2021

Higher Education's Immunity to Change: Understanding How Leaders Make Meaning of Their Student Success Landscape

Brittany Motley
Antioch University - PhD Program in Leadership and Change

HIGHER EDUCATION'S IMMUNITY TO CHANGE: UNDERSTANDING HOW LEADERS MAKE MEANING OF THEIR STUDENT SUCCESS LANDSCAPE

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of

Graduate School of Leadership & Change

Antioch University

In partial fulfillment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by

Brittany Motley

ORCID Scholar No. 0000-0002-8831-9301

January 2021

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This dissertation, by Brittany Motley, has
been approved by the committee members signed below
who recommend that it be accepted by the faculty of the
Graduate School of Leadership & Change
Antioch University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Dissertation Committee:

Jon Wergin, PhD, Chairperson

Laurien Alexandre, PhD

Richard McGuigan, PhD

ABSTRACT

HIGHER EDUCATIONS' IMMUNITY TO CHANGE: UNDERSTANDING HOW LEADERS MAKE MEANING OF THEIR STUDENT SUCCESS LANDSCAPE

Brittany Motley

Graduate School of Leadership & Change

Antioch University

Closing equity gaps in the higher education sector is a long-standing issue. This issue has become exacerbated with the impact of COVID-19 and racial injustices happening across America. Now more than ever it has become imperative to use participatory action research to understand how leaders make meaning of their student success landscape and use that meaning to influence their strategic action for equity. I engaged two student success stakeholders from one university as co-researchers to help identify a problem in practice as it relates to equity gaps in student success. We used a modified approach to immunity to change (ITC) coaching coupled with an action inquiry framework to assist student success stakeholders with processing and reflecting on this problem to enact change. Co-researchers identified groups of stakeholders, referred to as "ITC participants," based on their problem in practice to complete modified ITC mapping. I then used the findings from the modified ITC mapping to ask co-researchers to develop a plan of action to sustain momentum around resolving the Problem in Practice. This qualitative research project revealed three key findings: (a) understanding problems that relate to equity requires disaggregating data; (b) staff who are on the ground are key in understanding student success and creating a student-centered culture; and (c) leaders' beliefs are translated into actions and demonstrated in structures and policies created. This dissertation is available in open access at AURA: Antioch University Repository and Archive, http://aura.antioch.edu/and OhioLINK ETD Center, https://etd.ohiolink.edu/

Keywords: higher education, equity, leadership, change management, meaning making, immunity to change, student success

Dedication

I want to dedicate this dissertation first to the All, Sacred and Divine Creator for providing me with health, strength, and discipline to complete this work.

To my mother, Vicky Jo Motley, and my father, Jerome Ira Cargle. Thank you for I would not be here without your sacrifice. This is truly for you.

To my siblings who served as my first teachers, Jasma Motley, Roman Motley, LaTisha Card, Kita Pruitt, and Lavie Jackson. Jazz, thank you for coming home every day and teaching me everything you learned in school. To all my siblings, I watched your resilience closely and gained power through watching you thrive despite the opposition in your way.

To my dear Sue Foege, my first college math teacher who taught me to be confident and boldly pursue my dreams. To my undergrad college advisor Robert Hebble, who took time to extend grace to the noncognitive issues I faced. To Sara Ellis-Hebble, who provided opportunity for my first professional job in higher education and taught me to empower students in such a way that "I put myself out of business."

To every student who is suffering from Imposter Syndrome, may the way be opened for you and may you unlock your self-authoring nature to boldly navigate this world!

Acknowledgements

To my colleagues at EAB, thank you for providing me with the opportunity and access to work with multiple Institutions in the Higher Education space as it relates to Equity.

To the University represented in this study. Thank you for your equity mindedness. I have and will always appreciate your agility to serve students and remain steadfast in ensuring you create an inclusive culture for the students at the University and in the community.

To my co-researchers, thank you for lending your time and mentorship and creativity in helping me design and implement this research.

To the participants of this study, thank you for your transparency and willingness to share the barriers and successes of your student success landscape.

To my dissertation chair, Jon Wergin. Thank you for being a coach, a friend, and a good listener. I would not have been able to complete this work without you.

To my advisor, Laurien Alexandre. Thank you for being there through this entire doctoral journey; you were there through many career changes and relocations—offering empathy, advice, and encouragement.

To my committee member, Richard McGuigan, thank you for teaching me Immunity to Change coaching and how to expand my consciousness to become self-authoring. Your integral approach to living is what I aspire to.

To Maike Philipsen, thank you for allowing me to serve as your ITC portfolio client. It was only through overcoming my shadow side in working with you that I was able to pursue this research with confidence.

To my cohort, C-16, thank you for being the most supportive friends and colleagues. I am so blessed to have friends of so many different mindsets and walks of life. Special thanks to: Love Benton, Mooni Osman, Glyn Horn, Mike Bills, Taran Cardone, Kelly Cerialo, Sara Safari, Denine Rocco, Ashley Kehoe, and Angie Wellman.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions worldwide are amid a profound transition: not only are they losing public credibility and support, but they are also becoming increasingly subject to corporate forms of accountability and quality assurance (Levin & Greenwood, 2001, p. 211). Over time, universities have shifted their identities from their research focus to produce “public good” to becoming more government regulated. With increasing market demands in the higher education sector, we now witness the educational experience being much more transactional. Since this conversion of the government into the regulators of higher education, it has caused the public to be viewed and treated as consumers of the university and the faculty and staff as service providers.

Many higher education ideologies are rooted in traditional mindsets that held empiricist beliefs that we are all born empty slates and knowledge comes from outside of us. The impact of these traditional teachings on a postmodern world has caused students to graduate without getting a return on their education. Meaning graduating with more debt and no skills to assist with career placement to mitigate loan defaults. There are expectations on us now that we are in a post-modern world, which is a world shaped by individuals’ experience, meaning we will need to understand our own as well as others complexity of consciousness to appropriately engage. This requires us to develop more than just mere skills or mastery of a particular knowledge. Kegan (1994) wrote, “the issues we face today places demands on our minds, on how we know, on the complexity of our consciousness” (p. 5).

Throughout history, we have witnessed the higher education system working in tandem with the economy. Providing curricula based on job and market demand, this is evidenced by the influx of curriculum design centered around data mining tracks because of Amazon’s predictive analytics. This also speaks to almost all general education tracks having social justice and sustainability tracks to deal with the postmodern issues of society. This reveals that higher education institutions will always be pulled in several directions simultaneously, calling on the agility of its stakeholders.

In recent years, presidents, VPs, advisors, and faculty have faced mounting pressure to make fundamental changes in the ways they lead and serve students. In addition to their previous management and operations responsibilities, these leaders are now charged with improving teaching and learning for an increasingly diverse student body, providing professional development for institutional stakeholders, and negotiating the pressing political context at state and federal levels. Many leaders have not been trained to manage and make sense of these multiple demands and can be overwhelmed by the responsibilities required of them.

Educational leaders' work is further complicated by current needs for the fundamental and systemic change required for dramatically increasing student learning and achievement. Responding to these needs means that educational leaders are often engaged in running schools while they are also working to reinvent them. Essentially, we are asking higher education leaders to build the plane while flying it. The task of reinventing schools requires adaptive work (Helsing et al., 2008, p. 438).

Leo Tolstoy (1898/1960) stated, "Everyone thinks about changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself." Adaptive works means something must be changed about our beliefs that will then allow our behavior to align with our intended goals. We must recontextualize universities in concert with significant nonacademic stakeholders to create a transformational educational experience. Kegan (1994) explained that transformation is different than learning new information or skills. New information may increase knowledge, but transformation changes the way "he or she knows those things" (p. 17). Transformation occurs when someone is newly able to step back and reflect on something and make decisions about it. Transformational learning is needed to assist individuals in becoming adaptive in order to maintain balance within whatever social context they will thrive in.

My research agenda is to help leaders break free from the thinking that led to many of the incumbent systems higher education operates in. I want to do this by introducing a new paradigm of reflection, modified Immunity to Change Coaching combined with Action Inquiry. With this approach, I hope to assist higher education institutions in becoming learning organizations that constantly reflect and reevaluate for the community. I want to approach this using participatory action research to fully engage the higher education institutions as co-researchers and to solve an institution specific problem.

What Is Immunity to Change (ITC)?

The first revolutionary change movement I ever witnessed, and was truly inspired by, was the South African Apartheid movement. The way the then South African President, Nelson Mandela, united and dispelled racial tensions between the blacks and whites at the South Africa's 1995 Rugby World Cup triumph is legendary. This story has become widely known since the movie *Invictus* (2009). Mandela strategically partnered with the captain of the all-white South African team in hopes of provoking camaraderie and boundary spanning between black and white groups. Because of both races' devotion to winning and love for the sport, they reconciled. The most powerful thing about this movement was President Mandela's (1995) approach. He is often quoted for saying: "If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart." Mandela had the capacity to engage the emotions of opposing parties. Kegan and Lahey (2009) agree with Mandela when they assert, "twenty-first-century leaders must find a more effective way to engage the emotional lives of their organizations and their leadership teams" (p. 157).

Essentially, Mandela gave attention to how individuals on each side of the conflict perceive and make meaning of the world around them. He empathized with polarized mentalities and therefore was able to speak to opposing parties in a language that they commonly understood. It is no secret that understanding how people construct their meaning could advance how leaders approach leading, in the same way it helped Mandela use a rugby game to unite nations. Helping individuals process change is understanding the complex intersection between social worldviews and developmental capacity to understand how one makes meaning of and navigates their world.

Kegan and Lahey (2001a), conducted extensive research unpacking personal barriers to change and discovered that one develops an Immune system to change (ITC) by being unwittingly caught in a competing commitment, “a subconscious, hidden goal that conflicts with their stated commitments” (p. 2). The problem, Kegan and Lahey (2009) assert, is the subject’s inability to close the gap between what we genuinely, even passionately, want and what we are actually able to do. This “gap” represents a metaphysical space that one journeys through while learning to develop the capacity to no longer be subject to their beliefs and assumptions. The researchers deemed the inability to close this gap as a “central learning problem of the twenty-first century” (p. 36).

When one develops an immunity to change, she creates a system that protects her from the uncertainty and fear that comes with change. She maintains this immune system by subconsciously engaging in behaviors that act to protect her and are consistent with her beliefs or assumptions. In order to fully unpack one’s immunity to change, one must first understand what is the commitment goal that one wants to accomplish but have not been able to? Then understand what behaviors does one engage in that contradict that goal? What emotions does one feel, what do you worry, or fear will happen and engage in these behaviors consequently? Finally, what big assumptions does one hold as a result of said fears? Questions such as these are used to help one uncover their immunities to change and surface their big assumptions.

Kegan and Lahey (2001a) discuss the process of understanding one’s immunity to change and then acting to dismantle it, “is the process of challenging a persons’ deepest psychological foundations and questioning their longest-held beliefs” (p. 2). One must “tread delicately and sympathetically through this potentially painful process”; as “empathy is crucial in every phase of the life span and intrinsic to how we develop” (p. 67). People rarely realize they hold big assumptions because they are often accepted as reality. Development is a continuum of structural change, meaning it takes time and intentional practice to fully erect those structures that transform your view of the world. We are constantly challenged to adapt and to make meaning of our world, transforming our mindset in order to maintain balance in our respective personal and professional environments.

It is important not to trivialize this work to simply identifying unproductive behavior and systematically making plans to correct it. This "New Year's resolution" approach can be equated to applying a "technical solution to an adaptive problem" (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 256). Heifetz et al. (2009) described that technical challenges are those that require a solution that involves a skill or more information. Adaptive challenges are those that require a change in ourselves and the way we view situations. "Adaptive challenges can only be addressed through changes in people's priorities, beliefs, habits, and loyalties" (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 19). This means that challenging our mindset is a part of the adaptive challenge. Adaptive change can only be done through encouraging our ongoing development, not a mere increase in knowledge. It is a transformation of one's identity that influences behavior, not an increase in information.

Higher Educations' Immune System

A hard truth I have discovered in my experience as a higher education consultant and from the research literature is that most transformation initiatives in higher education will fail. This is because transformation challenges the very fundamentals of the organization. To do this means to challenge how the money works, how governance works, how management works, and how accountability works. Drawing on the Immunity to Change framework, when we develop an immunity to change, it is a deeply embedded protection system that helps our system function, and our immune system does not go down without a fight. Its purpose is to defend. The same applies to organizations; organizational cultures represent deep internal and traditional structures that are built and maintained by the people of the organization in order to protect various personal and organizational values. These defense mechanisms are put in place to help the organization function. Stakeholders naturally become extremely defensive when their immunities are threatened. To truly understand an organization requires engaging with the organization's underlying structures, behaviors, values and beliefs, essentially understanding what truly drives people and their commitment to the organization.

I work for the Education Advisory Board (EAB) in Washington, DC, where we provide technology and best practice solutions for Higher Education Institutions. Recently, we held an equity roundtable with various leaders who represent facets of student success to understand their pain points around equity. We started by displaying a thought-provoking exercise in front of the leaders to see how they understood equity. We asked leaders which scenario they preferred. Assuming similar investments between Pell recipient students and non-Pell recipients, would one prefer scenario A to increase both graduation rates by 20%, or would one prefer scenario B to close the graduation gap between both populations. See Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1

Equity Thought Exercise

Which Scenario Do You Prefer?

Assuming Similar Investments for Scenario A and Scenario B

Today	
May 2019	Non-Pell student graduation rate: 62%
May 2019	Pell student graduation rate: 44%

Scenario A	
May 2020	Non-Pell student graduation rate: 80%
May 2020	Pell student graduation rate: 62%

Scenario B	
May 2020	Non-Pell student graduation rate: 66%
May 2020	Pell student graduation rate: 66%

Source: Reprinted with permission to use by Pavani Reddy (EAB, 2019).

All leaders who claimed to want to close equity gaps chose scenario A over scenario B. When asked to unpack their choice, the leaders expressed that Scenario A will “keep the lights on,” emphasizing the funding an 80% graduation rate could yield. Leaders expressed that Scenario A felt like a better overall “win” for all stakeholders, “by raising all boats by ~20%” instead of Scenario B. We then reframed the question, asking, “What if the populations were Chem101 section 1 and Chem101 section 2, instead of Pell and non-Pell eligible students—which scenario would you prefer?” Leaders expressed they would then prefer Scenario B, stating, “well of course we want all of our students passing at fair rates.” Why, one might ask, does that line become greyed when it is time to think of students graduating at fair rates? It seemed that funding tied to graduation is what impacted their choice—revealing how higher education leaders have to wrestle with their competing commitments in all of their decision making.

Because higher education is so resource strapped, transformation conversations always start and end with budget. Transformation in higher education rarely happens at all or takes 3- to 5-year cycles. This is because many are waiting on retirement and new leadership to even begin an initiative and many are also bound by tradition and funding models. Even though this notion is disheartening, the reality is we have not been able to think about student equity until now because we finally have a business case for it. Essentially, enrollment has declined to the point that many institutions have to re-think what populations they are marketing to, and many institutions have to adjust for the types of the students that are now enrolling (nontraditional). Transformation is not a transactional activity that starts and ends and has a budget, and it should not be treated as one. It is never finished, in the same way evolution or adaptation is never finished.

Essentially higher education has developed an Immune System to defend itself in our society. Higher Educations’ commitment goal is to enroll, retain and graduate all students fostering citizens who go on to thrive in society and make it better. However, we often have many citizens in society who have not received a return on the investment placed in their education; they are walking away with debt and nontransferrable skills. The competing commitments of higher education leaders are often fiscal demands, staff capacity and enrollment concerns. Higher education, no matter how well intentioned, fails to impact student success in the way it desires to. What are the competing commitments of leaders that impact student success? What are the big assumptions we hold in higher education that prevent us from keeping to our student success goals? I want to understand higher education's immune system, then dismantle it.

Human Development as Integrated Operating Systems (IOS)

IOS means integral operating system. In an information network an operating system is the infrastructure that allows various software to operate. Using Wilber's (2005) language, if you are operating any "software" in your life (i.e., business, work, play, or relationships), you want the best operating system you can find (p. 3). The integral framework allows one to see their individual system within a social system. Integral theory proposes that we are all integral operating systems (IOS), with different downloads based on the mental structure activated within us. Change management is about first understanding what IOS individuals are operating at, then using that understanding of mindset to help someone develop as it relates to the needs of the environment. The goal is for one to be in balance with their respective holding environments.

While systems are great ways to maintain balance with our environment, one must understand the limitations of IOS systems. Shermer's (2011) notion, backed up by extensive neuroscience research, is that our brains are hardwired to make meaning out of chaos. Because of this, we may make connections when there are none. The Immunity to Change framework helps to illuminate these erroneous connections through a mapping process. The process creates intentional mapping of your beliefs, worries, fears, assumptions, and behaviors back to your commitment goal. Through this map, you can see how you get in your own way; likewise, you can see a collective view of why a group is unable to reach their goals if completing collectively. It was through understanding that higher education leaders are struggling to surface their competing commitments that I arrived at my research question.

Research Question

I seek to engage student success stakeholders to uncover how to assist them in being more adaptive so that they can adequately thrive in their workspace and create an inclusive environment for students. More specifically, I want to use Participatory Action Research (PAR) to understand how a modified approach to ITC coaching and action inquiry can assist student success stakeholders in reaching their student success goals as it relates to equity?

Researcher Positionality

I am conducting an Action Research (AR) dissertation, and while researcher positionality is important in all research—it is particularly important in AR. Herr and Anderson (2014) noted this importance because action researchers share all kinds of border crossings (e.g., class, gender, race, position, etc.), and for this reason action researchers' relationship to their setting and "participants" or co-researchers is a central dilemma. Essentially, one's positionality as a researcher means answering the question, "Who am I in relation to my participants and my setting?" (Herr & Anderson, 2014, p. 49).

The reason I am choosing to pursue an action research dissertation is because this framework allows for truly meaningful work. AR leaves room to connect our values and philosophy. Maguire (1993) wrote about this in her own dissertation research: "I started out looking for ways to make my dissertation research more congruent with my beliefs about empowerment and social justice" (p. 176). She chose to do participatory action research (PAR) as a way of integrating her interests, values, and beliefs. Whereas some research approaches have suggested that researchers keep their passions and themselves out of the process, Herr and Anderson (2014) suggested that the questions we pursue in action research are often related to our own quandaries and passions. Anderson and Jones (2000) also noted through their review of practitioner research dissertations that “although personal, professional, or organization/social transformation might be a byproduct of insiders doing ‘outsider within’ research, it was usually reported—if at all—as an afterthought in the dissertations” (p. 440).

I have spent 10 years of my professional career working in the higher education industry. I worked in academic support services at two small historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), and I currently work at a technology and research firm, the Education Advisory Board (EAB). In my professional capacities, I have witnessed driving student success initiatives from external and internal higher education lenses. This has given me a unique perspective for the problem’s higher education stakeholders face. While working at HBCUs I gained in depth understanding of the impact of constant leadership turnover and low resourced environments, I personally felt the impact of low morale on the work environment. While working in technology consulting, I am able to witness higher education organization cultures at scale. I work with 14 clients and have access to many higher education leadership forums. This has given me a unique lens because I discovered that the technology mirrors institutional processes. It is not until a workflow is embedded in the technology that is flawed that institutions are able to see the leaks in their pipelines. As a consultant, we hold private focus groups and conduct “secret shopping” on campuses to audit processes. This has allowed to me to get a “peek under the tent” into many higher education practices and processes. My career gives me an experiential and empathetic understanding of the student success landscape in higher education. This coupled with my personal passion for improving higher education because I was an underserved student who needed a coordinated care network to assist me through my journey, is why I am committed to reforming higher education specifically for initiatives related to equity.

My proposed positionality would be serving as an outsider in collaboration with insiders. This is because I work with an external consulting firm, but partner with institutions to assist with their retention and graduation pain points. This positionality was traditionally practiced by Paulo Freire to drive radical social change in the community. I believe this is the appropriate positionality for me as I want to understand higher education organizational structures.

Research Approach

I am using the Participatory Action research (PAR) research methodology. PAR is considered democratic, equitable, liberating, and life-enhancing qualitative inquiry that remains distinct from other qualitative methodologies (Koch & Kralik, 2006). PAR allows for one to understand an individual's feelings, views, and patterns without control or manipulation from the researcher. The participant is active in making informed decisions throughout all aspects of the research process. I want to use this method to give voice to student success stakeholders in assisting to address problems specific to their respective context.

Quinn (2000) developed advanced change theory based on Argyris, Schön, and Torbert's previous Action Science/Inquiry frameworks. This theory explains why reflective practice is critical for enhancing personal and professional effectiveness. Quinn argued that change processes that resort to telling, forcing, or even participation without self-change have limited effectiveness. Without changing one's own behavior, significant, sustainable, and systemic change is unlikely (p. 657). Combining PAR with Action Science, I will approach this research by engaging co-researchers to create a collective student success ITC map through three key stages to action science/inquiry: (a) understanding the social construction of reality; (b) recognizing one's own contribution to that construction; and (c) taking action to reshape that construction (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. 656).

While action research is very popular amongst teaching communities, Immunity to Change work is not being widely done in higher education spaces. In fact, higher education professional development conferences, retreats and seminars rarely provide space for self or group reflection in the way ITC does.

Ethical Considerations

Because PAR research unfolds as the result of negotiation with research partners, in response to the problems and needs of those partners, ethical arrangements ideally should develop iteratively and interactively (University of Sheffield, 2015). This means continual ethical approval as each stage of the research unfolds. Things that will be negotiated with participants acting in the role of co-researchers are anonymity and confidentiality, publication, data storage, and informed consent.

Carol Stuart (1998) outlined an ethical process for PAR researchers using the *Code of Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (1997)* framework. Adopting Stuart's principles, ethical approval for PAR will be done in two stages; the first stage will be used to allow the researcher (me) and co-researchers (participants) to develop a solid understanding of each other's bias, interests, roles, and responsibilities. Ethical approval for stage one would be based upon the participants' understanding of roles and responsibilities and require that the proposed research indicate that a relationship has been developed with the leaders of the population to be studied, or the specific participants. Ethical approval for stage two would address the following:

1. The process by which relationships with participants will be maintained and how these relationships will impact on the decision making that occurs within the project. The participant population will be engaged as co-researchers and asked to co-design the research.
2. The perspective of co-researchers will be included in determining the ethical suitability of the project.
3. Informed consent procedures will describe the ongoing communication process used to shape the project and identify the roles and responsibilities of all involved parties. A process for conflict resolution and decision making must be identified that respects all parties.
4. Publications and presentations of the research should be credible for participants and for the designated researcher, with a priority placed on the participant's experience.

5. Preliminary reports and working papers should be disseminated and discussed among the leadership of the participants as early as possible. Interpretation of the meaning and potential actions resulting from the findings should be undertaken as early as feasible in the research process.
6. Members of the participating collective should be actively sought and used as researchers, on an ongoing basis, within the project. Their role in data collection, analysis and interpretation should be identified in the research plan.

Once agreement is reached on the items above and documented between all stakeholders this will serve as approval for ethical stage two.

Organization of Remaining Thesis

Chapter II provides a literature review on the key forces for change in higher education as it relates to equity. The chapter will then review the effectiveness of change management in higher education, specifically focusing on the Immunity to Change framework and its theoretical underpinnings. With a review of equity as the impetus for change and change literature from social cognition theorists, ITC has the potential to contribute to effective change management in higher education environments.

Chapter III provides overview of action research methodology and the proposed theory of action for this dissertation. Using Participatory Action Research (PAR) methods, I will engage one University as co-researchers to help me identify a problem in practice as it relates to equity gaps in student success. We will use a modified approach to Immunity to Change coaching coupled with an Action Inquiry framework to assist student success stakeholders with processing and reflecting on this problem to enact change. This chapter also provides overview of the negotiation phase with co-researchers.

Chapter IV discusses the action component after developing a research plan with co-researchers in Chapter III. It provides an overview of three modified immunity to change sessions held with ITC participants and a review of the findings with co-researchers.

Chapter V discusses the details of the key findings from the modified PAR project. The study revealed three key findings: (a) understanding problems that relate to equity requires disaggregating data; (b) staff who are on the ground are key in understanding student success and creating a student-centered culture; and (c) leaders' beliefs are translated into actions and demonstrated in structures and policies created. It also provides discussion on using a modified ITC approach in participatory action research, study limitations and personal reflections.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review begins with defining what equity means in higher education. Equity is an adaptive and systemic problem permeating the higher education sector. This chapter will review equity gaps and their impact on student success at each stage of the student's life cycle: enrollment, retention, graduation, and beyond. The chapter will then review higher education's organizational structure, change management models, and approaches and their effectiveness. Deep diving into constructive developmental theory the theoretical underpinning that informed the Immunity to Change framework. This review will thus illuminate higher education's organizational structure, revealing its Immunity to change and how it impacts their student success landscape as it relates to equity.

The Impetus for Change: Equity Throughout the Students' Life Cycle

Defining Equity in Higher Education

The dictionary defines equity as "justice according to natural law or right; freedom from bias or favoritism" (citation). When we discuss equity as it relates to education, it is a measure of achievement, fairness, and opportunity in education. When defining this term, it is important to delineate equity from equality. Catapano (2013) noted that equality refers to treating people the same under the law; equity, on the other hand, refers to giving people the treatment they need. While everyone may be considered equal under the law, individual needs vary person to person. Equity is the attempt to provide different treatments to suit different students' needs in a fair manner.

Field et al. (2007) defined equity as having two dimensions: fairness and inclusion. Fairness means making sure that personal and social circumstances—for example gender, socio-economic status or race origin—should not be an obstacle to achieving educational potential. The second is inclusion, ensuring a basic minimum standard of education for all—for example that everyone should be able to read, write, and do simple arithmetic. The two dimensions are closely intertwined: tackling fairness creates an inclusive environment and vice versa. Kozol (2012) highlighted that although we understand the need for equity, inequity is difficult to avoid. Inequities in socioeconomic standing, race, gender, and disability are rooted in larger historical constructs that will inevitably shape one's outcome depending on the historical context of one's social identity.

Castro (2015) defined equity in higher education as providing access to the resources and supports that traditionally marginalized students need to achieve success. As minoritized students interact with representatives of postsecondary institutions, they learn about the institution's commitment to equity and social justice. To create a climate that promotes equitable outcomes, colleges must understand how students experience the institution through daily interactions, policies, and processes. Equity efforts must be made to ensure that faculty, staff, and administrators understand diverse student perspectives and provide resources to support students who experience college differently than the experiences of those representing the institution.

The Center for Urban Education (CUE) defines equity as a two-dimensional concept. One axis represents institutional accountability that is demonstrated by the achievement of racial parity in student outcomes, and the second axis represents a critical understanding of the omnipresence of whiteness at the institutional and practice levels (McNair et al., 2020, p. 97).

While defining equity in the higher education context, it is also important to discuss what is meant by equity gaps versus achievement gaps in higher education. "Achievement gap" implies that the onus for the outcome disparity is on the student. That is, they failed to achieve something, or lack the appropriate character traits to succeed and therefore, there is a gap. This mindset informed the developmental education movement and the grit ideologies (Duckworth et al., 2007; Dweck, 2008; Tough, 2012). "Equity gap," on the other hand, means any disparity in a metric, like graduation rate or term-to-term persistence, along racial, socioeconomic, gender, or other major demographic groupings. Instead of, "what did the student do wrong?" this helps leaders who are looking to solve equity problems to understand "what processes, policies, strategies, etc. did the institution put in place that created or exacerbated these disparities by race, gender, socioeconomic status, and so forth?" (Education Advisory Board, 2020).

Equity in education requires putting systems in place to ensure that every student has an equal opportunity for success. This is done through understanding of the unique challenges and barriers faced by individual students or by populations of students and providing additional supports to help them overcome those barriers. While this may not ensure equal outcomes, its purpose is to strive to restore justice to disproportionately affected students ensuring that every child has equal opportunity for success. A review of the literature on equity in education has revealed serious equity gaps for students in the following areas: student access, student debt and affordability, and academic content and support as it relates to students' identity and mindset.

Student Access

The enrollment declines forecasted for the 2020s will occur within the context of a broader shift in student demographics (Grawe, 2018). Researchers anticipate that students of color, especially Hispanic students, will continue to grow as a share of college-going high school seniors, even as the overall population of students is predicted to contract. This continues a trend that has been observed across the country for many years and is now central to any conversation about student success, equity.

Wright-Davis (2017) noted people without a college degree earn approximately one million dollars less over their lifetimes, often facing high rates of unemployment while also experiencing poorer health and political disenfranchisement, stating, "The United States cannot socially or economically afford to maintain these oppressive structural inequities. Marginalized students' unequal access to college is a major civil rights issue that threatens the well-being of our society" (p. 4).

