

**Race and Hiring: Examining Implicit Biases of Search Committees and their
Influence on Hiring Racially Minoritized Staff at a Predominantly White Institution**

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Lack of racially minoritized staff is a complex problem, requiring the examination of implicit biases of search committees to better inform and improve institutional hiring practices. Implicit bias describes the attitudes and prejudice we have towards other people, along with the associated stereotypes, without our conscious knowledge, and usually in a way considered to be unfair (EverFi, 2021). After examining this problem at Western Penn University (WPU), a pseudonym for the University, and its organizational system, in the context of a predominantly White institution, the primary drivers of this problem include demographics, campus climate, and methods and processes. Assessing the racial diversity problem at WPU provides insights regarding how attitudes and beliefs influence racial diversity hiring practices on a predominantly White campus.

The focus of this dissertation was to implement a training intervention for search committees to better inform their selection and hiring decisions. This problem recognizes the impact beyond the human resources function and considers the effect on WPU's future growth and sustainability. Hiring managers, including administrators, are full-time and regular part-time staff employed on campus. Employee groups outside the scope of the problem examined include faculty, part-time coaches, contract workers, student workers and temporary employees.

The problem of racial diversity in higher education can be effectively addressed by implementing change ideas, such as training for search committees. The intervention primarily addressed attitudes and beliefs, by intentionally training search committee members in recognizing and managing their implicit biases, to improve racial diversity of staff at WPU, through their selection and hiring decisions.

Keywords: Implicit bias, managing biases, mixed methods, racially minoritized, training intervention

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Preface

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Author's Note

Dean Nelson provided free consulting services as part of the Behavioral Sciences Division, and a tenured professor of statistics at the University of Pittsburgh.

1.0 Naming and Framing the Problem of Practice

Colleges and universities spend a significant amount of time, money, and personnel resources filling staff vacancies (Carlson, 2014). One metric of a successful employment recruiting effort involves creating a diverse pool of qualified applicants, which includes attracting and recruiting people of color, including those with multicultural backgrounds (Wachsman, 2020). This metric allows the human resources (HR) function to contribute to the institution's overall diversity strategy (Williams, 1988), while maximizing the value of the organization's talent and related contributions to the institution. Racial diversity impacts many areas across campus, including challenges related to attracting and retaining Black students; thus, the impact and effects of creating a racially minoritized workforce are felt across WPU. Understanding how hiring practices negatively impact people of color assists in identifying the issues that challenge the long-standing cultural, race-based norms in the United States, including norms related to staff hiring on college campuses (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2014).

1.1 Broader Problem Area

Examining race is necessary to understand the consequences of a racialized society, as race does not mean the same for everyone. Discussing race in the framework of racial diversity provides clarity and context, as the classifications of race often apply only to non-White people; as a result, many White individuals do not view themselves as belonging to a race (Kennedy et al., 2005). An enduring socialized viewpoint that this dissertation challenged is the belief that being White is

normal and everyone else is part of a race, and consequently, inferior to Whites (DiAngelo, 2018; Kennedy et al., 2005). The belief that White people do not belong to a race further perpetuates the racial diversity problem in institutions of higher learning (Kennedy et al., 2005).

1.2 Organizational System

WPU is a small, four-year, liberal arts institution, located in western Pennsylvania, and a regional campus of a larger university. The campus is situated in a predominantly White community, adding to the challenges of becoming a racially diverse campus. However, WPU campus administrators recognize the positive impact on the institution's future growth and sustainability in creating a racially diverse workforce, so the administration supports the efforts to address this problem through tests of change.

WPU's demographic makeup as self-reported by staff includes 108 White staff, two Black or African American staff, no Multiracial staff, two Hispanic or Latinx staff, and no Asian staff. When the problem is examined from an organizational and structural diversity perspective, the results are even more dismal. To illustrate, WPU's staff representation among senior leadership is 100% White, while most Black and Hispanic or Latinx staff representation are among the lower levels within the organization. A literature review (Oloyede, 2018) reveals diversity influences student recruitment of underrepresented groups, and the same likely holds true for staff. As the college faces a student enrollment and retention crisis, racial diversity in key positions, particularly student-facing positions, is vital. Past campus administrators who asserted local demographics was the reason for not being racially diverse made such claims based on anecdotal evidence. Further, the institution often contends with racism embedded in and operationalized within the surrounding

community adjacent to campus. Campus administrators acknowledge its Black students are subjected to these experiences within the community, and these community behaviors and practices often demonstrate the mindset that underpins racism.

A common metric for a successful staff search process is to create a large pool of qualified applicants, with the goal of including racially minoritized candidates (Wachsman, 2020). Since some hiring managers on campus believe they are not able to attain racial diversity given the local demographics, this mindset hinders the college's ability to become racially diverse absent proper interventions. Therefore, training search committee members can be an effective means to begin to de-bias their minds (Bohnet, 2016) and gain new perspectives. This is especially critical when recruiting locally, as the nearby city's demographic data shows 23.6% Black or African American (Homefacts, n.d.). And while at first glance, the institution's lack of racial diversity of staff problem may appear to stem from local demographics, the problem is much deeper and the impact more significant given the reports of racism, the limited curriculum related to equity and justice, and the current structural aspects of the institution.

Many Black students attending this predominantly White institution have expressed concerns they do not feel welcome in the community. Anecdotally, business owners reportedly watch Black people more closely because they think Black people steal. Black students attending WPU often describe the surrounding community as not very inclusive. The notion of exclusion within the campus community is concerning to WPU administrators, and they recognize the need to address this issue, particularly since WPU is attempting to increase student enrollment, in general, and improve retention rates among minoritized students, specifically. To illustrate these efforts, WPU administrators, including the campus President, the Dean of Students and the Director of Housing and Residence Life, recently began a dialogue with the local business

community to discuss WPU's concerns, to improve the community's perceptions regarding race, and develop improvement plan and strategies. WPU's campus community has historically not addressed the lack of racial diversity through planned interventions. And although in the University's Strategic Plan, the University demonstrates its commitment to improve racial diversity in stating an action "to create an inclusive and equitable campus environment," this commitment statement is not enough. Rather, diversity work depends on the efforts around documents, since this speech act of professing diversity and inclusion, for example, is just that – a statement (Ahmed, 2012). A true commitment to diversity and inclusion is demonstrated in the work supporting such statements and making them performative (Ahmed, 2012).

The primary drivers of the lack of racial diversity of staff at WPU include staff hiring methods and processes, campus climate and local demographics, with the main secondary driver of search committee processes (Appendix A). And while some steps have been taken to address WPU's organizational system, further improvement is needed. The lack of racially minoritized staff at WPU can be improved by implementing and testing change ideas, such as training for search committee members.

1.3 Context Review

In examining this problem in the context of the campus community, it is appropriate to highlight three key principles: (a) White privilege, (b) structural aspects of diversity and (c) attitudes and beliefs that continue to uphold the racist social system.

White privilege, a societal benefit for Whites, takes many forms of societal patterns and trends (DiAngelo, 2019). White individuals receive such privilege or advantage for no apparent

reason, as displayed throughout society. For example, when job searching, Black candidates are more likely to face obstacles with getting noticed than equally qualified White candidates (Arends, 2014; Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; DiAngelo, 2018; McIntosh, 1988). When examining the context of the racial diversity problem, many campus hiring managers and search committee members enjoy White privilege and have a *White view*. Further, many search committee members have not recognized their White privilege nor the impact their privilege has on their attitudes and beliefs, and related selection and hiring decisions.

Data related to the second key principle, structural aspects of diversity, that is, the numerical representation of various racial groups by position, revealed a structural diversity problem exists at the regional campus, with a very limited number of Black staff in middle and upper-level management roles, and with only one Black faculty and one Hispanic or Latinx faculty in leadership roles. Thus, the racial diversity problem is much deeper and the impact more significant, when considering the structural aspects of the institution.

Finally, attitudes and beliefs of many WPU faculty, staff and students are not inclusive of racially minoritized individuals, as Black campus community members assert that discriminatory behaviors against them occur by their White peers. As humans, we all need to feel included (Strayhorn, 2012), although the current educational system often prevents individuals, particularly those from minoritized and underrepresented groups, from experiencing this inclusiveness, which many times results from the structural racism that exists (Brooms, 2017; Strayhorn, 2012). Addressing attitudes and beliefs through planned interventions, such as training, will assist WPU in dismantling the systems of structural racism.

Taken together, White privilege, structural aspects of diversity, and attitudes and beliefs inform the racial diversity problem on WPU's campus and illustrate the problem is widespread, affecting the entire organizational system.

1.4 Identifying Stakeholders

A critical aspect of evaluating a problem involves identifying the stakeholders and related categories and groups, and understanding the problem from each stakeholder's interests, needs, concerns, power, priorities, and perspectives (Bryson et al., 2011). Stakeholders represent individuals, groups or organizations affected by an evaluation process and/or its findings (Bryson et al., 2011), and likely have relevant solutions and offer an opportunity to consider multiple perspectives (Heifetz et al., 2009). Differing levels of participation exist among the stakeholders related to this problem, as some stakeholders may have a vested interest in the outcome, while other stakeholders may not even know the racial diversity problem exists, such as donors or the university at-large. And since some stakeholders may not know each other, often a relationship *among* stakeholders does not exist.

When assessing the problem, evaluators must engage their stakeholders throughout the entire process (Bryson et al., 2011). The stakeholders related to this problem can be classified into two major categories: *Primary Stakeholders* and *Secondary Stakeholders*, and several stakeholder groups exist within each category. Although each stakeholder group has an interest or concern in the overall success of the institution, for this Overview, we limit the discussion to *primary* stakeholders, as their success is directly tied to WPU's ability to create a racially diverse workforce.

The primary or dominant stakeholder categories include members of WPU's campus community, that is, staff, faculty, students, and senior leadership, candidates for employment at WPU and student applicants for enrollment at WPU. Table 1 provides a detailed list of *primary* stakeholders, including identifying the stakeholder category, describing the relationship to the evaluator, recognizing the probable level of stakeholder involvement, and the power distribution central to racial diversity at WPU.

Table 1 Primary Stakeholders

| Stakeholder | Stakeholder Category | Relationship to the Evaluator | Probable Level of Stakeholder Involvement | Power Distribution and Influence |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| Staff | Primary | Internal constituents | Collaborate | Extremely influential |
| Faculty | Primary | Internal constituents | Collaborate | Very influential |
| Students | Primary | Students on WPU campus. | Involve | Very influential |
| Sr. Leadership | Primary | Peer; Internal constituents | Inform | Very influential |
| Candidates for employment | Primary | Prospective WPU employees | Engage as data source | Somewhat influential |

1.4.1 Detailed Description of Stakeholders

A detailed description of specific individuals, or group of individuals involved with, interested in, and impacted by the lack of racial diversity at the college as *primary* stakeholders include WPU staff (administrators), faculty, students, senior leadership, and candidates for employment as described in more detail below.

- A. Staff** - Employed by the institution in a staff, support services capacity and/or search committee member. This stakeholder group will be the most influential in creating a diverse workforce of staff, as they primarily serve on staff search committees, and in most cases, are the individuals making the hiring recommendations and/or decisions. It will be necessary to ensure their biases are not embedded in their decision making, thus a reason to provide specific training to this group.
- B. Faculty** - Members employed by the institution, responsible for teaching and advising their students. This stakeholder group plays an important and influential role related to students on campus. Students look to their faculty for mentorship, and well as direction and advice. While their probable level of stakeholder involvement will be as a collaborator, this stakeholder group is very influential throughout campus, and therefore, it will be necessary to understand their role in evaluating the diversity problem and improving the campus climate related to racial diversity.
- C. Students** - Individuals who currently attend the college, in pursuit of a four-year college degree. Given the college's struggles with recruitment and retention of students, this stakeholder group plays a pivotal role in creating a diverse workforce. Although their probable level of stakeholder involvement is at the *involve* stage, the power distribution and influence is very influential for this group. Students on their campus can greatly inform this problem of practice, as demonstrated during the empathy interview with students.
- D. Sr. Leadership** - Comprised the President and his cabinet, and other primary decision makers on campus. Their probable level of stakeholder involvement is at the *inform* stage. However, cabinet members are very influential from the power distribution and influence perspective. This stakeholder group can make or break any racial diversity initiative, as members of this

group possess both positional and organizational influence, and many have staff they manage, and as a result, provide influence. Consequently, a critical component is to engage this stakeholder group ongoing and often. The senior leadership team at WPU will also help with the implementation plan, as they direct the work of staff and faculty in their areas.

E. Candidates for employment - Qualified applicants who apply to WPU staff jobs, with *qualified* as the defining aspect of their application. Ideally, candidates are only eligible to be hired if they are deemed qualified for a position. Individuals who apply will not be considered candidates until they are screened and determined to be qualified for the position. This stakeholder group is a data source, since their data will inform changes in recruiting and hiring processes. Many of these candidates are currently not known to WPU, thus their power distribution and influence is somewhat limited.

1.5 Problem of Practice Statement

Implicit biases and related attitudes and beliefs often contribute to a campus climate that does not support or recognize the importance of diversity and inclusion or demonstrate a commitment to equity and justice. Hiring practices negatively impact people of color and other minoritized groups (Arends, 2014; Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004). Data from WPU suggests low diversity of faculty and staff contributes to declining student enrollment and retention of underrepresented groups (WPU, 2019). WPU administrators are struggling with how to design and implement interventions to address this problem. My aim focuses on increasing racial diversity of staff at WPU, with 20% of staff job offers extended to underrepresented candidates by May 2024.

1.6 Research Questions

Specific questions were used to focus my research and support scholarship, professional knowledge, and context for this problem. My review and analyses of the racial diversity problem revealed that staff attitudes and beliefs inform the evaluation aspect of our staff hiring practices. Therefore, research questions to address the problem included:

1. What hiring protocols can WPU develop to improve attitudes and beliefs regarding racial diversity hiring of staff?
2. What interventions can be implemented to improve recruitment and selection of racially minoritized candidates in student-facing staff positions at WPU?
3. What factors influence recruitment and retention of minoritized groups at a predominantly White institution?
4. How are implicit biases evident on campus that fundamentally challenge this problem?

1.7 Review of Supporting Scholarly and Professional Knowledge

A review of scholarly and professional knowledge in the context of this problem is necessary to identify and discuss elements influencing racial attitudes and beliefs and their impact on staff hiring practices, and related selection and hiring decisions. This review also orients the scholarly work within the higher education context to better inform the racial diversity problem at WPU, as well as inform and support change ideas to address the problem.

It is evident from the research that structural racism has been embedded in our education systems and continues to exist 66 years after the landmark Supreme Court decision made

segregation in schools unlawful (Strauss, 2019). Institutions continue to provide, and in some instances encourage, separate, and siloed spaces for their Black and White students. Black students' feelings of exclusion on their campuses (Hawkins, 2021), often forces them to create their own space to feel a sense of belonging as part of their college experience (Harris, 2015; Lovett, 2011). Black faculty and staff, including Black administrators, feel they need to perform twice as well to get noticed. These trends began well before desegregation in the 1950s and continue today. It is also clear from the research that White privilege and a "white view" of college campuses is a common theme found within many colleges and universities, especially at Predominantly White Institutions, including WPU. This Whiteness has an elusive and subtle commentary for those institutions thinking they are "committed" to diversity and inclusion, and equity and justice. Naming the White privilege and calling it out is necessary, since doing nothing will merely uphold the social, economic, and education systems we are trying to change (DiAngelo, 2018; McIntosh, 1988).

Examining aspects of racial attitudes through both a structural racism and a White privilege lens allows for a deeper understanding of the drivers of this problem, as attitudes and beliefs are formed by our fundamental values, and ultimately influence our individual decisions, including staff selection and hiring decisions. Thus, racial diversity in higher education can be reviewed and analyzed through three main bodies of knowledge or themes: (a) historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion of different racial groups; (b) White privilege, and (c) lived experiences of people of color within a collegiate context.

1.7.1 Historical Legacy of Inclusion and Exclusion

Reviewing racial diversity from a historical perspective, particularly starting with the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s and discussing the landmark case involving racial segregation in public schools, provides a context for understanding racial diversity in higher education today. This discussion underscores the legacy of inclusion, often associated with the White campus community, and emphasizes the legacy of exclusion, often associated with Black faculty, staff and students.

