"We Are All for Diversity, but . . .": How Faculty Hiring Committees Reproduce Whiteness and Practical Suggestions for How They Can Change

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Despite stated commitments to diversity, predominantly White academic institutions still have not increased racial diversity among their faculty. In this article Robin DiAngelo and Özlem Sensoy focus on one entry point for doing so—the faculty hiring process. They analyze a typical faculty hiring scenario and identify the most common practices that block the hiring of diverse faculty and protect Whiteness and offer constructive alternative practices to guide hiring committees in their work to realize the institution's commitment to diversity.

Keywords: Whiteness, university hiring, higher education, racism, diversity in academia

> The reason we don't have more faculty of color among college faculty is that we don't want them. We simply don't want them.
>
> —*Marybeth Gasman, "The Five Things No One Will Tell You About Why Colleges Don't Hire More Faculty of Color"*

As university workers, we find ourselves in a critical social moment. We are in the midst of the Black Lives Matter movement and global student protests (in Chile, South Africa, and Taiwan, among other countries) against government austerity and authoritarian state structures, the 2017 protests led by Indige-

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nous students against Canadian celebrations of 150 years of the colonial state, and the high-profile 2015 resignations of the University of Missouri's president and chancellor over racial tensions they could not manage. The deep racial divides exposed by the 2016 election in the United States and the subsequent rise in hate crimes on campuses illustrate that racism has been and will continue to be a central issue in higher education. It is no longer justifiable for academia to remain racially illiterate. Interviews with student protesters repeatedly show that a key demand is increased racial diversity among the faculty and racial literacy among the White faculty (We The Protestors, 2015; Chessman & Wayt, 2016). These calls are not new; generations of activism and scholarship have reiterated the demand to diversify and decolonize predominantly White university campuses (Kayes, 2006; Smith, Turner, Osei-Kofi, & Richards, 2004). Yet, while most universities have responded with declarations of "valuing diversity," and some with pledges and specialized programs, why have they overwhelmingly still not achieved these goals?

While racial diversity among students has increased, faculty diversity has not. In the fall of 2013, among full-time professors in the United States, 84 percent were White (58 percent males and 26 percent females), 4 percent Black, 3 percent Hispanic, and 9 percent Asian/Pacific Islander. Making up less than 1 percent each were professors who were American Indian/Alaska Native and of two or more races (NCES, 2015). Similarly, in a comprehensive diversity accounting of Canadian universities made public in 2016, Malinda Smith and colleagues (AWA, 2016a) report that despite two-plus decades of equity policies, the Canadian university professoriate remains overwhelmingly White (81 percent) and male (66 percent). The numbers are even more bleak as one looks *up* the ladder of university leadership: 73 percent of universities have all-White leadership teams, and "in 2016, not a single university had a visible minority woman, or Aboriginal man or woman on their presidential leadership teams" (AWA, 2016b, para. 4).

At the same time, position calls that "encourage" and "invite" underrepresented groups and especially visible minority applicants are ubiquitous. In Canada, publicly funded universities have a legal obligation through the Employment Equity Act to include statements that demonstrate their commitment to equitable hiring practices. In the United States, federal law requires equal opportunity and reasonable accommodation. Yet, in the face of these legal and stated commitments to diversity, the above statistics speak to the urgent need for predominantly White academic institutions to identify the persistent barriers that prevent greater racial diversity among their faculty and to develop strategies to address them. In this article we focus on one such entry point: the faculty hiring process.

We argue that through a range of discursive moves, hiring committees protect rather than unsettle Whiteness. In so doing, they actively close the gates against racial diversity (CAUT, 2010; Gutiérrez y Muhs, Nieman, González,

& Harris, 2012; Henry et al., 2017; Matthews, 2016; Ng, 1993; Schick, 2000). These moves include the so-called objective scrutiny of applicant CVs, the discourse of "fit," the token committee member, the additive nature of diversity-related interview questions, and the acceptability of candidate ignorance on issues of race/gender. By analyzing these elements, we offer a thematic examination of both well-meaning and outright obstructionist actions that block efforts to increase racial diversity within the academic labor force.