Harper et al. (2009) conducted a critical race historical analysis of policy efforts for access and equity for African American students in higher education. The review showed that many policy efforts enacted through the late-1960s opened many doors for African American students in higher education.

However, the authors noted: “to characterize the current status of African Americans as inequitable would be a gross understatement” (p. 398). Over a century of gainful policy efforts have been undermined by the following: the steady underrepresentation of African American students at predominantly White Institutions (PWIs); continued over-reliance on racially-biased college entrance exams; consistent attempts to dismantle affirmative action; increased statewide admissions standards for public postsecondary education, without corresponding advances in public K-12 schools; reports of racism and negative African American student experiences at PWIs; low African American male student persistence and degree attainment rates; forced desegregation of HBCUs; inequitable funding for HBCUs; and the decline of need-based federal financial aid.

Unfortunately, progressive change has not occurred vigorously since the 1970s. This should concern public policymakers as it poses troublesome implications for the economic and sociopolitical status of African Americans. Increasing access to the public good of higher education is beneficial to everyone: public interests converge when more Americans across racial/ethnic groups earn college degrees and assume societal roles that enhance global competitiveness, decrease crime and poverty, and help the U.S. enact its espoused democratic ideals (Harper, 2006; Kezar et al., 2015; Lewis & Hearn, 2003). Equity gaps not only affect students at access but throughout their entire student life cycle. From enrollment, to retention, to graduation, to post graduation, students with marginalized identities are affected.

Student Debt and Affordability

Lack of financial aid has long been documented as a barrier to post-secondary persistence and completion. While accrual of debt may not directly interfere with college completion, it can burden students for years afterwards (Harper, 2012). Research has also demonstrated that minimal numbers of minority students and their families have adequate knowledge of the financial aid system (Roderick et all, 2011, p. 18).

Houle and Addo (2019) conducted extensive research on racial disparities in student debt and the reproduction of the fragile Black middle class. Their work recognizes that student loan debt is racialized and disproportionately affects youth of color, especially Black youth. The National Center for Education Statistics (2020) provided data that 86.6% of Black students borrow federal loans to attend four-year colleges, compared to 59.9% of white students. Scott-Clayton and Li (2016) published in a Brookings report that an average Black graduate has $7,400 more in student debt than his or her white peer. The gap widens over time: after four years, Black graduates hold almost twice as much in student debt as their white counterparts at $53,000. Though just six out of every 100 bachelor's degree holders' default on their loans, Black borrowers are much more likely to default: 21% of them default on their loans compared to just 4% of white graduates. Furthermore, Black graduates with a bachelor's degree are even slightly more likely to default or not make a payment for 270 consecutive days than white college dropouts. These racial inequalities in student debt contribute to the Black-white wealth gap in early adulthood, which increases over time. These devastating consequences make it economically, politically, and socially imperative to provide all students with equitable educational opportunities and college access.

Student Mindset

Annunziata (2018) researched increasing institutional capacity for equity. Her review discussed that student engagement is associated with higher rates of retention and success across all student groups; however, the opposite is true for African American males. While African American males report the highest levels of engagement in community colleges, they experience lower rates of success than any other peer group. This research emphasizes the need to examine issues related to the academic preparation of African American males, as well as the experience of stereotype threat which often leads to underperformance of African American males due to their own expectations or fears regarding performance (Center for Community College Student Engagement [CCCSE], 2016). Steele (2010) discussed the impact of stereotype threat on student achievement, stating:

> Minority student achievement gaps have multiple causes, ranging from socioeconomic disadvantage and family dislocation to unsupportive subcultures, and many extensive school reform efforts have failed to make even a dent in these gaps, or to sustain the initial improvements they did achieve. (p. 173)

Dweck, who is known for authoring *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (2008), changed the way many educators have approached teaching and learning by distinguishing between a “growth” and “fixed” mindset, reflecting on how a student reacts to failure. In her research, Dweck noticed that some students rebounded while other students seemed devastated by even the smallest setbacks. Dweck noted:

> Those with a growth mindset had a very straightforward . . . idea of effort—the idea that the harder you work, the more your ability will grow and that even geniuses have had to work hard for their accomplishments. In contrast, the students with the fixed mindset believed that if you worked hard it meant that you didn't have ability, and that things would just come naturally to you if you did. This means that every time something is hard for them and requires effort, it's a threat. Those with growth mindsets reported that, after a setback in school, they would simply study more or study differently the next time. But those with fixed mindsets were more likely to say that they would feel dumb, study less the next time, and seriously consider cheating. (p. 2)

Dweck’s work falls under the same umbrella as Duckworth et al. (2007) and Tough's (2012), "grit" ideology that uses self-regulation and emotional intelligence research in the modern classroom. Duckworth et al. (2007) defined grit as passion and sustained persistence applied toward long-term achievement, with no concern for rewards or recognition along the way. Duckworth and Tough both believed in order for students to be successful, “that the qualities that matter most have more to do with character: skills like perseverance, curiosity, conscientiousness, optimism, and self-control" (Tough, 2012). Dweck believed the growth mindset created a passion for learning rather than a hunger for approval, similar to Duckworth and Tough's GRIT models that refers to a person's capacity to work toward long term goals and not give in to short term distractions and temptations, thereby building academic and personal stamina, especially when things are challenging for students. Wood and Harper (2015) critiqued Dweck's growth mindset stating:

> I believe this myopic perspective perpetuates a cancerous idea that tells students you can succeed as long as you work hard while depriving them from messages that affirm their abilities or recognize the external challenges such as racism and oppression that often inhibit their ability to do so. This point is relevant to all underserved students, but particularly to our Black boys and men who experience school as an intellectual and emotional prison.

Wood and Harper (2015) asserted that black men without representation need positive affirmations for their effort and ability, while Dweck recommends that praising students' effort will allow for students to appreciate the learning process instead. Dweck (year) stated her intention for this model was "to help close achievement gaps, not hide them" (p. 4). However, the growth mindset and other research on resilience and grit all are rooted in a deeper meritocracy concept that does not consider the systemic oppression students with marginalized identities face. Mehta (2015) cited:

> The most prominent critique [of grit ideologies] is that an emphasis on grit is a way of "blaming the victim"—rather than take up larger questions of social, economic, and racial justice, if only the most disadvantaged kids were a little "grittier" they could make it in life. (p. 5)

Dukakis et al. (2014) completed an extensive literature review that examines challenges and promising practices for increasing college access and completion amongst boys and young men of color. The literature the researchers examined shows that the most promising interventions include an emphasis on identity development; strong relationships with adults and peers; high expectations from adults; group learning opportunities; family engagement; and fostering a sense of belonging, among many other practices. The literature also identified a number of institutional practices for achieving equity in college access and completion among boys and young men of color. High leverage institutional practices include leadership commitment to college completion (on the post-secondary side); inclusion of this commitment in the institution's mission and vision; a clear and transparent system of accountability; and extensive use of data.

Student Identity

Race is a very active and large standing systemic barrier that continues to adversely impact Black, Native American, and Latinx students' college access, experiences, and attainment. However, White students of lower class tend to suffer the same marginalization (G.L. Martin, 2015). More students continue to report being alienated and rebuffed as they attempt to navigate campus settings that they perceive privilege some groups over others. "By imposing on us certain conditions of life," Steele (2010) wrote:

> Our social identities can strongly affect things as important as our performances in the classroom and on standardized tests, our memory capacity, our athletic performance, the pressure we feel to prove ourselves, even the comfort level we have with people of different groups—all things we typically think of as being determined by individual talents, motivations and preferences. (p. 4)

Identity contingencies are the things one has to deal with in a situation because of their given social identity (Steele, 2010).

Steele (2010) conducted a study on the effects of stereotype threat for black and white students on academic and athletic tests. Because of the stereotypes that blacks are less intelligent than whites, and that blacks are more athletic than whites, students' performance aligned with the stereotype. When test instructors emphasized the role of race before the test, Black students performed worse than White students. When instructors did not emphasize race, Black and White students performed equally well. Despite the strong sense we have of ourselves as autonomous individuals, evidence consistently shows that contingencies tied to our social identities do make a difference in shaping our lives, from the way we perform in certain situations to the careers and friends we choose. One's identity composition can reveal how a person has to systemically deal with power and oppression. Steele's work uncovered that African Americans, a historically stereotyped group, displayed greater psychological vulnerability to early failure than any other race. For them, early failure may have confirmed that the stereotype was in play as a stable global indicator of their ability to thrive in school.

In Morales's (2012) dissertation on *Black Boundary* Line,s her findings also revealed Black students internalized stereotypes related to their social locations. These issues often resulted in students dropping classes and leaving majors. Morales cited that new scholarship has begun to question the homogenizing of Blacks in educational research (p. 23). Scholars assert that important intra-group differences among Black students create variations in experience such as class and gender. Studies examining the diverse experiences of Black students are needed. Social locations such as gender, race, social class, age, ability, religion, sexual orientation, and geographic location affect students differently. A person's social location carries a certain set of social roles and rules, power, and privilege (or lack of), which heavily influence our identity and how we see the world.

Crenshaw (2017) held an interview *on Intersectionality, More Than Two Decades Later*, to help others understand her intended purpose of the intersectionality framework and its applicability in the 20th century. Crenshaw (2017) discussed that:

> In society we see that social identity has a very strong relationship with power. It is not just about identities but also about the institutions that use identity to exclude and privilege. The better we understand how identities and power work together from one context to another, the less likely our movements for change are to fracture. (p. x).

Intersectionality theory is used to understand the influence of an institution, the socio-historical context, cultural and political contexts, and how all of those social locations can affect one's sense of belonging at an institution.

The purpose of intersectionality is to identify that these forms of discrimination are related to one another and take these relationships into account when working to promote social and political equity. Intersectionality is a lens through which one can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. "Intersectionality is an analytic sensibility, a way of thinking about identity and its relationship to power" (Crenshaw, 2015, p. 1).

Student Success Efforts Related to Equity

Many campuses have begun change efforts in order to serve their populations more equitably. They are doing this through hiring chief diversity officers, creating student groups to support marginalized identities, soliciting support from federally funded programs that specialize in serving underserved students, and auditing processes and embedding new predictive technologies to understand and stratify risk in students. However, with these efforts we still see a massive gap in how we are supporting all students. Chang et Al. (2005) introduced a concept called "magical thinking," a practice that often undergirds practices of student engagement: "The [magical thinking] rationale provides no guidance for campuses on assembling the appropriate means to create environments conducive to realization of the benefits of diversity or on employing the methods necessary to facilitate the educational process to achieve those benefits. Under this rationale, the benefits will accrue as if by magic" (Chang et al., 2005, pp. 10–11).

Given our new era of data science, we have explored a lot of technology use and predictive modeling for student success and closing equity gaps. However, without discussing ethical use of data and implicit bias, these data points can be used to further project stereotypes on students. Harper (2017) noted that "at-risk students" is perhaps one of the most unfair terms used in American education, in P-12 and higher education alike. This suggests that some students are in jeopardy of not succeeding. Harper's view is that students are placed at risk for dropping out of college when educators are negligent in customizing engagement efforts that connect them to the campus. While some may enter with characteristics and backgrounds that suggest they need customized services and resources, Harper maintained that student affairs educators and faculty should be proactive in assessing those needs and creating the environmental conditions that would enable such students to thrive.

Universities and colleges must use student data ethically to advance their missions of serving students and enriching communities as well as the state of knowledge in the world. While many institutions are accustomed to thinking about data privacy and security in the context of academic research and IRBs, higher education institutions also handle and store a tremendous amount of sensitive student data, including personally identifiable information (PII). Although most individuals who handle student data are familiar with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), they often do not receive adequate training on how to ethically use student data beyond the minimum guidelines described in federal, international, state, or institutional policies. New America's (2016) report on the predictive analytics in higher education explains that "examining the ethical use of data is an iterative process; colleges will continue to use student and institutional data in new and innovative ways and will therefore have to occasionally reassess whether their ethical standards address current data practices. "Using data ethically is complex, and no magic formula exists" (p. 2).

Harper (2009) reviewed educational practices for students of color and their ineffectiveness. He then proposed that effective educational practice demands consciousness of the environmental factors that either stifle or enable engagement among racially diverse groups of students. Harper proposed a version of student engagement that is fundamentally different from commonly accepted definitions of the term:

> In my view, effective educators treat engagement as a verb, rather than a noun, and attribute the presence of engagement inequities to institutional dysfunction. That is, the popular approach of only determining what students do to become engaged must be counterbalanced by examinations of what educators do to engage students. Put differently, questions concerning effort must be shifted from the individual student to her or his institution. Effective educators avoid asking, what's wrong with these students, why aren't they getting engaged? Instead, they aggressively explore the institution's shortcomings and ponder how faculty members and administrators could alter their practices to distribute the benefits of engagement more equitably. Accepting institutional responsibility for minority student engagement and success is the first step to race-conscious educational practice. (p. 41)

In their 2002 study, Kezar and Eckel interviewed 30 college presidents who had been engaged in organizational change with a significant emphasis on the success of racial/ethnic minority students. The presidents used a strategy of dialogue and discussion in the appraisal of their own and their institutions' commitments to diversity, while holding various stakeholders accountable for aligning efforts with stated institutional values and priorities. If this is to occur on other campuses, race cannot remain an avoidable topic. For instance, if accountability for student learning is a high priority, dialogue and strategic efforts must be directed toward addressing undercurrents of racial segregation that inhibit the rich learning that occurs in cross-racial engagement. Likewise, faculty and staff in academic affairs, student affairs, multicultural affairs, and other units on campus should be challenged to consider their roles as accomplices in the cyclical reproduction of racism and institutional negligence.

Challenges to Change in Higher Education

There is a clear need for change in higher education, but how do we approach it? Buller (2014) asserted that institutions harm themselves and their students by making "a fetish out of change" (p. 56). Often, there is frequent turnover of administration in higher education, and it is typical for one to come with the mindset that the people before them had done something wrong and that all needs to be changed. That administrator is also pressured to enact change by the governing board in order establish themselves as being immediately effective. This has caused Higher Education to gain the reputation of being in a constant state of flux. Due to new technologies, emerging fields of inquiry, and the ever-changing face of the types of students we enroll and market to, higher education is now synonymous with change. Higher education does not necessarily need the impetus for change, rather they need to understand their effectiveness. Buller (2014) emphasized it is not about the need for change, but whether we are posing the right questions. Kezar (2001) echoed these sentiments stating that change agents must think differently about change because context will shape the entire change process.

A 2013 study by the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Attitudes on Innovation*, suggested:

> That while university presidents tend to be highly positive about the current direction of higher education, the view of faculty members is far bleaker. Only 32 percent of the faculty members surveyed felt that higher education is moving in the right direction, as opposed to 64 percent of presidents. While 35 percent of presidents described the American system of higher education as the best in the world, only 17 percent of their faculty members concurred, and only 7 percent of the faculty believed that it would remain so over the next ten years. So, while it is evident that many believe that change is always happening in the higher education landscape, only 11 percent of presidents and 10 percent of faculty members thought that the current pace of change in higher education was too slow. (p. 2)

Leaders or stakeholders who lead change in higher education often make the assumption that the initiative will be positively received as long as one provides proof that it works. Leaders also make the assumption that mandating initiatives will enact change. Many social cognition scholars would argue that leaders of change need to be adaptable, creative, and have a host of strategic tools at their disposal

(Argyris, 1982; Heifetz, 2009; Kegan & Lahey, 2001a; Kezar, 2001; Schön & Argyris, 1996; Senge et al., 1999). Andrews et al. (2008) noted that change agents learn more from broad explanatory theories about the larger story of how change unfolds as a unique human and organizational dynamic than particular change techniques often emphasized in training sessions in leadership or management courses.

Kegan and Lahey (2009) distinguished three stages in adult development that can help us think of how we view leadership and change. The three stages of adult development are: the socialized mind, the self-authoring mind, and the self-transforming mind. The socialized mind seeks to conform and typically looks for prescription. The self-authoring mind is an independent thinker, with its own internal compass. The self-transforming mind is one who is an independent thinker but able to collaboratively think with others in order to transform situations. I will discuss these in depth later in the chapter but wanted to note how our individual development can influence how we seek to approach change on organizational levels. Kegan and Lahey's research discovered that only 75% of the general population have developed to the socialized mind. This means that change agents are typically seeking external direction and prescription models.

Leadership and change agency in higher education will take systems thinking. This means thinking about the context and external environment for change. The higher education landscape has truly become more complex due to the:

> Connection of higher education to the global economy, greater public investment and sense of accountability, increasingly diverse student body who engage campuses differently, corporatized higher education environment, marketization of higher education, new knowledge about how people learn, and technology and internalization of campuses. (Kezar, 2013, p. 5)

Given the complexity of higher education organizational context, change agents will need the agility to develop multi-theory approaches to change.

With increased external funding, it has allowed many federal and state policy makers to feel that they should have greater say in institutional operations. Mandates for conformity to new legislation and regulations on issues of equity and civil rights, such as the American Disabilities Act, Title IX, and sexual harassment, has also infiltrated the higher education space. Federal and state governments have called for greater accountability and transparency in the assessment of student outcomes. These external pressures place competing commitments on stakeholders, who would typically be able to decline new change initiatives that do not protect administrators and students, whereas now they must consider a larger group of stakeholders when making decisions. Consequently, there is a widening gap between legislatures, governing boards, and upper administrators, on the one hand, and faculty, deans, and chairs on the other about why we have colleges and universities in the first place and how we can best and most affordably achieve that purpose. Many higher education leaders are feeling a lack of control in face of legislative changes, state funding, and changes in types of students we are enrolling.

Kezar (2013) noted "when campuses respond to external forces, this is adaptation; when campuses switch from one practice to another, mimicking others in the enterprise, this is called isomorphism; and when campuses implement a new program or practice, this is called innovation" (p. 60). Scholars tend to focus their research on organizational change and isomorphism, ways to bring a positive outcome for the entire organization. Leaders and change agents tend to focus on innovation—creating something new. However, what is least focused on is the impact of external influences and collaboration of external stakeholders. Leaders need an appropriate framework for dealing with this coupled with other competing commitments.

The Iron Triangle of Higher Education

Political scientist Adams (1981) developed the term "the iron triangle" to discuss the tension amongst three powerful forces where only two can win. Discussing equity with the lens of the iron triangle can help illuminate the tension related to student success competing commitments. Higher education often wrestles with the iron triangle of cost, access, and quality. For example, some institutions may elect to keep costs low to grant more access, but will also sacrifice quality due to low resources. Conversely, investing in quality will heighten costs and impact access for low-income students. Institutions must first seek to balance the tensions created by the priorities on this triangle as it relates to their mission before thinking of equity related initiatives.

Views About Change

Change for many means that something shifts from one thing to another. Kübler-Ross (1969) developed this replacement view of change that means that something changes from A to B. This view of change is also referred to as the common view of change, meaning this is how most individuals interpret change. This view is often countered by fear of losing A in replacement of B. In the higher education context, the common view of change can be interpreted as a personal attack because often the initiative, policy, or process sought to be replaced was created by one of the stakeholders at the institution. Heath and Heath (2010) provided a new approach called “shrinking the change,” the purpose of this is to calm people and reassure them as to how minor and painless the change will be. This approach is the continual view of change. This is done by not framing B as a replacement of A, rather continuing A to its next appropriate stage of evolution A’ (p. 31).

This continual view of change was posited by Aristotle, who said that while the matter remains the same, the form changes. Think of a potter making a vase; the clay remains the same, but the form or shape is altered: it did not go from A to B, rather from A to A’ with the apostrophe noting a modification in form. This can help dispel the myth that change is identical to replacement or loss. Instead, one can think of change as an appropriate transformation needed for our evolution. Buller (2014) asserted perhaps we should not use the word change anymore, since it is often synonymous with the replacement view of change in higher education, to dispel the negative connotations this can have on the initiative and leadership.

Zolli and Healy (2012) developed the equation Change = replacement + resilience, stating change is "the capacity of a system, enterprise, or a person to maintain its core purpose and integrity in the face of dramatically changing circumstances" (p. 33). This equation captures both the common and continual views of change. An institution may replace its procedures, terminology, and means; but will remain resilient in its core mission and integrity and values. This continual view of change frames change as an ongoing organic process and not a one-time event. This allows the Institution to be in a constant state of evolution and growth.

This constant state of "growth" in the higher education context can become demoralizing because stakeholders may get the sense that "we keep reaching our goal, but never really arrive." (Is there a source for this direct quote, or are these your words?) Blanchard (2009) noted that too often we miscommunicate with stakeholders about why they should support an initiative. We must be intentional about outlining the destination, what it will take to arrive, and celebrating wins along the way. Blanchard noted that even while managing change after announcing the destination, there still may be significant resistance.

In the higher education context, the term "change management" is counteractive to the higher education identity. To be a higher education stakeholder, is to be a *partner* of the academic community. To seek to manage someone who is an esteemed academic partner is offensive. It provokes resistance because telling someone they need management implies they are a problem that needs to be solved rather than a valued partner needed to inform the journey. Leading change in higher education means we must reexamine how we understand our organizational culture and develop change methods accordingly.

Higher Education Organizational Culture

All organizations resist change; this is appropriate behavior. The purpose of any organization is to act in ways that are regular, consistent, and predictable. And "regularly, consistency, and predictability are natural enemies of change" (Buller, 2014, p. 2). An organization is a structured system in which individuals come together as a group in order to achieve a common goal. Schein (2010) defined culture as, "a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive think and feel in relation to those problems" (p. 18). With this definition of culture, we can use our understanding of culture to understand what stakeholders take for granted, what they use to solve problems, how do they understand their role, and how do they educate others.

Gareth Morgan's (1986) work on organizational metaphors is a good starting point for understanding the different beliefs and assumptions about change that exist. Morgan identified eight organizational metaphors: machines, organisms, brains, cultures, political systems, psychic prisons, flux, and transformation and instruments of domination. Cameron and Green (2015) discussed how Higher education is often named with metaphors of political systems and flux and transformation. The flux and transformation metaphor sheds light on how change happens in the higher education landscape. This view implies that managers can nudge and shape progress but cannot ever be in control of change. The political systems metaphor sheds light on the style of power rule in higher education. Key beliefs in political systems are that you must build support for your approach to get engagement, coalitions are more important than work teams, and you need to know who has power and decision-making ability. Using Morgan's metaphor can help us see higher education in a constant of flux with a very nuanced political structure.

Bolman and Deal (1991) developed a framework that we can use to conceptualize organizations. The framework uses a model that views organizations in four frames captured by distinct images or metaphors. Each frame equates to a mental model. A frame consists of ideas and assumptions that help the seeker of understanding register and assemble information into a coherent pattern. This enables one to decipher those clues by getting a more comprehensive picture of what is happening and what to do. The four frames are: the structural frame, which focuses on the obvious “how” of change. It concentrates on strategy: setting measurable goals, clarifying task, responsibilities and reporting lines; agreeing metrics and deadlines; and creating systems and procedures. The Human Resource Frame places more emphasis on people’s needs. It primarily focuses on giving employees the power and opportunity to perform their jobs well, while at the same time, addressing their needs for human contact, personal growth, and job satisfaction. The Political Frame addresses the problem of individuals and interest groups having sometimes conflicting (often hidden) agendas, especially at times when budgets are limited, and the organizations have to make difficult choices. In this Frame, one will see coalition-building, conflict resolution work, and power-base building to support the leader’s initiatives. The Symbolic Frame addresses people’s needs for a sense of purpose and meaning in their work. It focuses on inspiring people by making the organization’s direction feel significant and distinctive. It includes creating a motivating vision and recognizing superb performance through company celebrations. In the higher education context, change processes may follow the strategic plan logically (the structural frame) but may require the collaboration of two habitually hostile groups (political frame), or the initiative could impact the institutional mascot that represents heart and morale of institution (symbolic frame), or conflict with the priorities of key stakeholders (human resources frame).

Buller (2014) reviewed three types of organizational models that are typically seen in the higher education context: hierarchical, decentralized and distributed organizations (p. 11). Hierarchical organizations are structured as a social pyramid. While most people think of higher education as composed of hierarchical organizations, and organization charts are usually constructed to depict them that way, colleges and universities share many features with distributed organizations. In this type of hierarchy, every member of the organization is equidistant from power. Distributed organizations occur when power is shared among various individuals or groups within the organization. Western Universities typically use shared governance. The governing board retains fiduciary responsibility and sets basic policies. The administration implements those policies and is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the institution. The faculty is responsible for the curriculum of the school, the provost is responsible for academic personnel, and the students are responsible for the allocation of student activity funds (p. 17). Higher education is a professional bureaucracy, a unique type of institution with a distinct structure and culture that is different than what is found in businesses or government. Higher education also has the concept of academic freedom that has legal and cultural meaning in the higher education space. Academic Freedom allows for administrators and faculty pure autonomy in their respective spheres of influence.

Peter Vaill (1996) popularized “permanent white water” as a metaphor of describing the continual state of turbulence facing most organizations. He described permanent white water as having five characteristics: full of surprises, complex systems tend to produce novel problems, events are messy and ill structured, events are often extremely costly, and conditions raise the problem of recurrence (p. 5). He asserted the best way to deal with white water conditions is to become an effective learner. Heifetz (2009) echoed this sentiment through defining adaptive challenges as those situations that are difficult to diagnose and resolve because they require people to change their beliefs (p. 69). Five characteristics of an adaptive organization: elephants on the table are named, responsibility for the organization is shared, independent judgment is expected, leadership capacity is developed, and reflection and continuous learning are institutionalized (p. 165). Schein (2010) developed his learning culture theory in response to how to get organizations to adapt change more readily. Schein posited that a learning culture is proactive, committed to learning, and assumes positive assumptions about their stakeholders, who believe change is possible in themselves and the larger environment, understand that learning methods need to change over time, are optimistic about the future, are committed to transparent and open communication, committed to diversity, adopt a systems approach whenever possible, and believe that the study of their organizational culture is important to their growth and development (p. 84).

All of this falls under the umbrella of social cognition theory which is a school of thought that says that change is better understood and enacted through individuals and their thought processes (Harris, 1996; J. Martin, 1992). Studies of resistance to change illustrated that people were often not resisting a change because they disagreed with it, but because they did not understand its nature and how it might integrate into their work. Researchers then began to deep dive into mental models, sense making and dissonance to understand meaning making's influence on driving transformation.

Social cognition theorists Morgan (1986), Bolman and Deal (1991), and Weick (1995), suggested that leaders who view the organization through different lenses can better understand different interpretations and serve as translators and facilitators of change (p. 55). Social cognition theorists Argyris (1982, 1994), Schön (1983), and Torbert (1991) provided extensive research on single and double loop learning to illuminate why people are reluctant to examine inconsistencies for fear of consequences. Single loop learning is often associated with retaining existing norms, goals, and structures. Double loop learning refers to the process in which existing norms, goals, and structures are reformulated to embark on innovative solutions. Argyris and Schön's research identified how an environment of trust must be created in order for double loop learning to occur. In double loop learning people come to terms with their beliefs. Herr and Anderson (2014) emphasized the importance of Argyris' work, because it suggests why many institutions may not be thrilled at the idea of close examination. Kegan and Lahey's (2009) work on Immunity to Change contributes to the foundation of how people's implicit theories and assumptions block or stall changes.

Change Models in Higher Education

This section will review common change models that have been used in higher education. Each of the models reviewed below reveals an aspect of higher education's overall Immunity to Change (ITC) as an organization. While these models alone have been ineffective in leading transformation for higher education. Each model highlights important aspects of change that must be considered within the higher education context. Using these models, we can understand the ways in which institutions have sought to protect themselves.

The Kübler-Ross Model of Change Management

The Kübler-Ross Model, also referred to as the five stages of grief, was developed by a psychiatrist who conducted most of her research on understanding the emotions of terminally ill patients. Kübler-Ross (1969) authored *On Death and Dying* where she termed the following stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Building on her work in 1980s, she developed the Kübler-Ross Change Curve. This quickly caught on in change management spaces and across sectors. Scire (2007) applied these grief stages to organizational management. Kübler-Ross assisted initial practitioners in viewing change management much like grief counseling. Kübler-Ross contributed to why many resist change and the importance of leaders acknowledging the healing that is needed throughout the change process and without healing, it can deepen resistance.

The Krüger Model of Change Management

Krüger (2010) posited a theory of change that has become commonly known as the iceberg model. His idea was that change, like an iceberg, is a phenomenon for which most of the danger lies below the surface. Krüger believed that most people involved in organizational change tend to only engage in management issues, referring to cost, quality, and time. Difficulties arise because of the less immediate visible factors, like power relationships, politics, beliefs, biases, and perceptions. Krüger implied that effective change management requires leaders to adopt system thinking, meaning that one has to deal with those invisible as well as visible factors that affect change.

