents another, and notably, equity-minded challenge, to such a way of thinking and conceptualizing the problem.

The previous exchange serves to highlight how the team contributed to each other's learning and growth, as we challenged one another to shift into more equity-minded ways of considering how to approach the problem of graduate enrollment inequities. To further demonstrate such learning, consider the following from Ava, who, in our December 2016 meeting, reflects upon her outside presentation of disaggregated data:

> Largely it probably just corroborated some of the other observations [presentations]. We got into the conversation about local demographics and where we recruit from. … I get it, it's like a defensive response, 'Well there's no way we could have Latino students— there's not any here.' It's just interesting people go there first.

Similarly, when John offered reflections of his outside presentation of data presentation in our September 2016 meeting, he relays that, "I felt like a lot of the things people were saying were these defensive things, 'because we're in [the city where the SFC is located] and that's just how it is.'" Whereas both John and Ava's critiques of their greater SFC colleagues for relying on the regional argument is reminiscent of their own reactions back in February, what's notable now in December and September, respectively, is their ability to recognize that such a mentality is more so a defense mechanism, and therefore counterproductive to taking an equity-minded approach regarding the problem of inequities. Such a recognition and subsequent shift, then, would suggest that a level of learning has occurred as a result of both Ava and John's participation on the team.

The examples as presented above are not meant to be exhaustive, but rather serve as a glimpse into many similar demonstrations of equity-minded learning and growth that occurred as a result of participating on the GET REAL team. Because of my own expertise, coupled with my immersion as a participant-observer throughout the yearlong journey of the GET REAL team, I am able to present such a finding with confidence, and frankly, pride. In the next section, I will focus on how the learning that occurred translated more specifically to the various types of responses that were displayed throughout our journey together as a team.

4.2 DISPLAYING EQUITY-MINDEDNESS

A primary goal of my study was to examine whether or not the team displayed, through words and actions, equity-minded ideals as consistent with Bensimon's (2007) definition and the USC Center for Urban Education's (CUE) components of equity-mindedness (2016). A close analysis and coding of the data resulting from the monthly team meetings indicated that the GET REAL team tallied a total of 220 equity-minded responses as consistent with my protocol in Appendix B, which is grounded in the five components of equity-mindedness as outlined by the USC CUE (2016). Throughout our time together, the team tallied only 16 responses that were coded as deficit-minded. Using the five components of equity-mindedness as outlined by the USC CUE (2016), the following subsections will demonstrate how the GET REAL team displayed equity-mindedness through a deeper exploration into the types of responses and what each looked like within the context of the monthly meetings.

4.2.1 Evidence Based

One component of equity-mindedness is related to the concept of being evidence based in thought and practice (USC, 2016). If we think about data as evidence, then to be evidence based means to take data-driven approaches to understanding and subsequent problem solving in our practice as higher education professionals. The disaggregation of data by race and ethnicity is central to the EqS framework. Thus, when coding for evidence based responses, I paid particular attention to anything that was in direct response to the presentation of disaggregated data, as well as the subsequent understanding that occurred as a result of the responses to such data. For example, Izzie noted that, "When I showed them [her colleagues] the [SFC] data…the comment was 'Wow. Talk about underrepresentation.'" Izzie and her colleagues not only responded directly to the presentation of disaggregated data, but also used such evidence to formulate an understanding as to what those data suggested.

A total of 19 evidence based responses were tallied over the course our year together as a team, with the most significant amount tallied in response to discussions surrounding the outside presentations. The majority of the evidence based responses were coded as "inequities within the SFC" (tallied five times); "no surprise" (four times); and "shock/surprise" (four times). For example, in Izzie's quote as presented above, she and the colleagues to whom she presented the disaggregated data responded in ways that reflected shock/surprise in expressing, "Wow." Izzie also responded in a way that reflected an awareness as to the inequities within the SFC when she said, "talk about underrepresentation."

Calvin's presentation prompted similar reflections, who indicates that, "We were really surprised at…how much of a difference there was between the number of White students and the number of students of color… When you see the raw numbers it kind of hits you like, wow."

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Both Izzie and Calvin, as well as the colleagues whom they referenced, were responding to the data in ways that were reflective of an awareness as to the inequities within the SFC, as well as a shock or surprise as to the extent of such inequities. Not only did these quotes demonstrate how members of the GET REAL team displayed equity-mindedness, but they also speak to the importance of revealing data that has been disaggregated by race in efforts to create awareness that might ultimately, with time, attention, and care, lead to an alleviation of inequities.

4.2.2 Race Conscious

The USC CUE (2016) also indicates the importance of adopting race conscious philosophies when learning how to be equity-minded. When coding for race conscious responses, I paid particular attention to any team member: a.) being explicit and/or intentional about using racial identifiers in a variety of ways, b.) references to race conscious or race neutral practices, and c.) suggestions and/or ideas relating to intentional, race conscious efforts and strategies that may be used to alleviate enrollment inequities.

The idea of using intentional, race conscious admissions practices was identified as a recurring theme and strategy toward the goal of alleviating enrollment inequities, as it was tallied as occurring seven times, which was more than any other response coded as race-conscious. For a detailed example of the coding process as it relates to this theme, see Appendix F. These conversations came more so at the end of our time together, when the team was working on recommendations to extend to the greater SFC as a result of our experiences. One such conversation, during the November 2016 meeting, was as follows:

Wendy: One [strategy and/or recommendation] was that people [during the online application review process] have to acknowledge that they've looked at the race of a student (many members agree).

Antonia: If we can actually change in the [online] application process that you can't submit your recommendation until you've actually filled out a box that says whether or not you've considered the diversity that this person would add to the School. So you can't hit submit [online] unless you've said that (many members agree).

Ava: And would that be accompanied by a definition of diversity?

Antonia: This conversation has been all about race. So if we want to say race then we're going to have to say race. Because if we go with diversity you're going to get everything under the sun.

As the team members in this conversation consider potential race conscious admissions practices, they are, in turn, displaying their own levels of race consciousness and therefore, equity-mindedness.

4.2.3 Institutionally Focused

Over the course of twelve months, the GET REAL team offered 72 institutionally focused responses, which overwhelmingly counted for the majority of equity-minded responses tallied for the year. When coding for institutionally focused responses, I looked for anything that, as Bensimon (2007) suggests, was reminiscent of calling attention to, "institution based dysfunctions" (p. 446) and demonstrated a "reflect[ion] on their own and their colleagues' role in and responsibility for student success" (p. 446). As the GET REAL team reflected upon particular processes that may be considered dysfunctional to alleviating enrollment inequities

within the SFC, the "admissions decision making process" was brought to attention several times, having been identified as an institutionally focused code that occurred six times. Before presenting the following scenario and quote, it is important to provide some context. The SFC employs an online admissions decision making tool that allows those who make admissions decisions to do so in isolation (from their home and/or office computer) or, if they so choose, admissions committees can collectively gather in a group setting and make joint decisions. There are no parameters set and there is no norm for admissions committees across the SFC, just that everyone on the committee ultimately submits their decisions through the online system.

When Jasmine presented data to her fellow doctoral student colleagues outside of the GET REAL space, she described for her colleagues the idea of committees making admissions decisions using the online system. As a result of that conversation, Jasmine reflected upon the following when reporting back to the team,

> Structures of the graduate admissions process. We wondered why it's not a more structured, a more collaborative, real-time process. … What does that mean that people making decisions aren't physically coming together? That part is missing. How does that affect what we talk about here—increasing racial diversity in the School? How do admissions processes unstructured-ness and ambiguity contribute to the lack of racial diversity in the School?