1.7.1.1 Ebony and Ivory Towers

During the Civil Rights era, Black Americans were fighting for equal rights under the law through protests, marches, and other activist techniques (Carroll, 2012; Cox, 2020; Williamson-Lott et al., 2012). As Black Americans began to push for reform, legislation was enacted to support the equal rights efforts (Williamson-Lott et al., 2012). For example, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed race-based discrimination, among other protections. The courts were also making decisions supporting equal rights efforts. For example, in the 1954 landmark case, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, the United States (US) Supreme Court ruled racial segregation in public schools violated the US Constitution, specifically, declaring “separate but equal” has no place, and segregation violated the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment (Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, 347 U.S. 483, 1954). The Brown case is a significant court decision regarding constitutional law, and has been described as a watershed moment, changing the trajectory of racial diversity in the US, including higher education (Anderson, 2006; Strayhorn & Johnson, 2014). While some states celebrated the Supreme Court ruling, other states such as Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Missouri, Oklahoma, Virginia, and many others resisted

desegregation, by not demolishing segregated schools (Williams, 1988). For some schools, desegregation meant redistricting schools, while in other districts it meant busing students to other outlining districts (Editorial Projects, 2004). Black Americans continued to fight for their rights, including their rights to education, housing, and other benefits of the American society, and thus, US history reflects the beginning of decades-long struggle to fulfill the Supreme Court ruling's promise (Ramsey, n.d.; Strayhorn & Johnson, 2014; Wallenstein, 2004).

Although the Supreme Court ruling in 1954 stated separate educational facilities for Black students and White students was not permissible, many forms of this unequal principle continued. For example, many predominantly White institutions (PWIs) either disqualified Black students who applied to their institution or limited the admission of Black students (Harris, 2015; Wallenstein, 2004). In some instances, Black students were physically blocked from entering the universities (Clark, 1993). As an example, James Alexander Hood and Vivian Malone were the first Black students to enroll at the University of Alabama in 1963, but their enrollment did not occur without a fight. The Governor of Alabama, George Wallace, physically blocked the entrance to the auditorium on the all-White University of Alabama's campus, acting against the court-ordered desegregation (Clark, 1993). This incident became known as the "Stand in the Schoolhouse Door" and represented an ugly piece of history. The two men eventually joined a federal lawsuit filed by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which ultimately granted Black students the right to enroll at the University (Clark, 1993).

Colleges and universities across the country employed other tactics to limit enrollment of Black students (Harris, 2015). For example, some parts of the country implemented quota systems to limit admission of Black students, where only a designated percentage of Black students would

be admitted (Harris, 2015). This separation and resistance describe some of the “ebony and ivory” towers, that is, the separate and distinct spaces for Black students and White students which existed within higher education (Williamson- Lott, 2003). Although Black students wanted to enter the post-secondary education system, their desires were met with opposition by White institutional leaders and others who wanted to keep schools segregated (Williamson-Lott et al., 2012). The response to this resistance increased racial tensions, taking many forms, including violence in the streets and in the schools (Cox, 2020). In their fight for equality, Black Americans endured significant violence by segregationists, those advocating for and vehemently opposed to desegregation in the schools (Reilly, 2017; Santoro, 2008). Thus, in response to Black protestors, staunch segregationists were murdering people active in Civil Rights protests to ward off such school desegregation and equality efforts (Reilly, 2017; Santoro, 2008). In fact, the violence was so intense, the National Guard was called eight times in response to segregation protests, and as history demonstrates, the National Guard continues to be called during racial tensions and civil unrest, almost exclusively related to Black Americans. Many of their deployments are initiated by the state’s governors related to riots and protests during periods of unresolved race relations in this country (Associated Press, 2020). However, under the Insurrection Act of 1807, the President of the United States also has the power to federalize the National Guard in states where federal law is being defied or where states cannot control insurrections (Associated Press, 2020; Cox, 2020). Adding further discourse to the already heated racial tensions that existed, the Ku Klux Klan, a White supremacist terroristic group, responded to the Civil Rights movement by pursuing their own fight against Black Civil Rights activists and their White supporters (Lewis, 2013). In summary, and as illustrated, violence was rampant and racial tensions extremely high during this time as many Blacks were killed or beaten by the White supremacist and terroristic hate groups.

However, despite the continuous violence, hate and oppression that Black Americans had targeted against them for centuries, they remained vigilant in their fight for Civil Rights despite the structural forces working against them.

With racial tensions high, Black Americans continued to be treated as less than their White peers and subjected to exclusionary practices in higher education. The experiences of Black students included discriminatory acts against them, resulting in many Black students being isolated at most PWIs - if they were even permitted to attend those institutions (Carroll, 2012; Strayhorn & Johnson, 2014). Nonetheless, Black students continued to seek access to post-secondary education, as they desired and aspired to economic, political, and social mobility, regardless of their race, class, gender, or religion (Harris, 2015; Williamson-Lott et al., 2012). However, due to the poor treatment they received at PWIs, many Black students were often forced to choose Black institutions to pursue their higher education (Harris, 2015; Williamson-Lott et al., 2012). As illustrated in this section, the “ebony and ivory” silos continue to display their sturdy and prominent structures, along with historical exclusionary practices and programs, throughout the decades following the Civil Rights era of the 1950s and 1960s.

1.7.1.2 Campus Climate

The historical legacy body of knowledge also involves an assessment of the campus climate and related framework (Hurtado, 1992), a useful context for examining attitudes and beliefs, with particular focus on viewing and understanding the racial diversity issue from a historical perspective.

Campus climate is a measure of the real or perceived quality of interpersonal, academic, and professional interactions on a college campus, which includes attitudes and behaviors of the campus community regarding the level of respect for individuals and their needs and abilities (Hart

& Fellabaum, 2008; Hurtado, 1992; Rankin & Reason, 2005). Understanding racial diversity in higher education is complex and can effectively be viewed and analyzed using a campus racial climate model (Hurtado et al., 1998). While other models that consider campus diversity exist, this campus climate framework addresses the core elements associated with racial diversity in higher education. The four dimensions of the campus climate model include (a) historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion of different racial groups, (b) structural diversity (c) psychological climate of perceptions and attitudes between and among groups, and (d) behavioral climate, or the campus' intergroup relations (Hurtado et al., 1998). And while the campus climate model describes four different components of the climate, these dimensions are not separate and distinct, but interrelated and they are all interacting and influencing one another (Hurtado, et al., 1998).

This campus climate model evaluates campus climate differently, as prior research omitted the diversity component (Hurtado et al., 1998). This model looks beyond the number of racial and ethnic individuals to the climate dimension of *historical legacy of inclusion and exclusion* (Hurtado et al., 1998). To further understand the racial diversity problem on campus, institutions examine their campus climate from multiple vantage points, including the institutional context. Thus, examining the campus climate by reviewing the entire system provides an opportunity to better understand influences and impact of racial tensions from multiple perspectives, while assisting in understanding the campus climate in aggregate (Hurtado et al., 1998).

The *structural diversity* dimension of campus climate, the numerical representation of various racial groups by position, is a key component in analyzing the racial diversity problem (Hurtado et al., 1998). The structural diversity dimension provides an aspect of the problem that helps assess the racial diversity representation, by position, to better understand the impact structural diversity has on the problem.

The *psychological climate* of perceptions and attitudes between and among groups, presents a compelling aspect of the climate model (Hurtado et al., 1998). This dimension defines how an institution views the work environment and reveals how predominantly white faculty and staff often have a “White view” of a campus environment. For example, an institution not including any Black history courses as a standard course offering, illustrates the institution’s psychological climate.

In examining an institution’s campus climate, the *historical legacy of inclusion and exclusion* is the most effective dimension of the model to assess diversity (Hurtado et al., 1998). Additionally, the historical legacies of segregated schools and universities, and campus policies that serve the dominant (White) population are other aspects of the campus climate, as these legacies continue to impact Black students and their campus environment in negative ways and thus, influence racial and ethnic diversity on campus (Hurtado et al., 1998; Rankin & Reason, 2005). To illustrate, Black students often perceive the campus climate as more racist and less accepting than White students, even though White students recognize racial harassment on campus (Hurtado et al., 1998; Rankin & Reason, 2005). Therefore, examining this dimension of the model allows campus administrators to assess their level of diversity (Hurtado et al., 1998; Rankin & Reason, 2005) and develop interventions, such as training, to address their deficiencies in their diversity among staff.

1.7.2 White Privilege

The second main body of knowledge, White privilege, is an essential element to consider because attitudes and beliefs cannot be fully addressed without understanding how society is privileging Whites, while marginalizing people of color. Further, racial diversity on college

campuses is influenced by White privilege. The discussion of White privilege also includes aspects related to Whiteness and White supremacy, both linked to White privilege, and their influence on attitudes and beliefs.

As briefly discussed earlier in the Context Review section, White privilege, an element of campus climate, comprises a host of benefits Whites receive from the country's racist social, economic, legal and education systems (DiAngelo, 2019; McIntosh, 1988; Tatum, 1997). These benefits are in the form of unearned power not available to people of color, and consequently, this power puts them at a significant disadvantage (McIntosh, 1988).

A prominent source of the White privilege involves the tools and resources that Whites hold and carry with them, containing their maps, passcodes, visas, blank checks, and other resources for life (McIntosh, 1988). People who are not part of the privileged group are regularly viewed as second rate citizens, while the White group often denies the privilege, and even protects it (McIntosh, 1988). As a result, Whites and non-Whites are on unequal playing fields with different ground rules.

The societal honor of White privilege takes many forms of patterns and trends throughout society (DiAngelo, 2019). White privilege does not imply Whites do not have challenges; however, their challenges are not related to the hue of their skin (Arends, 2014; DiAngelo, 2018; McIntosh, 1988). For example, when job searching, Black candidates are more likely to face obstacles with getting noticed or interviewed than equally qualified White candidates (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; DiAngelo, 2018; McIntosh, 1988). This example highlights the need to provide training to search committee members, so more equally qualified racially minoritized candidates are invited for interviews at WPU. The forces that create White privilege are not always known, as White privilege is often influenced by the upbringing and socialization of Whites

(DiAngelo, 2018). As a result, individual attitudes and beliefs become part of who Whites are and ingrained in their being from a young age (DiAngelo, 2018). Consequently, Whites are often oblivious to their own White privilege as they are frequently taught not to recognize or acknowledge the privilege or advantage, they have over non-Whites (McIntosh, 1988).

Although Whites take many of these experiences for granted, part of the privilege allows Whites to access these resources at any time, without much difficulty or resistance by others (McIntosh, 1988). For example, studies show when identical resumes with white-sounding and black-sounding names are sent to different companies to see who would be offered interviews, White applicants are called more often than Black applicants (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004). This example, as illustrated, showcases the advantage and honor experienced by Whites, as White privilege perpetuates race-based oppression for people of color, who cannot access these same resources. As a result, the system of patterned advantages for Whites results in harm to racially minoritized groups (McIntosh, 1988).

Many White people do not recognize or acknowledge their White privilege, so unless White people name the privilege and call it out, then doing nothing will merely uphold the social, economic, and education systems we are trying to change (DiAngelo, 2018; McIntosh, 1988). Since attitudes and beliefs are a part of who White people are and ingrained in their being from a young age, dismantling White privilege will require unlearning and undoing such privilege, with intentional awareness of action to be successful. (Chiariello, 2016). Thus, deploying training for search committees as a planned intervention can help participants learn to recognize and acknowledge their White privilege, and dismantle such privilege to better inform their selection and hiring decisions.

1.7.3 Lived Experiences of People of Color

The third main body of knowledge, examining the lived experiences of Black faculty, Black staff, including administrators, and Black students, reveals the lack of racial diversity in higher education continues to be displayed on college campuses today. This theme offers an alternate perspective to provide a counternarrative for individuals excluded in our education system and often compelled to attend Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) so they can achieve racial equity and feel a sense of belonging at their institutions. This body of knowledge also reviews the perspectives of Black administrators in the context of their lived experiences on campus.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities were institutions created to educate Black students at a time when segregation was prevalent in the US, and although HBCUs were officially established prior to 1964, federal funding was not provided to HBCUs until the Higher Education Act of 1965 (Stefon, 2022). The mission of many HBCUs was to prepare Black leaders for the future. These colleges and universities also provided Black students an opportunity to feel a sense of belonging to their institution, while avoiding the systemic exclusion Black students experienced at PWIs (Harris, 2015; Lovett, 2011). Black students recognized that frequent and meaningful interactions positively influenced this sense of belonging and social identity for themselves, and thus for many students, influenced their decisions to attend the HBCUs.

Researchers argue an individual's need to belong is a fundamental human need and belonging with peers on campus is a vital part of the college experience. (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Strayhorn, 2012). Black fraternities helped fulfill this need and establish the belongingness for Black students who joined such social organizations. Black fraternities were created at a time when the vestiges of slavery and segregation were still prevalent and lingered throughout schools,

as institutions and their student organizations did not welcome or want Black students on campus (Brooms, 2017). For Black students, social organizations such as Black fraternities, offered Black students an opportunity to bond with a group and assisted in developing their social identities, since social inequities through continued segregation and related Jim Crow law, statutes legalizing racial segregation, persisted on college campuses (Brooms, 2017; Jenkins, 2012; Urofsky, 2020). Further, many PWIs were not promoting multicultural interaction among and between Blacks and Whites as is necessary for racial diversity (Strayhorn & Johnson, 2014). Some scholars argue the resistance to diversity and inclusion in higher education relates to the White's desire for entitlement of property (Patel, 2015). As a result, the mindset of excluding Black students on college campuses has historically shaped higher education institutions, and these behaviors and practices persist in driving inequitable outcomes based in race (Jenkins, 2012; Patel, 2015). Consequently, higher education's lack of promoting multicultural interactions, while establishing separate spaces for Black students only perpetuated the "ebony and ivory" towers and silos that existed in higher education (Brooms, 2017).

As Black students faced challenges in higher education related to exclusionary practices, Black student activist groups, under the Black Campus Movement and representing various Black-oriented student groups, were active by the 1960s in pressuring colleges and universities to develop equitable policies and programs, as these Black student activists, and their White allies, demanded change and improvement (Carroll, 2012; Williamson, 2003). Many Black students were looking for a Black cultural center to serve as their "home away from home" (Carroll, 2012, p. 164). As an example, Black students created Black student unions to meet their social and emotional needs, which provided them a sense of empowerment. These spaces were validated and viewed as important knowledge and spaces for Black students, while many of these Black student unions are

still active today (Brooms, 2017; Jenkins, 2012; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998). The pressures upon institutions had an impact on narrowing the “ebony and ivory” silos that existed within higher education (Williamson- Lott, 2003). However, the movements and pressures were not enough, as issues of diversity and inclusion on college campuses continued to exist for Black students, Black faculty, and Black staff. Further, campus diversity does not often translate into unity and cooperation for Blacks and other minoritized groups, so the lived experiences of Black faculty, administrators (staff), and students and the climate on their college campuses show the racial diversity problem continues in higher education today (Brooms, 2017; Gomez et al., 2015).

Black administrators (staff) are often an underrepresented employee group on college campuses, particularly at PWIs (Gomez et al., 2015; Wolfe, 2010). This environment also puts the campus staff in situations of marginalizing scripts, in which they are expected to adhere to (Gomez et al., 2015). Nonetheless, Black staff play an integral role related to campus operations. To illustrate, WPU employs two Black administrators (staff) in key roles on campus and although their compensation is in line with similarly situated positions of White staff, they represent less than 2% of staff, demonstrating a significant underrepresentation of Black administrators (staff) at WPU. (Western Penn University, 2019). And while many institutions in higher education have developed initiatives with the intent of improving diversity among their staff, Black staff are still an underrepresented group (Gomez et al., 2015). Further, after Black staff are hired, they report feeling undervalued across all areas of campus (Gomez et al., 2015). WPU faces this same dilemma in retaining Black staff, with a recent example of a Black administrative hire who stayed less than one year (Western Penn University, 2020). Black staff are often forced to exert their leadership capacity as members of a minoritized group and this often proves to be very challenging (Gomez

et al., 2015). However, scholars recognize important roles of administrators on college campuses, and equally important is having administrators who represent diverse groups (Gomez et al., 2015).

Studies suggest many Black administrators are subjected to overt and implied criticism on campus every day (Gomez et al., 2015). As a result, Black administrators must learn to navigate their campus in different ways than their White peers. Black staff report that the campus culture at PWIs is one of privilege for Whites, and confrontational for others, particularly when institutional policies are questioned (Gomez et al., 2015). Black administrators often describe themselves as a token of their race (Gomez et al. 2015; Wolfe, 2010), while others are viewed as experts on all diversity matters (Stanley, 2006). In terms of onboarding and the socialization process for new hires, Black administrators (staff) report a lack of mentorship, as well as limited relationships with colleagues (Stanley, 2006). Thus, this underpinning of racism allows for the legacy of inclusion and exclusion to live on and be present in higher education 66 years after the landmark case ruled it unconstitutional. However, a planned intervention or training for WPU search committees could dramatically improve the attitudes and beliefs of search committee members, since without proper training to recognize and manage their biases, and demonstrate more inclusive behaviors, the Whites on WPU's campus will likely continue to enjoy their White privilege and related benefits.