The Kotter Model of Change Management

Kotter (2012) in *Leading Change* described successful change processes as having eight significant steps:

1. Establish a sense of urgency.
2. Create the guiding coalition.
3. Develop a change vision.
4. Communicate the vision for buy in.
5. Empower broad based action.
6. Generate short term wins.
7. Never let up.
8. Incorporate changes in the culture.

The goal of Kotter change model is providing a consistent level of emphasis on the process that is needed throughout change, not just the implementation of the change. Kotter (2008) noted it is the nature of organizations to “allow the powerful winds of tradition to pull new behaviors back into historical norms” (p. 185). His model acknowledges the importance of intentionality and enthusiasm throughout all stages of the change process.

In summary, the Kübler-Ross model illuminated how the change process brings out deep rooted fears and a range of emotions that one has to deal with a nonlinear way. The Krüger model highlighted the importance of understanding one’s beliefs and assumptions about the change initiative and its components. The Kotter model emphasized the importance of maintaining momentum at all stages of the change process and beyond. All change models discussed above can offer the higher education sector keys areas to be mindful of. A commonality the change models discussed above share, are they assume that the organization is hierarchical and centralized. This assumes that change comes from the top down.

Change Model's Relevance to Higher Education

Because colleges and universities are structured as distributed organizations, most approaches and the change models discussed previously are not effective. This is because most change models were developed for corporations, the military, and other types of hierarchical organizations. In a culture of shared governance, faculty members do not view change just as an issue affecting the university; they view it as an issue affecting them. In hierarchical cultures, most can distinguish themselves from the organization. In a distributed culture like a university, it is much more difficult to distinguish their work identity from who they are. Faculty are often the ones who created the process, policy or curriculum that is being challenged for change.

It leads to a phenomenon conceived by Norton et al. (2012) known as the Ikea effect, which is a tendency to overvalue products that we ourselves participate in creating when compared to similar prefabricated items (p. 18). Ultimately, members of distributed organizations tend to resist change most strongly because they view what is being changed as a part of themselves. The vision for change is expected to derive from the manager, an occurrence that may work well in hierarchical organizations but runs counter to the culture of decentralized or distributed organizations. Change management as it commonly occurs in higher education fuels faculty suspicion that administrators are doing this for personal gain or to improve their resume instead of being genuinely needed (Buller, 2014).

The change literature teaches that people do not fear change, they fear loss. We must acknowledge higher education's immunity, meaning the system they have in place to protect them. In the higher education context stakeholders regard themselves as competent, well educated, and quick to master new information. This is coupled with stakeholders seeing themselves as partners to leadership and not necessarily *under* leadership. Change is not something that higher education leaders manage; it is something they lead, initiate, guide, and occasionally capture (Buller, 2010).

Kezar's Framework for Understanding Change

Due to higher education's open system and distributed organizational culture, change processes are embraced by stakeholders more readily when they are based on a clearly established needs case rather than the anticipation of comparative advantages, net benefits, or any justification other than genuine need. Since the distributed organizational culture of colleges and universities operates in an open system, those who are involved in change processes need to be able to see each policy, procedure, and proposal from multiple perspectives.

Change agents must first consider the type(s) of change needed for the initiative. The type of change shapes the approach. Change agents will then need to map the type(s) of change to the appropriate context for change, all contexts that shape the initiative should be considered: social, political, and economic. After understanding context, successful change agents will then need to understand who are the leaders that are needed. This is done through understanding the levels of agency amongst different actors. Lastly, one can then identify the approach for change. Kezar (2013) emphasized that strategies cannot be developed until a careful analysis of the type of change, context for change and leadership available is developed. The next sections will outline each section of the macro change framework.

Type of Change

Kezar (2013) outlined that the following issues must be addressed to understand the type of change needed: content, scope, level, focus, forces/sources, and intentionality. Change is shaped by the following content areas: scientific management, evolutionary, social cognition, cultural, political, and institutional and neo-institutional (p. 69). For example, if one is trying to implement a new technology on their campus to improve equity gaps, one would first need to audit how people will perceive this change as it relates to their interests, using a political lens. Since this initiative is related to equity, one would need to use a cultural lens to understand how this is viewed as being in the interest of faculty, staff, and students of color, but not always in interest of faculty, staff, and students who are white. Using a social cognition theory lens, one could see that implementing a technology alone may not get as much resistance since everyone understands that in this era, technology adoption is inevitable in the workspace. Through an analysis of social, cultural and cognition theories of change we can uncover more hidden blind spots that could hinder the change initiative.

Now that content is understood, one must understand the degree or scope of change. The degrees of change are either first order or second order. A first order change involves minor improvements or adjustments, while a second order change requires double loop learning because underlying values, beliefs, and culture must be changed. Change agents must then recognize the level of change they are dealing with to map appropriate strategies: individual, group, organizational, sectoral. Social cognition theories are most appropriate for change at the individual level. One then must understand the foci of the phenomenon, the three typical focuses for change are: structure, process, and attitude. Lastly in diagnosing the type of change, agents need to understand where the change is coming from. Changes from external sources are often met with more suspicion. Diagnosing where the change originates also helps the change agent unpack the “why” behind the change initiative.

Context for Change

Kezar (2018) encouraged change agents to look at the process of change as inherently embedded within larger contexts (p. 109). The context for higher education continues to evolve, meaning leaders must understand how to create change in an increasingly academic-capitalist environment. The social, political, and economic factors must be considered parallel to its stakeholders in the environment. Often these social, political, and economical factors involve external stakeholder groups such as foundations, government agencies, and disciplinary societies that also impact and shape change in a variety of ways. An example of an impact of external government policies on higher education is financial aid: the GI Bill increased veteran enrollments at higher education institutions causing the institution to quickly rethink how they are serving veteran populations of students.

Institutional theory suggests that higher education is a social institution, healthcare is also labeled a social institution. According to Scott (2008), institutional theory is “a widely accepted theoretical posture that emphasizes rational myths, isomorphism, and legitimacy.” A key insight of institutional theory is imitation: rather than necessarily optimizing their decisions, practices, and structures, organizations look to their peers for cues to appropriate behavior. Because of institutional theory, higher education typically takes cues from its peers on how it should shape its identity. This is coupled with change processes within institutions involve extensive debate among many different stakeholders because campuses serve so many societal needs.

Higher education’s status as a social institution suggests a unique change process is needed which change agents should approach slowly and with care. A last element of context is understanding the organizational capacity and readiness for change. Toma (2010) outlined the following as necessary for higher education organizational readiness: a clear and meaningful mission, structures that support the mission and vision, healthy governance processes, policies that support institutional mission and vision, streamlined and clear processes, healthy information resources that are well shared, facilities, technology, human infrastructure, capital assets that continually maintained and updated, and an institutional culture that promotes the predominant values of the mission and vision (p. 130).

Agency/Leadership

All literature on change acknowledges the importance of leadership to facilitate the change process. According to Wergin (2007), “it’s time we rethink how our colleges and universities are organized and led. While political pressure for greater accountability has been the chief catalyst for change, other forces for change have huge implications for academic leadership” (p. 5). The mindset needs to be to create a leadership team for change initiatives. And these leaders can lead from anywhere. Leadership does not have to be hierarchical, formal, or rule bound, but rather lateral, informal, and ad hoc (Wergin, 2007, p. 15). Kezar (2013) shared the same notion referring to leaders of change as "change agents" sharing that many theories overemphasize the importance of positions of authority ignoring other change agents and how they can uniquely create change even in constraining contexts. Bensimon and Nuemann (1993) used political theories to highlight how leadership teams are often much more successful than one single individual.

Depending on the individuals who are leading the change levels of power and authority, this will determine if the initiative is top down versus bottom up. Top down change initiatives are mostly documented through scientific theories of change where leaders have the ability to mandate change, can articulate mission and provide incentives and rewards to drive change. For bottom up change initiatives, political theories of change are essential to drive strategy. Political theories address the importance coalition building and creating allies. Kezar and Lester (2011) outlined the following strategies for grass root leaders: intellectual opportunities, professional development, hiring like-minded people, garnering resources, working with students, leveraging curricula, and using classrooms as forums, gathering data, joining, and utilizing existing networks, and partnering with influential external stakeholders (p. 139).

Lastly, when understanding agency and leadership for change, change agents must understand the advantages of collective and shared leadership. Shared leadership involves agents at various levels of change working together to create change. Collective leadership may be confined to a group of leaders holding positions of authority or a network of bottom up leaders exclusively. Shared cognition does not mean groupthink. Bensimon and Nuemann (1993) highlighted the importance of creating a safe, productive, and diverse culture for leaders to mitigate this.

Approach to Change

Practitioners must analyze and create a multi-theory approach to change. For example, if an institution is trying to implement a change initiative focused on closing equity gaps on campus, the change agent must first realize that because of the context of equity, this will elicit a political response and resistance. The agent will use political theory to understand key players. Because equity requires a cultural change, this a second-degree change initiative that will need understanding of social cognition theory. An agent must understand the meaning making of various stakeholders. Since this is a broader organizational change, the agent must also understand scientific management theory to recognize structures and incentive resources. With this understanding, the agent can use a social cognition approach coupled with political theory to map different interests to understand need. A change agent could use this contextual understanding to develop focus groups that hold regular dialogue about equity, or a professional development series to inform about equity initiatives and how to improve them.

Immunity to Change

In the higher education context, there is much resistance to change. Social cognition theory emerged in response to this resistance, to better understand why people resist change and what type of meaning making needs to occur for change to be successful. One of the most significant social cognition theories is the Immunity to Change framework. Kegan and Lahey (2009) identified a paradox of how people set goals and commit to change but then consistently do not. The researchers identified why people appear to resist change. Uncovering that while people are committed to the change, they are also committed to another deeply ingrained value or assumption that conflicts with the change. Change then becomes difficult because this competing commitment is often unconscious and has to be something identified in order to elevate it to conscious awareness. Kegan and Lahey posit the key to change is helping people reflect on the assumption that drives the competing commitment.

Kegan and Lahey (2009) provide a worksheet called an Immunity to Change Map to help individuals and groups understand their Immunity to Change. The ITC map is named as such because it is supposed to provide a way of mapping or connecting commitments to behaviors, worries and assumptions. This mapping allows one to see “how you get in your own way.” The mapping process keeps all things on the map accountable to one’s improvement goal.

Kezar et al. (2015) conducted a study of reforming STEM learning for 12 campuses. Using social cognition theory, they discovered there were many implicit theories about how change happens. The team found that having initial discussions about change occurs first were essential to allow assumptions to emerge and be debated. Kezar and colleagues also discovered when participants reviewed case studies on change, their assumptions about change began to alter (p. 196). Social cognition theories are essential for the higher education context because they can help individuals understand why the movement is so difficult, the barriers to change that are likely to emerge, and if a mental model needs to be altered completely in order for change to be sustained.

Theoretical Underpinnings of Immunity to Change

The Immunity to Change process is derived from Constructive developmental (CD) theory. Constructive developmental theory is a stage theory of adult development that focuses on the growth and elaboration of a person’s ways of understanding the self and the world. CD theory brings together two potent lines of human psychology: constructivism, which looks at the ways in which people construct meaning from their experiences; and developmentalism, which looks at the ways in which the actual constructing of meaning becomes increasingly more complex in one’s ongoing interaction with one’s social environment. The relationship between an individual and his or her environment is a dialectical one: in the interaction between them, each constructs the other; one cannot exist without the other.

The research on CD theory is centered on the notion that a leader's order of development should impact his or her leadership effectiveness or managerial performance. Given the challenges we are now faced with in society and the higher education landscape, we can no longer think of solving problems related to equity in student success without adaptive deep learning. We must deeply understand how we work and develop individually and collectively to influence organizational culture.

Self-Development Views

Self-development can be traced to Socrates, who noted that one must first "know thyself." This has been termed the "essentialist" view of self, the core belief that one's true self lies within and must be discovered or unearthed. Wergin (2019) noted that the essentialist view of self is rooted in psychoanalytic theory and humanistic psychology, made popular by Maslow's (1998) "hierarchy of needs." Interactionist views of self-development differ from the essentialist view of self in that development is viewed as occurring in interaction with the environment. Wilson (1988) noted that one's true self develops as we interact with an external context, mediated by our interpretation of experience (p. 42). John Dewey (year) provided a foundation on the nature of human learning and development and also had an interactionist view: he argued that interaction and continuity are immediate and longitudinal aspects of experience, and that we learn through experience and from experiences.

Piaget (1952) was an evolutionary biologist who contributed a unique perspective to the interactionist view using a biological adaption lens. From early in life, Piaget was fascinated by the problem of understanding how it was possible for human beings to "develop objective, scientific knowledge of the world" (Soldz, 1988, p. 47). It is generally believed that a baby is born with a limited repertoire of behaviors; however, there is considerable contemporary controversy over the exact capacity of this repertoire. Over the subsequent 20-year span, the person develops an extraordinary amount of knowledge and adapts to find balance with the world they are immersed in. Piaget's work sought to understand the origins of knowledge and its connection to how it is constructed through human development. His epistemology was to become an experimental science called, genetic epistemology.

Piaget (1952) developed the notion that we have housed/resident within us latent psychological structures that only need to be activated through change. This means that one is not an empty slate needing to be "filled" with knowledge, nor is one fully equipped with all knowledge needing to only "call it forward." These structures are content free, and while they do not expand our knowledge, they expand our relationship with that knowledge. They help us develop how we know something. We are prompted to invoke this genetic epistemology when we are no longer balanced with our environment and it is impacting our survival. At this moment we activate a process of self-construction in order to adequately make meaning of our new world. Piaget developed this theory from an ecological lens to help one understand that we have everything within us to maintain balance with our environment; however, it is only activated when faced with change.

Piaget is highly regarded by scholars. Kegan (1982) stated, "In Piaget, I believe we discover a genius who exceeded himself and found more than he was looking for" (p. 26). Einstein once called Piaget's discoveries of cognitive development, "so simple only a genius could have thought of it." Through Piaget's trailblazing, Kegan (1982) was able to uncover that "the primary human motion" is for us to make meaning (p. 452). "Piaget transformed an abstract notion such as 'structure' or 'subject-object differentiation' into something almost palpable" (Kegan, 1986, p. 578). Rowson (2016) wrote:

> Piaget's genius, not fully appreciated even by himself, was to link the structure and logic of living systems with the development of human perception and knowledge, which in turn shape human patterns of meaning-making with cultural evolution and expectations, the setting for modern policy and politics. (p. x)

Because of Piaget, we have a way of understanding the what and how of "knowing," through which we can understand our connection to life more systemically, and we can appreciate the diversity of human capacity and consciousness.

Constructive Developmental Theory

Kegan (1982) was inspired by Piaget's ability to marry "philosophy (the constructive theme) and biology (the developmental)" (p. 535). McCauley et al. (2006) define Constructive development (CD) theory as how consciousness develops adequate complexity so that we may be balanced within our complex environments. Constructive developmental theory concerns itself with two primary aspects of development: (a) construction of one's understanding of reality by organizing principles that regulate how people make sense of themselves and the world; and (b) development of these theories over time by constructing and re-constructing these regulative principles over time.

McCauley et al. (2006) noted that Constructive developmental theory is neo-Piagetian theory because it extends Piaget's ideas in several important respects:

> (a) Constructive-developmental theory takes the view that the developmental growth Piaget studied affects more than the way a child constructs the physical world and includes the way adults construct and interpret their experiences; (b) the theory moves beyond Piaget's focus on cognition and includes the emotions; (c) although constructive-developmental theory recognizes qualitatively different "stages" of development, it also focuses on the processes of transformation—the challenges, achievements, and costs of moving from one way of making meaning to another; (d) the theory moves beyond Piaget's exclusive attention on the external manifestations of development to also include the inner experience of developing; and finally, I constructive-developmental theory broadens its focus beyond the individual to include a study of the social context and how it affects development. (p. 636)

Kegan’s (1982) theory is based on his ideas of “transformation” to qualitatively different stages of meaning making.

The Subject Object Relationship

People’s unquestioned beliefs about the world are mostly unconscious and held as “Subject” by them. Subject is something we are embedded in and identify with, while “object” is something distinct from us that we can see objectively. Kegan (1994) wrote, “You generally cannot name things that are Subject, and you certainly cannot reflect upon them—that would require the ability to stand back and take a look at them … we cannot be responsible for, in control of, or reflect upon that which is subject” (p. 32).

Shifting things from subject to object is a reclamation of power and transforms our identity: “We have object; we are subject” (Kegan, 1994, p. 32). Things that are Object in our mind’s eye are “those elements of our knowing or organizing that we can reflect on, handle, look at, be responsible for, relate to each other, take control of, internalize, assimilate, or otherwise operate upon” (p. 32). Emancipation takes place when the individual’s sense of a problem is shifted from being subject to the experience (being a victim) to being able to take it as object in their mind’s eye. It is not until we no longer identify with the problem, but can view it objectively, that we are able to truly see the problem in an abstract instance that allows us to conquer it.

For example, one may be subject to their anger. To be subject to your anger means you accept this emotion as an absolute truth and have little control over it. Anger has you. Shifting your anger to the objective position allows you to objectively manipulate and therefore manage this anger. One can view anger as a basketball and minimize it to a pea to objectively see that anger does not have as much power as you thought it did when you were subject to it. You have anger. You are angry but with a sense of control over it.

For Kegan and other constructive developmental theorists, this “subject-object dance” described above is necessary for adult development. Berger et al. (2007) asserted, “as you begin to take increasingly complex elements as Object, your world view becomes more complex because you can see and act upon more elements” (p. 49). The most profound example of a move from Subject to Object is when gradually, over time, our entire meaning-making systems move from what was previously Subject to Object. This shift means that what was once an unselfconscious lens through which the person viewed the world now becomes something that can be seen and reflected upon. This shift of entire systems from Subject to Object is what gives structure to the five orders of mind, and the four sub-stages between them, in Kegan’s theory. Interestingly, what may be the most powerful moment of human development is the transition from subject to object; however, it is the least understood portion of CD theory.

Orders of Mind and Meaning-Making

Self-complexity refers to the different ways people make sense of the complex world around them; Kegan classified complexity as orders of mind, later revised to be called mindsets, to describe the capacity of humans to cope with complexity, multiple perspectives, and abstraction. Berger et al. (2007) asserted that there is a pattern of being able to “make sense of greater and greater levels of complexity” that continues throughout the lifespan (p. 26). In a world marked by enormous amounts of complexity in every area, we need a way of understanding our development to survive and thrive. Although this classification of mindsets does create a hierarchy, it is not meant to imply that higher orders of consciousness are better than others. These mindsets or ways of knowing were developed as a way of supporting our understanding of the diversity of adult meaning-making systems.

Kegan’s (year) five orders of mind involve qualitatively different ways of constructing reality. Each order is erecting a structure that encompasses the meaning making and complexity from the order before it. Kegan explained that we do not give up what we have learned in a previous order; we move the elements of the earlier meaning-making system from Subject (where it was controlling us) to Object (where we have a new sense of control over the meaning-making system itself). In so doing, we transform, changing the actual form/structure of our understanding of the world. At each stage, what we were previously subject to becomes object.

Individuals are prompted to engage in the subject-object dance of growth when their environment prompts a change in how one interprets it to more fully understand it. Kegan adapted Winnicott's (1965) idea of the holding environment and proposed that the evolution of meaning-making is a life history of holding environments, or cultures of embeddedness. Kegan described cultures of embeddedness in terms of three processes: confirmation (holding on), contradiction (letting go), and continuity (staying put for reintegration). According to Kegan and Lahey (2001):

> We construct meaning from our experience within the context of and in relation to our social-cultural, physical, and psychological environments. Holding environments are characterized as the social, physical, psychological context(s) in which and through which an individual develops and comes to know and define his *[sic]* very self. (p. 52)

Kegan (1982) suggested that a person is both individuated (different from others) and "embedded in the life-surround":

> There is never just a you; and at this very moment your own buoyancy or lack of it, your own sense of wholeness or lack of it, is in large part a function of how your own current embeddedness culture [your holding environment] is holding you. (p. 116)

First Order

The first mindset is defined as the impulsive mind: ones' meaning making structure is at the level of a single point making ones' behaviors narcissistic and impulsive in nature. Individuals operating at the first order are most concerned with getting their needs met according to their feelings and perceptions. Individuals are unable to distinguish their reflexes from self, emphasizing their structure of a single point. Kegan (1982) noted, "Narcissism is nothing other than emotion associated with the non-differentiation between the self and the non-self" (p. x). The first order is typically experienced during ages of 2-6. There is no separation between imagination and reality. Everything is built upon impulses. Individuals at this order are subject to their impulses, feelings and perceptions, and there is no object but their self.

Second Order

The second order is the instrumental mind, where one makes meaning through classification and categorizing. Now the first order is embodied within the second order. Individuals with this mindset are using the same first order consciousness, while now classifying the information that is received. Individuals at this stage can repeat facts and view the world very concretely. Other people's interests are important only if they interfere with the interests of the person at the Second order. People at this order may appear extremely rule-bound, following along with various philosophies or mandates because of the possibility of external rewards or punishments. They might appear self-centered and might see others as helpers or barriers on the road to get to their desires. Relationships are transactional to get their needs met. Second order individuals are subject to their needs, and can now objectively view impulses, feelings, and perceptions.

Third Order

Once this second order of consciousness can be viewed objectively, the next laten structure emerges—which is the erection of the third order structure, also referred to as the socialized mind. You can now view your needs objectively and are subject to your environment. Someone in this order has developed the ability to put others needs before their own. Starting at the third order, our interaction with the world begins to highly impact the state of the world. Kegan matches levels of consciousness with historical epics of society, to demonstrate the impact of our mindset on resolving issues in the world. He maps the socialized mind to a “traditional world.” A traditional world is one where laws and religion are prominent for self-regulation.

They now internalize the ideas or emotions of others who represent their meaning system and are guided by the ideologies, institutions, or people that are most important to them. They are able to think abstractly, be self-reflective about their actions and the actions of others, and be devoted to something that is greater than their own needs. It is as if, in their growth from the Second order, those at the Third order have welcomed a Board of Directors (Kegan, 1994) into their decision making and now have the ideas or voices of important other ideologies, institutions, or people with them as they make their decisions. When there is a conflict between important ideologies, institutions, or people, third order individuals have a hard time answering the question: “what do I want?” They defer to this “board of directors” which represents their ideologies. Third order individuals are focused on others’ expectations or societal roles. Although they themselves do not experience it this way, “those at the Third order do not have an independently constructed self to feel good about; their esteem is entirely reliant on others because they are, in many ways, made up of those around them” (Berger, 2006, p. x).

Fourth Order

Once an individual is able to objectively view the needs of self as well as others, the Fourth order structure is erected, also referred to as the Self-Authoring Mind. This order creates a filter for what it allows to come through. Individuals at this order are able to do this because they can now objectively view the boardroom from the previous order, thus being able to manage it. Adults at the Fourth order have created a self that is the author of its connections to the ideologies, institutions, or people which they were previously written by.

Kegan maps this order to a world of Modernism, an objective way of knowing. Modernism represents an emancipation from traditional ways of knowing and viewing the world. The perspectives, opinions, and desires that third order individuals were Subject to are now Object to them. They are now able to examine those various rule-systems, opinions, and expectations and are able to mediate among them using an internal set of rules and regulations—a self-governing system. The limit of the Fourth order meaning-making system is that a person becomes subject to this self-authored system. This means a self-authored mind may choose not to consult with important theories or people about their opinions—shutting herself off to the voices of others because of her fear that those voices will drown out her own newly-emerging voice.

Fifth Order

The Fifth order, also referred to as self-transforming mind, is a systems thinker having the ability to see the whole and its parts in parallel. Erecting the fifth structure allows one to move self-authorship to object, allowing one to hold multiple thoughts and ideologies at once. Adults at the Fifth order have achieved all that those at the Fourth order have, but in addition they have learned the limits of their own inner system—and the limits of full identification with any one inner system in general (Berger, 2006). Instead of viewing others as people with separate and different inner systems, those at the Fifth order can look across inner systems to see the similarities that are hidden within what used to look like differences. Adults at the Fifth order are less likely to see the world in terms of dichotomies or polarities. They are more likely to understand and deal well with paradox and with managing the tension of opposites. It is only through relationship of subject to subject that the subject object relationship comes to be; by their interconnection they balance difference. It is when the subjective self has relationship with the objective self that we are like god, able to truly see the fullness of our self and all we are able to create. This order is mapped to the postmodern world, a culture stripped of its capacity to function in a linear state.

Kegan uses a brilliant geometric metaphor in *In Over Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life* (1994) to help one understand the movement of orders of consciousness. Geometric transformations occur by absorbing a previous structure and expanding outward. The shift of one order of mind to another is equivalent to expanding a geometric structure that encompasses the previous. The First order is equivalent to a single point where subject and object are one. Once one activates a structure of consciousness within them it expands and removes that person further from the original point (or subject) now creating a line, a space between two lines. With this space one is now able to see things objectively. When one expands their structure of the line to see it objectively, they have now formed a plane. This is when one can begin to objectively see self and manage your boardroom. Continuing this growth process of erecting structures, one can see several planes make up a three-dimensional space called a cube, which is representing the fourth order of consciousness. The Fifth order is a tesseract which goes beyond three dimensions to a place where objects are interwoven and penetrating into each other. Note that each of these higher dimensioned geometric objects depends upon, or "encompasses," the lesser-dimensioned objects. There can be no tesseract without a cube, and no cube without planes, no plane without lines, and no line without points. By constantly activating structures and expanding our consciousness, we are able to develop a deeper way of understanding and knowing our complex world. We become in perfect harmony with the world we live in. This brings to life Plato's statement that "geometry draws the soul towards god." Geometry was referred to as sacred and the language of god by many philosophers because it contains every structure that exists in the universe.

In true postmodern fashion, many deny the existence of grand narratives and ideologies, perceiving Kegan's orders of mind to be a hierarchy and thus oppressive (Berger, 2012). The five mindsets are not to encourage approaching one's development faster nor should it encourage one to negatively compare themselves to others; but it is about understanding that we are all at different stages of complexity and that there are opportunity costs for both growth and staying stagnant, depending on your holding environment. It is important not to judge these orders of mind as being better than the other rather to use these as a way of understanding ourselves and our interaction with the world. Berger (2003) noted:

> Is one better than the other? We do not say that the four-year-old is happier or that she is more moral or more successful in any way. In fact, it is even possible that she has the capacity to be more unhappy, more immoral, and get into more trouble (although she does not necessarily do these things, either). What we say is that the four-year-old and the six- month-old need very different environments, different kinds of support, and different kinds of challenges. (p. 32)

Developmental models may be interpreted to suggest that higher is necessarily better, but many question that assumption. Having a greater capacity for self-complexity is important—even vital—in some leadership situations. But in situations where the tasks are clear and not filled with complexity, it is possible that there would not be any advantage to having a greater level of self-complexity. Again, it is the interaction between the demands made on the leader (the holding environment) and the leader's capacity for self-complexity (the mindset) that matters the most. It is also true that having higher levels of self-complexity does not guarantee success any more than greater height guarantees more points on a basketball court. Having the capacity to deal with complexity does not necessarily mean that a leader is a careful observer, has good interpersonal skills, or even that the leader exercises good judgment in general (Berger, 2003). This classification of self-complexity should not be viewed in a polarized manner; there is no good or bad only appropriateness for staying in balance with the environment.

Critiques and Limitations to CD Theory

Most criticisms of CD theory are less about limitations of the theory and more about limitations to people's understanding of the theory. Many have questions: does this theory provide solutions for personal problems? Does it represent a strict congruence between cognitive and personality stages? Are some orders of mind better than others?

Berger (2003) reminds us that Kegan's theory looks at a "single slice of what makes us human—a thing [called] self-complexity" (p. x). Self-complexity does not deal with all aspects of the internal human experience; it does not obviously correlate with issues of intelligence, morality, and psychological wellness. While CD theory deals with developmental growth, it should not be viewed as holistic identity construction. It never attempts to examine issues of class or culture or action in general. "It is a lens through which to view a piece of human meaning-making that is nearly always hidden, but with its careful focus on that one thing, it relegates to the background much of what makes humans as complex and interesting as they are" (p. 2). Even though some persons are capable of formal operational thinking in certain circumscribed areas, they may not have achieved the institutional level of personality functioning (autonomy, self-esteem, and identity) essential to functioning in other areas.