Clearly, Jasmine and her colleagues are pointing to an institution based dysfunction, such that the current admissions decision making process does not necessarily foster equity-mindedness and/or equitable enrollment results for minoritized graduate student populations in the SFC. In pointing this out and, in turn, questioning this practice, Jasmine displayed equity-mindedness as consistent with Bensimon (2007) and the USC CUE (2016). Furthermore, Jasmine's reflection

sparked additional conversation between team members, as Antonia, a SFC faculty member, indicates,

> People are going online and making decisions without having any sort of conversations. And those of us who have been in that system, you can't see anyone else's comments until you submit your comments. And then you submit your comments and you can see a lack of equity-mindedness. … There's this unconscious bias that can come through based on names, based on where they went to school, based on where they're from—and there's nobody there to check that. There's no checks and balances in that system.

Antonia's perspective further revealed the issues related to the current admissions decision making process within the SFC, and both Jasmine and Antonia's reflections speak to the importance of working to potentially reverse such processes in efforts to alleviate the current graduate enrollment inequities.

Both the race conscious and institutionally focused responses and codes brought attention to admissions decision making practices within the SFC, indicating that there are various overlaps between the different types of responses. This is reflective of the idea that not every response fits neatly into one equity-minded component or another. It is also reflective of the image that drives my observation protocol for the monthly GET REAL meetings (Appendix B), as borrowed from the USC CUE website (2016), which shows the components of equity-mindedness on a continuum, suggesting that such components are working together and interconnected to one another. This image also suggests that you need all the components in efforts to be near the peak of equity-mindedness and thus effectively working toward achieving such an ideal in practice. It is encouraging, then, as reflected in the previous subsections outlining the GET REAL team's responses, that the members tallied responses that were

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complimentary to and overlapping with each other, and thus aligned with the image as outlined by the USC CUE (2016).

4.2.4 Systemically Aware

When coding for responses that were systemically aware, I looked for a team member's understanding that, as consistent with Bensimon (2007): "exclusionary practices, institutional racism, and power asymmetries impact opportunities and outcomes for Black and Latina/o students" (p, 446). Many of the systemically aware responses alluded to institutional and structural barriers that might hinder success for students of color, as reflected in the following exchange between two team members:

> **Marika:** Education is predominantly White. Students are having a hard time with reflections…finding someone who they can look to and have that same experience—self-fulfilling prophecy.

> **John:** In its [our program's] current from, I don't see how to address the diversity issue. I think it's kind of structurally set up in a way that we're going to continue to get White students. … That could be considered an opportunity, as we try to figure some of those structural things out—how we can do it with a mind toward diversity.

Marika called attention to the fact that students of color cannot see themselves as embedded within the fabric of the institution because they are surrounded by people who do not look like them. Such barriers—or exclusion, or power asymmetries—that have been engrained within the structure of higher education, may likely hinder an underrepresented, minoritized student's chances for success. In his reaction to what Marika suggested, John got very contextually specific in referencing the program with which he is an affiliated faculty. In doing so, John

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expressed his concern for the structural barriers inherently created that have negatively impacted potential opportunities for students of color to participate in the program. At the same time, John recognized the opportunity to disrupt such barriers, which is indicative of a distinct display of equity-mindedness, in that he was not only aware of, but also willing to confront these systemic barriers in efforts to create more equitable opportunities for Black and Latina/o students.

4.2.5 Equity Advancing

Over the course of the year, the GET REAL team members offered 44 responses coded as equity advancing. When coding for equity advancing responses, I was listening for ideas that were reminiscent of something bigger—of longer term goals and potential solutions, for example. The idea of creating pipelines (with local city schools, for example) and forming partnerships (with HBCUs and HSIs, for example) was a popular and valid response, and one that is certainly reflective of long term solutions, but the idea of setting priorities and involvement from leadership was also very intriguing. As Ed suggested,

> You have to have these values and then put the support behind them in order to get these things done. For example, we [the SFC] don't have meetings until 11 a.m. so people can do research. Is that a statement!? And so what is the comparable statement about this [increasing enrollments for Black and Latina/o graduate students] that leadership makes and says this is really important so we're going to do x, y, and z.

Ed's sentiments speak to the idea of something bigger, to the idea of involving key leadership, and the need for making a statement and establishing goals in efforts to affect greater change. Buy-in and involvement from key leadership is also central to The EqS process and data tool employed by Bensimon and USC CUE. And importantly, it is a goal of the GET REAL team to

ultimately secure buy-in from the new SFC Dean as we present them with a recommendation document resulting from our journey together and subsequent experiences encountered over the year.

4.2.6   Deficit-Minded Responses

While the vast majority of the responses tallied for the GET REAL team were classified as equity-minded, there were some deficit-minded responses that were displayed, too. The team tallied a total of only 16 deficit-minded responses, which pales in comparison to the 220 equity-minded responses from the team. As Bensimon (2007) reminds us, "deficit-minded individuals construe unequal outcomes as originating from student characteristics" (p. 446). Thus, when seeking to develop deficit-minded codes, I was concerned with identifying responses that were not self and institutionally reflective, but rather were laden with excuses beyond anything we or the minoritized student populations we are striving to serve, could affect or control.

What was coded as the "regional argument" and also "field issue" were recurring deficit-minded responses from the team, accounting for 12 of the 16 deficit-minded responses on behalf of the GET REAL team. The following from Ed is reflective of each of these codes,

> The [program's] data is not a surprise…unfortunately, [it] tends to reflect the reality of our region. … We are up against two facts: too few minorities are entering [the field] in [the area] and too few of these…aspire to leadership and see administration as a career.

In his opening thoughts, Ed used the regional argument as an excuse for reasons as to why the program he teaches within is not diverse. In his closing thoughts, Ed demonstrated a deficit-minded response when he cited student characteristics as reasoning for why there is underrepresentation in the field. It is noteworthy to indicate that this quote was taken from a

meeting in March 2016, whereas the equity-minded quote from Ed in the preceding subsection was from our October 2016 meeting; this is suggestive of equity-minded learning and growth, even for Ed, who was only able to attend meetings on a very irregular basis. Because Ed had spent time learning how to be equity-minded, he was able to display equity-mindedness. Such a conclusion is also consistent with the amount and timing of deficit-minded responses on behalf of the team, who tallied 14 of the 16 total in our first three months together.

A close exploration and analysis of the GET REAL team's monthly meetings revealed a journey that was reflective of learning how to be equity-minded, which in turn, allowed for various displays of equity-mindedness. This exploration also revealed a team that didn't engage in much of any deficit-minded thinking, and demonstrated a near betrayal of such thinking as the year progressed. There were, however, in the direct observations I conducted, opportunities for deficit-minded thinking and responses to be revealed outside of GET REAL's monthly meetings, and particularly by members of the greater SFC community who were not engaged with our group otherwise. The following section will focus on some of the obstacles the GET REAL team encountered on our journey.

4.3   BECOMING EQUITY-MINDED DESPITE OBSTACLES

While the GET REAL meetings provided a space for learning and growth, they also and often provided a space for airing grievances resulting from frustrations incurred after the completion of outside presentations, as noted by John,

> I felt like there was so much defensiveness. And it came in the form of trying to not talk
>
> about what we wanted to talk about. … And upon reflection, I think a lot of that has to do

with…people feeling like their having a finger pointed at them. And I kind of thought of

that beforehand but I didn't realize how powerful that was.