1.7.4 Legislation with Exclusionary Impact

Related to the lived experiences of people of color, is examining the racial diversity problem in the sociohistorical and government/policy context (Buse et al., 2016; Harper & Hurtado, 2007). During the 1970s, Congress passed significant student loan legislation, the Middle-Income Student Assistance Act of 1978. Under this legislation, and for a period of three years, the legislation provided middle-income students a means of financing college expenses, by

expanding the eligibility for Pell Grants and offering subsidized guaranteed loans to any student regardless of income or financial need (Gladieux & Haupman, 1995). The impact of this legislation was that more White middle-class students received grants and other student loans, which made college more affordable for them, and consequently, increased the competition for college admissions. Although the Middle-Income Assistance Act provided more students financial support, the legislation worked against and excluded marginalized and underserved students, including Black students and other students of color, while indirectly working to maintain the “ebony and ivory” pillars in higher education due to the increased competition (Gladieux & Haupman, 1995).

As the US entered the 1980s, President Reagan and his conservative Republican administration passed legislation whereby reducing federal aid programs for higher education, resulting in changes to financial aid offerings (Astin, 1990; Carter-Williams, 1989; Hurtado, 1992). Many scholars contend these changes disproportionately impacted Blacks in their desire to attend or remain in college by further pushing the financial burden of education to students and thus, significantly increasing student debt (Astin, 1990; Carter-Williams, 1989; Hurtado, 1992). The 1980s represented a time of continued and prominent financial aid legislation with exclusionary impact on Black students. This was also a time in history when many White Americans believed that Civil Rights had gone beyond the intent of the regulations, so reverse discrimination cases were emerging in the courts. Thus, the financial aid legislation, coupled with the prevalence of reverse discrimination court cases, allowed the separate Black and White spaces to persist in higher education (Gomer & Petrella, 2017).

In the late 1990s, legislation continued to exclude Black students and put them at a disadvantage. An example is the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997, which created the HOPE and

Lifetime Learning tax credits for college tuition (Federal Funds for Higher Education, 2020). As legislation shifted more federal resources away from the neediest students and moved to support more middle- and upper-income students, Black students were often the group negatively impacted by such legislation (Federal Funds for Higher Education, 2020). Consequently, instead of the US government addressing college access needs for poor students, they were subsidizing the affordability for college for wealthier families, which often meant benefiting White students, and marginalizing Black students. This action by the US government disproportionately impacted Black students because the grants were no longer offered based on need, so academically gifted students, for example, were likely to be admitted first and thereby, limiting access for other students, such as Black students (Federal Funds for Higher Education, 2020). This program initiative illustrates another higher education system that frequently excluded Black students or put them in a marginalized position.

Since the Higher Education Act of 1965, changes in federal support for college students can be characterized as a shift away from addressing college access needs of poor students, to subsidizing the affordability of families of wealthier college students (Federal Funds for Higher Education, 2020). In many cases, the affordability was offered to White students, while excluding Black students and as a result, not providing equal access to higher education. Consequently, this shift allowed access for wealthier students, often representing the dominant identity group (Whites), while excluding the non-dominant identity group (Blacks) (Federal Funds for Higher Education, 2020). Further, enrollment effects of programs that are merit-aid based are large and significant, while the enrollment effects of need-based aid programs are often insignificant (Cornwell et al., 2006).

2.0 Theory of Improvement

Through Improvement Science methodologies, I attempted to address the problem of lack of racial diversity of staff. Current methodologies negatively impact people of color and other minoritized groups (Arends, 2014; Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004). Thus, my aim was to extend 20% of staff job offers to racially minoritized candidates by May 2024, through improved hiring practices and procedures (i.e., protocols). At this stage in my improvement journey, I see and understand the entire system, and the impact the institution's current staff hiring practices and limited training requirements has on the problem. My theory of improvement was that training search committee members on recognizing and managing their implicit biases impacts their selection and hiring decisions, and their actions become more inclusive of racially minoritized individuals, thus leading to hiring more racially diverse staff.

2.1 Theory of Improvement – A Broad Overview

Creating a diverse workforce is necessary as such a workforce has been shown to contribute to a thriving organization, which often leads to higher levels of innovation (Hewlett et al., 2013; Tulshyan, 2019). A recent study (Hunt et al., 2015) indicated a positive relationship exists between racial and ethnic diversity, and organizational growth. Given a diverse workforce leads to innovation, and innovation leads to growth, a racially and ethnically diverse staff is necessary for the growth and sustainability of a college or university.

The theory of improvement describes how scholarly practitioners analyze the problem and begin to confront the problem during the testing phase (Perry et al., 2020). The initial change relates to training search committee members in recognizing and managing their biases (Bohnet, 2016). Longer term changes will consider equity agents on search committees, advertising in diversity publications and additional training opportunities related to evaluating candidate resumes and candidates' other selection criteria (Arends, 2014).

Interventions such as training search committee members on managing their biases have high potential to work because the problem requires an intentional approach to managing biases, and training can be an effective means of educating and inspiring changes in behavior (Emerson, 2017). Training is also necessary since the law does not adequately address the effects of bias on hiring decisions (Carbone, 2014). Studies show that cues relating to ethnicity provoke individuals' implicit biases (Staats et al., 2015). Thus, training search committee members to ensure they recognize and manage their biases, including their bias in selection and hiring decisions, is a critical aspect for increasing racial diversity hiring. These changes are directly linked to decision makers in the hiring process, and therefore, at the epicenter of the change.

My overall assertion or theory is that hiring managers and search committee members learn to recognize their biases and more effectively manage those biases, while applying concepts from the training. Focusing on behaviors of search committee members, I see the needle moving, with more racially minoritized candidates selected for interviews, and identified as finalists, and ultimately, offered more staff positions at WPU. In implementing this change idea, I attempted to demonstrate the change was an improvement.

2.2 Change Idea

As I analyzed the problem of lack of a racially diverse staff, change ideas supported reaching my aim, as they were a mechanism for demonstrating how change was working (Perry et al., 2020). As a framework for planned change, the Multicultural Change Intervention Matrix (MCIM) was useful to represent the change efforts in advancing my goal of social justice and multicultural transformation at the institution (Pope et al., 2019). Utilizing this MCIM framework, the focus of the intervention was individual, with the first order of change being awareness, and the second order of change a paradigm shift (Pope et al., 2019). I attempted to demonstrate how the shift in paradigms, while implementing intentional change ideas can lead to prolonged and meaningful change for the organization (Pope et al., 2019). My strategy was to identify changes related to the college's staff hiring practices and protocols and increase the number of racially minoritized staff throughout the hiring process by influencing search committee selection and hiring decisions. My change idea involved training search committee members in recognizing and managing their biases (Appendix C) and applying the concepts they learned to their search committee activities, including their selection, and hiring decisions. The change idea had not previously been implemented or studied at the institution. Search committees generally wield considerable influence over hiring decisions, so the central change concept, regularly scheduled training, aligned with the training idea and linked directly to search committee related processes and attitudes and beliefs, with the legacy of exclusion (Appendix A).

2.3 System Measures

System measures are the crux of solutioning a problem, as it is necessary to measure outcomes to understand what happened and determine if the intervention resulted in a change. For this project, I measured the outcome of the *Managing Bias* training to determine if the intervention increased the number of racially minoritized candidates selected for interviews, identified as finalists, and offered staff positions. To measure the outcomes, I used specific inquiry questions to guide the study after deploying the training, as these questions aligned directly with my data collection methods and protocol questions (Appendix E).

System measures, that is, process, outcome, driver, and balance measures, assist the practitioner in determining if the change idea or intervention will impact the system (Perry et al., 2020). Each system measure in this project involved aspects linked to the lack of a racially minoritized workforce at the institution.

2.3.1 Process Measures

Process measures focus on change ideas and seek to quickly and easily measure how the change idea is working (Perry, et al., 2020). Process measures are collected frequently and cannot be time consuming (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020). A process measure associated with the training intervention included reviewing the training platform and related reports to determine if the individual search committee members completed the training, as assigned, before they were added as a collaborator on the requisition. Another process measure determined if the process of implementing the *Managing Bias* training was successful, by adding to their knowledge base, or if the participants were already competent in the training concepts prior to the training. I assessed

this measure during the semi-structured interviews with participants. Another process measure involved determining whether search committee members discussed take-aways from the *Managing Bias* training during their first committee meeting, as indicated in the activity logs.

2.3.2 Driver Measures

Driver measures are leading indicators used to determine if change has occurred and if change is impacting primary and secondary drivers (Perry et al., 2020). Following the training intervention, I anticipated the system changing and moving towards my aim. The potential driver measures to help me see if my work was impacting the system include reports of process improvements by search committees, such as determining whether the defined processes (i.e., discussing takeaways from training) was utilized by search committees. A further driver measure was recognizing an increase in the number of racially minoritized staff selected for interviews, identified as finalists, and offered staff positions at the college.

2.3.3 Outcome Measures

Outcome measures are lagging indicators and focus on outcomes of testing changes and answer if the overall aim has been met (Perry et al., 2020). The potential outcome measures help track the progress of improvement efforts and determine if I am reaching my aim. One outcome measure was a shift in the number of racially minoritized candidates invited for interviews, while another outcome measure was an increase in the number of racially minoritized staff employed at the institution, thus establishing a more racially diverse workforce. An outcome measure linked to training was to assess the degree to which participants were applying what they learned in the

training and determine if decisions made by search committees were more inclusive, while participants acknowledge their biases and discuss ways to manage those biases throughout the search process.

2.3.4 Balance Measures

Balance measures assist the practitioner to see if the change has been an improvement for the entire system or if the change has cost the system (Perry et al., 2020). If WPU extends more job offers to racially minoritized candidates, for example, this could upset the system, particularly related to nepotism in hiring that may be occurring. If a racially minoritized candidate was equally qualified, then search committees may likely recommend the underrepresented candidate, which could go against the hiring manager's desire to hire a relative or a friend. Upsetting the system can be measured through the HR due diligence process at the selection stage. HR due diligence helps assess if the training intervention is upsetting the system or maintaining balance, based on a review of the final candidates, and the level of pushback received when approvers question the hiring manager's decision. Another balance measure is tied to hierarchy and power. If the percentage of racially minoritized staff increases, then some individuals may lose power they previously enjoyed. Again, through the hiring approval process, this balance measure will be assessed to determine if the change upset the system, from a hierarchical and/or power perspective.

3.0 Methods

My implementation plan involved collecting and analyzing data to determine if training search committee members on recognizing and managing their implicit biases would better inform their selection and hiring decisions and improve the lack of racial diversity of staff in student-facing positions at WPU. Implicit bias is a term used to describe the prejudice and associated stereotypes towards another person without our conscious knowledge, often resulting in unfair treatment in the workplace (EverFi, 2021). My inquiry questions informed my data collection methods, and subsequent data analyses, specifically related to the training intervention, and search committee activities associated with the selection and hiring process. I obtained data from transcripts from interviews with search committee members, activity logs completed by individual search committee members, and data obtained from the University's applicant tracking system. Information captured in the applicant tracking system included demographic data of individuals who applied to job vacancies, applicants interviewed, candidates identified as finalists, and candidates selected for hire.

Data collection included mixed methods, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data sources. This mixed methods approach involved collecting data from interview transcripts, activity logs and applicant tracking data, and effectively blending data from these sources to support my inquiry. This approach provided an opportunity to obtain a holistic view of the phenomenon, to better understand the impact of the training intervention (Plowright, 2011). Twelve staff members across three search committees for student-facing positions participated in this assessment. The sample size of 12 was sufficient, as it is often recommended that qualitative studies involve a minimum sample size of 12 to reach data saturation (Braun et al., 2016). This

participant number represents a convenience sample taken from search committees formed following vacancies in student-facing staff positions. Convenience sampling was a quick and easy way to find participants for this project (Jager et al., 2017). This sampling methodology was also a cost-effective means of obtaining participants (Jager et al., 2017), as participants did not require honoraria payments since they were already serving on the search committees. Search committees were evenly represented, with four participants per committee, allowing for shared contribution to the study across three search committees. For my analyses, the demographic make-up of the individuals serving on the search committees was not considered, although hiring managers indicated they attempted to create representative search committees, to include individuals across several departments. Although demographic identities of participants did not constitute a major part of my analysis, Table 2 provides a description of the heterogeneity and homogeneity across some participant background characteristics.

Table 2 Participants

| Pseudonym | Sex | Racial Identity | Search Committee Served | Represented Department |
|------------------|------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Robert | Male | White | Mid-level A | Financial Aid |
| Justin | Male | White | Mid-level A | Admissions |
| Elizabeth | Female | White | Mid-level A | Business Office |
| Kathy | Female | White | Mid-level A | Advising |
| Anne | Female | White | Mid-level B | Career Services |
| Betty | Female | White | Mid-level B | Career Services |
| Judy | Female | White | Mid-level B | Univ. Relations |
| Jane | Female | White | Mid-level B | Student Affairs |
| Milt | Male | White | Entry-level | Residence Life |
| Geoffrey | Male | White | Entry-level | Residence Life |
| Paul | Male | Black | Entry-level | Residence Life |
| Betsy | Female | White | Entry Level | Student Affairs |

Participants in the study included hiring managers and individuals who served on staff search committees of student-facing positions. All participants in this study were WPU staff members. To serve on a search committee, participants were required to complete the online *Managing Bias* training module, once per calendar year and prior to performing any search committee activities. Although not required, participants ideally completed the training just prior to performing any search committee activities, so the learning concepts were fresh in their minds, and they could immediately apply the training (O'Donnell, 2017). Ten participants completed the training just prior to serving on a search committee, while one participant completed the training four months prior to serving, and one participant completed it six months prior to serving.

3.1 Inquiry Questions

The following inquiry questions helped inform what occurred in the process of implementing the change idea:

1. What did search committee members learn from the *Managing Bias* training?
2. How did search committee members apply what they learned from the *Managing Bias* training to demonstrate more inclusive behaviors during the selection and hiring process?
3. Did search committees select racially minoritized candidates for interviews, identify them as finalists, and offer them staff jobs, following search committee members' participation in the *Managing Bias* training?

3.2 Data Collection

To support and inform my Problem of Practice, I gathered data in a disciplined and rigorous fashion (Perry et al., 2020). My dissertation in practice employed mixed methods for data collection, using transcripts from participant interviews, along with participant activity logs, supplemented by quantitative data from the University's applicant tracking system. Mixed methods were a strength for this project as it provided a full view of the problem from the balcony (Heifetz et al., 2009). Studies show that utilizing mixed methodology adds value, as it provides the researcher with a deeper and boarder understanding of the phenomenon than other studies that use only one method (McKim, 2017). Additionally, mixed methods improved the study by increasing the validity in the findings (McKim, 2017). Moreover, this mixed methodology better

informed what was happening within the system (Heifetz et al., 2009), while answering my inquiry questions.

3.2.1 Qualitative Data Source: Semi-Structured Interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews with 12 participants serving on three search committees of student-facing positions. For ease of collecting the data, I audio recorded the interviews via Zoom and transcribed the interviews verbatim. Each interview followed a semi-structure interview protocol (Appendix E), and the interview questions aligned with my inquiry questions. The interview protocol was divided into five main sections: (a) general introduction, (b) reflections and lessons learned, (c) demographics and selection, (d) action, and (e) conclusion. Each section of the protocol included a series of questions to inform my inquiry. For example, the reflections and lessons learned section inquired about the participant take-aways from the *Managing Bias* training. During the interviews, I was particularly interested in assessing the participant's understanding of biases, and how they reflected on challenges in managing their own biases during the selection and hiring process. Further, I asked participants to identify the number of racially minoritized candidates the search committee selected for interviews and hired. I collected this necessary data for comparison purposes, since search committees did not have access to any demographic data supplied by the applicants. Asking participants the demographic make up of candidates helped me understand their perceptions of the candidates' racial identity. Additionally, at the end of each interview, I immediately reviewed the transcripts, and began analyzing the data, while continuing to perform analyses throughout the assessment (Savenye & Robinson, 2005). This technique allowed me to keep up with the data and not become overwhelmed with the data analyses process (Savenye & Robinson, 2005). Semi-structured

interviews also provided an opportunity for me to ask probing questions, to clarify a point and to ensure I understood the information conveyed by participants. Asking probing questions added to the depth and meaning of the interviews by asking participants to explain what they said (Savenye & Robinson, 2005). This technique allowed me to understand what was important to the participants, and subsequently, created the rich narratives to describe participants' search committee experiences (Savenye & Robinson, 2005).