Kegan's theory has also received criticism for privileging a more traditionally Western, traditionally male kind of orientation to autonomy over more traditionally Eastern or female kinds of orientation towards connection or community. This theory does not judge as more complex any particular kind of orientation—either more connected or more separate forms of acting in the world. Instead it looks at the structure of that orientation. Kegan's theory shows the ways that people can be embedded in and made up by the role of autonomous separation (like the archetypal lone cowboy image) or can be more self-authored on behalf of their deepest connections (Berger et al., 2007).

Eriksen (2006) noted that people are not consistent in their meaning-making systems across life circumstances, that people may operate from different stages when in different life domains (p. 8). For instance, someone may operate from Kegan's Fourth order of consciousness when counseling and supervising but the third order of consciousness when getting their car fixed. Adults who have successfully worked in one setting may find themselves operating at a more limited stage when beginning work in a new work setting, such as graduate school or a counseling practicum. People experiencing life stresses may also operate from a more limited meaning-making position. These ideas counter Kegan's conceptions of a person reaching a level of meaning making that accounts for all areas of life.

A limitation to Kegan's theory is that constructive development theory and Immunity to Change in particular is psychological work and requires people to challenge their long held beliefs and assumptions. Kegan frames this as requiring appropriate training. Training, cost and availability for appropriate certifications and tools hinders completion and leaves the samples for impact of this work very small. As McCauley et al. (2006) noted:

> Although some leadership researchers have begun to use constructive-developmental theory in their work, there are serious limitations in the body of research we reviewed, including restricted samples and research designs. There is also little evidence of cumulative programs of research, integration with existing leadership research, or research that looks at the relationships between the three major frameworks. These issues no doubt have reduced the potential impact of constructive-developmental theory on the leadership field. (p. 14)

There are also few studies that identify measuring the transitioning of one order of mind to another. Fisher and Torbert (1991) asserted that leaders lack evidence that existing measurement tools are adequate for assessing the meaning making structure (p. 648). Overcoming this limitation will require mastering measurement tools and coupling it with leadership and change theories for most impact.

Self-Development in Organizations

Humans are acting systems that must integrate with larger social contexts. Because of the complexity of our modern world, we must learn how to interact appropriately and timely through every opportunity. Torbert (1991) outlined that through inquiry based first and second person actions that we are presented with the opportunity to treat ongoing experience at any given time as either harmoniously constant or as dissonant in one way or another, leading to adjustments.

> In the frequent case of dissonance there are four choices: 1) deny or externalize the dissonance, 2) treat the dissonance as single loop feedback (meaning leading to a change in practice), 3) treat the dissonance as double loop feedback (meaning leading to a transformation of strategy) or 4) treat the dissonance as triple loop feedback (meaning leading to a change in quality of attention). (p. 240)

The heart of modern action inquiry lies with Chris Argyris (1982), who founded the concept of Action Science. Action science begins with the core idea that our frames (in a broad sense which includes mental models, schemas, and so forth) lead us to act in certain ways and those actions produce outcomes. Torbert drew on this discipline and developed action inquiry which offers us the fundamental notion that by consciously paying attention to the alignment (or misalignment) among our intentions, strategies used to carry our intentions, and our own actions we can continue to develop as adults (Torbert, 1991). The encompassing aims in action inquiry are to increase one's own and others capacity to appreciate and cultivate transformation, integrity, mutuality, justice, and sustainability for ourselves, for our groups, and for our institutions (Torbert & Taylor, 2008, p. 240).

Action inquiry has three key stages: (a) understanding the social construction of reality; (b) recognizing one's own contribution to that construction; and (c) taking action to reshape that construction. This breaks down the complex process of reflecting in action into simpler steps. Torbert (1972) stated we are attempting to help them move from an approach that emphasizes keeping their own concerns and goals a mastery while unilaterally attempting to master the outside world to an approach that values transparent thinking and collaborative dialogue (p. 658). This approach helps a manager in training understand how she co creates the organizational reality she moves in.

Torbert's Leadership Development Profile LDP framework has been used to understand various aspects of managerial behavior and organizational change. Four propositions have been central to this work: (a) An individual's order of development influences his or her approach to managerial tasks; (b) leaders at later orders of development are more effective at leading transformative change; (c) developmental movement is facilitated by action inquiry; and (d) organization development can be understood from a constructive developmental theory perspective.

Self as System

The word “system” comes from the Greek verb *synhistanai*, meaning “to stand together.” A system is perceived whole whose elements are “interconnected.” Someone who pays particular attention to interconnections is said to be systemic (e.g., a systemic family therapist is someone who considers the interconnections amongst the whole family; Ison, 2008, p. 146). On the other hand, if I follow a recipe in a step by step manner, then I am being systematic. Medical students study the body in a systematic manner which is why they see the body as the sum of parts and not as a whole. Holistic medicine practitioners criticize traditional medical practitioners for treating systems independently instead of holistically understanding the body’s dis-ease. Reason and Bradbury (2001) argued that starting off systemically to attempt to change or improve situations of complexity and uncertainty means being both systemic and systematic (p. 140). Strategic thinking requires one to constantly converge and diverge, or as Heifetz (2009) would refer to it, “going from the dance floor to balcony” (p. 7). Systemic awareness comes from understanding cycles, counterintuitive effects, and unintended consequences.

Heifetz (2009) asserted that humans are systems, just as complex as the systems we are trying to move forward (p. 181). To understand your personal system, you must take stock of many different things: your personality, life experiences, cognitive and other skills and emotional makeup. Wilber (2005) proposed that humans are integrated operating systems (IOS). Stating that our brains are the hardware of our potential, yet hardware is nothing without software. Software changes the way your brain is structured and what is possible for you. Wilber uses the alphabet as a mental software example. The alphabet as a mental software allows humans to translate the written language into sounds and meaning, the same applies for cardinal directions, calendars/clocks and numbers. Wilber notes that all of your mental software comprises your individual operating system.

The notion of understanding one's self as an IOS system challenges notions that we have "one self.". Heifetz recommends mapping your identities and understanding your role in multiple contexts. This can help one use their mental software most appropriately. Heifetz et al. (2009) recommended individuals remain self-aware in understanding and auditing their system in order to advance organizations through: (a) identifying your loyalties in three circles (colleagues, community, and ancestors), (b) broaden your bandwidth means discovering your tolerance and capacity, and (c) deploy your system, as systems we must protect ourselves from burnout and ensure we are operating optimally.

The ITC Process

Understanding ourselves as a system, allows us to see acknowledge our mental capacity in different contexts. Within our IOS system, we have an immune system. Kegan and Lahey (2009) asks us to think about this immune system metaphorically as it relates to self, teams, and organizations. Immunity to Change coaching is a process of self-reflective exercises that helps one to understand their map their Immune System, dig into the deep underlying assumptions and beliefs that fuel the immune system, and to consolidate this learning and iterate for continual and future progress.

An ITC map is provided in Figure 3.2. Kegan and Lahey (2009) noted the purpose of the immunity map is to help one to see "not just how things are at the moment, but why they are this way, and what will actually need to change in order to bring about any significant new results" (pp. 674–676).

In summary, Immunity to Change Coaching is a professional development framework that aims to increase participants' effectiveness in their roles by making explicit the contradictions between intended goals and behaviors. The focus of the Immunity to Change activity is to increase self-awareness in the leader. The four columns represented on the ITC map show how to transform one's way of thinking and talking to oneself. The transformation that immediately happens with ITC work is shifting from a habitual and unreflective pattern to a more deliberate and self-reflective pattern. Kegan and Lahey (2001a) outlined four transformations, each of which corresponds to a column of the immunity map. These are: (a) From the language of complaint to the language of commitment, (b) From the language of blame to the language of personal responsibility, (c) From the language of New Year's resolutions to the language of competing commitments, and (d) From the language of big assumptions that hold us to the language of assumptions we hold. This framework can also be applied collectively to conduct group and departmental maps.

Potential for ITC as Agent of Change in Higher Ed

Using the ITC Mapping process outlined above, we can create an ITC map for higher education from the literature review. In example for column 1, higher education is an organization that is committed to retain and graduate students who enroll at their respective institution, yet they continually find themselves acting in disorganized manners that are not yielding a return for students. For column 2, higher education organizations suffer from many leaks in their process pipelines that hinder delivering a return on education to students. For column 3, there are many fears and worries that fuel why change fails in higher education: fear of loss of power or position, fear of temporary incompetence, fear of punishment for incompetence, fear of loss of personal identity, and fear of loss of group membership. For column 4, there is a big assumption that if a change initiative is initiated by a new administrator it is for personal gain and not true need. And perhaps the largest assumption in higher education: that the replacement view of change is the only appropriate way to progress. All of this is driven by the competing commitments that higher education organizations have to wrestle with can help an institution clearly see their Immune system.

Higher education is at a critical point in its evolution. ITC coaching for individuals and groups in higher education can provide the self-reflection that is needed to truly conquer issues as it relates to equity on campuses. To lead change as it relates to equity, it will take equity minded leadership. The term "Equity-Mindedness" refers to the perspective or mode of thinking exhibited by practitioners who call attention to patterns of inequity in student outcomes (USC, 2020). These practitioners are willing to take personal and institutional responsibility for the success of their students, and critically reassess their own practices. It also requires that practitioners are race-conscious and aware of the social and historical context of exclusionary practices in American Higher Education. Harper (2017) stated, *"Equity-Minded* practitioners question their own assumptions, recognize stereotypes that harm student success, and continually reassess their practices to create change. Equity minded practitioners must be aware of their Immunity to Change, as well as their team's."

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGIES AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Action Research (AR) provides a very intentional relationship that is needed between theory and practice to advocate and challenge systems causing transformational change. Action Research's power lies in its ability to empower practitioners towards meaningful action that can, and almost always should, liberate their intended community of focus. Reason and Bradbury (2001) emphasized that AR without its liberating and emancipatory dimension is a "shadow of its full possibility and will be in danger of being co-opted by the status quo" (p. 5).

While action research shares some similarities with qualitative research (and even quantitative research), "it is different in that research participants themselves either are in control of the research and/or are participants in the design and methodology of the research" (Herr & Anderson, 2014, p. 276). Human persons are agents who act in a world on the basis of their own sensemaking; human community involves mutual sensemaking and collective action (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. 4). Participation is more than a technique. It is more than an epistemological principle or a key tenet of political practice.

> An attitude of inquiry includes developing an understanding that we are embodied beings, part of a social and ecological order and radically interconnected with all other beings. We are not bound individuals experiencing the world in isolation. We are already participants, part-of rather than apart from. (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. 8)

Rather than approaching change as an individual endeavor, AR recognizes the importance of recognizing groups as "a web or field of human interactions collectively working toward shared goals within a general community framework" (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. 1).

Action research is inquiry that is done by or with insiders to an organization or community, but never to or on them. It is a reflective process, but is different from isolated, spontaneous reflection in that it is deliberately and systematically undertaken, and generally requires that some form of evidence be presented to support assertions. What constitutes evidence or, in more traditional terms, data is still being debated. Action research is oriented to some action or cycle of actions that organizational or community members have taken, are taking, or wish to take to address a problematic situation. The idea is that changes occur within the setting or within the participants and researchers themselves. Action research is best done in collaboration with others who have a stake in the problem under investigation (Herr & Anderson, 2014).

To fully understand the intent of Action Research, it is very important to understand the term. Because AR has the modifier "action," this can contribute to action research being misinterpreted as a vague term that describes all types of research endeavors as long as they concentrate on "action." The "action" in action research refers to challenging the habits and rules through the collective participation of all community members. The term "research" sets the agenda for proactive social action—understanding the impact of habits and boundaries and how they restrict community goals—and recognizing that habits are changeable through enlightened leadership (Glassman & Erdem, 2014).

Defining Action Research

Definitions of AR often emphasize empirical and logical problem-solving process involving cycles of action and reflection. Reason and Bradbury (2001) asserted that:

> Action research is a participatory process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities. (p. 4)

So, what is action research? Perhaps its most important feature is that it shifts its locus of control in varying degrees from professional or academic researchers to those who have been traditionally called the subjects of research, helping co-researchers to understand the true perspective of those who have traditionally served as the “subjects” of research.

Participatory Action Research

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a form of Action research that shifts control completely to the participants and focuses on a problem specifically related to participants’ context. It is a research methodology that attempts to address power imbalances and oppressive social structures (Grant et al., 2008, p. 589). PAR values the community’s engagement as a vital part of the researched project, allowing individuals to provide the expertise of their experience. PAR is particularly concerned with oppressed communities and attempts to create action as a catalyst for social change. To illustrate, Freire (1970) used PAR to pose and solve problems to transform consciousness and society’s perception. The most important and even appropriate case for PAR is to use participation to facilitate the process of co-learning. A key criterion for PAR is to ensure hegemonic differences and power differentials are minimized. PAR is also inclusive ensuring that constituencies and stakeholders are represented, even if not there. This is extremely important when using PAR in the higher education context and ensuring the student experience is represented.

Grant et al. (2008) noted that the challenges raised in PAR literature are: building relationships, acknowledging and sharing power, encouraging participation, making change, and establishing credible accounts. The authors offer a host of strategies to deal with this. Relationship building is the most important part of PAR. Relationship building is done through communicating openly and honestly, learning about the community, and holding consistent interactions. Power sharing is done through constant reflection, the creation of mechanisms to address abuses of power, demystifying research process, and encouraging community involvement. Participation is encouraged through co-creating the research plan and offering options for participants. This same approach was used for making change, the participants were encouraged to co-create and provide input throughout the entire process. Establishing credible accounts was done through clear decision making and collaboration with appropriate stakeholders.

A tendency to co-opt AR is often cautioned by AR researchers. Jordan (2003) synthesized this dilemma nicely, describing the implications of the increased global use of PAR. One effect of this is that PAR is used interchangeably, and often loosely, by researchers to denote any one of a range of research methodologies that have participation of subjects as their focus. “Under global capitalism the discourse of participation has been gradually appropriated and re-contextualized within a neo-liberal policy regime that works to preserve and further the interests of capital over workers, communities, and other groups within society” (p. 186).

Action Research Cycle

Action research is done through a cycle of action and reflection, broken into phases of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The cycle starts with action, a real-life problem that a practitioner faces in their everyday work. This is referred at as a problem in practice (PIP), making the practitioner the expert in this problem because of their experience. Scholar practitioners then reflect on the PIP, decontextualizing this PIP so it is specific to a particular context, we then use their understanding of this PIP to inform a research plan. After reflecting on the process one can go through the AR cycle again with a modified approach from lessons learned in acting.

Criteria for Engaging Institution

I engaged a public comprehensive university (referred to hereafter as simply “the University”) for this modified participatory action research project. Pseudonyms are used for the Institution and its participants to protect their identities. I selected the University because of its strategic initiatives to close equity gaps. I worked as the University’s technology consultant for two years, assisting their student success stakeholders in implementing technology to assist with their student success goals, and established relationships with the assistant Vice President for Student Success, Executive Director for

Retention Initiatives and CIO. Because of my existing relationships, trust was established to work with the institution on closing equity gaps.

Theory of Action

Using participatory action research in this study meant that the problem to be researched and the research design would be co-created between the co-researchers and myself. I used a modified approach to PAR in that I proposed a theory of action outlined below and allowed stakeholders to decide the feasibility of this theory and to make changes. Using the AR cycle described above, the following theory of action was outlined for this study. This is referred to as a "theory of action" because while I provided the ITC framework as a foundation of this project, co-researchers were allowed to design how they would like to engage with ITC to assist with their student success goals.

Figure 3.1

Action Research Cycle

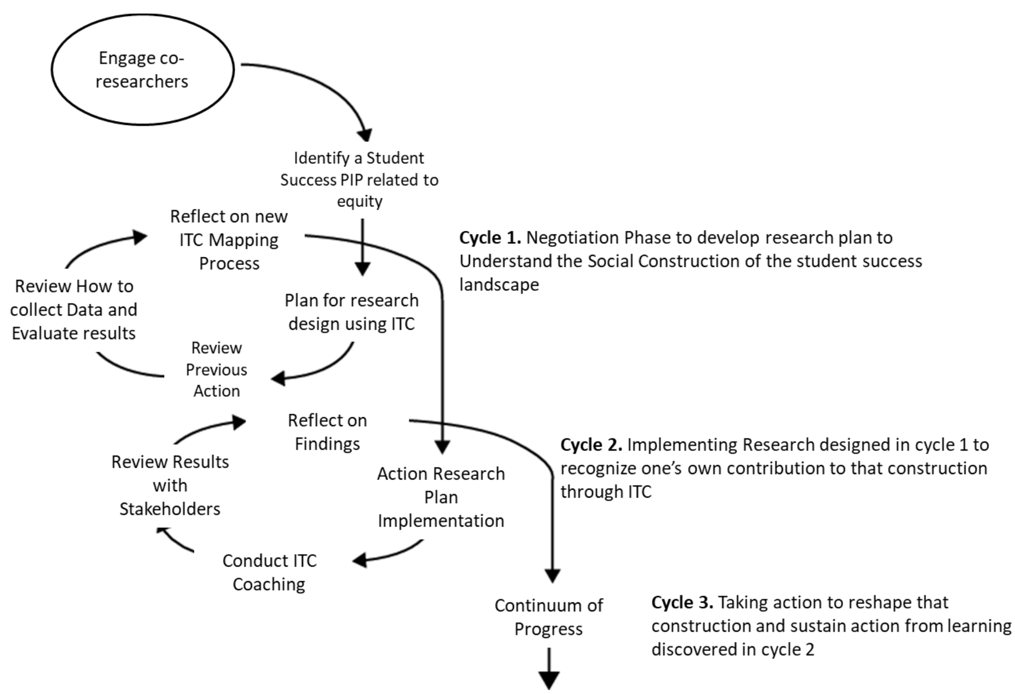


Figure 3.1 is intended to provide a framework for action research; however, co-researchers were asked to shape how they would like to leverage Immunity to Change coaching to understand their goals. Kusy and Holloway (2009) noted, “if you cannot implement strategies for change at all three levels, start with the organizational first and the team second, rather than on the one-on-one level” (p. 134). This was my initial approach. I wanted to engage the institution in conducting ITC coaching at the highest level possible but knew there may be trouble since I did not have relationships with senior leaders. In summary, the theory of action was to ask the University to plan, act, evaluate, and reflect on their student success goals through conducting two action research cycles. The University was allowed to make decisions on whether this would be feasible, who would be the stakeholders to engage, and the problem in practice to focus on.

Cycle One

The first cycle would consist of engaging co-researchers to gain a collective understanding of student success leaders’ social construction of their student success landscape as it relates to equity. This cycle would ensure that the action research portion is agreed upon and designed by all stakeholders involved.

1. During the “Plan for research design using ITC” stage in the action research cycle, co-researchers would hold a series of meetings to decide: what stakeholders to engage; the approach to Immunity to Change Coaching; and identifying a problem in practice and understanding why this problem would be the appropriate choice for ITC coaching.
2. During the “review previous action” stage in the AR cycle, co-researchers and I would reflect collectively and individually on why they chose this problem in practice, by reviewing previous initiatives and student data related to the PIP.
3. During the “review how to collect data and evaluate results” stage of the AR cycle, the co-researchers and I would agree on how we would collect data from the second cycle and how

the data would be represented and published in my final dissertation.

4. During the "reflect on new ITC Mapping Process" stage of the AR cycle, I reviewed the modified approach to ITC Mapping that we co-created. I then reviewed our PIP and finalized plan for the second cycle where we would implement our plan of action created in Cycle One.

Cycle Two

The second cycle would consist of conducting the research plan negotiated in Cycle One. Co-researchers and I would implement the acting phase, then review the findings to decide next steps based on our learnings. The team would be encouraged to develop a continuum of progress by asking, "What does sustainability look like? What plan will help us to fully reach our commitment goal?"

Lewin (1946) stated, "you cannot understand a system until you try to change it." The intended outcome of this AR cycle is for practitioners to become system thinkers, seeing their contribution to the organization and vice versa. In this process, co- researchers would be asked to intentionally unpack their contribution as it relates to this construction of reality. Through this design, co-researchers would complete what Heifetz et al. (2009) refers to as the "dance of change" (p. 7). "To diagnose a system or yourself while in the midst of action requires the ability to achieve some distance from those on the ground events" (p. 8). The dance of change is being involved in the middle of change, referred to as the dance floor; and also going to the balcony to see the whole party, stepping away to reflect on the change. Being in the midst of change means being subjected to it and provides a different lens from one that is distant from the change, having the ability to view it objectively. This vantage point allows one to see the whole and its parts, which is systems thinking.

Cycle Three

Cycle Three consists of developing a continuum of progress to understand how the learnings from the ITC coaching would be sustained and what action would be taken from our learnings of the research design. This cycle is where the co-researchers and I would develop a plan to sustain momentum based on the findings from ITC coaching.

Engaging Co-researchers for Design

Staying true to the art of participatory action research, participation means humans are not viewed as research subjects or participants; instead, relationships were built with stakeholders as co-researchers. Since the co researchers are part of the complex system I was seeking to understand, multiple perspectives were needed. This meant repeated observations and systematic feedback. My approach for engaging the institution was by simply asking, “how can we design a project to assist you in solving your student success problems as it relates to equity?” I framed myself as a co-researcher and additional toolbox to assist in helping the team resolve their equity gaps; using this framing flattened power dynamics that may have existed between me and the institution and helped the team understand I wanted them to play an active role in designing the research project. As discussed in Chapter I, co-researchers were asked to help me design the project. The team was presented with the AR cycle framework and asked to make decisions on the following: identifying a specific problem in practice, creating ethical understanding of roles, establishing which stakeholders to engage, and creating a feedback cadence for continual check ins with the co-researchers. Co-researchers were given options on how to approach each stage of AR cycle.

Participants as Co-researchers

The institution and all stakeholders on the leadership team received informed consent documents (see appendix). Kusy and McBain (2000) cited that an effective team should have representation from all areas of the organization that will be impacted by the strategic change being developed. For the leadership team, I wanted to work with 5–10 stakeholders, each of whom had direct impact and connection with equity related student success initiatives. For inclusivity, leadership teams were encouraged to consider inviting people from every hierarchy in higher education (for example, executive, administrative, faculty, staff, and student). However, due to leadership changes and COVID-19 impacts at the institution, there was limited capacity to engage a larger leadership team. I engaged two sets of stakeholders at the institutions, which I refer to as co-researchers and ITC Participants. Co-researchers were the two stakeholders I worked directly with for designing this project: Allison, the Executive Director for Retention and Special Programs who oversees campus-wide initiatives that promote retention and holistic student success, and Bethany, the Associate Vice President for Student Success who oversees Academic Advising and Student Success Initiatives. Each co-researcher represents student affairs and academic affairs respectively. These two leaders of the project appointed with whom we would work to conduct the ITC Coaching, which I refer to as ITC participants.

Co-researchers and I first established what would be the best way to work together and communicate. Allison and Bethany then set the timeline for completion, defined expectations, and set meeting cadence. Both were asked to commit; however, they did have the option to opt out at any point.

Co-creating Research Design

Allison and Bethany received a proposed meeting cadence and introductory call. The institution was asked to commit to Zoom sessions, each requiring reflection or homework afterwards; however, the institution was allowed to set the cadence and time limit and to discuss if they felt the meeting cadence was feasible. The first session corresponded to the pre-planning phase of the action research cycle. The institution received an introductory call outlining the research question and design, expectations, and informed consent. The institution was also provided the “Why people won’t change” article from Kegan and Lahey, outlining the ITC concept for homework.

The second session was used to complete our research design; co-researchers received the proposed AR cycle and meeting cadence below and were asked what worked for them and how would they like to adjust. Co-researchers received outlines for each session and were given options for the approach. For example, for ITC Mapping, the institution was offered the option to use the “hub and spoke” model, which is having individuals complete ITC maps individually and compile all responses anonymously or unanimously in one place, or to do a collective map done as a group. Each session would have an ethical check point to ensure co-researchers were comfortable with our research design. Sessions 3–5 were to consist of conducting Immunity to Change coaching with key stakeholders, while sessions 7 and 8 would be for creating a plan of action based on what we learned from the mapping and sustainability for that plan.

Table 3.1

Proposed Meeting Cadence for Research

Action Research Cycle Phase	Meeting	Goals
Cycle1-Phase 0: Engaging co-researchers for design	Session 1: Introduction	What is action research? What is expected of you (participants role as co researcher)? How will this information be used? Why I care? Outline of Sessions/Timeline IRB Consent/Written Consent Homework: Why people won't change article
Cycle 1-Phase 1: Understanding social construction of student success landscape	Session 2: What is ITC? Co-creating research design	Understand ITC work Technical vs adaptive problems and solutions Prepare for mapping, confirming design Pre-Mortem of Project Homework: Thinking and gathering feedback for a big goal
	Session 3: Student Success Goals related to Equity	Defining PIP Do ITC X-Ray, Column 1 Surveying for feedback on PIP (optional)
Cycle 2-Phase 2: Understanding what role stakeholders play in this construction	Session 4: Understanding my perception of student success culture	Do ITC X-Ray, column 2 Review survey feedback Bolman & Deal Exercise
	Session 5: Understanding my role in this construction	Column 3, 4 Equity thought exercise Iron Triangle of Equity
	Session 6: Understanding my role in this construction	Big Assumption Testing Taking Stock Exercise Creating safety guidelines
Cycle 3- Phase 3: Taking action to reshape that construction	Session 7: Action Plan, now that problem is identified	Create a plan that reinforces changed behavior from ITC Create plan to evaluate impact of outcomes and instill constant reflection mechanisms Completing pre-mortem of plan
	Session 8: Continuum of progress	What does sustainability look like? What does fully reaching goals in column 1 look like? Reviewing final dissertation write up for approval.

Data Collection

The results of this study are reported in the next chapter as an extensive case study. Detailed data were collected on co-researchers meaning making, actions taken and the research design. The process for analyzing and reporting on outcome data was negotiated with the co-researchers and ITC participants.

Cycle 1: The Negotiation Period

The first cycle of this action research project was for making decisions and developing the action research plan, referred to as a "negotiation period" between University Study Site and me; this was done over two months and three, 60-minute planning calls before implementing our action plan. The second cycle, where we implemented all planning done from Cycle 1, will be discussed in Chapter IV. Modifications made to the proposed theory of action are outlined below. Sessions 3–5 consisted of completing the Immunity to Change Map, and Session 6 was for reflection of the findings from sessions 3–5. Session 7 consisted of asking co-researchers to take action based on learning from ITC. And last, Session 8 was for developing a plan for sustainability and continued progress on the work completed. This phase of the project asked co-researchers to create a student success action plan based on this understanding.

Table 3.2

Meeting Cadence Modifications From Proposed Meeting Cadence in Table 3.1

AR Cycle	Action research phase	Meeting	Goals
Cycle 1: Participatory action research, negotiation period	Phase 0: Engaging co-researchers for design	Session 1: Introduction	What is action research? What is expected of you (participants role as co researcher)? How will this information be used?

AR Cycle	Action research phase	Meeting	Goals
			Why I care? Outline of sessions/timeline IRB consent/written consent Homework: Why People Won’t Change Article
	Phase 1: Understanding social construction of student success landscape	Session 2: What is ITC? Co-creating research design	Understand ITC work Technical vs adaptive problems and solutions Equity Mindedness Prepare for mapping, confirming design Creating a PIP
		Session 3: Confirming research design	Finalizing PIP Creating research design
Cycle 2: Research phase, ITC mapping	Phase 2: Understanding what role stakeholders play in this construction	Session 4: ITC Mapping I	Conducting modified ITC coaching with advisors
		Session 5: ITC Mapping II	Conducting modified ITC Coaching with Graduation and Retention Specialists
		Session 6: ITC Mapping III	Conducting modified ITC Coaching with Senior Program and Services Coordinators
Cycle 3: Continuum of progress	Phase 3: Taking Action to reshape that construction	Session 7: Reviewing results, action plan	Review ITC Map, create plan of action based on learnings from Maps
		Session 8: Review Chapter 3 and 4 for publishing	Co-researchers provide feedback to ensure their voice and interpretation of process is represented appropriately.

Action Research Planning Call 1

I first held a call with Bethany and Allison. Bethany is the Associate Vice President for Student Success in academic affairs; she has been at the University for five years and oversees the Academic Advising Center that consists of nine professional advisors and 14 graduation and retention specialists. Allison is the Executive Director of Retention Initiative, Bethany's counterpart in student affairs. She oversees a team of 10 Senior Program and Services Coordinators and has been at the University for 10 years. The primary purpose of this introductory meeting was to introduce my research question and approach and introduce our "negotiation period" for establishing the action research process.