This quote is reminiscent of several of the obstacles encountered during some, although and notably not all, of the outside data presentations. Such obstacles included but were not limited to: a defensive reaction to the data presented, all of which highlighted programmatic inequities for Black and Latina/o graduate students within the SFC, as well as and often times, a general unwillingness to talk about not only the data, but also the GET REAL team's focus on race. As I mentioned in response to some of these encounters,

The work that we're trying to do is to force people to have conversations about race in a

predominantly White setting where White people don't have to have these conversations

a lot of the time because of their privilege.

In summary, presenting these data and forcing these conversations was not an easy or comfortable task for either the presenter or to those whom we presented. However, and as I am confident each GET REAL team member agrees, such did not make the task unworthy of attempt.

Although the outside presentations presented many obstacles in the moment, the debriefing of these experiences during the monthly GET REAL meetings afforded the opportunity for the team to identify patterns and, at times, consider strategies that might make future presentations and resulting conversations more productive and equity-minded. While certainly reminiscent of and related to learning, these particular opportunities for growth are distinct in that they are directly correlated to obstacles the team encountered, and how they managed to become equity-minded in spite of such obstacles. In particular, over the course of

the year the team identified the emergence of patterns, along with several opportunities, resulting

from the various obstacles, many of which will be explored in the following subsections.

4.3.1 Diversity Rhetoric

As Lily reflected on her outside presentation, she noted that:

> I think it's interesting that everybody moves to diversity. It's hard to stay with this
>
> equity-minded idea and that equity-minded means a particular thing. There's constantly
>
> this 'but what we value is this other thing.' … It is funny how bounding the focus of this
>
> work—it ruffles people.

Lily's quote captured the reaction of many of our colleagues who were asked to confront and

comment upon these data, which was to not only change the subject to a more comfortable topic,

but also to call into question the focus of the GET REAL team. In response to Lily's

identification of this emerging pattern, Antonia and Jasmine offered the following:

> **Antonia:** I think the diversity rhetoric is obviously very common, people can talk about
>
> diversity. It's a little easier. Whereas this project is so focused on race, which is hard for
>
> people to talk about…it's easier to have a race-less conversation. We're—the people at
>
> this table—we're here to talk about race. … I know diversity's important and we value it
>
> here at the School, but, we're here to talk about race.
>
> **Jasmine:** Yes, all these other forms of inequity exist and are very problematic and very
>
> disruptive to many people, but, that doesn't mean we can't talk about race.

Lily's recollection afforded Antonia and Jasmine the opportunity to remind the team that our

focus is bound to enrollment inequities specifically related to race, and that it's okay, although

challenging, to bind our focus and to talk about race. Lily's acknowledgement of this obstacle

allowed both Antonia and Jasmine to grapple with such a pattern and ultimately offer a strategic, equity-minded response that was consistent with Bensimon (2007) and the USC CUE (2016) components of equity-mindedness.

4.3.2   The Regional Argument and Request for More Data

The regional argument was a topic of contention within the monthly team meetings. The outside presentations warranted similar contentions from the greater SFC community, which were typically followed by the request for more data. Because regional data was not provided in the earlier presentations, such requests often suggested the want for data that reflected the racial demographics of the region due to claims such as: 'we are a regional school.' However, once these data started to be included in some of the later presentations, there were additional requests for more, unrelated data, and/or requests for a different visual representation of the data presented to them. What the GET REAL team concluded on behalf of these incessant requests, was that they were used as an avoidance mechanism that allowed some of our SFC colleagues to divert attention as to what was in front of them, or the enrollment data disaggregated by race, along with the important yet difficult conversations in which we were asking them to engage as a result of these data.

Izzie's presentation, which came much later in the year, suggested an invited exception to such contentions. As Izzie remembers,

> When I showed them the regional data, immediately one of my colleagues said: 'Why are we looking at this? We're a national university that has a national pool of candidates. Why are we looking at this?' And I don't think anybody else said that, in these discussions [presentations].

Izzie's colleague's questions were reflective of an equity-minded response to what was otherwise evidenced to be a largely deficit-minded argument. Furthermore and importantly, Izzie's calling attention to and awareness of such a response was indicative of a level of equity-mindedness that was consistent with Bensimon (2007) and the USC CUE (2016). Finally, Izzie's perfect attendance in the monthly meetings, along with the timing of her presentation over the course of the year, allowed her to accurately draw the conclusion she did.

4.3.3   Tokenizing

The idea of tokenizing a specific person, program, or larger entity, as either an assumed panacea to the larger issue and/or an unreasonable representation of the whole, was also a recurring theme throughout the course of our time together. A specific example of tokenizing was the SFC's Center for Urban Education (CUE), such that the idea that we have this one, particular entity that is implementing an array of initiatives related to equity, and the alleged belief that we can always fall back on that entity and/or turn to that entity in our time of need when combating issues related to race and equity. In general, this belief that: 'CUE's got us covered,' and, in turn, the idea that it's not necessarily everybody's job. In listening to the audio playback and reflecting upon it, it became apparent to me that even I initially fell into the lure of CUE, and using CUE as a prime example, as a token, for initiating change. I felt compelled to share this finding because it demonstrates that one must continually strive to be equity-minded, and on such a journey, you are going to encounter both personal and outside obstacles. You are going to stumble and make mistakes. No one, including me as the facilitator of this team, has arrived; it's a constant and iterative process—as the USC CUE (2016) image indicates—of reflection and growth, of revising, and eventually, of taking action. The following and final subsection will briefly

address some of the opportunities that emerged as a result of the identification of various and common obstacles encountered on behalf of the GET REAL team.

4.3.4   Obstacles to Opportunities

The debriefing of the outside presentations provided important opportunities for the team to strategize around some of the obstacles as presented from the recollections of others. As Wendy, who was among the last to present, indicated prior to the actual conducting of her presentation: "I haven't presented my data yet but these are all learning experiences for me. Because of everything I hear I anticipate the defensive nature, the blaming." And then again, when reflecting upon her presentation afterwards to the team, Wendy notes that: *"You [referencing John's debriefing at a previous meeting] had given us those tips on how to introduce it [the data] and I did utilize that—to try not to jump to suggestions first and they listened."* Wendy's before and after quotes highlight one of the many reasons as to why the team spent such a considerable amount of time discussing the outside presentations of data.   Participating in such an activity allowed for the identification of patterns that led to strategies for subsequent presentations which often resulted in more productive conversations about race and inequities.

Marika and Ava were the last to present and did so in a joint fashion to many of their SFC staff colleagues.   When reflecting to the group, Ava noted that: "Largely it [our presentation] just corroborated some of the other presentations," which reiterates the idea of patterns and suggested strategies. In fact, Marika utilized a strategy during their presentation as she recalls that, in response to the regional argument:

> I highlighted that if you look at [our city] its very Black and White. So you can't say
> even though you don't have Latinx students, you can't just look at that population and

say that's why they're not here, when there's a plethora of individuals who are Black or African American in [our city] and they're not here, either.

Because of the previous debriefings, Marika was able to anticipate the regional argument and was able to effectively challenge that argument in the moment, and importantly, through the use of, and coming back to, the data for consideration. In confronting the regional argument in response to some of her colleagues, Marika also demonstrated a level of equity-mindedness that is consistent with Bensimon (2007) and the USC CUE (2016).

Our last meeting together as a group also brought forth some opportunities that were seized as a result of the obstacles encountered throughout the course of the year. For example, Wendy offered that:

We talked about [in my presentation] needing a point person, and it came up again in another [faculty] meeting, the need for a point person when students of color do apply. And we appointed a faculty member. So we're trying to move forward with that.