3.2.2 Qualitative Data Source: Activity Logs

I reviewed and analyzed ten activity logs, representing an 83% completion rate. One participant did not complete a log, and another participant indicated her log did not provide much detail because she had performed the search committee activities more than one month prior. Further, she expressed difficulty in recalling specific details of the search committee activities. The ten activity logs I reviewed provided a prominent level of detail, related to the selection and hiring process to better inform the assessment.

Participants used logs to document search committee activities, both individual and group activities, along with the steps involved in the evaluation and selection of candidates. Logs provided valuable sources of data for understanding patterns of behavior and activity (Jason et al., 2009). I was interested in learning what activities search committees performed, either individually or as a group. I also wanted to determine if search committees spent time during their committee meetings discussing the *Managing Bias* training, and to ascertain if they engaged in the often-challenging conversations surrounding implicit biases, particularly, implicit biases related to race. The backdrop to these necessary conversations was that if we cannot talk about race, then we cannot learn about it (Janove, 2020).

I emailed activity logs to participants at the beginning of each search, and asked participants to document any activity performed either individually or as a group. Appendix F shows the activity log shell and Appendix G shows an annotated activity log completed by a participant. Activity logs also documented the number of applicants who applied to the staff jobs, along with the number of candidates interviewed, selected as finalists, and hired, and the total racially minoritized candidates in these same disposition steps, according to the participant's perception of the candidate's racial identity.

3.2.3 Quantitative Data Source: Applicant Tracking System

Data from the University's applicant tracking system captured information as candidates progressed in the application review, selection, and hiring process. For example, as individuals submitted their applications, reports were generated to illustrate the number of applicants who applied to the job vacancy, and how many racially minoritized applicants the search committees selected throughout the dispositioning process, as qualified applicants were identified, ideally as part of a more diverse applicant pool. Active applicants deemed qualified for the job vacancy became candidates in the hiring process.

3.3 Data Analysis

I analyzed the data from quantitative and qualitative sources, both individually and collectively, in a mixed methods approach. Mixed methods for this project involved the use of three different data sources (transcripts, activity logs, and system reports), to test the validity of

the data (Carter et al., 2014) and to develop a comprehensive view and varying perspectives in understanding of the phenomena (Patton, 1999), occurring within this study. Through the mixed method approach, I was able to effectively analyze the data and determine to what extent search committees learned material in the *Managing Bias* training and moved from individual awareness to a paradigm shift in demonstrating behavioral changes in their selection and hiring decisions (Pope et al., 2019). One aspect worth noting related to my analyses was my attention to maintaining an awareness of my pre-understanding of this topic, so as not to bias or influence my analyses and/or findings (Erlingsson et al., 2017). It was necessary to carefully maintain such awareness throughout the study, so I would not introduce biases into the analyses, and thus lead to poor validity of research outcomes (Erlingsson et al., 2017).

3.3.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

I analyzed interview transcripts to assess what participants learned from the *Managing Bias* training, what surprised them the most about the training, what they did differently following the training, and their overall impression of the training intervention. Additionally, I assessed the behavioral changes of participants by inquiring about actions participants engaged in and ideas they offered to improve workplace diversity following the training intervention.

For the qualitative data analyses, I utilized content analysis as a means of examining the presence and meanings of certain words, themes and concepts within the text of the qualitative data (Erlingsson et al., 2017). More specifically, I thematically analyzed data from transcripts to understand what search committees learned from the *Managing Bias* training, and ways they applied key concepts from the training intervention. The analytic pathway I employed involved process coding, using gerunds (“-ing” words) to label actions conveyed by participants (Saldaña,

2021). Using process coding, I summarized the data using short action-oriented phrases, recapping the topics contained in the qualitative data (Saldaña, 2021). This analytic pathway was appropriate for this assessment, since the process coding technique often deals with what people do (Saldaña, 2021), and this was an action-oriented assessment. I also selected the process coding pathway as it is effective in small scale projects (Saldaña, 2021). As such, I developed process codes within the transcripts. Next, utilizing the process codes, I developed three themes for the overall assessment, to support my theory of change (Saldaña, 2021). My theory of change progressed from the particular to the general by predicting patterns about what may happen in similar contexts (Saldaña, 2021).

Analyzing the qualitative data were instrumental in informing my work, as interview questions effectively aligned with my inquiry questions, and the findings from the interview transcripts answered those questions (Appendix E). An analyses of the qualitative data provided valuable information to assess whether the *Managing Bias* training led to change. Specifically, during the analysis phase, I evaluated the driver measures to determine if the training intervention generated a change in the primary and secondary drivers (Appendix A).

I analyzed activity logs to identify the frequency of particular content within the logs. Through the activity logs, I wanted to understand patterns of behavior and activity among search committee members (Jason et al., 2009). For the analyses, I quantitized the data for purposes of paradigmatic corroboration (Saldaña, 2021), the process of taking the qualitative data within the activity logs, and transforming it into quantitative representation (Saldaña, 2021). As such, activity logs primarily detailed search committee members' frequency and length of time spent on various search activities, such as reviewing resumes and interviewing candidates. A component of the analyses also assessed if differences existed between group activities, as compared to individual

activities. Through this data analyses, patterns of behavior surfaced and informed my problem and related inquiry.

3.3.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

I analyzed the quantitative representations related to the applicant flow, in particular, the number of applicants who electronically applied to the job vacancies and voluntarily provided their demographic information, and how each applicant was dispositioned in the applicant flow. I presented the quantitative data using descriptive statistics, to describe the basic features of the study data through simple graphic analyses (Trochim, n.d.). Descriptive statistics formed the basis of the quantitative analyses of this data. Descriptive statistics also allowed me to summarize the data collected in a logical, meaningful, and efficient manner (Vetter, 2017). I tracked the applicants throughout the applicant flow to determine how many individuals applied to the jobs, and search committees deemed not qualified and therefore, rejected by the committee, or deemed qualified, and recommended for an interview, and selected as a finalist. Analyzing quantitative data in this manner is an effective means to inform decisions, often leading to better outcomes (“What is data analytics?”, 2021). Specifically, employing quantitative data analyses, with graphical representation, utilizing charts and graphs to summarize the characteristics of the quantitative data, while tracking the candidates throughout the applicant dispositioning process. During the analyses, I calculated the number of racially minoritized individuals selected for interviews, presented as finalists, and offered staff positions. I also downloaded raw data from the applicant tracking system and using Excel, created pivot tables and graphical representations of the data to perform further quantitative analyses.

Using quantitative data analyses allowed me to summarize the data set, and measure the outcomes, as well as measure other related statistics, for instance, assess the dispersion of data within the set, using range, and variability. In reviewing the quantitative data, I determined whether more racially minoritized candidates were selected for interviews, identified as finalists, and offered positions, in support of my inquiry.

3.4 Assessment Project Ethical Considerations

In September 2021, the University's Institutional Research Board (IRB) reviewed my plan, related activities, and concluded this project does not meet the definition of human subject's research and would instead be a program evaluation and improvement project. Therefore, no IRB submission was deemed necessary. However, this project adhered to the following ethical standards and principles: (a) acted to benefit others in the service of humanity (b) promoted justice to assure fundamental fairness for all persons (c) faith-filled and made all efforts to be accurate in the presentation of facts, honor agreements, and trustworthy in the performance of duties (d) avoided causing harm to others (e) maintained self-regarding virtues of prudence and integrity and (f) displayed respectfulness and benevolence in the treatment of others (ACPA, n.d.).

4.0 Findings

My findings from this assessment showed that the applicant pools were mostly White. Moreover, the *Managing Bias* training intervention resulted in a change in participants building their individual capacity for diversity, as well as planning for a diverse workforce. Throughout the selection and hiring process, participants were seeing White, although they demonstrated efforts to unpack their biases in an effort to build their individual capacity for diversity. Participants also offered viable solutions as a means of planning for a diverse workforce.

In analyzing the qualitative data, I developed process codes and overall themes emerged from the codes. Examples of process codes I developed included creating self-awareness, suggesting strategies for managing biases, recognizing barriers, and suggesting different advertising opportunities. Themes emerged from analyzing the transcripts, while participants' quotes exemplified these themes throughout the qualitative analyses. Thus, the overall themes that emerged throughout the assessment included, Seeing White, Building Capacity for Diversity and Planning for a Diverse Workforce.

My analyses uncovered varied findings related to the training intervention, in particular, the timing of the intervention as linked to the degree of retention, as well as the familiarity with the training material. On the one hand, findings showed participants who completed the *Managing Bias* training four or more months prior to serving on a search committee had very low recall of the training material. While for other participants the familiarity with the training material may have resulted in some participants downplaying their White privilege when discussing the training material and related lessons learned.

Participants encountered barriers in the selection and hiring process and subsequently, did not select and hire more racially minoritized candidates following the training intervention. One significant barrier identified by participants during the semi-structured interviews was the lack of racially minoritized individuals in the applicant pools. Explanations for this barrier may be attributed to the prevalence of Whiteness in the local demographics, and the institution not utilizing diverse advertising resources. However, most notably is the possibility that the *Managing Bias* training may have promoted a color evasive approach in the selection and hiring process, allowing participants to justify their actions for not hiring more racially minoritized candidates (Bonilla-Silva, 2017).

My findings related to lessons learned from the training intervention showed that participants learned about managing biases and individually reflected on the teachings. The main theme of the lessons learned related to participant's ability to move the work forward on an individual level, in building their capacity for diversity. However, most of the lessons learned seemed to relate to managing other biases, and not specifically race-related biases.

Through my analyses, I found participants demonstrated more inclusive behaviors and became more self-aware in building capacity for diversity. Thus, a paradigm shift occurred as they suggested ways to more effectively manage their biases. This shift was displayed when participants offered suggestions for improving the selection and hiring process. Additionally, through content analyses, I analyzed activity logs to help identify the frequency of particular content within the logs.

Overall, participants were seeing White as they engaged in the selection and hiring activities for the student facing positions, and thus, did not select or hire more racially minoritized candidates following the training intervention. However, participants reflected on lessons learned

related to managing biases, and demonstrated more inclusive behaviors, while building capacity for diversity and planning for a diverse workforce. And while the applicant pools were not racially diverse, other barriers existed and contributed to participants seeing White throughout the selection and hiring process.

4.1 Seeing White

The applicant data for the three student-facing positions revealed applicant pools contained predominantly White applicants. Further analyses of the demographic profile of applicants showed that only two applicants of the three searches self-identified as racially minoritized, while one applicant opted not to disclose their racial identity. Seeing White, therefore, is best understood in viewing the job applicants and their related demographic profile. The number of applicants for each position ranged from 14 to 15, with an average of 14.33 applicants per job posting. In measuring the number of racially minoritized individuals included in the selection and hiring steps, my analysis included a breakdown of the number of applicants by race for each position in this assessment. The demographics of applicants revealed that only two applicants self-identified as racially minoritized, with no Black applicants, and one applicant who opted not to disclose their racial identity (Figure 1).

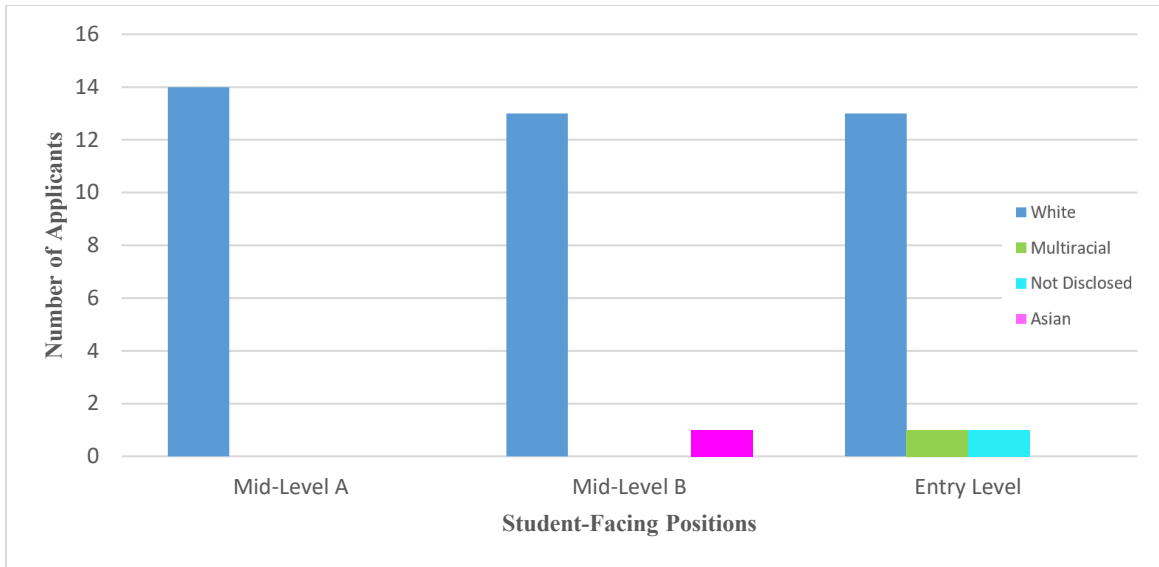


Figure 1 Demographics of Applicants

In analyzing system-generated reports, particular attention was given to the race of individuals at the qualified, interviewed and hired steps in the application review process. The data shows the demographic make-up of applicants for the three student-facing positions, at each step in the applicant review process. Examining the demographic make-up of applicants at each step puts the selection and hiring decisions into context, as hiring managers made selection and hiring decisions at each step in the applicant review process. As Figure 2 illustrates, the demographics of applicants interviewed for the three student-facing positions were all White (Figure 2).

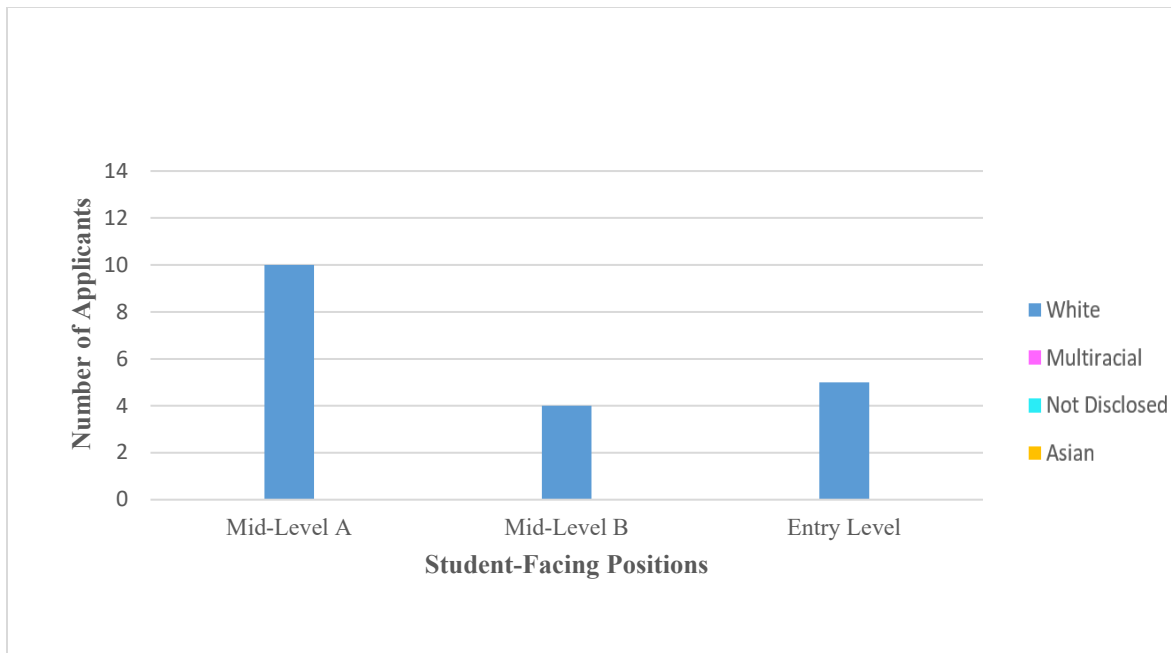


Figure 2 Demographics of Applicants Interviewed

I collected demographic data to determine if the number of racially minoritized individuals selected for interviews, identified as finalists, and offered staff positions increased following search committee members' participation in the *Managing Bias* training. As illustrated in Figure 1, almost all applicants for the three student-facing positions were White. In reviewing mostly White applicants, the quantitative data showed that the percentage of racially minoritized applicants selected for interviews was 0%, and thus, no racially minoritized candidates were hired for the three student-facing staff positions. As a result, the demographic profile of applicants, as shown in Figure 2, can be described as Seeing White.