Key items discussed in our first introductory meeting:

1. What is Immunity to Change? Allison and Bethany were each given an article that discusses the ITC framework and I explained this over the call.
2. Research Question and Positionality: I discussed that I am seeking to understand how a modified approach to ITC coaching and action inquiry could assist student success stakeholders in reaching their student success goals as it relates to equity.
3. Participatory Action Research Methodology: I discussed that this methodology was traditionally practiced by Paulo Freire to ensure that research participants are empowered and have say in the research process. This shifts power from the researcher and distributes that power to all participants, engaging them as co-researchers. I wanted Allison and Bethany to understand that they had a voice in all decision making and that I wanted to co-create the research with them using this negotiation period.
4. What is a Problem in Practice (PIP): I defined a problem in practice as a challenge that practitioners face and have attempted to resolve to no avail. I discussed the need to identify a PIP, by first determining overall need, then considering various reasons leading to need, and finally ensuring all relevant stakeholders' needs, wants, and desires are considered.

5. Then I provided an overview of how I was envisioning the conducting ITC Coaching Process: (a) Identify a PIP, (b) Audit all actions taken or not taken for this PIP, (c) Unpack our competing commitments against this PIP, (d) Identify big assumptions discovered through this process, (e) Test our big assumptions to dispel myths regarding our PIP.

During my initial meeting I proposed my plan to use the modified Immunity to Change Coaching with stakeholders and asked co-researchers Allison and Bethany to identify a problem in practice. Both seemed overwhelmed by the terms and tasks I was proposing stating they felt my project was "too ambitious." I then clarified that is why we are using a participatory action research methodology so we could negotiate a plan that was most feasible for all parties.

Coming out of our first meeting we identified two PIPs: (a) Addressing Student Anxieties in Virtual Advising and (b) Removing probation language from the University. The team felt more comfortable with Addressing Student Anxieties in Virtual Advising as a problem in practice to explore resolving using the Immunity to Change framework. However, I wanted to ensure this Problem in Practice (PIP) was an adaptive problem. An adaptive problem or challenge is one that skills alone cannot change and require a change in ourselves and the way we view situations. It can only be addressed through changes in people's priorities, beliefs, habits, and loyalties—which is what Immunity to Change Coaching does.

I then emailed the team asking for another call and shared that we should unpack more of removing probation language. The team understood with all of the racial inequities taking place with the murder of George Floyd and with the sudden acknowledgement of police brutality amongst African Americans, that Black students may be activated by words in academia that are also the same as words in policing. The team wanted to change the language of students being on probation to the something more universal such as "academic notice" in hopes to being less triggering for students of color. The team anticipated a lot of resistance with this, which makes it the perfect candidate for ITC work!

Bethany shared that when this was proposed administrators had sentiments such as "well an academic notice can be interpreted as a 'rent' notice and be equally triggering." I could immediately see that this would have been a perfect ITC candidate because it provoked strong emotions and resistance in people and it also immediately began to reveal stakeholders' beliefs about student populations. I asked Bethany and Allison for their thoughts on pursuing this and both seemed reluctant and overwhelmed at the thought.

Bethany said she would have to ask for approval from her supervisor, needing approval since this was challenging stakeholders above her and neither she nor Allison had the power in their role to directly influence the changing of probation language at the institutional level. Bethany empathetically shared, "Brittany, you're never going to be done with your dissertation if we pursue this, we have to get a lot of people on board." Bethany's supervisor shared that it would not be good to pursue that at the moment, and with the institution just appointing a new provost and VP of student affairs they anticipated those stakeholders did not want to come in challenging language and beliefs of probation in that way. This was completely understandable given the flux that the pandemic coupled with police brutality had caused for campuses across the nation this year.

Action Research Planning Call 2

For our second call, I used this time to check in on how Bethany and Allison felt about the narrowing down on a PIP, and clarifying language. I wanted to ensure all parties were comfortable and not feeling rushed on deciding a plan of action and that all parties truly understood the "why" of what was happening. It was a tension I had to balance in ensuring the co-researchers felt comfortable while also keeping the team engaged and constantly moving them forward. I ensured I was being mindful of leaders' time using both email and meetings. Allison and Bethany were both committed to the research, but also served as University administrators so I was cognizant that they had little time for meetings and wanted to find ways for this research to assist their current needs. I did not want to take up leaders' times in meetings and constantly asked what things they were comfortable negotiating via email. I also conducted language checks each call and was sure to send defining terms in email follow ups, language clarified on this call was technical versus adaptive problems and to understand equity mindedness. Language clarified during this meeting:

1. Technical vs Adaptive Problems: I discussed technical vs adaptive problems as it relates to equity gaps. Closing equity gaps is an adaptive challenge: this means that challenging our mindset is a part of providing a solution. Adaptive change can only be done through encouraging our ongoing development, not a mere increase in knowledge. This is why Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) trainings are ineffective. Equity mindedness is not a skill that can be taught, it is an adaptive problem that requires one to audit and understand their beliefs about their student body in order to change.
2. Importance of Equity-Mindedness: I discussed how I wanted to see what form of reflection is needed to promote equity mindedness on campus. If we are able to promote equity-mindedness we will not have to mandate inclusive practices, they will organically take place on campus. To lead change as it relates to equity will take equity minded leadership. The term *equity-mindedness* refers to the perspective or mode of thinking exhibited by practitioners who call attention to patterns of inequity in student outcomes (USC, 2020). These practitioners are willing to take personal and institutional responsibility for the success of their students, and critically reassess their own practices. It also requires that practitioners are race-conscious and aware of the social and historical context of exclusionary practices in American Higher Education. Harper (2017) stated that "Equity-Minded" practitioners question their own assumptions, recognize stereotypes that harm student success, and continually reassess their practices to create change. Equity minded practitioners must be aware of their Immunity to Change, as well as their team's.

I was intentional of providing definitions for these terms to prep the team for making decisions on our plan of action once we had data from the modified ITC maps. Typically, when dealing with equity on campuses we resort to creating implicit bias workshops or conducting equity practices, but this would reinforce technical solutions. I wanted to ensure we approached resolving gaps in an adaptive, complex manner and not resort to “box checking” best practices for equity. I wanted to ensure our plan of action moving forward had some aspect of promoting equity mindedness.

Having now understood that pursuing removing probation language was no longer feasible as a PIP, we discussed the impact of the pandemic on students and started to think of how we could provide support for staff and students who are adjusting to a virtual environment.

Historical Context of Equity Gaps at the University Study Site

The University is an urban, public campus hosting more than 39,000 students, with about 85% of those at the undergraduate level. The University has been working towards a system-wide Graduation Initiative which is an ambitious plan to increase graduation rates, eliminate equity gaps in degree completion and meet the State’s workforce needs. The University has been working towards this goal since 2018, with the specific challenge to close equity gaps among different racial and economic student demographics, particularly as those relate to graduation rates. In March 2020, the students, staff, and faculty abruptly vacated the campus; instruction and services converted to virtual operations. This took place while the academic advising season was still in progress. Fall course registration was underway, and summer course advising and registration were fully in motion. The campus had been making strides towards closing equity gaps and did not want the pandemic to impact this. Specifically, the advising center had assisted with re-enrolling stop outs and ensuring all freshmen were properly advised to shorten time to degree.

Before the pandemic, the Advisement Center (AC), home to General Education advising for all undergraduates, dedicated extensive efforts to ensuring inclusion for the University's diverse student communities. The team built an inclusive environment with multiple badges to represent student identities and the team placed staff in the Black student union to get more engagement from Black students. The AC center tracks student visits every month through its appointment system, and analyzes the racial breakdown of all users as well as conducting surveys to understand students' needs quantitatively and qualitatively. The AC has implemented a variety of long-term partnerships and outreach projects between the Diversity and Resource Centers and AC advising staff from underrepresented populations. The co-researchers were committed to maintaining the momentum created in building and sustaining an inclusive environment for all students enrolled.

COVID-19 Impact on Student Engagement

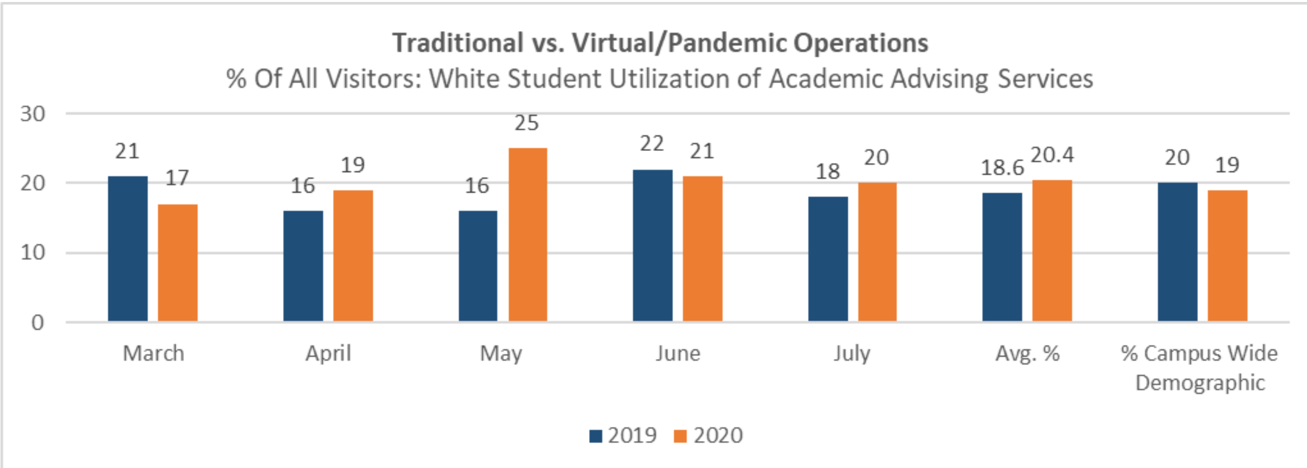
Since COVID-19, students have been more disengaged, and staff are struggling with virtual modalities. Bethany and I reviewed survey data from the advising office about how students felt about being in a virtual environment. Students provided feedback such as:

> Even though the [advising module] videos were very helpful, I still have trouble picking classes for myself. As an undeclared major, I think I will have to declare a major first before picking classes. That way I can really pursue the major I am really interested in. My biggest concern right now Is which classes are right for me and my future declared major. I think the advising session with a advisor would help me determine which classes are good and which classes are the I am concerned if online classes will have the same difficulty as in-person classes ones that I need.
>
> I am concerned with what to do if you earn AP credits that cover GE classes. Do I just fill my schedule with other GE courses, or can I start on my minor required classes? I am confused on what to do next.
>
> How it was all gonna work out due to the global pandemic. Along with dorming issues and not wanting to take any in person classes unless I am dorming.
>
> I'm concerned more so with certain logistics in regard to my classes, such as whether or not I'll have to take in person classes or if everything will certainly be moved to be online given the current circumstances, as well as if I'll properly do my part and sign up for the correct classes.
>
> When school is online, I feel like I learn less.

Bethany presented data about students' attendance to the advising center disaggregated by race and ethnicity comparing this to student's attendance before their virtual advising was established in 2019:

Figure 3.2

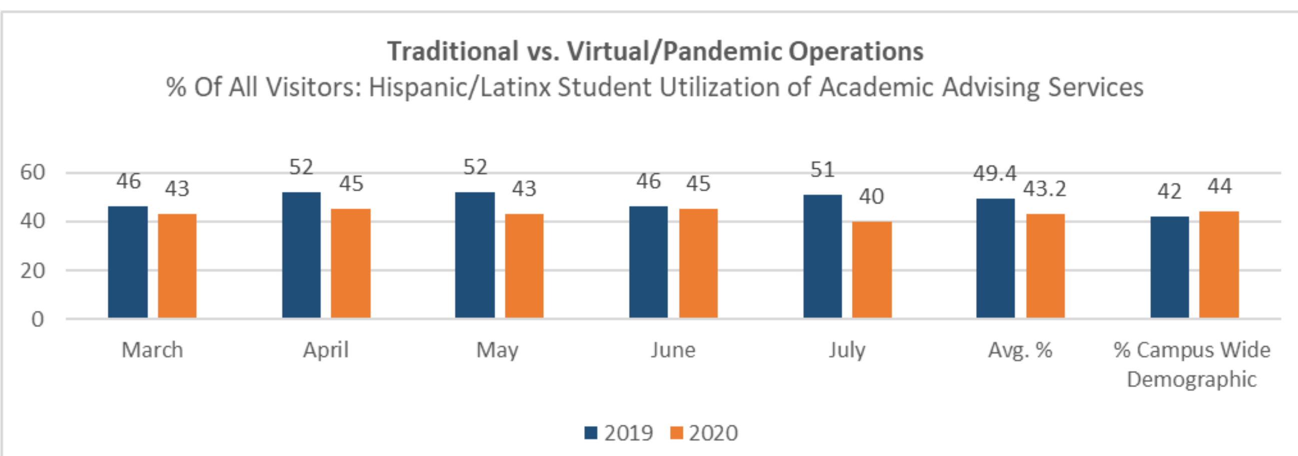
White Student Utilization in Advising Center



White students showed no significant change in their rate of visits to the AC. Prior to the pandemic, they comprised 18.6% of AC users, and during the pandemic, 20.4%. They comprise 19–20% of the campus population (*n* = 7,763 in spring 2019; *n* = 7,749 in spring 2020).

Figure 3.3

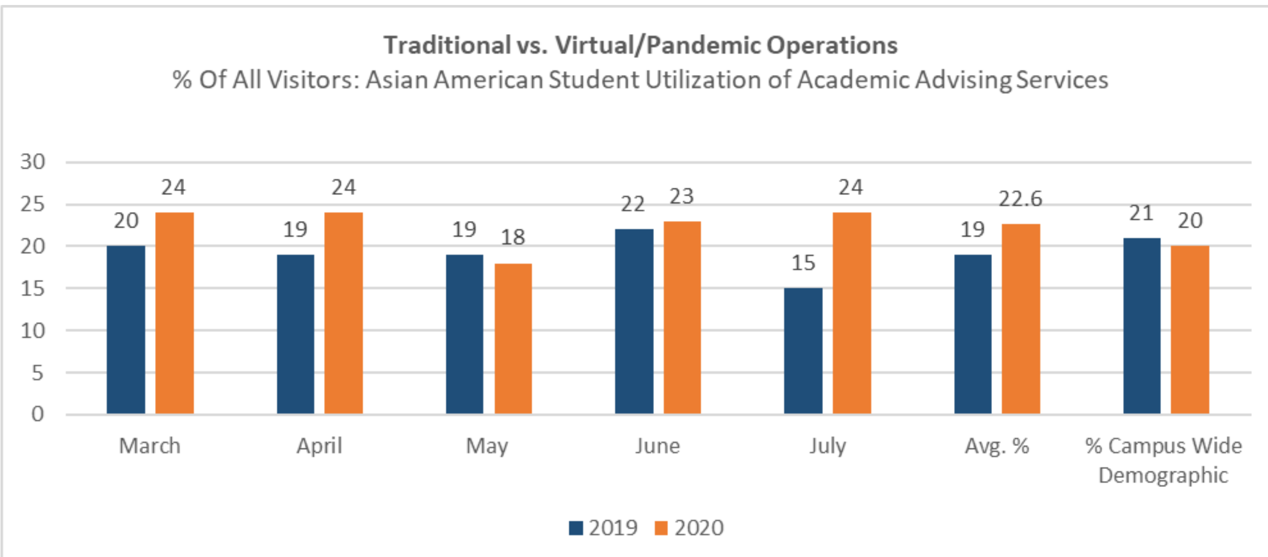
Hispanic/Latinx Student Utilization in Advising Center



Hispanic and Latinx students showed a distinct drop in their utilization of the AC, after virtual delivery of services began. They made up 42% and 44% of the campus wide population during spring of 2019 and 2020, respectively (n = 16,475 in spring 2019; n = 17,070 in spring 2020). In April-July of 2019, their utilization of the AAC represented 46%–52% of all visitors to the AC.

Figure 3.4

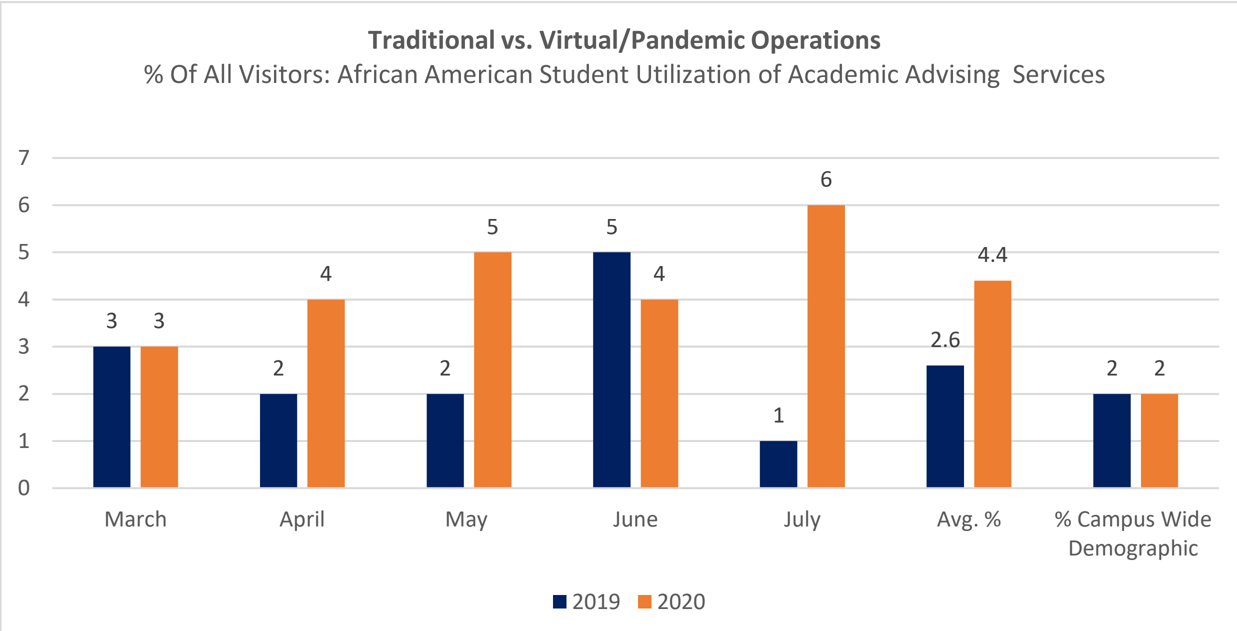
Asian-American Student Utilization in Advising Center



Asian American students made up 21% of the University's campus-wide population in spring of 2019, and 20% in the same term in 2020 (n = 8,081 in spring 2019; n = 7,950 in spring 2020). They showed an average rate of visiting the AC of 19% in April-July, 2019. In 2020, their average utilization rate was 22.6%. They showed engagement with the actual AC at a rate slightly lower than their campus population in 2019, and slightly higher than their representation during the period of online services.

Figure 3.5

African American Student Utilization in Advising Center



Bethany stated in her findings:

> African American students have represented 1.9-2% of the University's community for several years. They showed a utilization rate of the AC aligned with that, averaging 2.6%; this rate ranged from 1%-5% depending on the month. After adoption of virtual services, the AC served African American students at an average rate of 4.4%, peaking at 6% in July of 2020. The University has seen its African American student community face a number of obstacles to success. The observation that perhaps African American students find more accessibility or comfort in seeking advising from their homes or other off-campus locations provides valuable food for thought.

This could reveal that African American students did not feel included on campus but could now engage better with a virtual environment.

Now that we had qualitative and quantitative data to review, we had a better understanding of students' worries and concerns regarding receiving support on campus and wanted to develop a plan to use modified ITC coaching to assist with resolving students' anxiety around virtual learning. We explored how a professional development model using ITC coaching could help us to become more equity minded. Especially in a virtual world? We wanted to figure out a way to assist staff who are providing support for students virtually.

In addition to helping us understand what is needed to provide equitable student support, we also wanted to understand: how can we assess and promote equity mindedness on campus? If we can help staff become more equity minded (shift their beliefs about the needs and experiences of underserved students), will this organically begin to change institutional processes that do not promote equity?

We then shifted to our next decision point of how to conduct the modified ITC coaching and with whom to understand the questions and problem above. I asked whether Bethany and Allison would like to undergo the modified ITC coaching or would another group of stakeholders be a better fit. Bethany and Allison felt we would get more insight from doing coaching with the stakeholders in the offices they oversee instead of just themselves. Now that we had finalized what stakeholders for the modified ITC coaching, I emailed the following PIPs for the leaders to think about for our next call that would be used to finalize the PIP and start designing our action research plan.

1. Professional Development Activity to promote equity mindedness amongst Academic Advising Center and Senior Program and Services Coordinators
2. Ensuring equitable experience for XXX population of students, through engaging Academic Advising Center and Senior Program and Services Coordinators
3. Creating and maintaining DEI environments in a virtual world

Action Research Planning Call 3

We used this call to finalize a PIP and develop our action research plan. We landed on the following PIPs from our last call: Professional Development Activity to promote equity mindedness amongst Academic Advising Center and Senior Program and Services Coordinators. The co-researchers and I thought this would provide us the most insight as to how stakeholders perceive equity on campus and what barriers are in their way to reaching goals. As both Allison and Bethany were curious about the impact of equity mindedness, we were equally invested in finding an answer, one of the advantages to engaging in modified PAR. This is also how I gauged my success in the negotiation period.

Now that we established our PIP, we then began to develop timelines for conducting the coaching and processes. Allison and Bethany lent their bi-weekly team meeting times, which were only 60 minutes. All stakeholders were extremely busy with advising season and the University had just enrolled one of its largest freshmen classes yet. I knew I would need more time, so we discussed adding an additional 30 minutes to their team meeting. While I think 2 hours or another follow up session would have been beneficial, this was the best compromise we could find with all of the other commitments stakeholders had on campus, while also being mindful of zoom fatigue from co-researchers working in a virtual environment.

Finalized Action Research Plan for Cycle 2

Goal: To understand what barriers are in place that have hindered us from reaching our equity goal. Specifically, to decrease equity gaps for underrepresented, first generation, Pell eligible students, specific metrics to reach on this goal highlighted in the University strategic plan. What can we learn from modified ITC coaching with Advisors and Senior Program and Services Coordinators as it relates to providing equitable support to students?

Action: Conduct Immunity to Change Coaching with three groups of stakeholders to understand how they view their role as it relates to equity and to understand how these stakeholders make meaning of the equity goal. Three stakeholders: retention and graduation specialists, senior program and services coordinators, and general education advisors. Will hold three 90-minute zoom sessions with each group, with breaks after 30 minutes.

Evaluation: Brittany will compile results and hold meeting with Allison and Bethany to review (all raw data will be available as well). Based on what we learn from how these stakeholders make meaning of equity—we will develop a plan/process, or we may even find that no action is needed based on what we discover.

Outcomes: We are looking to understand how student success stakeholders *make meaning of their equity landscape*, and how can we use that understanding to remove barriers related to equity.

After finalizing our plan, I then began creating materials and modifications to the ITC maps based on what we were trying to understand and developed a participant email and workbook for engagement (see appendix). I provided an ITC workbook for users knowing that I would not have much time to define and clarify language. I developed a workbook and that provided background and definitions of the ITC process to help the team in digesting materials before time. Each participant of the modified ITC coaching process signed and submitted consent forms.

Composition of ITC Participant Groups

ITC participants were selected by Allison and Bethany. Both co-researchers thought we could understand more of the barriers that are impacting providing support in a virtual environment and more information on the needs of students through engaging the General Education Advisors, Graduation and Retention Specialists, and the Senior Program and Services Coordinators. The General Education Advisors are charged with providing support for all incoming freshmen and sophomore students. The Graduation and Retention Specialists are charged with working with each of the colleges ensuring students who have declared a major re-enroll each term and apply for graduation in a timely manner.

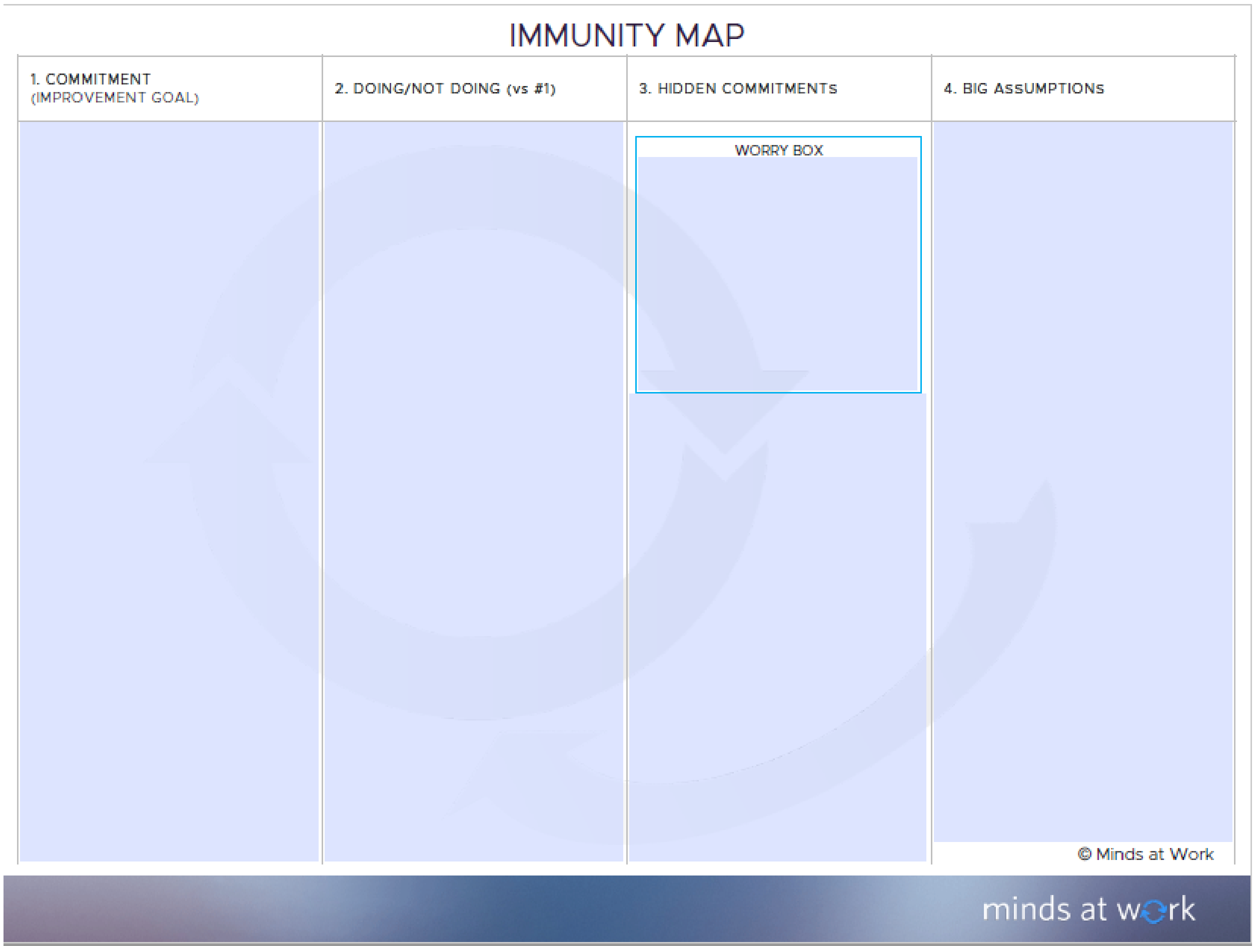
Each college has a graduation specialist who will assist students with questions regarding their degree requirements, including general education, major and credit requirements. Once students have applied for graduation, the graduation specialist would ensure the student meets all requirements for degree completion. Each college also has a retention specialist, who works with students who may be on probation to address academic challenges, improve strengths, and connect to campus resources that can help them reach their academic and career goals. The Senior Program and Services Coordinators provide co-curricular support, supporting students in getting involved, developing student leaders, exploring scholarship opportunities, engaging freshman in their respective college, and addressing sensitive personal challenges that may arise. Three modified Immunity to Change sessions were to be held with general education advisors, graduation and retention specialists and Senior Program and Services Coordinators. Allison oversees the senior program and services coordinators and Bethany oversees the advisors and graduation and retention specialists.

Modified Immunity to Change Map

Due to the limitations of time commitment and wanting to assist co-researchers in having meaningful actionable next steps after reviewing the ITC maps, I modified the columns from the initial mapping structure proposed by Kegan and Lahey (2009). I made two modifications: Column two was edited to include Bolman and Deal (2008) framing, and no big assumption testing was done like in traditional ITC mapping. This approach was used to ensure an organizational culture lens was added to the group coaching so that stakeholders could clearly see barriers in place for the respective group being coached and make quick decisions on next steps to remove barriers, to nurture the "action component" needed at the end of the process. I also removed Big Assumption testing because of time constraints.