Wendy's outside presentation, and the conversations that ensued about the current enrollment inequities for Black and Latina/o graduate students in the SFC as a result, served as impetus for change within her department. Similarly, Marika and Izzie also reflected upon a recent change due to their experiences as active GET REAL team members:

Marika: With the [applicant] spreadsheets [that we send to the departments], we added race and ethnicity as a field.

Izzie: Right, that's a change. … I'm on the admissions committee, and I will make sure we address that, we look at that. My colleagues will. I'm sure.

Marika, as a staff member charged with supplying applicant information to her faculty colleagues, spoke to a change she initiated with respect to many of the conversations we've had

as a team; and Izzie, as a faculty member who receives such information from Marika, not only noted the change, but also indicated how she would ensure it was given attention as part of the discussion with her faculty colleagues during the admissions decision making process. Both of the examples as provided above indicate evidence of a GET REAL team that took the initiative to turn obstacles into opportunities, and such is an exercise that I'm confident will continue as members of the team implement equity-minded ideals in thought and importantly, practice.

4.4   CONCLUSION

Through a deep exploration into the journey of the GET REAL team and the data analysis that occurred as a result, this chapter thoroughly addressed the question of: *How does the GET REAL team, as a designed group, display equity-mindedness over the course of twelve months*? The findings in this chapter were representative of a committed GET REAL team that spent a considerable amount of time learning how to be equity-minded through participation in a variety of activities during the monthly team meetings throughout the course of one year. The findings also revealed how the learning that occurred within the designed group allowed for a considerable amount of displays of equity-mindedness as consistent with Bensimon (2007) and the USC CUE (2016). This chapter also suggested that the GET REAL team was able to overcome a variety of obstacles, and often times, reverse such obstacles into equity-minded opportunities. Importantly, the findings in this chapter are reflective of a GET REAL team that will likely move forward continuing to display equity-mindedness, implementing an engrained ideology that will ultimately contribute to a more equitable SFC and higher education environment.

5.0   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to discuss enrollment inequities for Black and Latina/o graduate students in one graduate school at a large, urban, predominantly White institution through the lens of equity-mindedness. To fulfill this purpose, this study explored the ways in which twelve members of an ad hoc committee (the GET REAL team) displayed equity-minded ideals as consistent with Bensimon (2007) and the USC Center for Urban Education's (USC CUE) definitions and components of equity-mindedness (USC CUE, 2016). The twelve members of the GET REAL team were purposefully selected and invited to participate, representing a diverse group of faculty (7), staff (3), and PhD students (2) from a variety of departments and programs. The GET REAL committee, as a designed group, was brought together with the goal of examining enrollment inequities within the SFC and discussing race and racial issues using a particular philosophy of equity-mindedness (Bensimon, 2007).

The theoretical framework that guided my study was the Equity Scorecard (EqS) process, which disaggregates institutional data by race and ethnicity in efforts to identify gaps in student outcomes/success (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012). In taking an anti-deficit approach, the EqS process places primary responsibility for student success on the institutions and the individuals who work within them, as opposed to focusing attention and possible interventions on the individual students (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012). In efforts to achieve the level of equity-mindedness that ultimately allows for individual and institutional transformation, EqS relies on

the ideologies of learning and change as primarily informed by social cultural activity setting theory, practice theory, organizational learning theory, and critical theories of race (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012). Five key findings emerged from this inquiry process.

5.1   KEY FINDINGS

5.1.1   Key Finding #1

The GET REAL team displayed, through words and actions, equity-minded ideals as consistent with Bensimon (2007) and the USC CUE (2016). Taking an equity-minded approach requires individuals and organizations to look within themselves and institutional practices in efforts to affect substantial change (Bensimon, 2007; Bensimon & Malcom, 2012). Throughout their time together as a team, and particularly during the monthly meetings, members of GET REAL consistently reflected upon and questioned not only their own recruitment, admissions, and enrollment practices, but also the greater practices of the SFC, through an equity-minded lens. The culmination of such reflection and questioning became readily apparent throughout the last two months of our time together, as we worked to craft equity-minded recommendations to the incoming Dean. Findings surrounding other institutions that have implemented similar interventions indicate that providing recommendations as a result of team experiences is common (Bustillos & Rueda, 2012), and therefore further reflective of the fact that my study served to compliment the EqS framework that guided it.

The USC CUE (2016) outlines five major components to equity-mindedness: evidence based; race conscious; institutionally focused; systemically aware; and equity advancing. Over

the course of the year, the GET REAL team tallied 220 equity-minded responses as consistent with these five components. In direct contrast to equity-mindedness is the concept of deficit-mindedness, which focuses attention and possible interventions on the students, as opposed to placing primary responsibility for success on the institution and the individuals who work within it (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012). Members of GET REAL tallied only 16 total responses that were reminiscent of deficit-minded thinking and approaches throughout their time together as a team.

This key finding relates directly to the concept of practice theory, which is embedded within the EqS framework that guided my study. Practice theory requires practitioners to view inequities as a result of a failure of practice, and thus calls for practitioners to look within in efforts to address disparities and alleviate issues of inequity (Bensimon, 2012; Harris & Bensimon, 2007). As evidenced in their extremely high percentage of tallied equity-minded responses, the GET REAL team demonstrated a capacity to view and question their own enrollment practice, as well as the greater enrollment practices of the SFC, through an equity-minded lens as consistent with practice theory.

5.1.2   Key Finding #2

The GET REAL team functioned primarily as a learning group. This was true for the team even when confronted with various obstacles to becoming equity-minded. Lorenz (2012) reminds us that, "When organizational actors doubt what they have traditionally believed, an opportunity for learning has occurred" (p. 50). As evidenced in chapter four, the GET REAL team consistently challenged assumptions within themselves and within the institution where they worked, thus demonstrating a significant amount of learning during the course of our time together. As further

reflected in chapter four, the team faced many obstacles, most of which occurred outside the context of the monthly meetings. However, through the coming together and debriefing process, the team was able to continue to thrive in spite of such obstacles. This key finding is consistent with what Bensimon (2012) outlines as the first principle of change as relative to the EqS process and sociocultural theories of learning, which indicate that: "practitioners learn and change through their engagement in a joint productive activity" (p. 30). The monthly meetings provided a forum for the team to collaboratively engage in the processes of learning and change, and collectively, members of GET REAL took advantage of such opportunities for growth.

In describing the processes of learning and change as part of EqS, Bensimon (2012) suggests that:

The activity setting is designed to raise practitioners' awareness of inequities and to help practitioners learn to examine their own settings and to determine how inequities are created and sustained and consider how practices, structures, and policies might be changed (p. 30).

GET REAL team members' awareness of inequities within the SFC were arguably heightened as a result of their participation on the committee; for most, this was their first experience in not only seeing, but also examining enrollment data that had been disaggregated by race. Because we met for several hours over the course of the year, the team engaged in substantive opportunities to learn about inequities and consider how we, as individual practitioners and members of the greater SFC, might work to create change within our practice and institution. In comparison to other teams who have engaged in similar interventions, GET REAL could be considered what Lorenz (2012) describes as a High Learning group, such that "The important feature of what was learned by the High Learning groups was that they identified potential points

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for intervention to impact the identified inequitable education outcomes" (p. 57). Such points and their potential for impact are not only reflected in the journey of the team as described in chapter four, but also in the recommendation document that the team will extend to the new SFC Dean as a result of their experience as members of GET REAL.