Although the applicant pools were mostly White, two racially minoritized applicants were part of two of the three pools. Results uncovered that one racially minoritized applicant declined the job interview. However, further findings showed that the other racially minoritized applicant was deemed qualified, although the applicant was not interviewed, and for some reason the search

committee rejected the applicant during the selection process. As I discovered the qualified racially minoritized applicant was not selected for an interview, this finding required further evaluation. My assessment of the finding that a racially minoritized applicant deemed qualified for the position but rejected by the search committee supports the notion that the *Managing Bias* training may have promoted a color evasive approach, thus avoiding the discussion or acknowledgement of race related to implicit biases or justifying their actions through other means (Bonilla-Silva, 2017). Additionally, the concept of color blindness, a racial ideology which proposes the best way to end discrimination is by treating everyone equally, without regard to race, culture or ethnicity (Williams, 2011), may have been another factor influencing the selection and hiring process. Robert alluded to this concept when he expressed that the *Managing Bias* training was similar to other training, “to where you know, if you have a person of color - I don't see color, I just see you.” As an outlier among study participants, Robert’s comments seemed to suggest that he desired to be viewed as well-versed in managing biases, due to his previous bias trainings, but in doing so, actually downplayed the White supremacy that exists among the dominant racial group. This comment was not exemplar across interviews, as participants seemed to acknowledge learning key concepts from the *Managing Bias* training, and thus, did not view themselves as experts in managing biases. However, the demographic results of applicants interviewed as displayed in Figure 2 suggest such a White supremacy phenomenon may have actually been occurring.

I analyzed transcripts and activity logs to assess if search committees considered racially minoritized applicants during the selection and hiring process, following the *Managing Bias* training. Participants conveyed the applicant pools were not racially diverse, which is not surprising given my earlier analysis. However, search committee members also described barriers they faced in selecting racially diverse applicants. To support this finding, both transcripts and

activity logs revealed the applicant pools were not significantly racially diverse, as search committees were mostly seeing White. To illustrate, Elizabeth said, “the ones that we interviewed in person, they were all White.” While Kathy stated it more bluntly during her interview in saying, “let's be honest, what we're getting here is mainly predominantly White.” Further, Milt recognized the Whiteness was one aspect preventing their search committee from selecting racially minoritized candidates to interview. During Milt’s interview he explained, “it was not a deeply diverse pool of candidates to begin with. I mean, there was some diversity, but it did not appear to be a lot of racial diversity for sure.” As a result, it becomes difficult, or for at least one search committee, impossible, to select racially minoritized candidates as they were not even part of the applicant pool. Consequently, applicant data showed participants viewing a landscape of Whiteness, with almost all White applicants, and thus, were seeing White related to the demographic profile of applicants. Further, given the local demographics in a predominantly White area, the campus community and surrounding area essentially becomes a self-perpetuating system of Whiteness.

Examining quantitative data provided further insights into seeing White. Demographic data was retrieved from the University’s applicant tracking system, and results showed that this data displayed the same results when compared with demographic data collected from interview transcripts and activity logs. Hence, the system-generated data was deemed appropriate to use for purposes of my quantitative analyses as the demographic data collected was consistent across all data sources.

In measuring outcomes, my qualitative findings and the quantitative results reveal that search committees did not select more racially minoritized candidates during the selection and hiring process, following their participation in the *Managing Bias* training. This outcome reflects

a predominance of Whiteness in the demographic profile of applicants and is consistent with the Seeing White theme that emerged from the qualitative data analyses. Additionally, the training intervention may have promoted a color evasive approach and allowed participants to justify their actions for not hiring a racially minoritized candidate (Bonilla-Silva, 2017), namely due to the racially homogenous applicant pools. Further, search committees did not have access to the applicant's demographic data, so it is likely they applied the concepts from the training intervention to other types of biases, namely, non-racial biases. As a result of focusing on other aspects of diversity and using the training intervention to talk about non-racial biases, my analyses required further review and examination to unpack those biases.

4.2 Unpacking Biases

To measure outcomes related to reflections associated with the hiring process, specifically, what search committees learned from the *Managing Bias* training, it is necessary to understand participant biases. The finding related to this theme is that search committee members seemed to reflect on lessons learned at an individual level, as participants began to recognize their biases. Participants did not appear to address lessons learned as a group, rather their individual perspectives focused on qualifications and character, such as institutional size and work ethic, and not race-related biases. Interestingly enough, participants did not have access to the system showing the self-identified race of applicants, so not having this information may have played a role in participants failure to focus on race-related biases, since race was not at the forefront of their selection and hiring decisions. Thus, my findings suggest participants learned several key lessons from the *Managing Bias* training and applied those lessons learned to assist them in

Building Capacity for Diversity, a theme that emerged from the qualitative data. My findings demonstrated that participants were building their capacity for diversity, while recognizing and attempting to manage their individual biases.

Transcripts revealed that participants appeared to become more aware of their biases after completing the training intervention. For example, Paul mentioned that there was nothing different in the process, but he said, “I think it was more of a mindset for me just trying to check my biases along the way.” In a separate interview, Betty said “the reality of the workforce is that there are those types of biases that do play into people’s decisions and choices – in the hiring process, potentially or just even in the workforce with your colleagues and other departments. So, I think it's important to keep those kind of things in the forefront of your mind and be aware of your own biases. And you know, kind of gate your judgment process.” This finding clearly shows the *Managing Bias* training had an impact on participants, as the training was more of a refresher for most, and not new information. Further, with reminders to keep biases in check and gate the judgement process, the training seemed to make participants more self-aware of their biases, forcing participants to think more critically about their selection and hiring decisions.

Interview transcripts further revealed that many participants individually reflected on lessons learned during the selection and hiring process, and seemingly welcomed the opportunity to participate in the training intervention, as they acknowledged the importance of managing their biases. To illustrate, Judy stated regarding lessons learned, “that's what I really, kind of for me, that I took away from it, it was more of a self-learning.” Implementing a training intervention for search committees appears to be an effective method for keeping the managing bias concepts at the forefront of search committee activities.

A key finding related to individual reflections focused on qualifications and experiences of the applicants, rather than race-related biases, as revealed in the transcripts. For example, Elizabeth said, “I just really looked at their [applicants’] qualifications, what they’re putting out there with their writing.” In a separate interview, Judy also conveyed, “I was really looking at the qualifications and I was really trying to be fair about things and trying to compare people based on their [work] experiences.” Additionally, in Jane’s interview, she stated she was “reviewing the resumes individually, while focusing on whether or not the applicant meets the minimum qualifications.” Similar to other participants, Betty said in her interview that she “looked at resumes and qualifications.” By focusing on qualifications, participants may have thought this was a good strategy for managing their biases. However, not focusing on race-related biases may have actually introduced an implicit bias. Implicit biases are unconscious biases, and formed over a lifetime, thus we are not even aware of their influence over our decisions. As a result, our brain processes information so quickly, that we may think that focusing on qualifications is the best way to review applications. However, we may be introducing a bias known as confirmation bias (Loehrke, 2018). To illustrate, if a candidate is viewed as a top candidate based on their application materials, then a confirmation bias will lead search committees to focus on information that confirms their top-rated status. As a result, the bias could contribute to inconsistent selection of candidates during the hiring process (Loehrke, 2018).

To illustrate another aspect of biases, Anne described her sensitivity to certain areas that could lead to bias. As she explained, “I know when I look at resumes and qualifications, I look for people who have a really strong work ethic and I think that’s because I have come from a background where you had to have a strong work ethic in order to keep moving forward. I know those are the kind of qualities I definitely look for when I look at a resume.” This aspect of the

selection process demonstrated that some search committee members draw inferences related to an applicant's behavior, such as gaps in employment, and make assumptions about their work ethic as a result of those gaps. Engaging in such behaviors and related assumptions is known as correspondence bias, in that search committees draw inferences about an applicant's character from their behavior (or gap in employment in this case), without other situational factors influencing such behavior (EverFi, 2021).

In unpacking biases further, a few participants discussed ways they managed their biases related to assumptions, such as types of institutions, and other non-race-related biases. As an example, Geoffrey indicated his committee discussed biases related to broad assumptions. In providing the example, Geoffrey described the following scenario. "If an applicant was from a Big-10 school and someone on the committee made a comment about not being a fit for this position, Paul would say, well, let's not make that assumption." In a separate interview, Betsy made a similar comment in saying that "sometimes thinking of fit contributes to bias. As an example, if you have an applicant from a larger institution, and you are thinking about fit, that is a potential bias because it has nothing to do with the person's qualifications." Additionally, other participants seemed to associate the training intervention with diversity in general. As an example, during Milt's interview he said, "we interviewed a candidate from the LGBT community and I don't ever think it was an issue, and that never really seemed to be something that was at the forefront of any of our issues or any of our decision making." These findings suggest that participants thought they were effectively managing their biases, when in fact the conversation really seemed to center around building capacity for diversity.

Activity logs further suggested participants became more aware of biases after completing the training intervention, as they spent significant time reviewing resumes and applications,

particularly given the smaller applicant pools. Activity logs contained on average 6.5 entries. Findings showed that search committees spent on average 2.25 hours individually reviewing resumes and applications, and 7 hours interviewing candidates as a group, either virtually or in-person. However, some outliers were identified. For example, Judy's activity log revealed she spent 3.5 hours "reviewing resumes before initial review with the committee and I created my own chart with criteria from the job posting and noted how each individual fit the requirements." My analyses of the activity logs suggest that search committees were attempting to manage their biases by thinking more critically about their selection decisions, as many participants took significant time in reviewing applications and resumes, given the relatively small size of the applicant pools.

Many participants stated they had previously participated in similar trainings about managing biases, so the material in this training was not new information. As such, several participants said they either completed the same training before or attended a similar training in the past. For example, Robert conveyed he had completed a comparable in-person training prior to joining WPU. He went on to say, "the training went over a lot of that stuff, so *Managing Bias* was almost like a refresher." And in a separate interview Anne stated, "I'm trying to think back to the training, I mean, I think because I've done it before nothing really surprised me per se. I'd say that it was probably a good reminder." These quotes suggest that the training intervention, while a good refresher, may not have been impactful enough, particularly for those participants who completed the training more than four months before performing any search committee activities.

As participants appeared to learn valuable lessons from the *Managing Bias* training, my findings showed that they reflected on lessons learned and began to recognize their biases. The overall finding was that reflections were done at an individual level, while applying what they learned from the training intervention and moving from individual awareness to a paradigm shift

(Pope et al., 2019). This change in behavior demonstrated participants' propensity in building capacity for diversity. Thus, the paradigm shift allowed participants to begin creating viable solutions to the lack of racial diversity of staff at WPU (Pope et al., 2019).

4.3 Creating Viable Solutions

In measuring outcomes related to participants demonstrating more inclusive behaviors during the selection and hiring process, my findings showed that participants offered viable solutions for managing biases, and thus, seemed to demonstrate more inclusive behaviors. As I prompted participants to discuss potential solutions for managing biases, this inquiry allowed them to think more deeply about their biases. Through the process of providing viable solutions to the racial diversity problem at WPU, themes emerged from the qualitative data to suggest participants were Building Capacity for Diversity and Planning for a Diverse Workforce. Offering viable solutions allowed participants to demonstrate more inclusive behaviors and suggest ways to improve the selection and hiring process. As a result, participants seemed to experience a paradigm shift in their individual behaviors, as these intentional change ideas will likely lead to prolonged and meaningful change for the institution.

To assess how applicants applied what they learned from the training intervention, I reviewed transcripts to determine if participants demonstrated more inclusive behaviors during the selection and hiring process. My results revealed that the training intervention helped participants learn about their biases. For example, several participants reported the real-life examples and practical application contained in the training material were useful in helping them understand their implicit biases and significantly contributed to their learning. Participants shared that these

training examples and scenarios made them more self-aware during the selection and hiring process. A quote from Elizabeth illustrates this point when she said, “just having that awareness since you know the biases that we all have, whether we realize them or not.” During Jane’s interview she said, “the training allowed me to keep it [bias] in the back of my mind as you’re going through the search process, so for me it was just the overall awareness.” And in Kathy’s interview she echoed this sentiment saying, “simply put – when it’s not on our radar, you can’t keep yourself in check.” Together, the quotes support that applicants applied what they learned from the *Managing Bias* training and demonstrated more inclusive behaviors during the selection and hiring process. Further, the findings suggest that the training intervention assisted participants in becoming more self-aware of their potential biases and helped them build capacity for diversity, as well as plan for a diverse workforce.

As participants expressed their desire to apply the teachings from the training intervention and demonstrated more inclusive behaviors, participants seemed to exhibit a paradigm shift in offering viable solutions about ways to manage their biases. As an example, several participants suggested the University remove applicants’ names when reviewing applications and resumes. They explained that removing identifying information, such as names, will allow search committees to only evaluate qualifications of applicants, without potentially making assessments based on an applicant’s name. In a separate interview, Justin suggested that after committees interview candidates, the committee should not talk to each other, but instead, “write their thoughts down on a paper or evaluation sheet, and then put it in the middle of the table.” He explained that this was a strategy he had used at a previous institution to help reduce biases. As Justin further explained, “this process allows search committee members to state their opinions about candidates without being influenced by other committee members.” These expressions by participants

appeared to show that they were applying what they learned from the training intervention, while moving from individual awareness to a paradigm shift (Pope et al., 2019).

Although several participants expressed a desire to apply lessons learned and manage their biases, they also conveyed barriers existed in the application process which they had difficulty overcoming with the current training intervention. As previously discussed, applicants were not significantly racially diverse, and thus, search committees had mostly White applicants to select and hire for the three student-facing staff positions.

Further, a racially minoritized applicant for the entry-level position opted not to accept an interview. Although the exact reason is unknown, this finding might suggest that institutional factors are at play that limit people of color from applying or limit people of color from remaining in the interview process at WPU. Due to these barriers, a few participants suggested targeting advertising to increase diversity within the applicant pools. Kathy explained, “we have to advertise in a different place in order to recruit and hire more racially minoritized candidates in a predominantly White area.” In a related quote, Anne suggested to “advertise in organizations such as the Pittsburgh Promise. We could attract potentially a wide array of people to consider for the openings.” The suggestions offered by participants support the belief that they applied lessons learned in managing their biases, although recognized barriers existed in the selection and hiring process, specifically non-diverse applicant pools.

The findings among participants regarding ways to address non-diverse applicant pools illustrated how search committees are becoming more self-aware, and as a result, planning for a more diverse workforce. Further, participants appeared to transform their thinking and identify new ways to create more diverse applicant pools. For example, as Paul acknowledged, “we struggle with not even getting them into the pipeline. Right now, I think we at least need to increase

them [diverse applicants] at the top of the funnel, if you will. I think that could really help.” My findings suggest participants are planning ways to create a diverse workforce, while building their capacity for diversity, as they create viable solutions to increase racial diversity of staff at WPU.

In analyzing transcripts, activity logs and system-generated reports, my overall findings in this assessment suggest that while the training intervention improved participants’ understanding of biases, to better manage their individual biases, increasing the racial diversity of staff at WPU faced challenges due to the prevalence of seeing White throughout the selection and hiring process. Further, various comments and stories as conveyed by study participants underly what Whites often use to justify racial inequities (Bonilla-Silva, 2017), in this case, non-diverse applicant pools, and instead focused on qualifications and experiences of applicants.

5.0 Learning and Actions

My Problem of Practice was the lack of racially minoritized staff employed at WPU. As attitudes and beliefs often contribute to a campus climate that does not support or recognize the importance of diversity and inclusion or uphold the commitment to equity and justice, this study examined implicit biases of search committees and their influence on hiring racially minoritized staff on a predominantly White campus. Hiring practices disproportionately impact Black and other minoritized groups (Astin, 1990; Carter-Williams, 1989; Hurtado, 1992), and as such, the problem likely contributes to declining student enrollment and retention of underrepresented groups, and thus, the rationale for focusing the training intervention on search committees of student-facing positions.