We explicate these familiar moves and also reflect on our own efforts to increase faculty diversity as White women who have served on numerous university hiring committees in both Canadian and US contexts (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2009). While we are situated within the field of education, these dynamics have been documented across these national borders and in a range of disciplines, including education, law, humanities, social sciences, and nursing (Beard & Julion, 2016; Henry, 2015; Henry et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2004; Vick & Furlong, 2012; Ware, 2000). Drawing from this research and the generous mentorship of colleagues of color and our own struggles to advance racial equity in our spheres of influence, we speak explicitly to our fellow White colleagues who serve on these committees and offer strategies that might authentically open the gates to greater faculty diversity.

We are White academics whose work is indebted to the generations of scholarship on race by Indigenous scholars and scholars of color. In addition to this academic foundation, we have benefited from the personal mentorship of many colleagues of color and Indigenous colleagues. While we centralize the example of race in our discussion, we do so using an intersectional race analysis. At times, we use *race* interchangeably with the common institutional language of *diversity*. In isolating race (to the exclusion of intersectional identities, for example), we do not intend to minimize the importance of gender, sexuality, class, or ability on how people experience racialization. Nor do we intend to make invisible the history of White settler society that has erased Indigenous bodies for generations (Barker, 2009; Razack, 2002; Wolfe, 2006). For both brevity and accessibility, we use race as a familiar entry point for predominantly White institutions to begin to problematize a range of unnamed and exclusionary institutional practices. We recognize that we may seem at times to be essentializing racial categories. But our objective is not to reify these categories but to make common racial patterns and assumptions visible in an accessible way.

Whiteness in Higher Education

Ruth Frankenberg (1997) describes Whiteness as multidimensional: "Whiteness is a location of structural advantage, of race privilege. Second, it is a 'standpoint,' a place from which white people look at ourselves, at others, and at society. Third, 'whiteness' refers to a set of cultural practices that are usu-

ally unmarked and unnamed" (p. 1). Thus, to name Whiteness is to refer to a set of relations that are historically, socially, politically, and culturally produced and intrinsically linked to dynamic relations of White racial domination (Frankenberg, 1997; Roediger, 2007). In other words, Whiteness is deeply embedded in sociocultural practices, and disentangling Whiteness from these practices requires a multifaceted approach.

As Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2015) explains, White-oriented and -led institutions reproduce Whiteness through their curriculum, culture, demography, symbols, and traditions, while they simultaneously pass as neutral spaces free of race and racialized perspectives. Only peoples of color are racialized and seen as "bringing" race into race-neutral (White) spaces. If there are no peoples of color present, race remains unnamed and is not presumed to be an organizing institutional factor. Bonilla-Silva surfaces this normative invisibility through his deliberate naming of non–Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) as Historically *White* Colleges and Universities (HWCUs). He terms this normative invisibility "the white racial innocence game" in which Whites claim to have no racial knowledge and therefore no awareness of the structures of racism that reproduce White advantage. Similarly, Indigenous scholar Susan Dion (2009) refers to the stance of "perfect stranger," wherein White teachers claim a racial innocence about Indigenous peoples despite having received a lifetime of formal and informal pedagogy on the stereotypical "imaginary Indian" (p. 330).

HWCUs have, for decades, articulated a desire for integration and lamented the difficulty of achieving that goal (Gasman, 2016). Yet these lamentations do not address Whiteness itself as a fundamental barrier to integration (or to racial equity, which goes far beyond mere integration). As Sara Ahmed (2012), Bryan Brayboy (2003), Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2012), Frances Henry and colleagues (2017), and others have explained, for many White/settler-colonial institutions, the implementation of university-wide diversity initiatives and policies are problematic for at least three reasons. First, they tend to view diversity as a stand-alone policy that is conceptualized as the adding of students or faculty of color to the existing makeup of the institution and do not address the fundamental Whiteness of the university's policies and practices. Second, the conceptualization and implementation of diversity initiatives in this manner nearly always add workload to the most junior faculty of color and the few numbers of senior faculty of color who can mentor them. Third, diversity initiatives render their underlying logic of Whiteness invisible and thus normalize the everyday discourses that racialize only faculty of color. In these ways, the everyday "grammar of whiteness" (Bonilla-Silva, 2012) remains unaddressed.