5.1.3 Key Finding #3

The designed group component of the GET REAL team was an important and contributing factor to the group's overall functionality and purpose. The intentionality with which I facilitated the meetings—creating agendas and presentations, assigning activities, leading discussions, and making adjustments as needed—was critical to the equity-minded growth of the team. Many of the theories embedded within the EqS framework, such as practice theory, organizational learning theory, and sociocultural theories of learning, address the importance of intentionality and collaboration when working to develop equity-minded practitioners for individual and institutional change (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012). The monthly meetings offered an ideal setting for such intentionality and collaboration. The planning that went into them, as well as the implementation of such planning, was a critical component to the team's overall functionality, growth, and development. Thus, this key finding can essentially be considered the vehicle for achieving key findings one and two.

As the leader of the team, I was able to plan the agendas for the monthly meetings, as well as the various activities around issues of race and equity in which the team engaged. I was also able to make adjustments to the agendas and activities in real time. For example, there were times when an agenda called for more activities than our time together allowed; if and when I noticed that a particular activity was resulting in a considerable amount of productive

conversation that was obviously contributing to the team's growth, I allowed for that activity and conversation to continue, regardless as to what was initially outlined on the agenda. Furthermore, although I made concerted efforts to allow the conversations that occurred as a result of the activities to happen organically, as the GET REAL team leader, I was also able to steer conversations as needed. For example, I often asked probing questions in efforts to both encourage dialogue around a particular topic and as a mechanism to foster equity-minded conversation and growth. Ultimately, the monthly meetings served as a platform that allowed the team members, as well as me as the facilitator of the group, to maximize opportunities for equity-minded growth.

5.1.4   Key Finding #4

The equity-minded dialogue within the monthly team meetings was often in contrast to the deficit-minded dialogue in the outside presentations. As outlined in the previous key finding, the monthly meetings provided a critical space for learning and growth; however, and as unveiled in chapter four, the outside presentations were often times in contrast to the process of learning that was occurring within the context of the GET REAL meetings. Bensimon (2012) states that:

> A premise of the Equity Scorecard process is that practitioners can make a marked difference in the educational outcomes of minoritized students if *they recognize that their practices are not working* and *participate in designed situated learning opportunities to develop the funds of knowledge necessary for equity-minded practice* (p. 19).

The recognition of a failure of practice was a continual theme of conversation throughout the course of the monthly GET REAL meetings, and the team meetings innately provided an opportunity for participation in equity-minded learning and development. On the contrary, more

often than not, when members of the GET REAL team facilitated outside data presentations to their SFC colleagues, there was a considerable amount of deficit-minded thinking and resulting conversations, and therefore many times little recognition of a failure of practice. At the same time, and notably, there were certainly exceptions to this finding, which were not only welcomed conversations with our broader SFC colleagues, but also ones that sustained hope as we worked toward improving enrollment inequities for our minoritized populations of graduate students.

This is a key finding because it speaks to the power of the team, and particularly the effect it had on the equity-minded development of its participants. Regardless of the some of the more disconcerting outside data presentations that occurred, Bensimon (2012) reminds us that: "individuals can become agents of change as a result of inquiring into an institutional problem of inequity" (p. 35). The members of the GET REAL team took an intense dive into issues of enrollment inequities, and many have become change agents; this work will continue well beyond our time together, and, as a result, continue to influence a more equitable SFC and higher education environment.

5.1.5 Key Finding #5

White people can, should, and need to engage in racial justice work. I am a White woman who engages in and is committed to racial justice work, and this study was no exception to such positionality. The majority of the GET REAL team was also White, with nearly 70% of the team racially identifying as such. In addition, the majority of the practitioners within the greater SFC are also White, which is reflective of a racial landscape that is not unique to the SFC context, but is representative of the overrepresentation of White practitioners within the broader higher education environment, and particularly within PWIs.

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Embedded within the EqS framework are critical theories of race, that, when applied to the EqS process, indicate that achieving an expert level of race-consciousness allows for a greater ability to engage in honest and constructive conversations about racial inequities within the institution and practice (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012). The findings as presented in the previous chapter suggested that the GET REAL team and our monthly meetings, and particularly the activities in which we engaged, provided a space that allowed for honest and constructive conversations about racial enrollment inequities. As further indicated in the findings, and as aligned with the EqS framework and its attention to critical theories of race, it can be argued participation in the meetings and on the GET REAL team often resulted in achieving heightened levels of race-consciousness on behalf of most participants, particularly those who are White.

Bensimon (2012) reminds us that: "To become an equity-minded practitioner means to be race-conscious and aware of who benefits from one's actions and who is not benefiting" (p. 35). Bensimon's quote (2012) calls for a recognition of privilege, which is particularly important for White people, as we are a racially privileged class in society and education, and, as an inherent result of such privilege, can more easily adopt race-neutral approaches. Because we are the majority, we need to do the work. As White people, we cannot expect our colleagues of color to do all of the heavy lifting that racial justice work requires; this is particularly poignant due to the overrepresentation of White practitioners, both staff and faculty, in higher education. We cannot continue to overburden our colleagues of color with the expectation that they will handle and manage the brunt of the work related to racial justice. White practitioners can, should, and need to get familiar with their privilege and work to disrupt the structures and patterns of inequity within higher education. The GET REAL team showed they can do it. More White people need to do the same in joint efforts to create a more racially equitable higher education environment.

5.2   IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

This primary purpose of this study was to begin discussing the best approaches to alleviating enrollment inequities for Black and Latina/o graduate students through the development of equity-minded practitioners. As evidenced throughout the previous section, each key finding demonstrated some correlation to Bensimon's (2007) definition of equity-mindedness and/or the EqS framework that guided this study. Additionally, chapter four revealed that members of the GET REAL team demonstrated multiple displays of equity-mindedness over the course of their year together, thus proving that participation on the committee served as an effective way to contribute to the equity-minded development of the team. While creating inquiry teams similar to that of GET REAL is a hallmark of the EqS process and framework, tallying equity-minded and deficit-minded responses is not something I have seen within the literature highlighting similar teams and associated practices. I see such tallies as a helpful extension to the theory, as it serves to further solidify the case to be made for soliciting participation on such teams, particularly when considering the competing priorities that many higher education practitioners encounter as part of their service to the institution.

The findings revealed that the GET REAL team functioned primarily as a learning group. This study focused on the team as a single case and therefore a unit of analysis greater than one individual, which is consistent with other interventions of its kind (Rueda, 2012), as well as the sociocultural activity setting theory that is embedded within EqS. However, while this study focused on a single case and/or team, much like those before it, future studies might benefit from a multiple case and/or multiple team approach in efforts to foster equity-mindedness among a greater number of practitioners within the participating institution. Doing so might allow for outreach to a larger quantity of practitioners who may, in turn, have a more substantive effect on

equity-minded development for the purpose of institutional transformation. In addition, future studies also might benefit from taking a more individualized approach. Engaging in pre-testing and post-testing methods might be an effective way to more substantially determine the level of equity-minded development from an individual perspective. Doing so would help to further inform the conversation around such development, and in turn, provide a more honed in approach to understanding traits of both equity-minded and deficit-minded individuals. Finally, this study was conducted over the course of one year, which is also consistent with similar interventions conducted using the EqS framework. A more longitudinal approach would be beneficial in efforts to determine whether or not the GET REAL team, or other teams like GET REAL, continue to display equity-mindedness in practice beyond their commitment to the team.