As I analyzed study data related to implicit biases of search committees, key findings emerged related to the impact of the change idea on the lack of racially minoritized staff. The findings were frequently supported by literature, lending credibility to the analysis and related training intervention. Additionally, I identified implications for practice, along with future research opportunities and study limitations, as discussed in this section.

5.1 Findings and Discussions Related to the Research

5.1.1 Improved Attitudes and Beliefs

My theory of improvement was that as participants reflected on lessons learned from the *Managing Bias* training intervention, they would demonstrate behavioral changes in their selection and hiring decisions. The findings in this study revealed that as participants completed the online training, they began to display improved attitudes and beliefs related to managing their biases. This finding aligned with authors Pope et al., (2019), as illustrated in the Multicultural Change Intervention Matrix (MCIM). Specifically, the training intervention focused on the individual, with the first order of change being awareness. My findings showed that the first order of change seemed to occur, as participants communicated changes in their attitudes and beliefs. Additionally, participants seemed to recognize such changes in becoming more self-aware of their biases. For example, during the interviews, most participants mentioned they became more self-aware of their biases following the training, such as biases related to institutional size, and work ethic. However, the biases participants mentioned tended to be non-race-based biases. These findings contributed to new knowledge about the concept of racial diversity, and specifically, identifying the issues that challenge the long-standing cultural, race-based norms in the United States, including norms related to staff hiring on college campuses (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2014). My findings also contributed to new knowledge about managing biases, where the focus was on diversity, rather than race-based biases.

5.1.2 Demonstrating More Inclusive Behaviors

Demonstrating more inclusive behaviors is the second step in assessing change. Following a comprehensive analyses of search committees, my findings showed a positive correlation existed between the training intervention and applying lessons learned to demonstrate more inclusive behaviors. This finding aligns with previous literature in what Pope et al., (2019) referred to when they described the second part of their MCIM and related framework for planned change. Specifically, the intentional action of the training intervention that leads to meaningful change through a paradigm shift. My findings revealed that a paradigm shift seemed to occur as participants began offering suggestions for addressing the lack of racial diversity on campus and subsequently, demonstrated more inclusive behaviors in offering viable solutions to the lack of racial diversity. Consequently, participants began to unpack their implicit biases.

Implicit biases describe our prejudices and stereotypes towards someone without our conscious knowledge (EverFi, 2021). Such implicit biases during the selection and hiring process can be extremely damaging to both the employer and the applicant. Engaging in correspondence bias, for example, could limit selecting viable candidates to interview. To illustrate, if an applicant's resume shows a gap in employment, and the applicant is provided an opportunity to explain the gap, they may say they were caring for their elderly parents, which is an altruistic act, and portrays strong character. And yet the gap in employment on the resume possibly prevents the applicant from being selected for an interview because the search committee views the gap as subpar work ethic. Thus, implicit biases can be detrimental to the selection and hiring process and the organization overall. This finding related to correspondence bias added new knowledge to the understanding of biases in the workplace.

Talking about race is a necessary component of recognizing and managing our implicit biases. Results from the study showed that as participants completed the training intervention, the learning added a valuable new dimension to the selection and hiring process. However, my findings revealed that search committees did not engage in the vital, yet sometimes difficult conversations, including conversations surrounding race-based biases. This finding aligns with previous literature as author Janove (2020) discussed when he said, if we cannot talk about race, then we cannot learn about race. Learning is a fundamental component to changing our attitudes and beliefs and therefore, an essential element of any training intervention. If search committee members are not openly talking about race and race-based biases, then the training intervention becomes less impactful in leading to hiring more racially minoritized staff.

5.1.3 Impact of Training Intervention

Throughout the study, I assessed how participants applied what they learned from the training intervention to demonstrate more inclusive behaviors during the selection and hiring process. My findings revealed that participants appeared to apply what they learned by transforming their thinking and offering viable solutions for improving the racial diversity of staff. For example, when participants suggested removing names from applications to eliminate the possibility of biases, they displayed their recognition that biases exist. The idea of removing names clearly supports previous studies and related literature about when identical resumes of White applicants are called more often than Black applicants due to white-sounding versus black-sounding names (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004). This finding further showcases the advantage bestowed on Whites, related to their privilege as author McIntosh (1988) discussed where White privilege perpetuates race-based oppression for people of color. Further, as author McIntosh

(1988) argues, the system of patterned advantages experienced by Whites results in harm to racially minoritized groups. This finding directly aligns with the literature about Whites' ability to more easily access resources, including their candidacy for jobs at predominantly White institutions.

Collecting data during semi-structured interviews provided insights into the research data. The assessment found that while many participants readily discussed take-aways from the training intervention, some participants demonstrated a low recall of the training material. In particular, data from interview transcripts showed recall of training content was significantly lower when training occurred more than four months prior to convening search committee activities. This finding supports what author O'Donnell (2017) discussed when he said training should occur just before the activity, so that it is fresh in mind, thus allowing participants to immediately apply the training and related concepts to the situation. This finding also contributed to new knowledge related to the precise timing of the required training. As a result, the frequency with which search committees participate in the *Managing Bias* training requires further consideration.

5.1.4 Identifying Patterns of Behavior

In this assessment, participants completed activity logs which proved extremely useful for data collection purposes. The use of activity logs illustrated that author Jason (2009) was accurate when he said, logs provide valuable sources of data in understanding patterns of behavior. Throughout the study, participants documented their search committee activities on activity logs. Such documentation appeared to demonstrate participants' desire to apply the teachings from the training intervention and their willingness to be more inclusive during the selection and hiring process. As an example, participants spent time individually evaluating applicant submissions

prior to any search committee discussion, to avoid a *group think* phenomenon. This finding added new knowledge in understanding the attitudes and behaviors. Additionally, search committee members spent a considerable amount of time performing such activity, particularly given the smaller size of the applicant pools. Thus, patterns of behavior emerged, as participants demonstrated a strategy for managing their biases.

5.1.5 Selecting and Hiring Racially Minoritized Staff

Analyzing the quantitative data provided necessary information related to the reaching my aim of selecting and hiring more racially minoritized staff. I discovered that the job postings attracted 43 applicants across all three student-facing positions, and 40 of those applicants were White. Consequently, this finding limited search committees' ability to select and hire more racially minoritized applicants. As a result, findings showed the *Managing Bias* training did not lead to an increase in the number of racially minoritized staff invited for interviews, identified as finalists, and offered staff jobs following search committees' participation in the training. Further, the quantitative data revealed that any effect of the training would reveal itself in the data by covariation. That is, when the level of training increased, the level of racially minoritized applicants would increase and these measures would vary together. However, because of the racial homogeneity of the applicants in these data, it was not possible to identify covariation, since there was almost no variation. Without variability, there is no co-variability. Quantitative data further revealed that at least one position attracted a predominately high number of out-of-area applicants, indicating that the applicant pools were not strictly influenced by local demographics and thus, not the only driver for low diversity of staff, as previously thought. My findings added to my knowledge related to the impact of the local demographics. However, we cannot exclude the

possibility that local demographics is a significant influencing variable. Thus, the quantitative findings revealed the demographic profile of the applicants was mostly racially homogenous, preventing hiring more racially minoritized staff.

5.1.6 Barriers for Search Committees

While the study revealed some behavioral changes appeared to result from the training intervention, the findings showed that other factors impeded participants' ability to apply what they learned, and thus, barriers existed in the selection and hiring process. A major barrier related to the lack of racially minoritized individuals in the applicant pools. As the key finding showed, only 4.65% of all job applicants for the three student-facing positions self-identified as racially minoritized. The participants were seeing White throughout the selection and hiring process, representing a significant barrier that participants could not overcome with the current training intervention. As reported by participants, this barrier prevented search committees from selecting and hiring racially minoritized applicants. I also cannot exclude the idea that local demographics was an influencing variable in considering the applicant pools for these student-facing positions. The non-diverse applicant pools are an example of what author Bonilla-Silva (2017) describes about situations Whites often use to justify racial inequities. This phenomenon may have occurred within this study, and as a result, additional tests of change and future iterations of the PDSA cycle are necessary to address non-diverse applicant pools.

Another barrier possibly relates to specific institutional factors, and those factors might be influencing the selection and hiring process, and thus, limiting people of color from applying to staff job vacancies, or limiting people of color remaining in the interview process. One possible explanation relates to accessing the online application. For example, if potential applicants,

including racially minoritized individuals, do not have access to a computer, this could limit WPU's ability to obtain a diverse applicant pool, as the University only accepts online applications. Given WPU's recruitment objective of increasing the number of racially minoritized staff, the college needs to increase the number of these individuals in the applicant pool to reach this aim. Therefore, applicants must be provided better access, to both the job postings and the online application process. This access could be accomplished by providing applicants access to computers, for example, in WPU's HR office. The responsibility for improved access rests with colleges and universities. Simply put, a college or university cannot hire more racially minoritized staff if those candidates are not applying to the job vacancies.

In exploring the results more deeply, other factors presented additional barriers. To illustrate, a key finding suggests the possibility that the *Managing Bias* training may have promoted a color evasive approach. This finding seemed to be displayed when search committees discussed ways they managed their biases following the training intervention. Specifically, participants indicated the training intervention created more self-awareness, but all the biases participants discussed related to non-racial biases, such as institutional size, LGBT+ and work ethic. This finding aligns with what authors Bonilla-Silva et al., (2017) discussed when they said that individuals (search committee members in this case) justify their decisions (i.e., not selecting racially minoritized applicants) due to the racial homogeneity in the White applicant pool. Instead, the search committees use other reasons to justify their selection and hiring decisions. The color evasive approach as described appeared to manifest itself in subtle ways, and if the researcher is not fully aware, it could easily be missed during the analyses.

5.1.7 Results of System Measures

System measures, that is, process, outcome, driver, and balance measures, assisted me in determining if the change idea or intervention impacted the system (Perry et al., 2020), as findings emerged related to elements of the system.

In reviewing the training platform and related system reports, I determined if search committee members completed the Managing Bias training, as assigned, prior to granting them access to the job applications. This review represented a process measure associated with the training intervention. Results showed search committee members were only provided access to the applicant tracking system after confirming they completed the necessary training. For internal control purposes, this process involved a segregation of duties, whereby the individual adding collaborators in the system was not the same person confirming search committee members completed the training. The two HR representatives worked together to successfully implement this new business process. Another process measure indicated that implementing the Managing Bias training was successful, as it added to participants' knowledge and self-awareness of implicit biases, as displayed when participants offered suggestions and viable solutions for managing biases. The final process measure related to determining whether search committees discussed take-aways from the Managing Bias training during their first or subsequent committee meetings. This process measure proved to lack consistency, and thus, requires additional change ideas, such as providing discussion questions, to promote and facilitate the necessary race-related bias conversations among search committee members.

The lagging indicators associated with outcome measures focused on the outcomes of testing change ideas and demonstrated the aim had not been met. For example, results did not show a shift in the number of racially minoritized candidates invited for interviews, or an increase in the

number of racially minoritized individuals offered staff jobs, and thus, creating a more diverse workforce. When assessing outcome measures related to the training intervention, the degree to which participants were applying what they learned as reflected in their decision making was examined. Participant's decision making appeared to focus on addressing non-race-related biases, such as institutional fit and qualifications. And although participants' decision making was not extensively put to the test, given the limited pool of racially minoritized applicants, participants did appear to acknowledge an improved self-awareness related to understanding and managing their implicit biases. Supporting evidence was displayed when participants demonstrated more inclusive behaviors by offering viable solutions to better manage their implicit biases.

I also evaluated the driver measures, that is, process improvement related to discussing takeaways from the training, to determine if the training intervention generated a change in the primary and secondary drivers. The results of the driver measures were not consistently achieved by search committees, as they did not incorporate meaningful conversations into their search committee meetings, specifically conversations related to managing biases. A desired result related to the driver measures involved observing an increase in the number of racially minoritized staff selected for interviews, identified as finalists, and offered staff jobs. However, this driver measure did not indicate an increase in the number of racially minoritized staff, as no racially minoritized applicants were interviewed or offered staff jobs.

For the balance measures, the training intervention did not upset the system, both from the level of pushback received from hiring decisions and from a hierarchical and/or power perspective. Pushback likely did not occur as no racially minoritized applicants were selected for interviews, and thus, no racially minoritized candidates were hired, resulting in no increase in racially minoritized staff as a result of the change idea.

5.2 Implications for Practice

Improvement Science is an approach and technique that can successfully be applied to a variety of problems of practice at colleges and universities today. As I assess the racial diversity problem, I see myself continuing to apply Improvement Science strategies, and implement additional tests of change to improve the lack of racial diversity of staff. Additionally, implications for practice must be reviewed and considered along this path of improvement and related journey.

5.2.1 Legal Implications

Several laws and regulations related to processes and practices guide human resource practitioners. And as such, one suggestion is to continue evaluating the selection and hiring process at WPU to ensure the process does not have an adverse impact on racially minoritized applicants. For example, if the selection of racially minoritized candidates (i.e., qualified applicants) is less than 80 percent of the selection rate for the group with the highest selection rate (White applicants in this case), as described in the 4/5th rule (SHRM, 2020), then the process is deemed to have an adverse impact on the minoritized applicant group. The legal implications of policies and practices, such as demonstrating adverse impact, can be significant for an institution.

5.2.2 Community Engagement

As I continue to assess the racial diversity problem, I recognize we must begin to remove ourselves from our ideological echo chambers, so we can begin to experience broader perspectives,

to better understand the lived experiences of other races, cultures and ethnic groups. One suggestion is for White administrators to intentionally engage in community with racially minoritized individuals and organizations in and around the campus. This engagement will likely lead to a better understanding of others, including those different from us. Through these newly formed, diverse connections, this engagement could eventually lead to an increase in the number of racially minoritized individuals in the applicant pool, as White administrators will have an opportunity to communicate staff vacancies to those diverse connections.

5.2.3 Facilitating Difficult Conversations

A necessary component for understanding other perspectives requires engaging in meaningful conversations. However, when the discussions relate to racial biases, such conversations can be difficult. Although it appears group discussions related to implicit biases was missing from the search committees' meetings, engaging in those difficult conversations will likely improve outcomes. This finding aligns with what author Janove (2020) said, if we cannot talk about race, then we cannot learn about it. To facilitate these necessary conversations, my suggestion is to incorporate a discussion component in the training intervention. Providing discussion questions to search committees would help facilitate the meaningful conversations around managing biases and bring attention to implicit biases that everyone undeniably possesses. Thus, providing discussion questions to search committees will assist them in facilitating the meaningful conversation related to implicit bias, particularly race-based biases.

5.2.4 Developing Strategies for Outreach

Although the results of this study did not develop as expected, the assessment brought attention to other issues impacting the problem, in particular, the need to create change ideas to increase the number of racially minoritized applicants. My findings suggest that a targeted advertising and recruitment strategy is necessary to create a more diverse applicant pool for the job vacancies. Again, if racially minoritized applicants are not expressing an interest in staff jobs, and thus not submitting their applications, then WPU will never increase the racial diversity of staff. Developing directed advertising and recruitment strategies will explicitly target, and ideally attract more racially minoritized candidates to the applicant pools.

5.2.5 Establishing Guidelines for Training Intervention

As my findings uncovered, some participants had a low recall of the training material. This finding adds a time element that is new to understanding the concept of training guidelines. To resolve this issue, one suggestion is to require search committee members to complete the training intervention in more frequent intervals prior to serving on a search committee. For example, WPU could implement training guidelines stipulating the *Managing Bias* training must occur within three months of participating in search committee activities. The more frequent training intervals will likely lead to improved recall of training material (O'Donnell, 2017), and thus, provide participants with a more consistent application of the material related to managing biases during the selection and hiring process.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

5.3.1 Limitations

A major limitation of this mixed method study was not having enough racially diverse applicant pools to support a change following the training intervention. For example, if racially minoritized applicants are not applying to the jobs, then it is impossible to select such applicants as they are not even part of the applicant pools. Another limitation was that study participants only represented staff from WPU campus, as no faculty or external staff serving on the search committees participated in this study. To illustrate, a thirteenth staff search committee member from another regional campus was invited to participate in this study, but the individual did not respond to the invitation, representing a limitation in understanding non-WPU staff perspectives. A third limitation was that the study only focused on search committees of student-facing positions, and therefore, not all new vacancies met this criterion. Although the participants for this study represented a sufficient sample size to obtain data saturation, consistent with what authors Braun et al., (2016) said about sample size. However, understanding implicit biases across campus could assist in providing better solutions. As such, search committees of non-student-facing positions were not studied, and they too could contribute to improving the racial diversity of staff on campus. A fourth limitation was the social desirability surrounding conversations about race in higher education. As a desirable topic, individuals may have learned to mask their biases throughout this study and could possibly be more biased than they acknowledged or displayed. A final limitation relates to the power dynamics between the researcher and the participants. As the researcher, senior administrator and change agent for the University, I am in a position of power and influence. As such, participants may have potentially told me what I wanted to hear about the

training intervention, and thus, this study component may have influenced how some participants spoke about the process or responded to interview questions.