Additionally, the labor of diversity work is often devalued at the highest-tier institutions, where research in the form of peer-reviewed journal publications and the acquisition of grant monies are the long-standing barometers of the most-valued work driving salary and career progression. In this context, fac-

ulty of color are positioned at the frontlines of implementing HWCUs' diversity policies, since they are seen as "the face" of these initiatives and are often among the few who understand the stakes associated with them (Henry et al., 2017). They are expected to do this work in spite of deep White resistance and at a cost to their own research programs. Further, they must make the diversity work palatable for White colleagues when even pressure to attend a stand-alone diversity workshop is a cause for animosity. If a stand-alone session names White advantage and challenges presumed White racial neutrality, the backlash of White fragility often ensues. DiAngelo (2011) defines *White fragility* as the result of the White subject position—moving through a wholly racialized world with an unracialized identity (e.g., White people can represent all of humanity, people of color can only represent their racial selves). She argues that White people

> are centered in all matters deemed normal, universal, benign, neutral and good. Challenges to this identity become highly stressful and even intolerable. Not often encountering these challenges, we withdraw, defend, cry, argue, minimize, ignore, and in other ways push back to regain our racial position and equilibrium. (p. 57)

Thus, for colleagues of color, in addition to the diversity work itself, they must also navigate the emotional landmines of White fragility so often triggered in response to diversity work.

Another unnamed logic of Whiteness is the presumed neutrality of White European enlightenment epistemology. The modern university—in its knowledge generation, research, and social and material sciences and with its "experts" and its privileging of particular forms of knowledge over others (e.g., written over oral, history over memory, rationalism over wisdom)—has played a key role in the spreading of colonial empire. In this way, the university has validated and elevated positivistic, White Eurocentric knowledge over non-White, Indigenous, and non-European knowledges (Battiste, Bell, & Findlay, 2002; Carvalho & Flórez-Flórez, 2014; Grosfoguel, Hernández, & Velásques, 2016; Mignolo, 2002). These knowledge forms "inscribed a conceptualization of knowledge to a geopolitical space (Western Europe) and erased the possibility of even thinking about a conceptualization and distribution of knowledge 'emanating' from other local histories (China, India, Islam, etc.)" (Grosfoguel et al., 2016, p. 59). The decolonization of the academy requires, at minimum, an interrogation of not only the disciplinary fields and their borders but also the everyday commonsense practices of the institution itself.

In what follows, we analyze a typical faculty hiring scenario. While there may be slight variations in the process (depending on discipline and teaching versus research-intensive campus), the core elements of the job search are predictable and stable (Perlmutter, 2017; Vick & Furlong, 2012). We focus on illustrative practices that serve to block greater diversification of academic units and thereby protect the inherent Whiteness of HWCUs.

The Steps of the Hire

> When the people in power receive a mandate to search out excellence, the first place they look is to people like themselves, and too often that is also where the search ends.
>
> —*Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs et al.,* Presumed Incompetent

Step 1: The Job Description

Tenure-Track Position in Elementary Education

Primary responsibilities will include teaching elementary-level teacher preparation courses and other teacher education courses as needed by the unit. Required qualifications include PhD or EdD in Curriculum and Instruction or another closely related field, demonstrated excellence in teaching, and experience teaching in grades 1–6. The ideal candidate will be adept in the use of instructional technology, be familiar with state teacher preparation standards, and be interested in joining a campus community that promotes diversity, respect, and inclusion.

In mainstream thought, it is people of color who "have" race (are *racialized*) and whose identities are hyphenated and marked (e.g., Black Canadian, Chinese American) as compared to "regular" (White settler) identities that remain unnamed (e.g., you don't see White American or Scottish Canadian). Thus, one of the most powerful actions an academic unit can take up when beginning a hiring process is to *mark* the invisible aspects of dominance that are embedded yet go unnamed in the position description. The field into which a new hire is proposed is never neutral. Therefore, a call for a general position in any field is not possible. While an open job description may allow for a wider range of candidates, it also reinforces the idea that some aspects of the job are core, foundational, and thus presumed neutral, while other aspects are additional, extra, and specialized. Because specializations are necessarily more focused, they can also seem narrower and limited.