As part of the EqS process, Bensimon (2012) reminds us that: "The development of practitioners into agents of equity for students of color requires that they react to data in educational outcomes as evidence that something is not working" (p. 30-1). As evidenced in the amount of time allotted to various activities surrounding the discussion of data as presented in the findings, it is with certainty that this study and the reactions of the various practitioners involved within the GET REAL team are reflective of Bensimon's (2012) sentiments and therefore complimentary to the theory that guided this study. Further aligned with what Bensimon (2012) describes, the findings also speak to the equity-minded development that occurred within the GET REAL team as a result of those discussions. Finally, the recommendations that the team will present to the new SFC Dean solidify Bensimon's (2012) suggestion that agents of equity recognize something within their practice is not working and therefore needs to be changed. All of these conclusions therefore serve to validate the guiding framework encompassing this study.

A central component of the EqS process is communicating findings to key stakeholders (Bensimon & Hanson, 2012). As the Bensimon & Hanson (2012) note:

> Although the Equity Scorecard culminates with a report to the president and campus community, teams do not wait until the report is completed to spread knowledge. Throughout the process team members make presentations to stakeholder groups that shape and influence campus policies and practices that can have a direct effect on equity in student outcomes (p. 70).

Much like what the authors (2012) describe of other institutions who have carried out similar interventions in practice, the GET REAL team also performed various presentations outside of the group context. This study, however, serves to extend the current EqS process and theory as related to this component in important ways. Not only did this study report some of the more negative energy and deficit-minded thinking that occurred outside of the team context, but it also provided opportunities to learn and strategize based on such presentations and their often predictable outcomes. This, in turn, allowed for more productive presentations to occur later in the year, and thus provided a valid opportunity and strategy that has not, to my knowledge, been explicitly addressed in the existing literature.

Another component of this study that serves as a helpful extension to the current EqS process and theory is the addition of engaging in a variety of activities in efforts to contribute to the equity-minded development of practitioners. Bensimon and the EqS process do not call particular attention to the intentional incorporation of a variety of other activities—beyond the discussion of disaggregated data—as an important contributor to the equity-minded development of practitioners of higher education. As the findings in this study suggest, the inclusion of other activities, such as the presentation and discussion of various articles, images, and videos related

to issues of race and equity, were essential components to the overall learning that occurred within the GET REAL team. Future studies would therefore be obliged to include such a variety of activities within their repertoire as they work to holistically foster equity-minded growth within their constituents.

5.3   IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The findings resulting from this study provide many valuable takeaways and implications for practice. First and foremost, the primary purpose of this study was to examine equity-mindedness of participating members of an ad-hoc team. As demonstrated throughout chapters four and five, members of the GET REAL team displayed, through words and actions, equity-minded ideals as consistent with Bensimon (2007) and the USC CUE (2016), thus confirming the importance of participating on such a team in efforts to develop equity-minded practitioners for institutional transformation. Such findings would suggest that developing these types of teams in a variety of institutions and contexts would contribute to a greater quantity of equity-minded practitioners; this, in turn, would serve to benefit a larger number of minoritized students, which is absolutely necessary in efforts to disrupt the patterns of enrollment inequities for our Black and Latina/o graduate students. The implication as it relates to these findings is that developing and implementing a similar initiative in practice takes a considerable amount of time and care. In addition to securing buy-in from leadership to develop and implement such a team, as well as obtaining a variety of participants to serve, many of whom are already overextended, the group facilitator and leader must assume the task of organizing large amounts of data and content, creating space and presentations, and other duties as related to the variety of

roles assumed by a committee chairperson. While a large task, the rewards, as indicated in the findings, are well worth the effort and subsequent fight toward equity.

The secondary purpose of this study was to use the experiences of, and expertise gained through participation on, the committee as a mechanism to leverage equity-minded recommendations and policies to the broader school community wherein the committee is situated. As previously outlined, the GET REAL team spent a considerable amount of time nearing the end of their tenure together in drafting a recommendation document that, once finalized, will be presented to the new SFC Dean, along with calls for both approval and action. While the team has achieved its goal of using our experiences in efforts to formulate recommendations and move toward action, due to the conflict as related to the timeline for completion of this study as compared to the Dean's start date, we are unable to determine the results of such recommendations. Thus, while the takeaway of value suggests that this particular goal of the study was met and other institutions could certainly mimic a similar and valuable document as a result of their own experiences, the implication at this point in time is that we are unsure as to how the recommendations will be received and/or acted upon. In addition, should the new Dean adopt the recommendations, further interventions and therefore commitments will undoubtedly be required of the team members as the recommendations are implemented in practice. This, of course, will extend beyond their yearlong agreement to serve on the committee. However, it is my guess that because of their dedication to the team and, more importantly, their united fight toward equity, this will not present any further implications.

What does further implicate the idea of the GET REAL team members and what they, and the greater SFC, have served to gain as a result of their experiences on the committee and their subsequent equity-minded development, however, relates to the greater concept of

structural change. Assuming that the team members will, as Bensimon (2007) suggests, retain their capacity to operate under the ideology of equity-mindedness indefinitely, the SFC will continue to reap the benefits of their adopting such a concept and implementing it in practice. If and when the members of the GET REAL team leave the SFC, the hope is that they will have left a legacy of changes in both thought and practice—such as intentional, race conscious admissions practices, for example—that have positively affected the overall structure of the School and its constituents. Furthermore, as the GET REAL team members pursue various opportunities outside the SFC, they will take such ideas and ideology with them, thus creating an even broader reach of structural change as it relates to issues of race and equity.

A consistent finding throughout all phases of data analyses was related to the idea of GET REAL as a learning group. The committee and its participants were dedicated to the purposes of unveiling enrollment inequities through the examination of disaggregated data by race and ethnicity, and engaging in conversations about race and racial issues through the use and discussion of scholarly articles, images, and videos. Such dedication and participation in a variety of activities led to a substantive amount of learning on behalf of the GET REAL team. Furthermore, because I was the leader of the team, I was able to plan the agendas and subsequent activities in ways that were most productive to equity-minded learning and growth. These findings are very encouraging for any institution that is seeking to develop equity-minded practitioners, in so far as if they employ a similar and intentional intervention, it is promising to consider that such efforts may likely result in positive outcomes on behalf of the group members. Such outcomes will, in turn, lead to more equitable enrollments for our Black and Latina/o graduate student populations.

Part of the GET REAL committee's mission was to distribute data beyond the context of the team setting, and, as the findings indicated, taking the data outside the group often resulted in contrasting reactions and discussions than those that happened within the GET REAL meetings. While such findings reinforce the value of participating on the GET REAL team, they also present both implications and opportunities. A major implication is that the learning that was occurring within the group was, for the most part, unable to be transferred beyond the context of the team. However, as time passed and the team was able to report back on their outside data presentations during the monthly meetings, the findings indicate that best practices were able to be gleaned from those who had gone before them, in turn making future presentations generally more productive.

In efforts to create greater opportunities for institutional transformation, it is critical that learning and equity-minded development occurs outside these team settings and therefore at a greater scale. As such, future studies would benefit from taking the best practices resulting from this research and using them as an opportunity to be more effective in their own efforts to disrupt inequities in graduate enrollments for students of color. Furthermore and importantly, because White people oversaturate the higher education environment, this study has reinforced the demand for us to not only recognize our privilege, but also to seize the opportunities to get uncomfortable and get engaged in issues related to race and equity.

5.4   CONCLUSION

The final chapter in this dissertation in practice reinforced the purpose of my study, along with the EqS framework that not only served to help develop such a purpose, but also guided my

research. As a result of my study and the qualitative case study approach I took to conduct it, five key findings were generated, each of which were poignantly connected to the GET REAL team, the concept of equity-mindedness, and the EqS framework. Finally, my findings were considered both in terms of implications for research as well as implications for practice.