Figure 3.6

Traditional Immunity to Change Map



Source: Reprinted with permission from Minds at Work © 2020.

Figure 3.2 represents the traditional Immunity to Change Map used by Minds at Work. This map asks one to identify a goal they have tried to overcome and have been unsuccessful at (column 1), then to audit all actions that work against this goal, acknowledging that thinking is also a action (column 2). Column 3 asks an individual or group to then identify fears and worries that come up if one was to take actions opposite of those identified in column 2. In that same column, stakeholder(s) are asked to transform those fears and worries into commitment statements to help identify what they may also be committed to as a result of their emotions. Column 4 asks stakeholders to fully contextualize their competing commitments identified in Chapter III by acknowledging their assumptions and beliefs surrounding their competing commitment in the form of if-then statements.

I modified the map by adding an extra column (column 2). I made this modification after the team identified their PIP and after understanding the stakeholders I would be conducting ITC coaching with. We were conducting the modified ITC coaching with advisors, graduation and retention specialists and Senior Program and Services Coordinators, and because of this, I wanted to fully understand their context as it relates to our goal. I wanted to understand their barriers organizationally and so incorporated Bolman and Deal’s four frames so we could have stakeholders self-reflect on the PIP, and their role through: a structural lens, human resource lens, symbolic lens, and political lens. Knowing we were limited in time, I anticipated having feedback from the stakeholders through these four lenses along with the ITC mapping would help us understand the institutional barriers hindering their progress to the goal along with their contribution that has hindered the progress to the goal. Adding Bolman and Deal’s four frames into column 2 facilitated next steps and brought in an organizational culture audit from a staff’s perspective.

I included Bolman and Deal’s four frames as lenses for the ITC participants to review their goal identified in column 1 as well as their respective roles. In my modified approach I asked leaders to view their goal and role through a structural lens asking ITC participants to state what barriers were in their way structurally regarding alignment and ability to clarify tasks. I then asked participants to view their goal and role through a human resource lens asking what resources were needed as people to assist in accomplishing their goal. I then asked participants to view their goal and role through a political lens asking the team to identify power dynamics and agendas that were working for or against the accomplishment of their goal. Last, I asked the participants to perceive through a symbolic lens asking what they felt their goal and role symbolically meant for the institution and the students. Bolman and

Deal (2008) developed this multi-frame thinking to help leaders untangle the complexity in making sense of their environments. This framing assists leaders to see all angles of barriers surrounding organizational problems to create appropriate solutions.

In traditional ITC, Testing Big Assumptions is at the heart of overturning an Immunity to Change. The purpose of a big assumption test is to see what happens when you intentionally alter your usual behavior in order to learn about the accuracy of your Big Assumption. The purpose of a test is to "get information," not immediately to improve or "get better." However, I did not approach big assumption testing but instead asked for holistic interpretation of the map and what immediate actions we could take based on barriers presented in column 2 and how that would in turn impact the assumptions.

I altered the Big Assumptions column to include the assumptions of others and administrators. I understand the purpose of traditional ITC coaching is to not place the blame on others, rather it is for one to recognize their own contribution or lack thereof to the goal. I added this modification because of the nature of the problem we were focusing on is rooted in systemic oppression.

As noted in Chapter II, inequities in higher education are a symptom of systemic oppression. Higher Education in America was built for white students and its curriculum and practices are centered on whiteness reinforcing systemic oppression for Black and LatinX students. When dealing with systemic oppression in the ITC context, it is re-traumatizing to ask someone to change their behavior and test whether it will change the effects of the systemic barrier; it often confirms their catastrophic belief and assumption surrounding barriers. There would be risks to safety of conducting Big Assumption testing when it comes to equity and with our limited time in meeting with the groups it would be better to use that column to understand the stakeholders' big assumptions as well as their big assumptions about others. By asking stakeholders to reflect on their assumptions about the institutional barriers, I knew I would have the opportunity to take this back to co-researchers and felt it would be more powerful for co-researchers to see the assumptions different stakeholders held about leadership to correct that narrative as opposed to trying to have team members understand their contribution to lack of inequity on campus, which is a clear systemic issue and not completely in their control.

Figure 3.7

Modified Immunity to Change Map

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5
Goal	**Framing My Goal & Role**	**Services/Actions Taken**	**Competing Commitments**	**Big Assumptions**
What do we want to improve professionally as it relates to student success? What change are we committed to and passionate about	Describe your role in student success using a metaphor: ___________. Using Bolman and Deal four frames note any barriers/observations to reaching these goals.	What do we do or not do that undermines my efforts in realizing our commitment? Fearless audit of behavior. Self Talk is a behavior!	What hidden competing commitments may be generating the items identified in Column 3? What competing commitment might we have that is about "not improving"?	What Big Assumption(s) do we hold that supports the hidden or conflicting commitments?
We are committed to...	**Structural:** **Human Resource:** **Political:** **Symbolic Framing of Role:**		My competing commitment may be... **WORRY:** **we may also be committed to...**	**We assume that...** **We assume others think...**

Adapted and reprinted with permission from *Immunity to Change: How to Overcome It and Unlock the Potential in Yourself and Your Organization* by Robert Kegan and Lisa Laskow Lahey. Harvard Business Press Books, 2009.

In summary, I used a modified approach to participatory action research. This approach was modified in that I provided a theory of action using modified Immunity to Change Coaching but allowed co-researchers to make decisions on how to implement the modified ITC mapping. Co-researchers decided who to conduct ITC mapping with and an appropriate meeting cadence, based on these decisions I made modifications to the proposed ITC map. Understanding I was limited with leaders time, I wanted the modified ITC map to provide as much information as possible so co-researchers could clearly see a picture of stakeholders’ role and goal through multiple lenses. I wanted the map to help them understand their fears and worries and their perception of leaders’ influence on their role and goal so that we could take meaningful action.

CHAPTER IV: ACTION RESEARCH AND FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to understand how leaders make meaning of their student success landscape and use that meaning making to influence their strategic planning for equity. I engaged two student success stakeholders from one university as co-researchers to help me identify a problem in practice as it related to equity gaps in student success. We used a modified approach to Immunity to Change coaching coupled with an Action Inquiry framework to assist student success stakeholders with processing and reflecting on this problem so as to enact change. Co-researchers identified groups of stakeholders, referred to as "ITC participants," based on their PIP to complete modified ITC mapping. I would then present the findings from the modified ITC mapping and ask co-researchers to develop a plan of action to sustain momentum around resolving the PIP.

I held three modified Immunity to Change Coaching sessions virtually over Zoom, each session 90 minutes. All sessions had the same structure: I would first introduce the research question and my positionality. I would then acknowledge and flatten any power dynamics that may lie between ITC participants and me by stating that I would serve simply as a facilitator of the modified ITC process, but the teams were the primary authors and owners of the work and that I would need their maximum engagement to truly understand how they make meaning of their respective student success landscapes.

Next, I would discuss and define what ITC is and provide a sample traditional map so the team could get a sense of the feedback I was looking to gather. See appendix for the PowerPoint deck used. I would then prepare the group for coaching by conducting a 2-minute mindfulness exercise asking the team to breathe and center themselves. For the first column, I would ask the team to pick a goal directly tied to their role and the university's equity goal. I would place the respective group of participants in a Zoom break out room so they could have privacy to deliberate. I would then bring the team back to one Zoom room and facilitate the rest of the mapping in a group format. Participants would either unmute themselves or place comments in the chat to provide feedback, while I would share my screen and document their feedback live. Notes were taken live during the zoom session while sharing screen, the meetings were also recorded for my reference and destroyed after.

ITC Session 1

The first session was held with Advisors & Retention Specialists from the advising center, a total of nine participants. Each session started with an overview of why I was approaching this research and how I wanted to go through the process; I then asked for any questions or needed clarity on terms discussed. I began the process by placing individuals in a breakout room separate from me so they could identify a goal that they have tried to accomplish as a group but have been unsuccessful at as it relates to equity initiatives on campus. I asked them to be as selfish as possible ensuring the goal was relevant to their department and their role. I allowed the team to deliberate for 10–15 minutes then asked them to state the goal and context for using the goal. I then moved the team into the next column by asking them to put on a different lens (using the metaphor of placing on different pairs of glasses) and to tell me what their role and goal looked like with the following lenses from Bolman and Deal's (2008) framework: structural, human resource, political, and symbolic. From there I asked the team to provide a fearless audit of behaviors, asking, what they actually do or not do that contributes or inhibits this commitment, and encouraging them to state their self-talk as a behavior. I then asked the team to feel their way into column 4 asking, "if you stopped any of these behaviors in column two what is your reaction? What do you fear?" Then, "What do these fears and worries say about what goals you are truly committed to?" and finally guiding them into column 5 asking, "Now let's fully understand the construct this story lives in. What assumptions do we hold as it relates to this goal? What do we assume of administrators?"

This group was extremely engaged and transparent in their needs. During the first session, the group stated they were committed to eliminating the idea of the "traditional student bias on campus."

The group felt that they had many mandates from administrators that reinforced the lack of understanding of the differentiated support needed for student populations. Stakeholders stated, “Administrators are adamant about ‘15 to finish’ regardless of the type of student we are serving going against equity mandates.” “15 to finish” is a mandate that requires all first-year students to enroll in at least 30 credits during their first academic year to ensure they graduate in a timely manner. However, this mandate assumes that all freshmen students are of one type; advisors expressed that some students work part time or are parents and that 12 credits would be an appropriate course load for such students. Advisors emphasized that students’ courses should be selected on the basis of understanding of the individual student’s need.

The group also expressed that many stakeholders assume that dually enrolled students are traditional White students, when they are primarily Hispanic/Latinx. Dual enrolled students are students who have taken college level courses in high school. There is an assumption that dually enrolled are straight from high school and should be treated as a first-time freshmen, when often that isn’t the case: some may be adult learners. It was clear that this group felt they had a better understanding of the student body because of their direct interaction with students.

Based on their goal and sentiments shared in column 1, I could see that participants felt their knowledge of the student body conflicted with processes and structures that were set in place for their role. I then shifted the group to the second column to get a better understanding of their role and goal organizationally. I asked participants to put on a different lens and tell me what their role and goal looked like through each lens, first asking the group to structurally frame their role and the impact this has on their goal. The group shared that structurally enrollment management is housed in student affairs while they are on the academic affairs side and there is no communication from this department, so they have no background on first year students being enrolled to proactively understand their needs before they reach the advising office. This causes the team to have to do a lot of discovery of the students' background. Before COVID-19, they were able to go to different offices and call stakeholders to find information—but since going virtual in March 2020 it has become increasingly difficult to contact the appropriate stakeholders to find out information about students. I then asked the team to put on a human resource lens and express what resources they need as people to thrive in their role and accomplish their goal. Participants expressed they need more articulation advisors to understand dually enrolled students. Articulation advisors are stakeholders who will interpret students' high school and transfer credits and how they apply to the University's academic road maps so students are enrolling in appropriate courses based on their academic history. Participants also stated they need better caseload management and no longer want to serve as a "dumping ground for all student needs." With the political lens, I asked participants to express the perception of the political landscape they are navigating. Participants expressed that administrators do not understand their student population and it causes barriers in the ways staff are expected to serve students. Through the symbolic lens, I prompted participants asking what their role represents; participants expressed they are the "catch all" for student needs.

We then shifted into column three, conducting an audit of all actions taken or not taken towards the goal. The team expressed being unable to identify students who are dually enrolled in both high school AP courses and freshmen and lacking communication and barriers to virtual advising. I then asked participants to express their worries, fears and concerns. The group stated: "How much are we reinventing the wheel for things to go back to normal after COVID-19?", "Will administration hear us?", "will there be turnover?", "we are not structurally aligned", and "we don't have enrollment management on campus." The team felt that the campus was very resistant to change and that while COVID-19 accelerated change on campus, there was no willingness to try different things before this point, and would this sudden agility be sustained?

With this group we began to run out of time so I quickly asked for their big assumptions; the group stated: “We assume that If we run at eliminating bias on campus it will be thwarted and a waste of time.” “We assume that if we propose differentiated support needs, administrators will be tone deaf to our needs.” I ended the session thanking the team for their transparency and emailed my finalized modified ITC Map to the group for approval to ensure I appropriately captured their voice. The participants felt I captured their voice appropriately and no changes were needed (See Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1

Modified ITC Coaching Session With Advisors and Retention Specialists

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5
Goal	**Framing My Goal & Role**	**Services/Actions Taken**	**Competing Commitments**	**Big Assumptions**
What do we want to improve professionally as it relates to student success? What change are we committed to and passionate about	Describe your role in student success using a metaphor: ____________. Using Bolman and Deal four frames note any barriers/observations to reaching these goals.	What do we do or not do that undermines my efforts in realizing our commitment? Fearless audit of behavior. Self Talk is a behavior!	What hidden competing commitments may be generating the items identified in Column 3? What competing commitment might we have that is about “not improving”?	What Big Assumption(s) do we hold that supports the hidden or conflicting commitments?
I am committed to... Eliminating idea of “traditional student” bias. By focusing on our Dual enrollment students and getting them set up for virtual term. *Administrators are adamant about 15 to finish regardless of the type of student we are serving going against equity mandates.*	**Structural:** Academic Policies that disqualify how does this close the equity gap? No home for EM (certain responsibilities), AC can be a dumping ground. EM housed in SA– placed on side on house that doesn’t have much leverage. **Human Resource:** caseload, advisors, see where overextending staff and not be tied to budget (no “other duties as assigned”), more evaluators **Political:** Administration don’t understand nuances of student pops **Symbolic:** catch all place for student, they know they can come to advisers. How do we adapt for the new student? “*mascot* reach higher” need resources to reach higher	We have general advising approach Have not identified dual enrolled before hand Have not identified advising approach for dual enrolled Students are not forth coming about AP credits Partnering needed with 11 and 12 (HS) HS Counselors Conference Don’t explore all possible partnerships. Pop in Advising (virtual)	My competing commitment may be... **WORRY:** “How much are we reinventing the wheel for things to go back to normal after COVID-19?” “Will administration hear us?” “will there be turnover” “we are not structurally aligned” “we don’t have enrollment mgmt. on campus” Want timely processing from the Onboarding/admissions office. Frequent turnover in position(s). In student affairs and AC in AA. It wasn’t until COVID-19 that we were able to go virtual, changed approach to virtual advising. No willingness to try differently until COVID-19	**We assume that...** “If we run at eliminating bias on campus it will be thwarted and a waste of time.” “If we propose differentiated support needs, administrators will be tone deaf to our needs.” **Many stakeholders assume that...** Dual enrolled are traditional white students, they are primarily LatinX. Dually enrolled are straight from HS and should be treated as a first time freshmen. Student semester starts at the University

ITC Session 2

This session was held with the Graduation & Retention Specialists, a total of 14 attendees. I used the same scripting and format in this session as the previous but spent less time on explaining the background to provide more time for mapping since we ran out of time during the last session. The commitment goal of this group was to “build a better working relationship with admissions and records.

Building rapport, questioning logistics and methods for students." This group wanted to clarify roles and responsibilities amongst offices because they wanted to better understand the student pipeline from enrollment to their office to better understand what support is needed and how to advise appropriately. I found it immediately interesting that this goal was very similar to the first group's commitment goal, namely wanting to have more information from student enrollment stakeholders so they could proactively prepare their caseloads and advise students.

I asked the participants to use a structural lens and discuss what their role and goal looked like. The participants expressed there has been much turnover in admissions, having "four directors in past two years," and that there is no collaboration with major advisors. With the human resource lens, the participants expressed, "we are always in survival mode, there is no time for reflection." The participants said they needed procedural clarity, a directory of staff to contact especially with being virtual and with the constant turnover it has become more difficult since they are unable to walk over to offices and find answers. Politically, the participants expressed there is a very "stay in your lane" type of culture. Everything is very siloed and specialists were often not allowed to "have a seat at the table" for decision making. Using the symbolic lens, the participants said they need offices staffed as this would represent "a commitment to student success" from administrators.

I then shifted the group to column three asking, what have they done or not done to contribute to the goal; similar to group one the participants expressed: "We pick up the brunt of stress of students, Many offices know advisors will step up, so we often become the catch all for student crises." The participants also expressed having limited access to information due to lack of knowledge sharing to being able to appropriately meet the students' needs. The participants acknowledged that even with many barriers they have learned to be resourceful to "hack the system" and build relationships informally with stakeholders to ensure needs get met—but for those who do not have relationships, it is harder to resolve student problems. An example was given from a participant who has relationships with someone in the financial aid office because she has been with the institution for a long time, but newer specialists who have not yet formed those relationships will have a harder time finding answers for students. The participants also expressed that they are unable to holistically advise students in the way they want to because they are devoting so much time to logistical things.

I asked the participants to express their worries and fears for column 4. The participants shared: “we are younger and don’t have the clout/credence to advocate for things,” “we are so anxious and stressed about fixing student solutions,” and “we are determined to help students regardless if we are appropriate resource.” The participants expressed worry about advocating for processes for fear that it would be interpreted as a personal attack instead of auditing a process that needed to be improved, stating: “it’s not about people, it’s about processes,” “we fear being seen as finger pointing, when its highlighting barriers in processes not people,” and “many know there are problems, but don’t have time or capacity to fix issues.”

I then asked the participants what they may also be committed to given these worries and fears and the participants shared they are committed to advocating for students in informal ways out of fear of being seen as disruptive, even though this is causing burn out and taking away from time that could be used for advising since staff are attempting to find information from other offices.

Lastly, the participants stated their big assumptions: “I assume that if we continually advocate for students that I may lose my job”; “we assume that if we fight this big battle it will be for nothing, and we will lose opportunities for advancement from speaking up”; “I assume that I will get burnt out from being taking advantage of and advocating so much for my students and seek out other opportunities/jobs.” The participants expressed clear concern about their capacity, fear of consequences of advocating, and that their devotion to solving students’ problems was clear regardless of how they had to go about doing it. I ended the session with emailing the final modified map to ensure

I appropriately captured stakeholders' voices in the session. The participants felt I captured their voice appropriately and no changes were needed.

Figure 4.2

Modified ITC Coaching Session with Graduation and Retention Specialists

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5
Goal	**Framing My Goal & Role**	**Services/Actions Taken**	**Competing Commitments**	**Big Assumptions**
What do we want to improve professionally as it relates to student success? What change are we committed to and passionate about	Describe your role in student success using a metaphor: ___________. Using Bolman and Deal four frames note any barriers/observations to reaching these goals.	What do we do or not do that undermines my efforts in realizing our commitment? Fearless audit of behavior. Self Talk is a behavior!	What hidden competing commitments may be generating the items identified in Column 3? What competing commitment might we have that is about "not improving"?	What Big Assumption(s) do we hold that supports the hidden or conflicting commitments?
I am committed to... build a better working relationship with admissions and records. Building rapport, questioning logistics and methods for students. Clarifying responsibilities and identify what tasks are assigned to each role (lot of handoffs). What is the pipeline for students who owns what along the way? Feels unobtainable because of past, but it is needed to resolve baseline support for students.	**Structural:** Admissions and records is undergoing changes in leadership (4 directors in past two years). Student Affairs, specialists are in AA. Need collaboration working with major advisors. Need collaboration working with major advisors Students don't understand their major advisor is only providing major requirements **Human Resource:** Historically, understaffed offices. Always in survival mode no time for reflection. Procedural clarity, understanding workflow. Being kept up to date with changes in office. A directory. Staffing **Political:** Misaligned goals from leadership. "stay in your lane" culture, very silod and we are treated like outsiders. Invite specialist to conversations for program development **Symbolic:** Introducing a director that will stay in admissions, and consider the challenges of the past, and address these with responses that make the staff feel heard, supported and considered. This person would represent a "ray of home" Not having herd mentality with silo'd offices/dpts We say "holistic" but don't provide holistic practices for students "Symbolic (that relates back to one our University-isms), often feels like a nice concept for posters around campus, jumbotrons, and overall an outward PR campaign...however, could that money that could be used for the staffing needs that would help more directly"	Working committees to discuss process issues. When students don't get response from Admissions they will reach out to Specialists. We can't provide or don't have all access to resolve solutions from that office Whenever there is a barrier students approach us We pick up brunt of stress of student, Many offices know advisors will step up, often becomes "catch all" for student crises Very resourceful group, can hack the system and make it work Have connections on campus, to get things done. Unaware of office rotations with COVID-19 and overall staffing changes. Can't holistically advise students because we are completing logistical things	My competing commitment may be... **WORRY:** "we are younger and don't have the clout/credence to advocate for things" "we are so anxious and stressed about fixing student solutions" "we are determined to help students regardless if we are appropriate resource" "its not about people, its about processes" "fear being seen as finger pointing, when its highlighting barriers in processes not people" " many know there are problems, but don't have time or capacity to fix issues" **we may also be committed to...** Advocating for student needs in informal ways out of fear of being seen as disruptive **We want to...** Continually advocating for student needs. Being better self advocates Having our voice considered in decision making	**We assume that...** "if we continually advocate for students that I may lose my job" "If we fight this big battle it will be for nothing, and we will lose opportunities for advancement from speaking up" "our ideas would get picked up later down the line and our collective group would not be named for the innovation of it" "I will get burnt out from being taking advantage of and advocating so much for my students and seek out other opportunities/jobs?"

ITC Session 3

The last session was held with Senior Program and Services Coordinators, seven total attendees. This group expressed being committed to "Setting clear expectations on communication and transparent processes of our teams' roles when collaborating with other stakeholders and supporting students." This goal informed the common theme of lack of communication and transparency between offices at the institution.

When asking this group to place a structural lens on their role and goal they stated the largest conflict was being housed in student affairs but appointed to each college in academic affairs. The Senior Program and Services Coordinators provide co-curricular support, supporting students in getting involved, developing student leaders, exploring scholarship opportunities, engaging freshman in their respective college, and addressing sensitive personal challenges that may arise. This group stated their purpose was “to bring student affairs representation to each college” to provide holistic student success; however, because of the nuances and different advising structures in each college there are often barriers to standardizing their role and practices. They also stated while they report to one supervisor in student affairs because they are housed in colleges, they often have a “dotted line” reporting structure to associate deans in each college. The participants symbolically framed their goals as a “conduit for students,” “safe space for students,” “bridge between academic affairs and student affairs,” “one stop shop,” and “advocate for students.”

I then shifted the participants to column three asking for all things done or not done towards the goal. The participants expressed that they have a leader who shares out their outcomes and advocates for their needs in meetings. However, the Senior Program and Services Coordinators felt they needed professional development and were often not informed enough to meet students’ needs. “Issues we address are complex and require us to reach out to colleagues for favors etc.; it is easier if there are personal relationships.” “Covid-19 is making it more difficult for communication.”

I then asked the participants to share their fears and worries regarding their role and the commitment goal if they stopped any of the actions in column three. The participants expressed: “I worry there won’t be a need for us,” “the students will suffer more,” “student leaders and student staff will not have any leadership,” “students won’t be able to get their voice heard, contact and get the general things they need,” “departments will become more siloed,” “we will lose more credibility in the colleges, because we are not receiving appropriate information,” “The student voice is not taken into account,” and “Decisions are made/actions without the student voice being considered when interacting with students no one is collaborating with Senior Program and Services Coordinators.”

I then asked based on these worries and fears what they may also be committed to. The participants expressed they were committed to maintaining their credibility so students and staff would see them as a resource, even if this meant developing their own processes and ways to help students. I then asked, “what big assumptions do you hold because of this. And what do you assume others think?” The participants stated they assume that “If we don’t have the information that Academic Affairs expect us to have as a Student Affairs practitioner, then they no longer see the value of the collaboration.” They stated that they assume others think, “Our ability and power is beyond what we can and can’t do. Because we are efficient in finding ways to solve student problems, they assume this is a formal process.” “Some campus partners may not see that Senior Program and Services Coordinators’ role is directly connected to equity work when it is.” “Senior Program and Services Coordinators are only of value when related to student affairs, when there is an academic issue it goes to associate deans.” This group felt misaligned and did not feel a sense of belonging amongst colleagues; however, they were extremely committed to the students they serve in spite of this. The participants were asked to review the final map over email to ensure their voice was captured appropriately. The participants felt I captured their voice appropriately and no changes were needed.

Figure 4.3

Modified ITC Coaching Session With Senior Program and Services Coordinators

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5
Goal	**Framing My Goal & Role**	**Services/Actions Taken**	**Competing Commitments**	**Big Assumptions**
What do we want to improve professionally as it relates to student success? What change are we committed to and passionate about	Describe your role in student success using a metaphor: ___________. Using Bolman and Deal four frames note any barriers/observations to reaching these goals.	What do we do or not do that undermines my efforts in realizing our commitment? Fearless audit of behavior. Self Talk is a behavior!	What hidden competing commitments may be generating the items identified in Column 3? What competing commitment might we have that is about "not improving"?	What Big Assumption(s) do we hold that supports the hidden or conflicting commitments?
I am committed to... Setting clear expectations on communication and transparent processes of our teams' roles when collaborating with other stakeholders and supporting students	**Structural:** each college has own structure; navigating can be tough for students and staff. Leadership changes causing ADs to reeducate and remarket their role in Student Affairs. SPSCs are housed in Student Affairs, but based in each college in AA. Not managers, but expected to perform and make managerial decisions **Human Resource:** staff to student ratio, professional development **Political:** 2 colleges have 2 SPSCs, also two largest colleges, "we bring Student affairs in the academic affairs setting". Expectations for SPSCs are inconsistent (typically set by college leadership that is different also from student affairs). Supervisor is in SA, but in practice but have a dotted line to Dean or SPSC of the college. **Symbolic Framing of Role:** Conduit for students Mini dean of student affairs Bridge between SA and AA Safe Space The one stop shop Housed in centers that symbolize one stop/safe space Advocate for students	SPSC not appropriately equipped, so students will go to AA faculty instead, not equipped with information causing ADs to lose credibility with staff and students. No formal outreach to campus partners, no coordinated effort to connect with SPSCs. Relationship Building, SPSCs have to go create these partnerships based on student need (self initiated). Issues we address, are complex and require to reach out to colleagues for favors etc, it is easier if there are personal relationships. Have a leader who shares SPSC role and how it contributes to equity work. Also Share out things across campus and to colleges that they are noticing from student issues Some colleges have tutoring centers some don't, there are different organizational practices. SPSCs do a lot if info sharing amongst each other, do not get that information from other channels Covid-19 making it more difficult, e-communication is difficult (social media, emails, texts) needs check and balances. Have to create own messages to students. Not included in important changes and conversations around the student. Each college has separate appt scheduling protocols.	My competing commitment may be... **WORRY:** "there wont be a need for us" "the students will suffer more" "student leaders and student staff will not have any leadership" "students wont be able to get their voice heard, contact and get the general things they need" "departments will become more silo'd" "we will lose more credibility in the colleges (AA side), because we are not receiving appropriate information" "The student voice is not taken into account" "Decisions are made/actions without the student voice being considered when interacting with students no one is collaborating with SPSCs" **we may also be committed to...** Maintaining our credibility so students and staff will see us as a resource. Even if this means developing our own processes and ways to help students.	**We assume that...** If we don't have the information that AA expect us to have as a SA practitioner, then they no longer see the value of the collaboration. **We assume others think...** Our ability and power is beyond what we can/ and can't do. Because we are efficient in finding ways to solve student problems, they assume this is a formal process. Some campus partners may not see that SPSC work is directly connected to equity work when it is. SPSC is only of value when related to student affairs, when there is an academic issue it goes to associate deans.

Reviewing Results Session 4

After all maps were complete, I held a call with Allison and Bethany to review the maps and my perception of the findings. I first emailed the maps before our meeting so they could have time to digest and ask questions on our 60-minute call. Bethany responded, "I read just a little bit of your findings and I could hear the voices of my staff loud and clear. It is interesting to hear that through an outside observer," and Allison responded, "Thank you for sharing your findings. I agree with Bethany, not too surprising—but valuable seeing it from this perspective."

When I went over the maps, Bethany stated that reviewing them made her sad that staff felt that way. She stated, "I've done so much to remove barriers for them, I am shocked." Allison stated she was shocked and was trying her best not to go through the attendee list for the meeting to put faces with who said what. Both leaders quickly assumed the burden of their staff expressed in the worry box from the maps and were immediately calling out solutions and ways they could alleviate barriers. I shared that I felt the change needed to take place at a cultural level, that no matter how much they attempted to protect their staff and provide resources, they were still operating in a larger institutional structure that Allison and Bethany had no control over. It was admirable to see the co-researchers' ability to empathize with their staff, through how they immediately internalized the sentiments expressed on the maps and were not defensive, but wanted to find ways to remove barriers stated in the modified ITC maps.