5.3.2 Future Research

Several opportunities exist for future research projects following this mixed methods study. To improve the climate and landscape at the University, such research and related change ideas must continue to contain a view with an equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) lens. Future research is necessary to increase the racial diversity of staff, including hiring more racially minoritized administrators. The rationale for such research supports existing literature from Gomez et al. (2015) which described the importance of having administrators who represent diverse groups. Research to increase racially minoritized staff may also help avoid what authors Gomez, Wolfe and others said about how Black administrators often describe themselves as a token of their race. If the institution employs more Black and Brown administrators, such recruiting efforts will likely assist in avoiding Black administrators being the token few employed on staff.

One suggestion for future research related to the Improvement Science process is to expand the sample population to include all staff search committees. After the test of change and related training intervention, WPU search committees for staff now require all members to complete the *Managing Bias* training. However, expanding study participants to include non-student-facing positions will potentially identify other variables and nuances to the racial diversity problem on campus. The plan of becoming a more racially diverse workforce supports the recent study by Hunt et al. (2015) which revealed a positive relationship exists between racial and ethnic diversity and organizational growth. Therefore, including all staff search committees in future research will

provide a broader understanding of the problem across campus, and have a greater impact on the organization's growth.

A second suggestion for future research is to test a change idea regarding additional outreach related to diversity advertising. If racially minoritized candidates do not apply to the positions in larger numbers, then it will be nearly impossible to hire more racially minoritized applicants for staff positions. Thus, researching diversity advertising sources is essential as it could likely lead to increased diverse applicant pools for the staff job vacancies.

A third suggestion for research is to test the modality of the training to examine the effects of online training vs in-person training. For example, an in-person training intervention may offer increased retention of the training material. Further, an in-person training could effectively facilitate the discussions about race, instead of leaving it up to the committees to carry out those discussions. Therefore, researching different training modalities could lead to improved racial diversity of staff. This suggestion again supports what author Janove (2020) said, if we cannot talk about race, then we cannot learn about race.

A fourth suggestion for research is to include students in the study, and thus collect data from both residential and commuter students, to expand the understanding of the campus climate. Students provide a valuable perspective, particularly related to their lived experiences on campus, and the surrounding community. This perspective will allow the University to better understand the campus climate and work towards developing change ideas that increase the racial diversity of staff.

A final suggestion for future research is to test additional training interventions, such as training search committees on techniques for effectively reviewing resumes. Too often participants made inferences regarding an applicant's resume, such as gaps in employment or qualifications,

and the assumptions likely contributed to their biases. Therefore, training search committees on how to effectively review resumes could limit the correspondence bias that the developers of the EverFi (2021) training platform discussed and allow search committees to select and hire more racially minoritized applicants.

5.4 Conclusion

This dissertation examined implicit biases of search committees, to better inform the staff selection and hiring process, by training participants to recognize and manage their implicit biases. Since hiring practices negatively impact people of color and other minoritized groups (Arends, 2014; Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004), the theory of improvement was to expand the racial diversity of staff through improved selection and hiring decisions. The assessment utilized mixed methodology involving qualitative interviews, activity logs, and demographic data from the applicant tracking system.

Utilizing the Multicultural Change Intervention Matrix framework, the focus of the intervention was individual, with the first order of change being awareness, and the second order of change a paradigm shift (Pope et al., 2019). In this study, I was successful in answering my three inquiry questions related to the *Managing Bias* training: (a) What did search committee members learn? (b) How did search committees apply what they learned? and (c) Did search committees select racially minoritized candidates throughout their selection and hiring process? And in examining this problem in the context of the campus community, the three key principles explored included (a) White privilege, (b) structural aspects of diversity and (c) attitudes and beliefs that continue to uphold the racist social system.

I analyzed the data using descriptive statistics and performed thematic coding, specifically process coding, using gerunds (“-ing” words) to label participant actions. Examples of such participant actions included creating self-awareness, suggesting strategies for managing biases, and suggesting different advertising opportunities. Three themes emerged from the process codes: (a) Seeing White, (b) Building Capacity for Diversity, and (c) Planning for a Diverse Workforce.

In Seeing White, my findings showed that the applicant pools were mostly White, with only 4.65% of all job applicants for the three student-facing positions self-identifying as racially minoritized. However, I found participants demonstrated more inclusive behaviors and began to unpack their biases, and thus became more self-aware of those biases, as they began Building Capacity for Diversity. However, such biases related to types of institutions and work ethic, and other non-race-related biases. Although, participants began suggesting viable solutions for search committees to better manage their implicit biases, resulting in participants Planning for a Diverse Workforce. Thus, a paradigm shift seemed to occur as participants offered such suggestions and viable solutions. Still, participants encountered barriers, including the lack of racially minoritized individuals in the applicant pools. And while an explanation for this barrier may be attributed to the prevalence of Whiteness in the local demographics, the most notable possibility is that the *Managing Bias* training may have promoted a color evasive approach in the selection and hiring process, allowing participants to justify their actions for not hiring more racially minoritized candidates (Bonilla-Silva, 2017).

My findings related to current literature on the topic, while adding new knowledge around understandings of the topics, and included implicit biases, timing of training interventions (O’Donnell, 2017), search committee discussions about race (Janove, 2020) and the use of activity logs to understand patterns of behavior (Jason, 2009). This dissertation’s findings revealed that

while participants showed some improvement in attitudes and beliefs regarding the selection and hiring processes, more work is needed related to improving the recruitment and hiring processes at WPU.

5.5 Personal Reflections

In reflecting on my lessons learned and individual growth, I categorize the teachings and development into three key areas: (a) lessons learned about Improvement Science; (b) growth as an improver and leader; and (c) growth as a scholarly practitioner. I feel accomplished in the work I completed thus far, and recognize a transformation within myself. And although my improvement journey and ability to drive change is gaining momentum, I acknowledge that much work is still needed in examining implicit biases of search committees, with the overall aim to increase racial diversity of staff at a predominately white institution. The perseverance in accomplishing this goal requires commitment, although I anticipate some setbacks and adversity in the pursuit of creating a more racially diverse workforce in higher education.

5.5.1 Reflections on Improvement Science

The Improvement Science process was a challenging yet rewarding approach to my Problem of Practice. This process allowed me to examine the problem from a different vantage point. As a human resources practitioner, I had initially viewed the problem, and its potential solutions through a HR practitioner lens. However, I mistakenly thought since I had extensive human resources knowledge, I could apply that knowledge and experience to develop a practical

solution to the lack of racially minoritized staff at my institution. Although, I quickly learned that the Improvement Science approach required me to set my HR practitioner knowledge and experience aside, and examine implicit biases of search committees and their influence on hiring racially minoritized staff with a scholarly practitioner lens. This alternate viewpoint allowed me to embrace the new way of solutioning the problem with an Improvement Science approach, combined with its related strategies and techniques.

In this new way of thinking, I learned the importance of stakeholders in the process of Improvement Science, and testing change ideas. Attempting to lead adaptive interventions requires allies, as the complexities of change will not allow us to navigate it alone (Heifetz et al., 2009). Thus, developing personal relationships is essential to creating strong allies. Many participants in my study indicated their willingness to *help me* so it was more than their desire to participate, it was about the allyship and relationships I had previously formed with participants across campus. As further illustrated, the one participant who did not respond to my invitation was a member of another regional campus, and with whom I did not have a personal relationship, which may explain their non-participation.

Another lesson I learned was recognizing the iterative process related to Improvement Science takes time, requiring researchers to approach and navigate the process like a marathon, and not a sprint. Improvement Science takes patience and time to perform the necessary iterations in the improvement journey, so the researcher needs to build that time into the project plan for a successful study.

5.5.2 Growth as an Improver and Leader

I learned valuable lessons throughout this assessment and the EdD program overall, as I recognize my growth as an improver and a leader. Prior to starting this EdD program, I had considered myself a leader. An individual with integrity and empathy for others, but also one who displays resilience in the face of challenges. Although, as I reflect on my growth as a leader, the difference now relates to my growth as an *adaptive* leader (Heifetz et al., 2009).

As I consider my growth as an adaptive leader, I consider the advice I would have given myself in addressing my Problem of Practice. The first part of reviewing a problem involves understanding the system(s) in which the problem exists. Adaptive leadership teaches us to get on the balcony, so we can view the entire system (Heifetz et al., 2009). Once on the balcony, observe what we are seeing and hearing; scan the systems; ask different questions while on the balcony. Further, identify the primary and secondary stakeholders; determine what drives and motivates individuals to make the selection and hiring decisions; identify the systems measures; and assess the campus climate. Adaptive leadership takes intentional thought and action to understand and address the complex problems facing colleges and universities today. And although practicing adaptive leadership is difficult, while at the same time, profoundly meaningful (Heifetz et al., 2009), we should not fall into leadership mind traps that get in the way of complex and uncertain issues (Garvey Berger, 2019). For example, a foundational skill is about listening to learn (Garvey Berger, 2019). Prior to this EdD program and this assessment specifically, my natural tendency was to listen to fix – because naturally others were talking to me about the issues because they wanted me to fix the problem or issue, or so I thought. However, in participating in semi-structured interviews, I learned to recognize the significance of understanding the problem, and listening to participants' responses, while trying *not* to fix the problem. My goal was to listen to learn (Garvey

Berger, 2019), and subsequently analyze the data collected. I also learned to pay attention and understand the simple stories being told (Garvey Berger, 2019). The simple stories delivered powerful messages, particularly related to the primary and secondary drivers. And in practicing probing techniques, I was able to gather data, and understand the problem from the primary stakeholder's perspective. Finally, I learned to view the situation from a development perspective. If the selected change idea did not work (e.g., *Managing Bias* training intervention), then try other change ideas, while being creative in my approach. In the end, I assessed the adaptive challenges I faced and formulated strategies for change, while sustaining a vision in the process. Adaptive challenges are complex, but with the appropriate leadership strategy, organizational change can be successful. As I articulated in my application to the EdD program, strong leadership is necessary to move an institution forward and often results in leading its faculty, staff and students into uncharted waters. As I complete this EdD program, I fully understand the truth in this statement, as I plan to continue finetuning my improvement skills, while continuing to grow as a leader, and more importantly, an *adaptive* leader, in leading change for faculty, staff and students in higher education, while incorporating my strong leadership skills.

What I learned most about myself as an improver is that, even though my positionality differs, and I cannot begin to know what it feels like to be a Black applicant trying to secure a job at a PWI, I can implement change ideas related to equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) that improve the climate and landscape at the University. Following this project, I remain committed and dedicated to the EDI work and look forward to continuing as an effective practitioner driving change in higher education and moving this work forward. And while I made strides in the EDI space, diversity of staff requires additional change ideas to address the problem. Utilizing

Improvement Science approach and techniques, we must continue to delve into the problem more deeply, utilizing a Plan-Do-Study-Act process and cycle (Bryk et al., 2017).

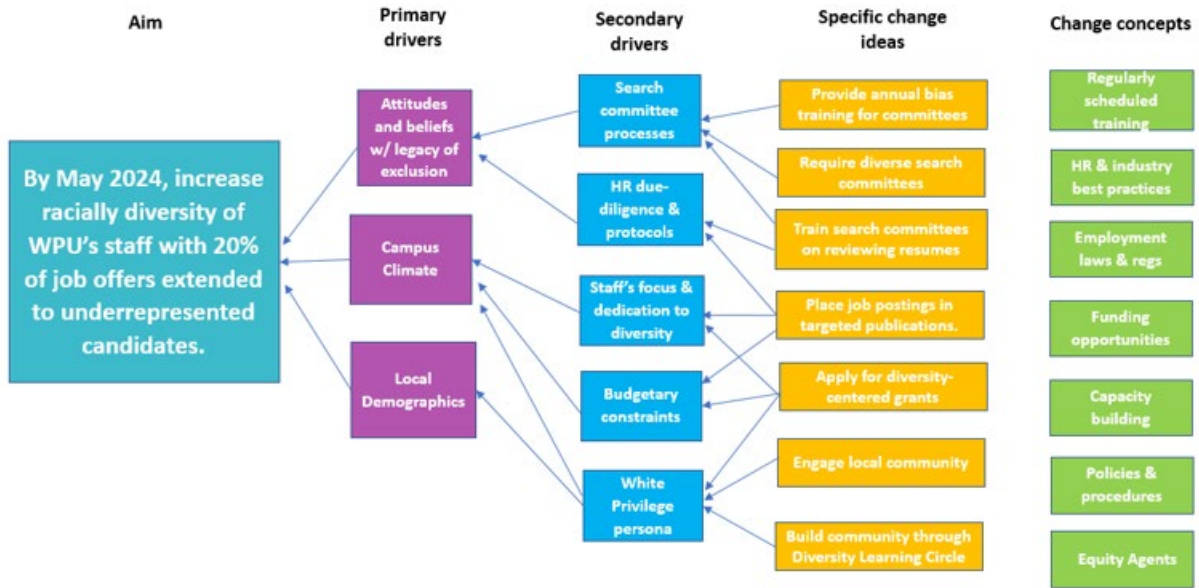
Finally, in reflecting on this project, what surprised me the most related to the semi-structured interviews, and the participants' willingness to offer solutions to the problem. Although the typical narrative surfaced about the challenge of WPU located in a predominantly White area, many participants also identified potential change ideas that can be tested through this same iterative process. In addition, participants seemed committed to improving diversity at WPU, and offered various perspectives related to the problem. The participants' engagement and commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion validated the relevancy of this problem of practice and one we must continue to address in order to drive change in higher education.

5.5.3 Growth as a Scholarly Practitioner

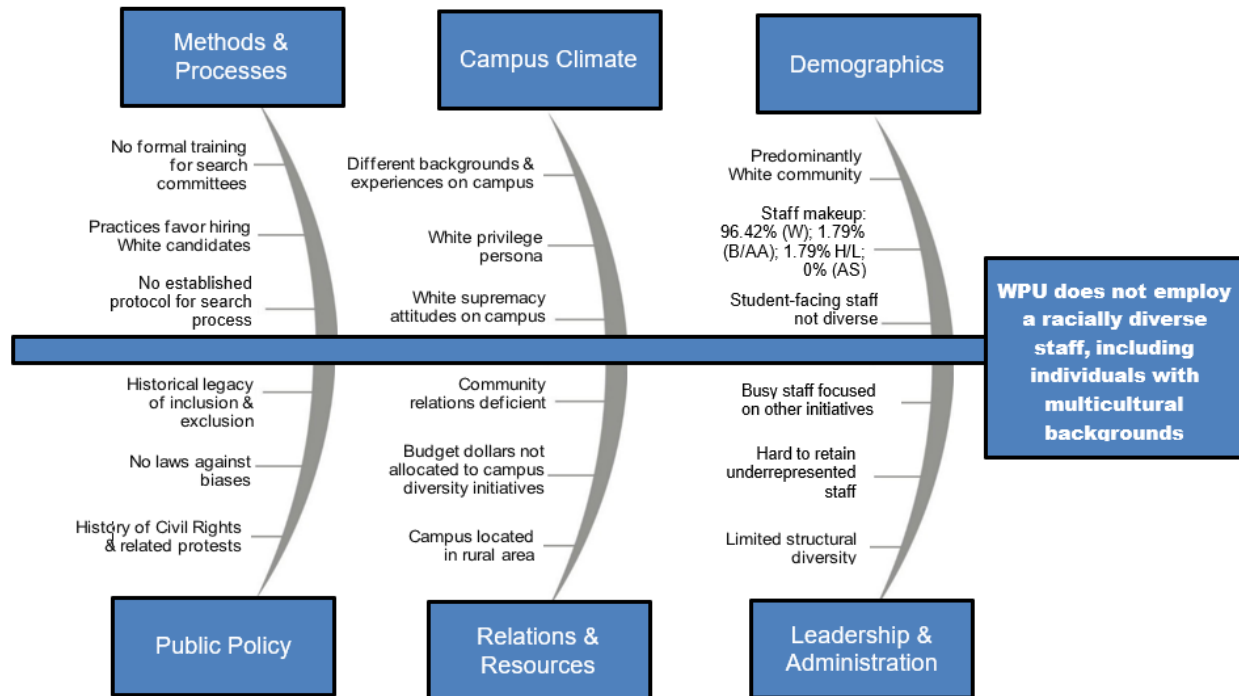
Throughout this EdD program, I developed skills as a scholarly practitioner. I now regularly view problems from a scholarly perspective, providing opportunities to understand the evidence behind problems of practice, through supporting literature, while developing creative solutions and tests of change. One example of my development as a scholarly practitioner relates to successfully identifying scholarly sources. Early in the EdD program we were asked to search for and identify scholarly sources related to our potential problems of practice. For me, this was a daunting task, as I had no idea where to begin and whether or not the articles and sources represented scholarly works. I quickly learned that scholarly works exist in numerous fields of study, and it takes practice to learn key identifiers of such works. Scholarly works are essential when examining problems of practice, as the information helps the researcher better understand the problem, and the literature lends credibility to the problem of practice and related tests of

change. As I continue my career in higher education, I plan to further develop my skills as a scholarly practitioner, while sharing my findings and insights with others, particularly individuals in the human resources and administration fields in higher education.