Ultimately, this study serves to inform practitioners who recognize the need for and importance of equity-minded development for institutional transformation, and calls for such practitioners to employ similar interventions in efforts to create more equitable enrollments for our Black and Latina/o graduate students. While this study largely indicates promising results, it is also indicative of the fact that there is much more work to be done in efforts to serve our most vulnerable and minoritized populations of students. Together with our colleagues of color, this study further reinforces the idea that White people can, should, and need to get engaged as we stand united in the fight for equity in higher education.

APPENDIX A

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL FOR MONTHLY GET REAL MEETINGS

Inquiry Question: How does the GET REAL team, as a designed group, display equity-mindedness over the course of twelve months?
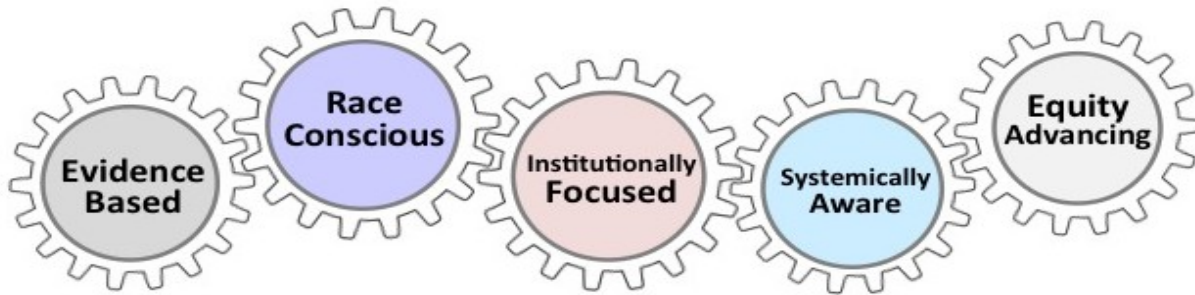
Center for Urban Education at the University of Southern California (2016)

Responses to the Presented Activity: Disaggregated Data; Scholarly Article, Video, or Image; Team Member's (outside) Presentation; Other Activity			
Type of Response	Type of Activity	Number of Times ^	Other Notes and Unexpected Responses
Equity-Minded: ☐ Evidence Based			
Equity-Minded: ☐ Race Conscious			
Equity-Minded: ☐ Institutionally Focused			
Equity-Minded: ☐ Systemically Aware			
Equity-Minded: ☐ Equity Advancing			
Deficit-Minded:			

Inquiry Question: How does the GET REAL team, as a designed group, display equity-mindedness over the course of twelve months?

Date of Meeting:
Time of Meeting:
GET REAL Members Present:

^*Direct Quotes*	
*Reflective of **Equity-Minded** Lens*	*Reflective of **Deficit-Minded** Lens*
Number of quotes will match number of tallies from chart above	*Number of quotes will match number of tallies from chart above*

Figure 5. Observation Protocol for Monthly GET REAL Meetings

APPENDIX B

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL FOR TEAM MEMBER DURING INDIVIDUAL DATA

PRESENTATION WITHIN GREATER SCHOOL FOR COGNITION (SFC)

COMMUNITY

Inquiry Question: How does the GET REAL team, as a designed group, display equity-mindedness over the course of twelve months?

☐ The team member provides context for the data to be presented (e.g., explains the mission of GET REAL).
      Notes:

☐ The team member provides explanations for each data set.
      Notes:

☐ The team member solicits responses to the data from meeting participants.
      Notes:

☐ The team member brings the focus back to the data if and when the conversation goes in different directions.
      Notes:

☐ The team member relates the data to the concept of equity-mindedness.
      Notes:

☐ The team member probes further when a participant responds to the data through a deficit-minded frame.
      Notes:

☐ The team member challenges a deficit-minded response to the data using an equity-minded response.
      Notes:

☐ The team member pushes the participants to consider equity-minded ideologies as they move forward in their practice.
      Notes:

Other Findings, Field Notes, and/or Headnotes:

Figure 6. Observation Protocol for Team Member during Individual Data Presentation within greater School for Cognition (SFC) community

APPENDIX C

C.1. EMAIL 1: INITIAL EMAIL INFORMING THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY OF THE

COMMITTEE/RESEARCH PROJECT AND SOLICITING PARTICIPATION IF AND

WHEN INVITED TO SERVE, SENT FROM THE SFC DEAN

Dear Colleagues:

Maggie Sikora, as part of her EdD dissertation in practice, is about to conduct a research study of our own efforts to be inclusive in our recruiting and enrollment. To do this, she will need some help from some of you. I hope you will consider getting involved when she contacts you. Here is a brief description of the effort she is planning.

The GET REAL (Graduate Enrollment Targets Realized via Equity-Minded Approaches and Leadership) team will be an ad-hoc committee focused on the idea of developing equity-minded* practitioners, and thus takes an anti-deficit and race-conscious approach to resolving inequities in higher education. The GET REAL team will be examining disaggregated data by race and ethnicity in efforts to identify gaps in student success/outcomes. The team will be participating in honest and courageous conversations in regard to not only the data, but also various readings, images, and current events related to racial issues. Ultimately, the GET REAL committee will provide equity-minded suggestions and related solutions in efforts to achieve more equitable enrollments for Black and Latina/o graduate students. The process is scheduled to begin soon, and those who are invited to serve will hear from Maggie shortly.

Best Wishes,

Dean of the SFC

C.2. EMAIL 2: FOLLOW-UP EMAIL SENT DIRECTLY FROM ME, INVITING

PARTICIPANTS TO SERVE

Dear Maggie:

I'm writing as a follow-up to an initial email that the Dean sent in regard to the GET REAL committee/research study that will begin as soon as possible in the School for Cognition. I would like to cordially invite you to participate in the project, serving as an integral member of the team. I feel that you would add a lot to the committee, and hope that you will consider joining us as we work to achieve more equitable enrollments for our Black and Latina/o graduate student populations within the SFC.

Among other important initiatives that will commence within the setting of the GET REAL team meetings, we will be charged with examining disaggregated data by race and ethnicity, asking exploratory questions of the data as we work to achieve higher enrollments for our Black and Latina/o students. We will also be engaging in race-related conversations surrounding various articles, images, and current events. Furthermore, as the Dean mentions, your participation on this team will also be part of my research efforts for the EdD program.

The team will meet once a month for approximately one calendar year. A primary goal of the team will eventually be to present specific findings and implications to the School at-large, and, very importantly, use the data as a catalyst to work to promote equity-mindedness* within the SFC.

Because we are trying to schedule a meeting ASAP, if you could kindly let us know whether or not you are able to serve by INSERT DATE HERE, that would be greatly appreciated. Once the team members have been finalized, I will immediately work to set an initial meeting, at which we will work together to more specifically unpack what our work might entail, as well as how our efforts might work to effect positive change within the SFC.

Sincerely,

Maggie Sikora

*Definition of equity-mindedness: "Equity-minded individuals are more cognizant that exclusionary practices, institutional racism, and power asymmetries impact opportunities and outcomes for Black and Latina/o students. Equity-minded individuals attribute unequal outcomes among Black and Latina/o students to institution-based dysfunctions, while deficit-minded individuals construe unequal outcomes as originating from student characteristics. Thus, equity-minded individuals reflect on their own and their colleagues' role in and responsibility for student success" (Bensimon, 2007, p. 446).
Reference:
Bensimon, E.M. (2007). The underestimated significance of practitioner knowledge in the scholarship on student success. *The Review of Higher Education, 30*(4), 441-469.