The co-researchers shared many structural changes that were currently underway to mitigate the barriers outlined in the maps. This revealed that the modified approach to the maps, placing Bolman and Deal's four frames in column two, provided tangible next steps for action as opposed to the Big assumption testing that typically has to be created and run from traditional ITC mapping. Without me providing much leadership on interpreting the maps and with the leaders reviewing on their own, with no ITC experience, they could clearly see the picture of what barriers were in place for stakeholders. Both Allison and Bethany shared that a large structural reorganization is already underway, hiring new staff and placing enrollment management under academic affairs to assist with student support. Bethany shared, "I wonder if you did this map again a month from now would staff feel the same."

A common theme was easily identified across all maps in that all groups had similar commitment goals and discussed the same barriers to accomplishing their goals. The groups represented both academic affairs and student affairs, which led me to see that this was a cross institutional structural issue and not just barriers to certain departments. All maps revealed that staff who serve students are extremely committed to students and are determined to find ways to support students even if there are no formal institutional processes. While the commitment to student success is amazing, the strain of finding loopholes and building informal relationships with other offices to support student needs is not scalable or sustainable for staff and could lead to burn out. Staff needed better processes and formalized communication so that advisors are fully informed. Since advisors are committed to serving students in any way possible, this could imply there is no need for formal processes since it has appeared to be effective.

Staff have created a student-centered culture that supports closing equity gaps, but this is conflicting with structures at the institution that do not provide the opportunity for support staff to give differentiated support to students. Culture is a silent curriculum: when you interact with an organization you are quickly taught its norms through engagement. Institutions can have multiple cultures, depending on what levels and departments you are interacting with. When there are competing cultures present, this will typically provide governance issues and conflicts of interest. While the Institution as a whole has an equity minded culture, staff tend to be more student centered because of their direct interaction with students; while administrators are equally invested in student success, they can create structures that conflict with staff being able to support students equitably. People will tend to be culturally consistent, no matter what structures are set in place, evidenced by staff's commitment to provide differentiated support for students. This also means staff are finding it harder to go around structures set in place to maintain their culture.

Through reviewing the maps, one could understand that their structure lacks communication and that mandates from administrators' conflict with ways to support students more equitably. Allison and Bethany discussed whether this may be a byproduct of being a large university. These maps also revealed the impact of COVID-19; since the campus had to move to virtual advising it has been a huge adjustment for students and staff. Many are re-learning their role in a virtual way, and re-learning how to do processes virtually that would have otherwise been done in person. COVID-19 has exacerbated inequities in processes.

I asked the co-researchers what our action component would be following this: what we would do with these findings. Bethany shared that she would share the maps with her supervisor, who is associate provost to share the barriers that staff are dealing with. Allison also agreed to share with her respective supervisor. The co-researchers expressed they have staffed enrollment management, vice president for student affairs and provost roles all which were lacking when initial ITC mapping was done.

I reviewed the integral model with the co-researchers, to show the complex systems at play that were influencing the common undertone of each map and who had the power to influence this undertone, see Figure 5.1. The University's culture was clearly being revealed through the maps, staff were trying to implement equity practices, but were challenged by existing structures. With structures working against the participants, this will lead to burnout and or demoralization as expressed by their fears and worries in the maps. Both Allison and Bethany agreed that all three maps had the same theme, revealing the structural barriers represented across the institution.

Key Findings

The University engaged in this modified participatory action research project to understand in what ways they would need to develop the staff to provide equitable support during the pandemic. Our goal was to understand what barriers were in place that have hindered them from reaching their equity goal, specifically to decrease equity gaps for underrepresented, first generation, Pell eligible students. Specific metrics to reach on this goal were highlighted in the University strategic plan. We wanted to understand what we could learn from modified ITC coaching with Advisors, Graduation and Retention Specialists, and Senior Program and Services Coordinators as it relates to providing equitable support to students. The University did not approach this in thinking of ways they would need to develop students in order to close equity gaps, rather in what ways they needed to develop staff. This already demonstrated the co-researcher's equity mindedness in that they assumed responsibility for this problem instead of placing the onus on the student.

Key findings from this modified participatory action research study were that a true transformation on campus requires an alignment of people and processes. To close equity gaps on campuses, it will take a restructuring of the Institution and alignment of staff. What we discovered is that to provide students the best support we must align the infrastructure to support staff and create formal processes for communication, so all appropriate stakeholders are informed on how to best support the student. Specifically, we must build a communication structure that will withstand virtual and nonvirtual environments. This structure must contain the students' story starting with their pre-enrollment context and with the details of their matriculation as it passed between stakeholders so support staff can fully understand their students and advise appropriately. In Chapter 5 I discuss these recommendations in detail.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

Working with The University revealed three key findings: (a) understanding problems that relate to equity requires disaggregating data; (b) staff who are on the ground are key in understanding student success and creating a student-centered culture; and (c) leaders' beliefs are translated into actions and demonstrated in structures and policies created.

The Importance of Disaggregating Data to Lead Change

Co-researchers collected disaggregated data monthly on student behavior. This allowed us to see the nuances in students' populations and identify a problem in practice that was data informed. The University collected data pre- COVID and post-COVID on students' attendance at the Advising Center (see Chapter III). Hispanic/Latinx students' attendance declined while Black student attendance increased in a virtual environment. We discussed whether Black students felt virtual advising was more convenient for them, and in what ways could we engage Hispanic/Latinx students more. If the co-researchers had not disaggregated this data appropriately, we would have missed an opportunity to understand the nuances of students' needs.

Assessing outcomes equitably means that no category is homogenous and differentiated attention must be given to these nuances. When we look at past initiatives where institutions have attempted to close equity gaps, many will demonstrate equity gaps with inappropriately disaggregated data: "white vs non-white" students, or "white vs URM" (underrepresented minorities). Combining data on students of color reveals the assumption that all students of color are the same and only different from their white counterparts. Through grouping students, we make their social identities invisible and miss an opportunity to support their needs. By disaggregating data, we can do a great service to understanding our students. The University's data demonstrated this perfectly in that Black students behave very differently from Hispanic/Latinx students. We must acknowledge all students enrolled, no matter what percent they are of the demographic, and understand their individual socio-historic contexts so that we many serve them appropriately.

The Role of Staff in Leading Change

This study contributed to the importance of systems thinking as an important capacity to enact change as it relates to equity. Kezar (2013) encouraged change agents to look at the process of change as inherently embedded within larger contexts. Through understanding how leaders made meaning of their student success landscape, we were able to unpack individuals as complex adaptive systems, with this understanding we were able to understand how humans impact and create social systems and are influenced by external systems. This study showed how ITC participants created a culture committed to equity and how these participants faced resistance in attempting to serve students equitably.

The ITC participants created and maintained a student-centered culture. This disrupts the notion that culture is only created from leaders in a "top down" approach. The staff were given an adaptive goal to assist with closing equity gaps through providing holistic support, and because of the tension created through this goal, the staff developed interconnected dynamic systems to assist them in supporting students.

The staff and their adaptability demonstrated complexity leadership. Complexity leadership considers leaders as individuals who act in ways that influence this dynamic and the outcomes). Through empowering staff who are leading in the student success space, this can allow for creative problem solving and learning that may be missed by administrators because they are not directly interacting with students. Seeing staff as leading in place can change views of what we think leaders are, they are not the ones with the authority; rather the ones who interact with all networks on campus and can provide new patterns of behavior and new modes of operating that are most efficient since they are "on the ground." The maps constantly reinforced how staff understood the nuances of student needs best because of their experience.

Leaders must develop their capacity to lead change within higher education contexts, understanding that this is very different from leading change in other organizational sectors. Higher education stakeholders do not need change to be “managed”: they are often creators and leaders of initiatives and need to instead be empowered to create and sustain change. Enabling staff to lead in place is best done through: (a) creating appropriate organizational conditions through auditing structures that are ineffective and creating structures that support innovation, and (b) facilitating the flow of knowledge and creativity from adaptive structures into administrative structures. Change within higher education is to be framed as the next stage of evolution needed for the current student climate, and not fetishized as a trend with no real meaning.

The Role of Administrative Leadership in Change

Equity gaps in higher education are often treated as technical problems. That is, they almost exclusively require learning a new skill to eliminate. There is no doubt that there is learning required to understand the negative effects imposed on subgroups of students. However, more information or technical knowledge alone will not lead to equitable, inclusive campuses. It will take administrators to understand their beliefs and assumptions and how those beliefs create structures and policies to develop an equitable student success landscape.

The findings of this study have allowed me to see that an inability to close equity gaps on campuses are best understand through a thorough understanding of all the social systems that are interacting as it relates to the institution and goal. Institutions will need to conduct a thorough analysis of root-cause drivers of equity gaps, including personal bias, flawed assumptions when making academic policy decisions, K-12 education challenges, and socio-historical contexts of student populations to gain a holistic view of students needs and whether one is reinforcing systemic oppression at their respective institution.

Paulo Freire (1970) noted, "acting without reflecting on why people are oppressed can lead to further oppression" (p. 45). He advised that educators utilize praxis—combining reflection with action when thinking of removing systemic barriers. An integral approach to equity asks stakeholders to understand how the following systems tetra-enact with each other (Wilber, 2005). Tetra-enact means all four social systems must be dealt with adequately and its influence on each other system must be understood in order for the entire holistic model to evolve:

- **Leaders' beliefs**: Leaders, although well intentioned, must audit their unconscious bias. What is valued or believed from leadership regarding equity? Student success?
- **Leaders' actions**: Leaders must demonstrate these values and beliefs in their behavior, appearance, language and tone of voice.
- **Institutional culture**: What are the shared values and ethics of the collective? How is this demonstrated in what people experience when interacting with your institution? How do different stakeholders view student success?
- **Systemic oppression**: How does this socio-historical context influence the structures, social interactions, laws and norms at your institution?

Figure 5.1

Integral Approach to Anti-Racism in Higher Education

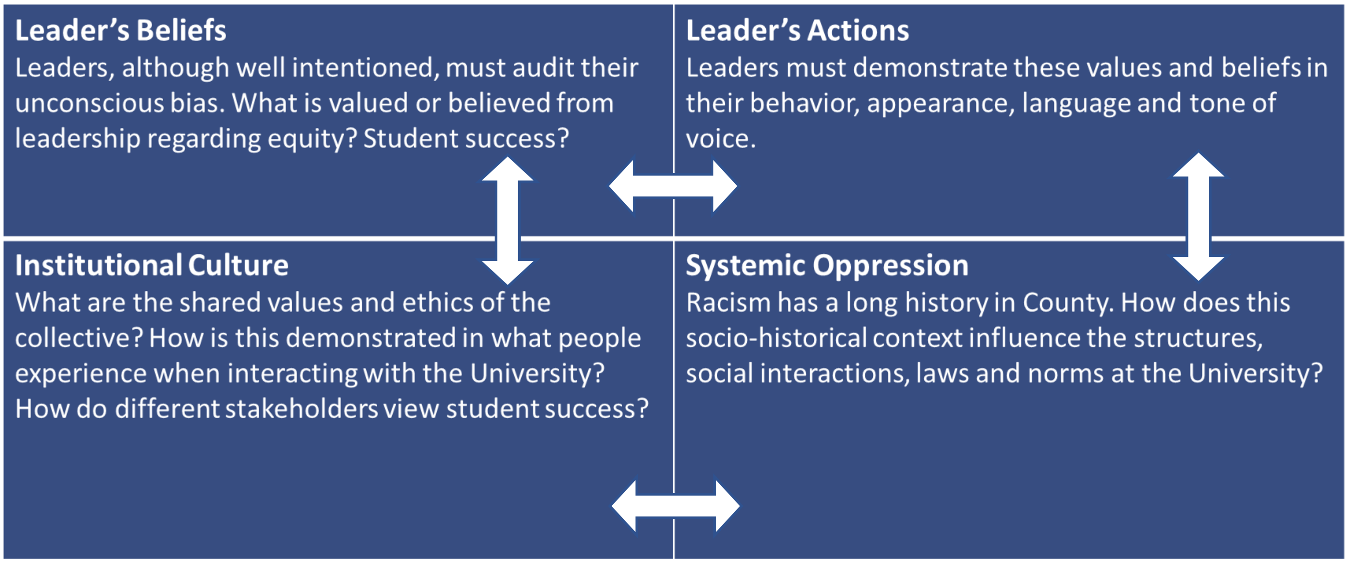


Figure 5.1 was presented to co-researchers at the University to help them understand all of the social systems at play when it comes to understanding equity gaps on their campus. The University is located in a county that has a socio-historical context of racism. A statement released July 2020 by the County Sheriff stated:

> We have got to accept the fact on the law enforcement side that *there is systemic racism* and *we're part of that problem* …. If we don't do that, we're never going to get anywhere. We've also got to accept the fact that we've got to change some of the practices that we have. If we don't do that we won't get anywhere—it'll stay just as it is.

A reflection on the socio-historical context this institution was placed in revealed why the institution has a 2% Black student population. Fewer than 2% of Black people make up the County's demographic; despite this, they were the most targeted racial group for hate crimes, according 2019 Hate Crimes Report. This is what led co-researcher, Bethany, to initially want to remove probation language on campus. She was sensitive to the over policing of Black people in the county as well as the country. The context for higher education continues to evolve, meaning leaders must understand how to create change in an ever-changing environment. Systems by themselves don’t have any value. It will take leaders to understand and acknowledge and take responsibility for acknowledging systemic oppression and its impact on institutions.

Using this integral approach can help leaders understand that while there needs to be changes in place to improve communication and structures that are hindering staff from serving students equitably. This will not be enough to influence the holistic culture; leaders will need to use the mapping provided for this study to understand how they influence and may reinforce external systems. ITC mapping could help leaders gain a greater perspective on themselves as it relates to equity and reviewing the maps of other stakeholders can help leaders see how other stakeholders at different levels make meaning of the student success landscape. Equity mindedness is developed through understanding one's own beliefs and the stories they are rooted in. Understanding what is needed to resolve equity gaps requires a complex approach, and leaders must commit to expanding their complexity in order to further it.

Recommendations for Use of Immunity to Change Coaching

ITC Coaching is an extremely useful strategy in action research. However, a strict adherence to the traditional ITC process is in conflict with PAR. With participatory action research one has to be mindful not to impose the ITC framework, but rather to explain the importance of surfacing immunities and allow co-researchers to co-create the most appropriate way to surface these through the context of a problem in practice (PIP). In all forms of PAR, there will be negotiation based on the perceived needs of co-researchers.

Based on our problem in practice, I knew we needed to add an organizational lens to understand how COVID-19 had impacted processes structurally. So, I added the Bolman and Deal’s (2008) framework. I don’t recommend this modified ITC template for all PAR, I recommend co-creating the appropriate template needed based on the problem under study. There is no cookie cutter approach to PAR since it is deeply contextualized. While ITC coaching is a powerful foundational framework it does pose limitations and will need constant modifications to appropriately engage stakeholders. It is important that PAR practitioners have a host of frameworks in their toolbox to be able to make the appropriate adjustments to fully understand the PIP.

There are many different ways to think about immunity to change, and many different ways to surface immunities. An immune system is the ultimate defender and protector against perceived harm. The global pandemic has literally surfaced our immune systems. In 2020 we have demonstrated the ways that we defend our work environments, homes, and communities from perceived illness through mass consumerism, isolation, and so forth.

Scientifically, to test someone's immune system, a doctor introduces an abnormality to one's cells to see if they are able to adapt by forming antibodies. If the immune system is unable to adapt to the perceived abnormality it is referred to as weak, and strength is determined by its ability to adapt. The goal in successful PAR is to understand the defense mechanisms that prevent people from adapting to the change that is needed. These defense mechanisms can take the form of a belief, assumption, historical trauma, self-talk, and/or organizational culture and may take other forms. Without surfacing these immunities, it is difficult if not impossible to get stakeholders to adapt to the change that is needed, and this is why some form of ITC is important in action research and change management.

Study Limitations

The largest limitation of conducting PAR is transferability. Since I was seeking to resolve a problem specific to the stakeholders at The University, this research may not be transferrable to other contexts. However, the modified ITC coaching process is transferrable in helping leaders to understand the subcultures different stakeholders are thriving in. I wanted to research a framework that promotes equity mindedness on campuses and constant reflection so that institutions could become learning organizations promoting agility in the face of the change. Since equity is a very contextualized adaptive problem, I wanted to see the impact of providing a reflective framework that institutions could use to resolve the problem, instead of a set of technical solutions to resolve equity that do not take institutional contexts into account.

A limitation to this study was the risk of conducting a participatory action research project. Since co-researchers maintain control of the project, I had no way of knowing or anticipating the outcome of this research, for it was not up to me to define success but the institution that I partnered with. Partnership is key for this form of research.

This research was conducted in the midst of a pandemic. The institution I worked with had just announced going virtual for the academic year and was under tremendous stress given the quick transformation of processes and training of university stakeholders that this calls for. This added to uncertainty of the project design and further limited stakeholders' time for engagement. This also meant all research would be conducted over the Zoom virtual platform. Many were suffering from "Zoom fatigue" causing me to limit the amount of time in meetings and provide more frequent breaks.

A final limitation was that because I allowed co-researchers to agree on how findings will be reported, they could decide to remove certain findings, thus potentially reducing my ability to provide a full portrayal of what happened. Co-researchers approved all original findings only asking for anonymity to the research site, researchers' names and titles of ITC participants.

Personal Reflections

This PAR process has truly developed me as a consultant. I have learned you have to be agile, deeply invested in your community of practice, and able to move from seeing the larger context as well as the individual contexts to understand all implications—What Heifetz et al. (2009) refers to as "moving from the dance floor to the balcony"—the dance of change.

Being a PAR practitioner has taught me how to be an equity minded practitioner. I have always wanted to find ways to remove systemic oppression but found myself paralyzed and overwhelmed at the thought. PAR provides an intentional framework that shows that one must start with an individual, typically oneself, then extend to the community, the sector, and the region. We are a microcosm of the macrocosm and everything is truly connected. I had to undergo in depth Immunity to Change coaching myself before truly understanding how to lead groups through this process. I had to wrestle with my own personal resistance and insecurities, and it was only then that I was able to empathize with participants and recognize how immunities reflect themselves in emotions. Once I was able to better understand myself, I understood how to move things I were subjected to, to objects that I could manipulate. It was then that I felt truly empowered to conduct this research. Learning to move things from subject to object taught me to be self-authoring to lead change in removing systemic barriers that I have typically felt oppressed by my entire life.

This process taught me a reflective way to understand people's assumptions through seeing their actions, reading their ITC maps from right to left as well as left to right. Reading a map from right to left helped me to understand that because one holds a specific assumption or belief they will act a certain way, in the same way that someone acts a certain way because they hold a certain assumption or belief. Understanding an individual or groups' beliefs helps to understand why they behave the way they do. This understanding is an essential first step to leading change.

Conclusion

There is much literature about equity and the closing of equity gaps. Equity is trendy amongst the higher education sector now, but this is a relatively new development. Estela Bensimon (2020) stated, "It seems like 'equity' is everywhere. Equity, once viewed suspiciously as racially divisive and associated with activism of social justice movements that academic purists disdain as "advocacy" work, is now being enthusiastically embraced on the academic scene" (McNair et al., p. 95).

Many are making bold statements in their strategic plans to close equity gaps and are seeking to hire Chief Diversity Officers and form DEI committees. However, we still are not seeing the needle move in the data, we are not seeing diversity in our student bodies or faculty bodies. The American Council for Education posted their 2020 equity report showing there is still much work to do in hiring faculty of color and closing equity gaps for our Black, Latinx, and Native Students.

While we have now latched onto talking to about equity and are comfortable with using the word, we still lack understanding in how to put equity into our practices. Many are told they need to adopt "equity mindedness" without a framework of how to approach this. The murder of George Floyd and Trump's presidency reignited civil unrest in America, causing many flashpoint incidents on campuses; we have seen noose demonstrations on campuses and signs of building walls at Hispanic Serving Institutions. Leaders are not taught how to lead anti-racism efforts on their campuses. A bold imperative without the appropriate resources is leaving many higher education stakeholders paralyzed as to how to deal with inequities amongst their student bodies.

The pandemic and the acknowledgement of long-standing racism in America, begins to create the pathway for trailblazing initiatives that are truly meaningful to our students. For example, historical redlining has impacted students' socio-economic status and upward mobility. Today we still see the residue of this in the forms of gentrification, largely segregating neighborhoods and in turn segregating our schools. Jim Crow although legally abolished still leaves its residue in the forms of mass incarceration. How can higher education use these understandings to create pipelines and degree certificates to assist those disproportionately affected by systemic oppression? How can we revamp our curricula to stir the passions of students of color in teaching them how to advocate for the things that have long oppressed their families and communities? Liberal Arts curricula were intended to liberate the minds of students, and it is time we restore that by empowering all students to be change agents to reform all sectors that will consequently reform America.

To be equity practitioners we must first understand how we make meaning—of our own social identity, the identity of our communities, and the identity of the social systems we are in. This understanding will assist us in auditing our bias for the purpose of enacting change.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Immunity to Change Workbook

HIGHER EDUCATIONS IMMUNITY TO CHANGE: UNDERSTANDING HOW LEADERS MAKE MEANING OF THEIR STUDENT SUCCESS LANDSCAPE

IMMUNITY TO CHANGE WORKBOOK

Brittany Motley
Dissertation Research
Antioch University

Adapted from Institute of Leading Change, Dr. Richard McGuigan

WORKBOOK CONTENTS

Contact Information:

Brittany Motley, PhD Candidate

Antioch University Graduate School of Leadership and Change
PhD Leadership and Change Dissertation

This informed consent form is for student success stakeholders whose role is involved with closing equity gaps on campus.

Name of Principle Investigator: Brittany Motley
Name of Organization: Antioch University, PhD in Leadership and Change Program
Name of Project: Higher Educations' Immunity to Change: Understanding How Leaders Make Meaning of their Student Success Landscape

You will be given a copy of the full Informed Consent Form

Introduction
I am Brittany Motley, a PhD candidate enrolled in the Leadership and Change program at Antioch University. As part of this degree, I am completing a dissertation examining how leaders make meaning of their student success landscape and use that meaning making to influence their strategic planning for equity. Essentially, I hope to find ways to assist student success leaders in "building the plane while flying it" in this ever-changing student success landscape. I am going to give you information about the project and invite you to participate. You may talk to anyone you feel comfortable talking with about the project and take time to reflect on whether you want to participate or not. You may ask questions at any time.

Purpose of the project
The purpose of this project is to understand how a form of change management coaching, referred to as immunity to change coaching can assist student success stakeholders in making meaning of their student success landscape. My aim is to produce findings that are transferable to institutions like you all and to provide student success leaders of similar institutions with guidance on how to close equity gaps. Immunity to Change coaching will be the primary method and source of data collection. The desired participants are student success stakeholders who are directly related to dealing with equity gaps on campus. Ultimately, I will produce a case study report of the change management coaching process and how this impacted planning for equity. This information will help me complete the dissertation in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of Leadership and Change. Of perhaps greater importance, it will provide institutions with guidance and tools of how to close equity gaps on campus.

Project Activities
This project will involve your participation in 90minutes of coaching referred to as Immunity to Change Coaching, in a group setting. This process is not therapy, rather a way to process why we are unable to reach our professional goals. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed for the purpose of analysis only. Participants will identify a commitment goal; audit actions taken for that goal and reflect on competing commitments of why we have not accomplished this goal. Leaders will then use this learning of their "immune system" to take action to reach their goal. Upon completion of the study, ITC Maps, recordings and transcripts will be left to discretion of participants of whether to destroy or keep.

Participant Selection
You are being invited to take part in this project because you were referred by the Associate Vice President of student success at your institution, who believes you have important insights regarding closing equity gaps on campus.

Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. You may choose not to participate. You may withdraw from this project at any time. You will not be penalized for your decision not to participate or for anything of your contributions during the project. Your position at your institution will not be affected by this decision or your participation.

Risks
I do not anticipate that you will be harmed or distressed as a result of participating in this project. You may stop being in the project at any time if you become uncomfortable.

Benefits
There will be no direct benefit to you, but your participation may influence the effectiveness of student success planning. This may assist in closing equity gaps. This may provide a new way of reflecting on your student success landscape.

Reimbursements
You will not be provided any monetary incentive to take part in this project.

Confidentiality
Since you were referred for this research, this diminishes one of your rights of privacy and confidentiality. When working in groups I cannot guarantee confidentiality as group members may disclose what is said. Participants will be asked to maintain confidentiality during all sessions, but I cannot promise that. All recordings and transcripts will be destroyed upon completion of the dissertation. All data will be approved by participants before publishing.

Future Publication
This dissertation will be published and available through OhioLink and Proquest. The University will also receive a copy of any findings and results. All data will be approved by participants before publishing.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw
You do not have to take part in this project if you do not wish to do so, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without your job being affected.

Conflict of Interest
Since I also serve as your strategic leader for EAB, please know that all coaching meetings will be held separate of EAB meetings. This work will not impact your current EAB partnership or level of service. I also have full support from EAB to engage in this research with you all. All information will be handled through my school email and with my school zoom, nothing will be handled or distributed through work channels. No information will be shared with EAB unless you all consent to it.

Who to Contact
If you have any questions, you may ask them now or later, you may contact Brittany Motley or the chair of my dissertation committee

THE REMAINDER OF THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

DO YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROJECT?
I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked to have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to participate in this project.

Print Name of Participant________________________

Signature of Participant ________________________

Please type your name for e-signing

Date ________________
Day/month/year

DO YOU WISH TO BE AUDIOTAPED AS PART OF THIS PROJECT?
I voluntarily agree to let the interviewer audiotape me for this project. I agree to allow the use of my recordings as described in this form.

Print Name of Participant________________________

Signature of Participant ________________________

Date ________________
Day/month/year

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the project and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

A copy of this Informed Consent Form has been provided to the participant.

Print Name of person taking the consent____________________

Signature of person taking the consent____________________

Date ________________
Day/month/year

Please type signature into box and email to me prior to our zoom meeting. Thank you.

Immunity to Change and Leadership

Have you been frustrated with an inability to make a break through success? Have you struggled to overcome a habit that you feel is holding you back?

If so, you are in good company – most of us experience this type of challenge throughout our lives.

Based upon decades of research related to adult development Robert Kegan and his colleague Lisa Lahey have identified a leading variable in this challenge – what they have called our "personal immunity to change."

Kegan and Lahey argue that it isn't a lack of commitment to "make the change" that holds us back but rather it is the existence of "competing commitments" that sabotage our efforts to change. We create and develop these competing commitments often over many years and typically they have served us well in previous situations – they were developed for legitimate reasons even if they no longer serve us well.

More importantly we tend to be unaware of these competing commitments. They operate "off our radar" as we try to change our beliefs or behaviours. They are powerful influencers over what we do even if we aren't aware of them in the moment.

The Immunity to Change (ITC) exercise described in this booklet was developed by Kegan and Lahey specifically to help us surface and identify these competing commitments – once we can "see them," we can begin to truly make the changes we desire. Kegan and Lahey have created an elegant method for us to search within ourselves to identify our personal immunity to change dynamic that is impeding our success.

While elegant and accessible to most adults the ITC exercise is not necessarily easy. You will need to work as you complete the exercise and you will likely find it uncomfortable in places. To derive the most benefit from the ITC you need to be very honest with yourself and dig deep. You need to take personal responsibility for the emotions and actions that you explore in the exercise. You can't rush through or skip any of the steps.

I have personally undergone ITC coaching and immediately wanted to see its impact in the workplace and specifically the higher education sector. While working in higher education, I often notice many of us are committed to student success but are unable to truly meet our goals due to competing commitments.

I want to see how can ITC Coaching help us see barriers related to equity in student success.

If you are interested in unpacking this and prepared to make this type of commitment to yourself and your success, the following pages should be of significant benefit to you. Most individuals who have fully engaged in this exercise have generated major benefits for themselves, their families and their organizations.

Using ITC to Understand Barriers to Equity in Higher Education

In recent years, presidents, VP's, advisors and faculty have faced mounting pressure to make fundamental changes in the ways they lead and serve students. In addition to their previous management and operations responsibilities, these leaders are now charged with improving teaching and learning for an increasingly diverse student body, providing professional development for institutional stakeholders, and negotiating the pressing political context at state and federal levels. Many leaders have not been trained to manage and make sense of these multiple demands and can be overwhelmed by the responsibilities required of them.

Educational leaders' work is further complicated by current needs for the fundamental and systemic change required for dramatically increasing student learning and achievement. Responding to these needs means that educational leaders are often engaged in running schools while they are also working to reinvent them. Essentially, we are asking higher education leaders to build the plane while flying it. The task of reinventing schools requires adaptive work (Helsing, Howell, Kegan & Lahey, 2008, p. 438).