The default of privileging a presumed neutral generalist will position them as able to teach more courses in the program; we presume that candidate Bob, as a generalist elementary education graduate, can "hit the ground running" and teach several of the courses we need covering, while candidate Ali, a multiculturalist, would be great for our required diversity course but not for the general elementary education courses (such as Classroom Management or Assessment). The failure to acknowledge that everything we teach is from a particular disciplinary perspective positions Bob as a generalist and Ali as a narrow specialist. Further, it disavows the extensive work a specialist undertakes. Consider a medical analogy: a neurologist will have undergone similar training as a general practitioner as well as further study and specialization in neurology.

Whenever diversity is an add-on, we normalize Whiteness rather than diversity. Curriculum, instruction, or elementary teaching are not neutral fields free of political agendas. And when there is no signal that those who wrote the job description recognize this, the message conveyed is that of the status quo. The institution is thus missing its first opportunity to recruit from the small handful of newly minted scholars who could support the institution in reaching the goals it claims to value.

— Constructive Alternatives

Most traditional fields are based on old classifications and, as such, reproduce the status quo. For example, the field of multicultural education grew out of the traditional social studies field (Banks, 1993). Be forward thinking in how the disciplines have evolved and reclassify the position to demonstrate that understanding this evolution is central to the position.

Consider the following issues when writing the job description:

- *Operationalize diversity.* If the job announcement states that yours is a campus that "promotes diversity," the committee needs to set clear targets by operationalizing the term. For example, decide what explicit evidence you will use to determine that the candidate has promoted (rather than simply values) diversity. Consider diversity in terms of numbers (e.g., who is and is not there) and as an integrated perspective (more than an opinion or feeling). Ask those with specific expertise to give their thoughts on the job description and to incorporate their ideas. If the committee cannot operationalize diversity, don't use it in the job announcement.
- *Politicize traditional canonic fields.* Incorporate language into every job description that signals a critical paradigm to traditional canons. For example, "Candidates must demonstrate an ability to situate knowledge in their field in a social (cultural, historical) context" (e.g., must be able to speak to how knowledge is validated and institutionalized in their field).
- *Avoid coded language.* Avoid language that signals an uncritical ideological paradigm, such as "urban," "inner city," "disadvantaged," or racializes all students (e.g., "Candidates are expected to explain the role of mathematical thinking in the lived race and class experiences of elementary students as well as in the teacher and school staff in the region. For example, the impact of White settler colonialism on Vancouver's racialized and Coast Salish communities, or Seattle's racialized and Duwamish communities").
- *Understand that dominant groups are always overrepresented in body and/or in ideology, particularly in disciplines seen as nonpolitical.* Given that the default of most HWCUs is an overrepresentation of the dominant groups (e.g., Whites, White men [especially at higher ranks], native English speakers, nondisabled peoples), use every job description as an opportunity to name and correct the imbalance.

Step 2: The Committee Composition

Imagine two committees:

- *Committee 1.* Head of academic unit makes an announcement in the faculty meeting: "We have a new generalist line open in elementary education and need to put the committee together. In addition to those on the standing committee, we will need at least two additional volunteers from the faculty at large. At least one of the volunteers needs to be a generalist. Who would like to volunteer?"
- *Committee 2.* Head of academic unit approaches faculty member with expertise in diversity and says: "We have a new generalist line open in elementary education and need to put the committee together. I am asking you as a member of our faculty with expertise in diversity to head this process. If you are unable to, whom do you recommend I speak with?"

Which one of these approaches to the committee's composition is biased?

They both are. Despite the appearance of neutrality and an open system of participation by all members of the faculty, the first one will continue to reproduce the same outcomes because it does not *intentionally* act to disrupt them. Given that little progress has been made in terms of faculty diversity in many decades, interrupting status quo procedures is a critical entry point for challenging the reproduction of inequity. This includes unexamined assumptions when putting hiring committees together.