APPENDIX D

TO: Maggie Sikora

From: IRB Office

Date: 7/25/2016

IRB#: [PRO16010589](PRO16010589)

Subject: GET REAL (Graduate Enrollment Targets Realized via Equity-Minded Approaches and Leadership) Research Study

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The Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved the above referenced study by the expedited review procedure authorized under 45 CFR 46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. Your research study was approved under:

45 CFR 46.110.(5)

45 CFR 46.110.(6)

45 CFR 46.110.(7)

There are no items to display

The IRB has approved the advertisement that was submitted for review as written. As a reminder, any changes to the advertisement other than to edit contact information requires IRB approval prior to distribution.

The risk level designation is Minimal Risk.

Approval Date: 7/25/2016

Expiration Date: 7/24/2017

For studies being conducted in facilities, no clinical activities can be undertaken by investigators until they have received approval from the Fiscal Review Office.

Please note that it is the investigator's responsibility to report to the IRB any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others [see 45 CFR 46.103(b)(5) and 21 CFR 56.108(b)]. Refer to the IRB Policy and Procedure Manual regarding the reporting requirements for unanticipated problems which include, but are not limited to, adverse events. If you have any questions about this process, please contact the Adverse Events Coordinator.

SNAPSHOT OF DATA VISUALS PREPARED FOR JOHN'S OUTSIDE

PRESENTATION TO SFC COLLEAGUES

In addition to these data, John also presented the graduate enrollment comparisons by discipline as found in figure 3 of chapter three, as well as the enrollment comparisons to the surrounding region, as found in figure 4 of chapter three.

Table 3. Example of Disaggregated Data used in Outside Presentations

School for Cognition: Graduate Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity Fall 2015			
Race/Ethnicity	**Enrolled Students**	**Percentage of Total Enrollment**	
White	680	73.51%	
Black	56	6.05%	
Latina/o	31	3.35%	
Mutli/Biracial	18	1.95%	
Asian	19	2.05%	
International	110	11.89%	
American Indian or Native Alaskan	0	0%	
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0%	
Unknown	11	1.19%	
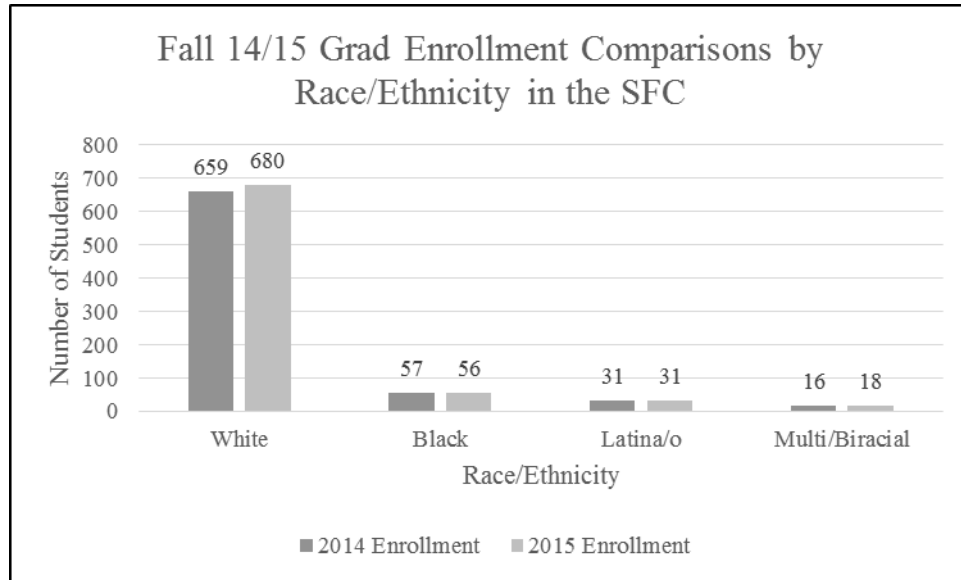
Figure 7. Example of Disaggregated Data used in Outside Presentations

Table 4. Example of Disaggregated Data used in Outside Presentations

Program Here	FA 14 Apps	FA 14 Incomp	FA 14 Denied	FA 14 Admitted	FA 14 Matrics	FA 14 Enrolled
White	54	3	8	43	25	17
Black	4	0	0	4	4	3
Latina/o	1	1	0	0	0	0
Mulit/Biracial	6	1	1	4	3	3
Asian	3	0	0	3	1	1
International	17	4	8	5	2	2
Unknown	1	0	0	1	0	0

*There was 1 additional applicant for the summer of 2014 who identified as Black; they were admitted
and enrolled

Program Here	FA 15 Apps	FA 15 Incomp	FA 15 Denied	FA 15 Admitted	FA 15 Matrics	FA 15 Enrolled
White	58	2	6	50	35	26
Black	4	0	1	3	3	2
Latina/o	5	1	0	4	1	1
Mulit/Biracial	0	0	0	0	0	0
Asian	4	0	0	4	2	1
International	21	2	7	12	3	1
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0

*There were three additional applicants in the spring of 2015 who identified as White; all were
admitted and all enrolled

*There was an additional applicant for the summer of 2015 who identified as Asian; they matriculated
but did not enroll

APPENDIX F

EXAMPLE OF CODING PROCESS FOR THEME OF RACE CONSCIOUS

ADMISSIONS PRACTICES

Overarching, Deduced Code/Category: Race Conscious (USC CUE, 2016)

Sub-Code/Subcategory: Race Conscious Admissions Practices

Direct Quotes/Number of Times Coded:	Descriptive Code & Notes:
1: For us, as a department, the yield is really important to us. That's where we start to be really intentional about who's in the pool as far as racially—how diverse is our cohort going to be?—that's where we really start to think about it.	RACE CONSCIOUS ADMISSIONS Yield; intentionality about and thinking around pool of applicants.
2: If we're going to race conscious admissions, there would have to be a race box—to write in, not check—right? An evaluation of race. … Yeah, we admit a lot of people who don't meet the quote unquote academic GPA, but that's when those other race conscious factors come into play. … If it was race conscious there would have to be an actual question that asks: did you evaluate this person on their ability to contribute racial diversity to the School? In what ways? And then fill it in qualitatively. It would have to be that explicit if we're going to be race conscious.	RACE CONSCIOUS ADMISSIONS Race conscious admissions; race box; other race conscious factors; an explicit evaluation of racial diversity and subsequent contributions during admissions process.
3: Putting race/ethnicity on the initial screen in the online review system. And adding race/ethnicity to the spreadsheet that we send to faculty outlining their applicant pool.	RACE CONSCIOUS ADMISSIONS Race/ethnicity added to online review system; adding race/ethnicity to spreadsheet outlining applicant pool.
4: I think in [our program], and I think from my presentation, people do pay attention to race already, particularly in the hopes of enrolling anybody who is a student of color.	RACE CONSCIOUS ADMISSIONS Admissions committees do pay attention to race in hopes of enrolling student of color.
5: People have to acknowledge that they've looked at the race of a student. 6: If we can actually change in the application process that you can't submit your recommendation until you've actually filled out a box that says whether or not you've considered the diversity that this person would add to the School. So you can't hit submit unless you've said that. [And would that be accompanied with any definition of diversity?] 7: This conversation has been all about race. So if we want to say race then we're going to have to say race. Because if we go with diversity we're going to get everything under the sun.	RACE CONSCIOUS ADMISSIONS Acknowledgment of race; change the admissions process to include components that force committees to answer explicit, race conscious questions.

Figure 8. Example of Coding Process for theme of Race Conscious Admissions

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