Leo Tolstoy (1960) stated, "Everyone thinks about changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself." Adaptive works means something must be changed about our beliefs that will then allow our behavior to align with our intended goals. We must recontextualize universities in concert with significant nonacademic stakeholders to create a transformational educational experience. Kegan (1994) explains that transformation is different than learning new information or skills. New information may increase knowledge, but transformation changes the way "he or she knows those things" (p. 17). Transformation occurs when someone is newly able to step back and reflect on something and make decisions about it. Transformational learning is needed to assist individuals in becoming adaptive in order to maintain balance within whatever social context they will thrive in.

My research agenda is to help leaders break free from the thinking that led to many of the incumbent systems higher education operates in. I want to do this by introducing a new paradigm of reflection, modified Immunity to Change Coaching combined with Action Inquiry. With this approach, I hope to assist higher education institutions in becoming learning organizations that constantly reflect and reevaluate for the community.

It is important not to trivialize this work to simply identifying unproductive behavior and systematically making plans to correct it. This "New Year's resolution" approach can be equated to applying a "technical solution to an adaptive problem" (Heifetz, p. 256). Heifetz (2009) describes that technical challenges are those that require a solution that involves a skill or more information. Adaptive challenges are those that require a change in ourselves and the way we view situations. "Adaptive challenges can only be addressed through changes in people's priorities, beliefs, habits, and loyalties" (Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, 2009, p. 19). This means that challenging our mindset is a part of the adaptive challenge. Adaptive change can only be done through encouraging our ongoing development, not a mere increase in knowledge. It is a transformation of one's identity that influences behavior, not an increase in information. Equity in higher education is an adaptive problem, that will require us to unpack our competing commitments and beliefs to understand.

Higher education is at a critical point in its evolution. To lead change as it relates to equity, it will take equity minded leadership. The term "Equity-Mindedness" refers to the perspective or mode of thinking exhibited by practitioners who call attention to patterns of inequity in student outcomes (USC, 2020). These practitioners are willing to take personal and institutional responsibility for the success of their students, and critically reassess their own practices. It also requires that practitioners are race-conscious and aware of the social and historical context of exclusionary practices in American Higher Education. Harper (2001) states "Equity-Minded" practitioners question their own assumptions, recognize stereotypes that harm student success, and continually reassess their practices to create change. Equity minded practitioners must be aware of their Immunity to Change, as well as their team's.

ENSURING WE HAVE COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF LANGUAGE AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. **Immunity to Change (ITC):** An "immunity to the change"—refers to a system that protects us from the uncertainty that comes with change. ITC Coaching helps us to see this Immune System through a mapping exercise. ITC Coaching is best done on adaptive problems.

2. **Adaptive Problem:** An adaptive problem or challenge is one that skills cannot change and require a change in ourselves and the way we view situations. It can only be addressed through changes in people's priorities, beliefs, habits, and loyalties—which is what Immunity to Change Coaching does.

3. **Technical Problem:** Technical challenges are those that require a solution that involves a skill. Heifetz states that the largest mistake a leader can make is by applying a technical solution to an adaptive problem. I argue that equity is an adaptive problem, and we must mitigate equity gaps through an adaptive solution. I am curious if the adaptive solution to equity in higher education is to promote equity minded ness amongst staff through the ITC framework.

4. **Equity Mindedness:** Higher education is at a critical point in its evolution. To lead change as it relates to equity, it will take equity minded leadership. The term "Equity-Mindedness" refers to the perspective or mode of thinking exhibited by practitioners who call attention to patterns of inequity in student outcomes (USC, 2020). These practitioners are willing to take personal and institutional responsibility for the success of their students, and critically reassess their own practices. It also requires that practitioners are race-conscious and aware of the social and historical context of exclusionary practices in American Higher Education. Harper (2001) states "Equity-Minded" practitioners question their own assumptions, recognize stereotypes that harm student success, and continually reassess their practices to create change. Equity minded practitioners must be aware of their Immunity to Change, as well as their team's.

5. **Participatory Action Research:** this methodology was traditionally practiced by Paulo Freire to ensure research participants are empowered and have say in the research process. This shifts power from the researcher and distributes that power to all participants, engaging them as co-researchers. We will negotiate what the research agenda looks like by first identifying a PIP that is extremely important to all stakeholders (what we are in process of doing now). All findings will be approved by you both before they are officially reported.

6. **Problem in Practice (PIP):** A problem in practice is a challenge that practitioners face that they have attempted to resolve to no avail. To identify a PIP, a team must determine overall need, consider various reasons leading to need, ensure all relevant stakeholders needs, wants, and desires are considered.

7. **How I am envisioning the ITC Coaching Process:** (1) Identify a PIP, (2) Audit all actions taken or not taken for this PIP, (3) Unpack our competing commitments against this PIP, (4) What are our big assumptions we discovered through this process, (5) Testing our big assumptions to dispel myths regarding our PIP.

MEETING AGENDA

GROUP ITC COACHING SESSION

DATE(S):
AUGUST 31ST 3:30-5PMPT FOR AAC
SEPTEMBER 9TH 3:30-5PMPT FOR GRADUATION/RETENTION SPECIALISTS
SEPTEMBER 21ST 4-5:30PMPT FOR SPSCS

TIME: 90 MINUTE SESSION
PREPARATION NEEDED: SIGN CONSENT FORM, REVIEW WORKBOOK

I. Pre-Test
II. Introduction to Immunity to Change Coaching
III. Mindfulness Exercise
IV. ITC Coaching, Columns 1, 2, 3
V. Break
VI. ITC Coaching, Columns 4,5
VII. Break
VIII. Post Survey
IX. Next Steps/Closing

ITC COACHING

STOP

Please review the content from this page forward and start thinking of ideas for this section (you can begin to write notes if you would like). We will complete the map on page 19 in a group setting via zoom. We will also complete the pre-post test live via zoom.

HOW TO NAVIGATE ITC COACHING SECTION: EACH PAGE WILL HAVE A NUMBER THAT CORRESPONDS TO A COLUMN ON THE ITC MAP ON PAGE 19.

PRE-TEST

DIRECTIONS: PLEASE COMPLETE THIS TEST AT THE BEGINNING OF OUR ZOOM SESSION, AND AGAIN AT THE END OF OUR ZOOM SESSION, THANK YOU.
PLEASE RATE YOUR GENERAL KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING ON THE FOLLOWING AREAS.

IF COMPLETING ELECTRONICALLY, HIGHLIGHT THE NUMBER OR BOX OF YOUR CHOICE FROM THE SURVEY SCALE.

EX:

1	I understand what ITC Coaching Is.		1	2	3	4	5

#	Question	Survey Scale: (1) Strongly disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither agree nor disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly agree.				
1	I understand what ITC Coaching Is.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I understand technical vs adaptive problems.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I have a general understanding of how the brain makes meaning.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I understand our Student Success Goal(s) as it relates to Equity.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I understand how my role contributes to this goal that relates to Equity.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I know the barriers related to my role that hinder me/us from reaching our equity goal.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I am aware of my personal competing commitments that hinder me/us from reaching the equity goal.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I see that I/we hold big assumptions that hinder me from reaching my goal.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I see and understand barriers as it relates to equity.	1	2	3	4	5
10	Do you think self-reflection is important in your professional work?	Yes	No			
11	Any additional feedback, reactions or comments from this session:					

Step One: Identifying a Personal Student Success Goal Related to Equity

Getting Warmed Up for a Successful Exercise

We have probably all tried to make significant changes in our lives using the "New Year's Resolutions" model: sometimes it works but more often it doesn't. Attempting to succeed based primarily on will power typically doesn't work – though some level of focus and will power is always necessary. The Immunity to Change exercise is all about helping you create a more successful change strategy.

This "warm up" exercise which will help you surface a few items you may wish to consider as the focus of the rest of the ITC. **For the sake of this project, we would like to focus the items on student success items related to equity.**

If you are confident that you don't need to do this warm-up step and already have identified something that you would like to change or improve feel free to skip this step and move to Step Two.

Here is how the warm-up works:

1. Think of 4-5 people who know you well, who's opinion you respect, and whom you feel will speak honestly to you - you will be asking them to "attend a meeting" to help you begin the ITC exercise.
2. With them metaphorically "around the table" ask each of them, "given how well you know me, if I could get significantly better at one aspect/attribute/behaviour what do you think is the single most important aspect on which I should work?"
3. Don't be satisfied with simple challenges, such as acquiring technical skills – push to hear challenges that will require you to grow.
4. Now write these suggestions down – don't edit your comments just write down "what you hear."

1

Name	Suggestion
1.	*Feel free to type in this text box, or take notes on separate word document*
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

This number corresponds the column on the ITC Map

Do you notice any similarities; is there a pattern, which ones resonate with you? Now you have a "menu" to help you with Step Two on the next page.

Step One: Identifying a Personal Student Success Goal Related to Equity

Creating the Foundation

Let's begin with a question –

> ***What sorts of things have you been trying to do more effectively or change or improve – about how you use time, organize your work, work with others, engage with conflict, communicate/listen etc. – that, if you could make these changes, they would likely enhance your professional success and your on-going leadership development?***

Use the "menu" created in the warm-up step – Step One as a catalyst if it helps.

I have been trying to …

Now think about what constraints you place on yourself that may be impeding your success and that, if they were less influential on your activity, you anticipate your professional development would accelerate. In considering your answer don't edit your response to sound reasonable – just notice what comes up for you, whatever it might be.

> ***What commitments or convictions that you hold are actually implied in your response to the earlier question?***

Three additional considerations to help you:

1. It is important to you, you feel some urgency to do "it" – it wouldn't just be "nice" to do but it "needs" to be done.
2. It is important to someone around you – others would highly value you being better at this.
3. This goal primarily implicates you – it is a change you will have to make – if you say "it would be better if I could get 'them' to do it you" have missed the point.

Fill in the first column: I am committed to the value or the importance of…

Step Two: Framing the Problem to Make Meaning

Getting Warmed Up for a Successful Exercise

Bolman and Deal created a way of framing things using (4) lenses or perspectives that we may gain a more holistic view. Frames are defined as windows, maps, lenses, tools al aimed and helping you change your frame so that you may change what you see.

To Maslow's point if the only tool you have is a hammer, you will look at every problem like it is a nail. The purpose of this exercise will be to see your commitment goal through multiple frames.

r this exercise I want you to describe the role you play in each four frames as it relates to student success.

Example: I am a math tutor

Structural: I provide academic support services to help students

Human Resource: I am an Instructional Counselor serving as a safe space for students with math anxiety.

Political: I am the informal professor for students who miss office hours

Symbolic: I am a safe space for learning

I would like for you to also think about your personal student success commitment goal using these four frames.

Based on what you identified from the warm up exercise…

Structural: What structures are in place that are for or against your goal?

Human Resource: Are there resources in place to align human and organizational needs?

Political: Any power dynamics that will hinder your goal from being reached?

Symbolic: Does my goal align with the University's student success culture?

Step Three:

Accepting Personal Responsibility

Identify what you are doing - or not doing - that is keeping your commitment identified in Step One from being fully realized. In this step you begin to investigate what your role has been in limiting yourself, the ways in which you have contributed to not fulfilling your commitment.

Begin this process by reflecting on the question:

What am I doing or not doing that prevents my commitment from being fully realized?

The idea is to move from being in the story, the subject of the story, to one of having a story – revealing how we might be evading responsibility for fulfilling our stated commitments. There is no shame in this; we all do it in our own unique manner. Each of us has clear strategies we use to avoid fully realizing our commitment to change.

Kegan and Lahey describe Step Three as creating **"the fearless inventory"** – pushing yourself to get below the surface.

Four additional considerations to help you:

1. The more concrete you are the better – not just "I get impatient" – but what do you actually do or not do.
2. The more items and the more honest you are the more powerful will be your "map" – this isn't about shame and fault but to provide a "deep dive."
3. Make sure everything you include provides a "picture" of what you do or don't do that works "against" you – you are likely doing lots of things that work "for" you but these aren't the focus here.
4. You aren't asking "why" you do or don't do something – don't try to "explain" things – just try to capture things in depth and honesty.

For Step Three, consider some of the unproductive actions or inaction that you have engaged in that contribute to you not fulfilling your commitment.

3

Step Four:

Surfacing Our Competing Commitments - Uncovering Our Immunity to Change

OK, you have done some good work in steps one through three. You have identified a current commitment and you have been honest with yourself in identifying the things you do or don't do that prevent you from fully actualizing this commitment. These first three steps have likely flowed relatively smoothly.

Now you are going to begin to unpack why you do or don't do the things you have identified in Step Three. Take a close look at what you have written in in response to Step Three – if you need to, go back and have a look at what you wrote down. Reflect on the following question:

> ***What does it feel like – can you detect anything like a fear or discomfort if you consider doing differently what you have indicated in Step Three?***

Note that the question asks you to identify "how you feel" and not "why do you do x." For the ITC exercise to be truly helpful you need to allow yourself to feel the fear or discomfort that emerges as you contemplate **not** doing what you identified in Step One– how does if feel if you don't take those actions identified or if you do those things that you typically avoid doing?

Kegan and Lahey have recognized that this is the step that can trip-up participants. To help you generate the "raw material" for identifying your fears and discomforts they created the **"Worry Box"** for Step Three.

So let's generate a little raw material. Look at each action noted in Step Three and, in the **Worry Box,** identify the biggest worry, discomfort or fear that comes up when you think of doing the opposite of the behaviour you identified in Step Three. Let yourself actually experience the depth of the feeling or fear – you want to have that sense of "yuck" or "oh s#*t." ***You need to get to a place where you feel yourself at risk in some way: where you are unprotected from something that feels dangerous to you.***

4

Look at what you have written and if you find yourself a little uncomfortable by what it says or if it bothers you a little then you are in the right track! It indicates that you are in touch with your reflecting process. If, on the other hand, you look at what you have written and it has a distinctly noble ring to it, you are probably off track – you are not digging deep enough.

Now you are ready to turn the raw material in your **Worry Box** into potential *competing commitments*. The idea here is that you don't just have the fears you identified – you also actively protect yourself from them.

> ***We are actively (but not necessarily consciously) committed to make sure the things we are afraid of do not happen.***

Take each of the fears or discomforts you have identified in your **Worry Box** and *reframe the fear* as an *active commitment of yours to keep the thing you are afraid of from happening.* For example:

I am afraid I will lose credibility;

could be reframed as;

I may also be committed to not losing credibility;

Write this active commitment down in Step Four, headed by *"Hidden/Competing Commitments"* and beginning the sentence in this column *with:*   ***I may also be committed to...........***

4

The actions (or things you avoid) that you identified in Step Three look very different when viewed through the lens of Step Four. Kegan and Lahey (2002) refer to this as a living contradiction – the countervailing balances that compose what they call the *third force*, a process of dynamic equilibrium that works with astonishing power and effectiveness to keep things pretty much as they are. This is the way in which dynamic equilibrium is maintained, an illustration of how our immune system continuously manufactures antigens to change.

It can be described as "like driving with one foot on the brake and the other on the gas."

They say that as long as this competing commitment is a part of the picture, but remains "unrevealed," no amount of altering your Step Two behaviours is likely to have a lasting effect.

Step Five:

Surfacing the Big Assumption(s) That has/have Us

Likely you have been very aware of some or all of the actions you identified in Step Three – but chances are these actions have prevented you from achieving your Step One commitment because you have assumed these actions are the actual "problem." In fact they are merely a "symptom of the problem." Kegan and Lahey argue that to achieve success you have to move past the "symptoms" to the actual "problem." Confusing the "symptoms" for the "problem" will cause you to continually respond to what is an "adaptive challenge" with a "technical solution."[1]

The intent of the ITC exercise is to help you create an "adaptive solution" by encouraging you to surface the "big assumption(s)" behind the "competing commitments" you identified in Step Four. Kegan and Lahey argue that this is the most reliable method of ultimately disrupting the "personal immune system" that is impeding your success in achieving the commitment you identified in Step Two.

A quick word about assumptions is important here. Central to how we understand the world are the assumptions we make about events, situations, and experiences – assumptions literally create and shape the stories we have about who we are – they can be either/both true or false yet they are instrumental in generating our behaviour and reactions. Often we are unconscious of our most powerful assumptions – these are the ones that Kegan and Lahey refer to as the *Big Assumptions*. Critically, they are not so much the assumptions that *we have*, rather they are assumptions that *have us*.

It is often difficult to separate ourselves from our perspective(s) particularly as a perspective changes and evolves. We also tend not to consciously recast our assumptions as our perspective(s) change. Consequently we continue to allow assumptions, often derived in the past, to continue to shape how we understand the world and our experiences. As we shift perspective(s) we can often discover that our assumptions are no longer useful. Everywhere you look you will find assumptions that are holding you, pushing on you and limiting your growth in profound ways.

In Step Five you will identify your own big assumption(s) that may be holding you back or limiting you – that are the foundation of your own "personal immunity to change." Once you have surfaced these big assumptions you will be able to craft your "adaptive solution" that will allow you to address the items identified in Step Three. You execute this fourth step by completing the sentence stem: **"I assume that if …"**

Three additional considerations to help you:

1. Don't worry about determining if your Big Assumption(s) are true or false – for the moment "assume" they are "true" – we can't determine if they are actually true or false until we have identified and tested them.
2. Taken as "true" it is clear how a Big Assumption(s) makes one or more of the Step Three competing commitments inevitable.
3. The Big Assumption(s) make visible a bigger world that until now you haven't allowed yourself to venture into – the danger warnings that are inherent in your Big Assumption(s) may be completely appropriate but they may also provide evidence about how you are limiting yourself.

Turn to the next page to begin surfacing your Big Assumption(s).

[1] Kegan and Lahey borrow these terms from Ron Heifetz: technical challenges require new techniques or tools to solve while adaptive challenges require new ways of understanding the nature of the challenge.

Complete Step Five by completing *"I assume that if..."*

5

Now that you have one or more *Big Assumptions* identified you should be able to "read" your ITC map from right to left – from Step Five back through Steps Four and Three. The actions identified in Step Three should now be appearing appropriate and inevitable in light of your Big Assumptions. The stories that you tell yourself – even your subconscious self – that are getting in your way to achieving the commitment identified in Step Two should be emerging.

> ***Having completed this step, your map should feel intriguing, illuminating, or at least interesting to you.***

More importantly you should now be starting to recognize your own version of the immunity to change dynamic. And now that you can identify the driver(s) of your immunity to change – your antigens – you can begin to address them.

IMMUNITY TO CHANGE MAP

Use this map to document steps 1-5 from the pages 12-19 of the workbook.
If completing electronically, you can type directly into text box below or use separate word document.

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5
Goal	Framing my Goal & Role	Services/Actions Taken	Competing Commitments	Big Assumptions
What do I want to improve professionally as it relates to student success? What change am I committed to and passionate about	Describe your role in student success using a metaphor: ______________. Using Bolman and Deal four frames note any barriers/observations to reaching these goals.	What do I do or not do that undermines my efforts in realizing my commitment? Fearless audit of behavior.	What hidden competing commitments may be generating the items identified in Column 3? What competing commitment might I have that is about "not improving"?	What Big Assumption(s) do you hold that supports the hidden or conflicting commitments?
I am committed to…	Structural: Human Resource: Political: Symbolic:		My competing commitment may be…	I assume that…

POST TEST

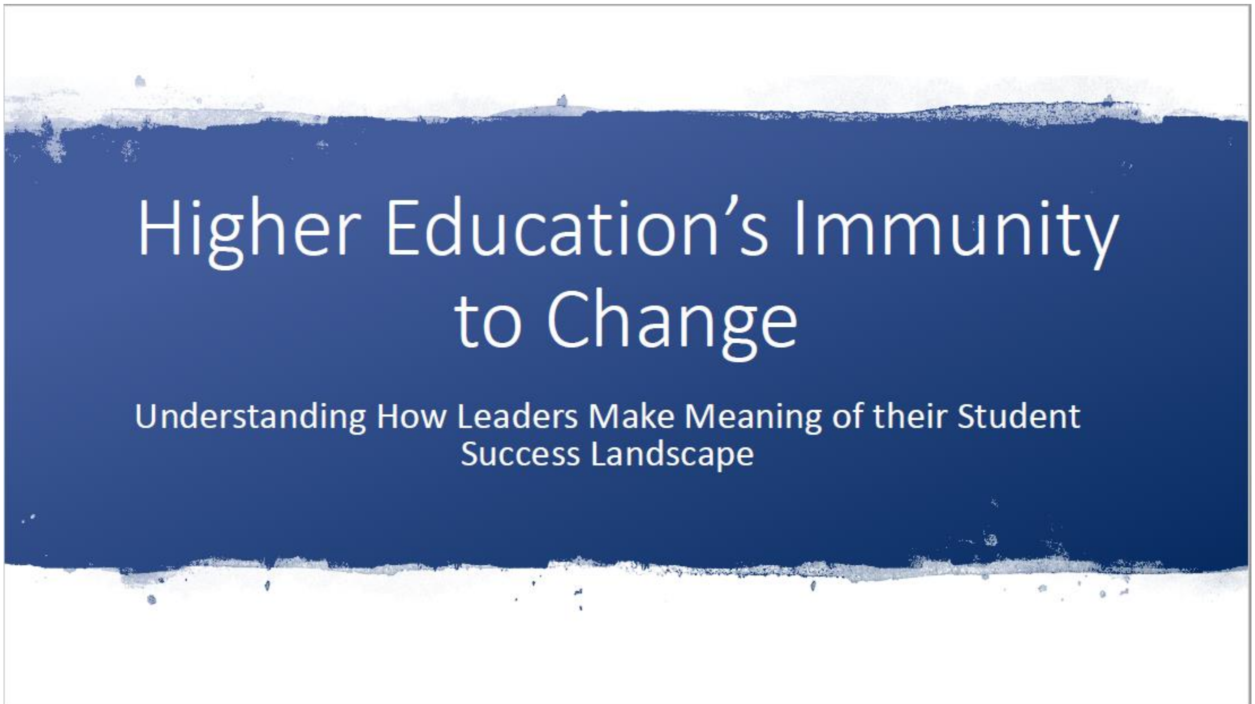
DIRECTIONS: PLEASE COMPLETE THIS TEST AT THE BEGINNING OF OUR ZOOM SESSION, AND AGAIN AT THE END OF OUR ZOOM SESSION. THANK YOU.
PLEASE RATE YOUR GENERAL KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING ON THE FOLLOWING AREAS.

IF COMPLETING ELECTRONICALLY, HIGHLIGHT THE NUMBER OR BOX OF YOUR CHOICE FROM THE SURVEY SCALE.
EX:

1	I understand what ITC Coaching Is.	1	2	3	4	5

#	Question	Survey Scale: (1) Strongly disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither agree nor disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly agree.				
1	I understand what ITC Coaching Is.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I understand technical vs adaptive problems.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I have a general understanding of how the brain makes meaning.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I understand our Student Success Goal(s) as it relates to Equity.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I understand how my role contributes to this goal that relates to Equity.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I know the barriers related to my role that hinder me/us from reaching our equity goal.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I am aware of my personal competing commitments that hinder me/us from reaching the equity goal.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I see that I/we hold big assumptions that hinder me from reaching my goal.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I see and understand barriers as it relates to equity.	1	2	3	4	5
10	Do you think self-reflection is important in your professional work?	Yes	No			
11	Any additional feedback, reactions or comments from this session:					

Appendix B: Results Overview



Reviewing the Maps from Each Session…

Three , 90-minute Sessions Held:

- Academic Advisement Center: Advisors & Retention Specialists, 9 attendees
- Academic Advisement Center: Graduation & Retention Specialists, 14 attendees
- Senior Program and Services Coordinators, 7 attendees

What I learned about student success culture from the ITC Maps

- An inability to close equity gaps on campus, is the symptom not the problem.
- Typically structural misalignment due to administrative beliefs. Administrative beliefs are often reflected in the alignment of student success staff and mandates.
- Equity and Student success are synonymous, framing this as such can assist with a shift in mindset. This can normalize equity practices.
- University's cultural values and structural alignment conflict. Administrators must provide resources and space for advisors to differentiate their case loads and support.
- The adaptive challenge here is getting administrators to gain a greater perspective on student success, so they can remove structures/processes that oppress staff who serve students.

What I learned about student affairs roles from the Maps

- Staff proving co-curricular support felt most misaligned and like outsiders in academic affairs spaces. Structurally they are misaligned and guided by different beliefs casting them as outsiders.
- Student Affairs individuals want academic affairs to understand, trust *and value* their role, they fear deans and faculty don't see their importance or value.
- SPSCs are charged with providing holistic support of student, Academic Affairs is charged with providing academic support, when an academic issue arises– SPSCs are pushed out not allowing them to have holistic understanding of student. Again, Cultural/Structural misalignment.

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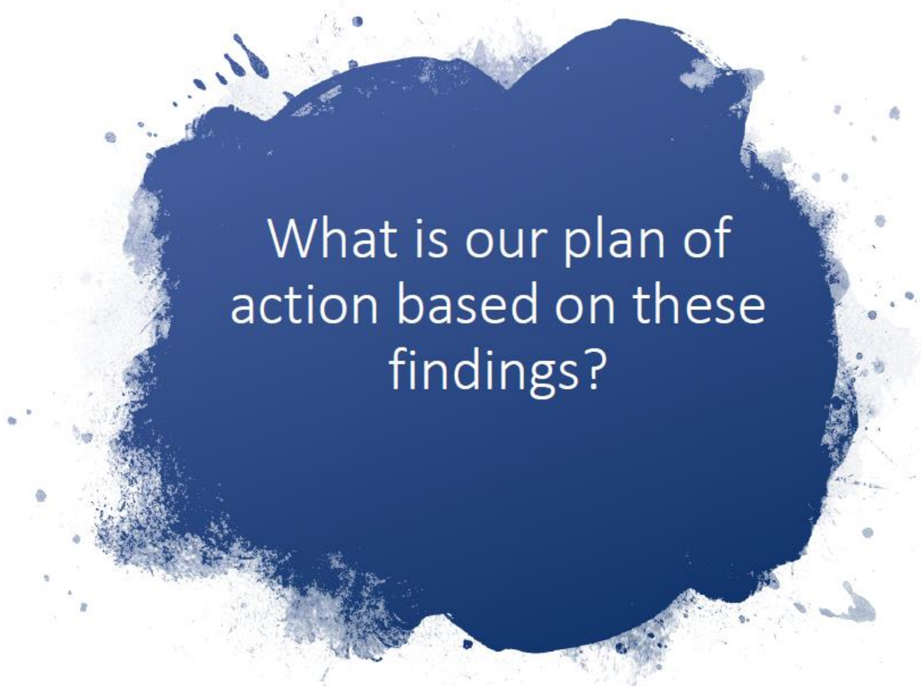

An integral approach to resolving Equity gaps on campus will take awareness of the following:

Leader's Beliefs
Leaders, although well intentioned, must audit their unconscious bias. What is valued or believed from leadership regarding equity? Student success?

Leader's Actions
Leaders must demonstrate these values and beliefs in their behavior, appearance, language and tone of voice.

Institutional Culture
What are the shared values and ethics of the collective? How is this demonstrated in what people experience when interacting with the University? How do different stakeholders view student success?

Systemic Oppression
Racism has a long history in County. How does this socio-historical context influence the structures, social interactions, laws and norms at the University?

Each quadrant influences *every* other quadrant, think of the 'butterfly effect' or 'ripple effect'.

Appendix C: Permissions

Permission to use Figure 1.1 Equity Thought Exercise

I am completing a doctoral dissertation at Antioch University entitled " Higher Educations' Immunity to Change: Understanding How Leaders Make Meaning of their Student Success Landscape." I would like your permission to reprint in my dissertation a copy of the thought exercise used in the Equity Roundtable at EAB in 2019:

Which Scenario Do You Prefer?

Assuming Similar Investments for Scenario A and Scenario B

Today		Scenario A		Scenario B	
May 2019	Non-Pell student graduation rate: 62%	May 2020	Non-Pell student graduation rate: 80%	May 2020	Non-Pell student graduation rate: 66%
May 2019	Pell student graduation rate: 44%	May 2020	Pell student graduation rate: 62%	May 2020	Pell student graduation rate: 66%

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Pavani Reddy

Pavani Reddy
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Permission to use Figure 3.6 the Immunity to Change Map

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Please feel free to contact our office with any additional questions.

Permission to use Figure 3.7 the Adapted Immunity to Change Map

Tim Cannon (Harvard Business Publishing)
Jan 19, 2021, 2:14 PM EST

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Richard McGuigan

Mon, Jan 18, 1:54 PM (2 days ago)

to me

Of course, my friend.

Best wishes for an outstanding 2021!

Rjm

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