Appendix A Driver Diagram



Appendix B Fishbone Diagram







Appendix C Managing Bias Training

Component of Change Idea: Required Training for Search Committee Members

Description of *Managing Bias Training*: This online training program recognizes that understanding bias in the workplace is the first step to managing it. This course defines bias, describes how it affects the workplace, and encourages learners to use that knowledge to reduce the negative effects of bias. Some of the learning outcomes include:

1. Staff will learn and understand how biases can affect our actions.
2. Staff will understand how biases affect decisions, including staff hiring decisions.
3. Staff will recognize how biases can have real impacts on WPU's campus community.
4. Staff will learn how biases can create unhealthy work environments that reinforce unjust practices if those biases remain unchecked.

Training Features:

-  Online learning perfect for remote and non-remote employees.
 -  Interactive content that drives behavioral change.
 -  Actionable insights that inform your diversity & inclusion strategy, include discussions related to hiring.
-
-  Course content that integrates seamlessly with major learning management systems platforms

EVERFI is a vendor for online training. This summary illustrates the current program design, as provided through the administrative dashboard, and associated administrative rights provided to WPU's human resources director.

Appendix D PDSA Sheet

| | | | |
|---|--|-----------------------|---|
| Test Title: | Managing Bias Training | Date: | 2-Nov-21 |
| Tester: | Mary Anne Koleny | Cycle #: | 1 |
| What Change Idea is being tested? | Implement a Training for Search Committee Members | Primary Driver | Attitudes & Beliefs, w/ legacy of exclusion |
| What is the overall goal/hypothesis you are testing? | To provide search committee members with informed perspectives on biases related to hiring practices & other related hiring decisions. To have search committee members employ strategies and skills they learned in the training, and effectively apply what they learned to the application review, interview, selection processes, and other search committee activities. Ultimately, hire more racially minoritized staff. | | |

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|--|---|--|---|---|--|---|---|---|--|---|---|---------------------------------|--|--|--|---|
| <p>1) PLAN Details: Describe the who/what/where/when for the test. Include your data collection plan.</p> <p>Require search committee members participate in the <i>Managing Bias</i> training. Training will be offered in an online platform, self-paced with required deadlines. Qualitative data will be collected via semi structured interviews and activity logs, completed by search committee members; Quantitative data will be collected via system-generated reports through the admin training portal of the applicant tracking system, Talent Center.</p> | <p>2) DO Briefly describe what happened during the test, surprises, difficulty getting data, obstacles, successes, etc.</p> <p>To be determined after test of change.</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%;">Questions: Questions you have about what will happen. What do you want to learn?</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Predictions: Make a prediction for each question.</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Data: Data you'll collect to test predictions.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>How are search committees reflecting on lessons learned from the Managing Bias training during their search committee meetings?</td> <td>Predict search committee members will reflect on the training during their search committee meetings and describe specific ways during</td> <td>Activity logs of search committees; Semi-structured interviews.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>How do search committee members apply what they learned from the <i>Managing Bias</i> training in demonstrating more inclusive behaviors during the selection and hiring process?</td> <td>Predict search committee members will begin to take action and exhibit more inclusive behaviors in their selection and hiring decisions following the training.</td> <td>Semi-structured interview data; Review applicant tracking data to determine how applicants are dispositioned in Talent Center.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Did the number of racially minoritized candidates selected for interviews, identified as finalists, and offered staff jobs increase following search committee members' participation in the <i>Managing Bias</i> training?</td> <td>Predict the number of racially minoritized candidates selected for interviews will increase; Predict the number of racially minoritized candidates offered positions will increase over time, as search committees begin to recognize and manage their biases, they will consider more racially minoritized</td> <td>System data from Talent Center;</td> </tr> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </table> | Questions: Questions you have about what will happen. What do you want to learn? | Predictions: Make a prediction for each question. | Data: Data you'll collect to test predictions. | How are search committees reflecting on lessons learned from the Managing Bias training during their search committee meetings? | Predict search committee members will reflect on the training during their search committee meetings and describe specific ways during | Activity logs of search committees; Semi-structured interviews. | How do search committee members apply what they learned from the <i>Managing Bias</i> training in demonstrating more inclusive behaviors during the selection and hiring process? | Predict search committee members will begin to take action and exhibit more inclusive behaviors in their selection and hiring decisions following the training. | Semi-structured interview data; Review applicant tracking data to determine how applicants are dispositioned in Talent Center. | Did the number of racially minoritized candidates selected for interviews, identified as finalists, and offered staff jobs increase following search committee members' participation in the <i>Managing Bias</i> training? | Predict the number of racially minoritized candidates selected for interviews will increase; Predict the number of racially minoritized candidates offered positions will increase over time, as search committees begin to recognize and manage their biases, they will consider more racially minoritized | System data from Talent Center; | | | | <p>Outcome</p> <p>To be determined after test of change.</p> <p>To be determined after test of change.</p> <p>To be determined after test of change.</p> |
| Questions: Questions you have about what will happen. What do you want to learn? | Predictions: Make a prediction for each question. | Data: Data you'll collect to test predictions. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| How are search committees reflecting on lessons learned from the Managing Bias training during their search committee meetings? | Predict search committee members will reflect on the training during their search committee meetings and describe specific ways during | Activity logs of search committees; Semi-structured interviews. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| How do search committee members apply what they learned from the <i>Managing Bias</i> training in demonstrating more inclusive behaviors during the selection and hiring process? | Predict search committee members will begin to take action and exhibit more inclusive behaviors in their selection and hiring decisions following the training. | Semi-structured interview data; Review applicant tracking data to determine how applicants are dispositioned in Talent Center. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Did the number of racially minoritized candidates selected for interviews, identified as finalists, and offered staff jobs increase following search committee members' participation in the <i>Managing Bias</i> training? | Predict the number of racially minoritized candidates selected for interviews will increase; Predict the number of racially minoritized candidates offered positions will increase over time, as search committees begin to recognize and manage their biases, they will consider more racially minoritized | System data from Talent Center; | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| <p>4) ACT Describe modifications and/or decisions for the next cycle; what will you do next?</p> <p>To be determined</p> | <p>3) STUDY What did you learn?</p> <p>To be determined</p> |
|---|--|

Appendix E Semi-Structured Interview Protocol and Alignment

| General Introduction | This section provides the participant with background on the study, thanks the participants and asks the participant to agree to recording the interview |
|--|--|
| I am interviewing search committee members of student facing positions and I would like to talk to you today about your recent experience on the search committee, including the <i>Managing Bias</i> training in which you participated. | Introduction - summary and purpose of interview. |
| First, I want to thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. | Thank search committee member for participating in this interview. |
| As you may know, I am completing my Doctor of Education in Higher Education Management in the University's School of Education. | This statement contextualizes the project and advises participant that it is part of the EdD program of study. |
| I am evaluating the impact of the Managing Bias training, to determine if it influences the selection and hiring decisions and improves racial diversity of staff. | This statement explains the purpose of the project. |
| The interview should last 30-45 minutes, and I will be recording this interview because I want to make sure I capture all your comments. | This statement describes the anticipated timeframe of the interview. |
| Do you have any objection to me recording this interview? | This question confirms the participant acknowledges and confirms they do not object to the recorded interview. |
| Please know that all responses will be kept confidential, and only shared with project team members and we will ensure that any information we include in our report does not identify you as the respondent. You don't have to share anything you don't want to, and you may end the interview at any time. | This is a confidentiality statement, used to reassure the participant that information will only be shared with project team members. |
| Do you have any questions about this interview as explained? | This statement provides the participants an opportunity to ask questions about the project or related interview. |

| Question | Rationale | Relationship to IQ |
|---|---|--------------------|
| Introduction | This section provides an entry point to the discussion by asking questions that helps the interview get started and helps put the participant at ease. | |
| Tell me about your role [at the institution]. | This question warms up participants by giving them the opportunity to explain their role and provide details to understand their perspective and/or expertise. | |
| Why did you accept the invitation to serve on this search committee? | This question helps to understand the participant's motives and desires for participating on a search committee. | |
| Reflection & Lessons Learned | This section discusses ideas about lessons learned from the <i>Managing Bias</i> training and prompts the participants to reflect on those lessons, both individually & collectively. | 1,2 |
| What did you know about the implicit bias topic prior to the training? | This question serves to assess the knowledge base of participants, to determine if the training was successful, by adding to their knowledge base, or if they were already competent in the training concepts prior to the training. | 1 |
| What surprised you in the <i>Managing Bias</i> training? | This question is intended to begin to establish participant take-aways as they reflect on the topic, following participation in the <i>Managing Bias</i> training. | 1 |
| What information from the <i>Managing Bias</i> training was most useful in understanding implicit biases? | This question helps build upon the take-aways following the training, to determine if the training is meeting desired learning outcomes (Illinois State, n.d.) related to biases. | 1,2 |
| What would you say is the most difficult part of managing biases? | This question is useful to assess the participant's understanding of biases, and ways they reflect on challenges in managing their own biases. This question will also help inform any actions taken by participants. | 1.2 |
| What have you learned about yourself as a result of participating in the <i>Managing Bias</i> training? | This question allows for a deeper dive into their personal reflection about recognizing and managing their biases. | 1 |
| Describe how your search committee discussed take-aways from the <i>Managing Bias</i> training. | This question is intended to determine if the search committee spoke openly about managing biases as a group, as requested, following the online training. | 1,2 |
| Selection & Demographics | This section of the protocol seeks to obtain demographic data of the candidates. Specifically, what was the demographic make-up of the candidates in the selection, interview and hiring stages of the recruiting process and whether the candidates selected included racially minoritized individuals | 3 |
| Describe the demographic make-up of the candidates in your applicant pool. | This question, along with the next three prompts, identifies the actual number of racially minoritized candidates the search committee selected to interview, identified as finalists, and offered the position, as directly related to the inquiry. | 3 3 3 |
| Invited to interview? | See rationale above | 3 |

| | | |
|--|--|---------|
| Identified as finalists? | See rationale above | 2,3 |
| Selected for hire? | See rationale above | |
| What prevented your search committee from selecting racially minoritized candidates to interview? (if applicable) | This question serves to understand any barriers in the selection process and how search committees are demonstrating more inclusive selection behaviors. | 1,2 |
| What did the <i>Managing Bias</i> training make you do differently as a search committee member? | This question further addresses how search committee members reflect on what they learned in the training to recognize and avoid biases in their decisions. | |
| Action | This section moves to the action component of the learning process and seeks to understand if a paradigm shift has occurred, as a result of learning to recognize and manage one's bias, as described in the Multicultural Change Intervention Matrix (Pope et al., 2019). | 1, 2, 3 |
| Describe ways you reviewed applicants differently after completing the <i>Managing Bias</i> Training. | This question is useful in understanding if the training resulted in changes in behavior, as described in the second phase of the Multicultural Change Intervention Matrix (Pope et al., 2019). | 1, 2, 3 |
| Tell me about any challenges you faced related to maintaining the search committee activity logs. | To help validate the data provided in the activity logs, this question is useful in understanding the maintenance of the logs. This question also provides the participant an opportunity to comment on the logs, to determine if the logs met their intended purpose of measuring activity (and action) of the search committee (Jason et al., 2009). | 1, 2, 3 |
| What can search committees do to avoid bias in their selection and decision-making process? | This question further seeks to understand actions that search committee can take in answering the inquiry questions. | 1,2 |
| What do you think you will do differently after participating in the <i>Managing Bias</i> training? | This question brings the participant to a future state and addresses the behavior component of the learning model (Illinois State, n.d.). | 1,2 |
| Conclusion | These questions set the tone for concluding the interview. This point in the process provides participants an opportunity to share additional information and discuss any items that were not discussed earlier in the protocol. | 1,2, 3 |
| What other ideas do you have for recruiting and hiring racially minoritized candidates when our campus is located in a predominantly white area? | This question allows the participant to apply what they learned to consider other ideas for addressing the racial diversity issue on campus. | 1, 2, 3 |
| Tell me about any search committee experiences we have not yet discussed that you think are important for me to know. | This question invites participants to share other ideas or recollections that have not been explicitly mentioned in the interview. This type of question invites participants to share new information or stress importance already discussed. | 1, 2, 3 |

Appendix F Activity Log Shell

Search Committee Activity Log

SEARCH START DATE

SEARCH END DATE

POSITION:

HIRING MANAGER

REQUISITION #:

| BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY | DATE OF ACTIVITY | TYPE OF ACTIVITY* | TIME SPENT ON ACTIVITY | DEGREE BIAS TRAINING WAS USEFUL** (1-5) | CHALLENGES WITH ACTIVITY | COMMENTS |
|-------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------------|---|--------------------------|----------|
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NUMBER OF APPLICANTS APPLIED:

CANDIDATES INTERVIEWED:

CANDIDATES AS FINALISTS:

CANDIDATES HIRED:

TOTAL RACIALLY MINORITIZED CANDIDATES:

INTERVIEWED:

FINALISTS:

HIRED:

Additional Notes

* Type of activity = group (G) or individual (I)

** 1 = not at all useful for activity; 5 = extremely useful for activity

Appendix G Annotated Activity Log

Search Committee Activity Log

SEARCH START DATE: 2/10/2022
SEARCH END DATE: 4/7/2022

POSITION: Entry Level
HIRING MANAGER:

REQUISITION #: 2200XXXX

| BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY | DATE OF ACTIVITY | TYPE OF ACTIVITY* | TIME SPENT ON ACTIVITY | DEGREE BIAS TRAINING WAS USEFUL** (1-5) | CHALLENGES WITH ACTIVITY | COMMENTS |
|--|---------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------|---|---|----------|
| Initial meeting of the search committee. | 3/1/2022 | G | 1 hour | 2 | | |
| Narrowing down applicant submissions for first round of interviews. | 3/10/2022 | I | 1 hour | 5 | Looking at only the information in the application to narrow down the search. With almost all applicants meeting minimum requirements. | |
| Committee meeting to share lists of top candidates and form final list to move to first round of interviews. | 3/15/2022 | G | 1 hour | 4 | Coming up with some backups if the individuals on our list do not accept the first round interview. | |
| First round Zoom interviews. | 3/18/2022; 3/22/2022; 3/23/2022 | G | 5 interviews 0.5 hours/per | 4 | Ranking candidate based on a short interview over Zoom. | |
| Narrowing down candidates based on their first round Zoom interviews. | 3/23/2022 | G | 30 minutes | 5 | Creating a ranking list of my top picks. | |
| Second Round On Campus Interviews | 3/30/2022; 4/6/2022; 4/7/2022 | G | 2 hours/per 3 total. Includes lunch. | 5 | Ensuring not to think of how well you think the individual would fit in at UPG | |
| Finalizing results of interviews and creating tier list of picks. | 4/7/2022 | G | 1 hour | 5 | Equally weighing the different weaknesses and strengths of everyone to determine who we thought would be the best fit for the position. | |
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|-------------------------------|----|
| NUMBER OF APPLICANTS APPLIED: | 15 |
| # CANDIDATES INTERVIEWED: | 5 |
| # CANDIDATES AS FINALISTS: | 3 |
| # CANDIDATES HIRED: | 1 |

| | |
|---|---|
| TOTAL RACIALLY MINORITIZED CANDIDATES: | |
| INTERVIEWED: | 0 |
| FINALISTS: | 0 |
| HIRED: | 0 |

| Additional Notes |
|------------------|
| |
| |
| |

* Type of activity = group (G) or individual (I) ** 1 = not at all useful for activity; 5 = extremely useful for activity

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