Most university committees would say they try for balance on working groups. However, balance as a working concept is often not adequately problematized. It must be contextualized. When baking, for example, a baker must balance the ratio of wet to dry ingredients. This balance is not fixed for all cases; the wet-to-dry ratio will be different if the desired outcome are pancakes versus bread. Thus, the desired outcome determines what is needed to achieve balance. Similarly, when universities strive for committees that are balanced in terms of diversity, they must consider a different set of parameters than simple equal numbers of tenured versus pretenure faculty, faculty versus students, people of color versus White people. If the organization has stated a desire to recruit and retain a faculty complement that reflects the diversity of the student body or local community, committee membership needs to reflect who can best assess a candidate's contributions to that goal.

Common committee formulas include senior administrative leaders, a subject-matter expert or two, and newer tenure-track members of the faculty. Because this is how hiring committees are typically put together in many academic units, we may assume that it is a proven successful process and that we can trust the good intentions of our peers to use their best judgments and bring forward the most qualified candidates. But as evidenced by our outcomes, these assumptions are false. Whether a department takes volunteers or votes members in, when a predetermined formula generated by the institution is used, the default is the reproduction of power; such formulas were

not originally constructed to address diversity and thus cannot be relied on to achieve diversity.

As the pressure to diversify faculty has increased, the response has often been to ensure that a person of color serves on the hiring committee. Given the demographics at most institution, there are typically one or two colleagues who are repeatedly tapped to provide "diversity cover" (Henry, 2015; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2009). In addition to being tokenized and overworked, members of color must also deal with ongoing microaggressions (Sue, 2010) in the deliberation process and White fragility should they resist. If the racial perspective the "token" member is asked to provide is in conflict with the desires of the White members, it is most often dismissed (Henry et al., 2017). The token member eventually refuses to endure any more committees (and is seen as "difficult") or, and especially if pretenure, learns to go along to get along (which guarantees that they will continue to be tapped to provide cover rather than critique).

The following dynamics are common and problematic:

- Members (except for token members) are presumed to be objective and neutral (well-intentioned = objective = supportive of a "balanced" approach to diversity).
- By positioning the token member as the one to bring the racial perspective, that member is continually racialized.
- The token member is presumed to have expertise on race and racial issues (such as racism, tracking, profiling), but *only* on these issues.
- White members do not recognize that the burden on this token member to bring race perspective is occurring in a hostile (White) workplace.
- The White assumption of a universal experience is that if the committee (or indeed, the academic unit) feels welcoming to the White members, it must feel equally welcoming to everyone.
- If the token member actually does call out the racism in a discussion, they are often met with resistance and dismissal.

— Constructive Alternatives

When putting together the committee, consider the following:

- *Think about committee balance in terms of bodies as well as perspectives.* If your institution has the numbers, ensure that the search committee tilts to redress the racial imbalance by having members of color as the majority and, especially, in senior roles on the committee. Ensure that the colleagues who are asked to serve—including White colleagues—bring expertise in racial equity. If your department is predominantly White and no members have racial equity expertise, invite faculty members with expertise from affiliated departments to serve.
- *Develop a response to stand by decisions that will be read by some faculty as biased.* Remind faculty that for generations the department was mostly White and

male and that those members hired the first groups who set up the culture and curriculum. Be prepared to clearly articulate how your committee composition today is in line with the institution's professed diversity goals.

- *Don't underestimate the role of the committee chair.* Make sure the person in charge has the critical understanding necessary to evaluate diversity-related questions and can advance the work of the committee with diversity as a central project. The chair should have the facilitation skills needed to redirect problematic tangents and arguments against diversity during committee discussions. Be sure that the chair will be able to present a strong case of recommendation to the power structure. If not, be firm and consider a different chair.
- *Draw on expertise in your faculty and account for their extra service load.* Recognize diversity service by increasing release time. Ensure that those assessing job applicants have a demonstrated critical understanding of, not just a "belief in" or "commitment to," diversity. Use measures such as committee members' published work, research projects, community involvement, and professional development efforts as specific evidence of their commitment and expertise, rather than their warmth, friendliness, professed interest in the issues, or international travels.

Step 3: The "Objective" Scrutiny of the CV

> *As chair, in preparation for our discussion, I have gone through the applicant CVs and created a table of candidates' publications in terms of numbers, quality of journals, and grant monies. This will help us compare the candidates on fair grounds.*

This vignette is based on an actual experience one of us had on a hiring committee. The committee chair (a White male) prepared for the shortlisting meeting by creating an elaborate template that he saw as an impartial frame, presuming that evaluating according to the same criteria equaled evaluating fairly.

Education researchers have extensively problematized the standardized approach to assessing students (Darling-Hammond, 2014; Darling-Hammond, Ancess, & Falk, 1995; Kohn, 2000; Oakes, 2005). Further, beyond the assessment *of* students, assessments *by* students of their courses and professors shift predictably along group-based lines: (cis) male professors are rated more positively than (cis) female, White professors are rated more positively than professors of color, and courses that address privilege and racism are rated more negatively (Deo, 2015; Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1996; Nast, 1999; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014). Further, research on implicit bias (Jones, Peddie, Gilrane, King, & Gray, 2013; Jost et al., 2009) shows that there is a large-scale social belief that peoples of color are inherently less qualified, yet implicit bias and its impact on an applicant's materials (such as teaching evaluations) are rarely ever addressed by hiring committees.

This research shows that the qualifications of candidates of color are often overscrutinized—for example, *Why are their student evaluations so poor? Why are there so few grants acquired for their research?* At the same time, many contributions are undervalued—for example, the extra workload that faculty of color typically take on is not "countable" on the CV. This includes mentoring students of color and/or helping them navigate HWCUs, supporting student activist organizations and community groups (e.g., Muslim Students Association, Black Lives Matter chapter), mentoring junior faculty, and consulting with administrators on issues pertaining to particular minoritized populations. Further, candidates of color and Indigenous candidates are often asked to bear additional high-stakes responsibilities—for example, *Can you serve on the vice president's advisory committee for the new Aboriginal Students Services Center? Could you consult with the president on his Asian Heritage Month speaker series? The department received a request for a speaker from the Aga Khan Community Leadership group, and the chair recommended they contact you.* The pressure to accept these responsibilities is intense, because if a candidate does not agree to take them up, it is likely that the important work won't be done—or won't be done thoughtfully. All of this shadow work draws on the personal, lived, and academic expertise of scholars of color and other marginalized scholars, yet it seldom counts (or counts very little) toward career progression. Conversely, the absence of these skills and experiences are not viewed as deficits on White applicants' profiles, as their capacity to contribute to this type of service work is rarely seen to be essential.

— Constructive Alternatives

Think through the following when reviewing candidate CVs:

- *No CV is race-neutral.* Is the committee tending to neutralize the CV of candidates who do not address race and to racialize those who do? For example, committees may begin to talk about the candidate of color as being an expert on "urban" issues rather than a "general" elementary education person (*We need someone who can teach and supervise our students on a range of elementary education topics, not just race*).
- *Count input, not just output, in research.* Is the committee counting only candidates' output (the number of publications) and not input (the time it takes to build the relationships that grant access)? Some forms of traditional cultural knowledge are exceedingly challenging to obtain, and some are against cultural rules to disclose to outsiders, and doing so could lose the researcher future access. Consider what other evidence might be considered, such as relationships with communities and activism/advocacy work, and ask for this type of evidence to be included with the application materials for all candidates.
- *Count multilingualism as a strength, not a barrier.* Are discussions about whether or not a particular committee member can understand the speaker allowed

to distract from the content? If monolingual committee members are having trouble understanding accented English, that should be considered a deficit on the part of the monolinguist, not the speaker.

- *Be aware that not all publications appear in Western indexes.* Does our assessment of publications consider the languages in which the candidate publishes? Recognize, for example, that international journals may not be indexed in your university's library.
- *Expect evidence of diversity literacy from every applicant, regardless of the field.* Is every candidate able to demonstrate a degree of diversity literacy? Consider what coursework candidates have taken. What are they writing about and who are they citing? In the context of racialized candidates, the playing field is not level, so seek criteria to include these candidates rather than eliminate them. *Take as long as necessary to get it right.* If you did not get candidates who could further your racial equity goals, why didn't *you* do well enough to attract them? If you had diverse candidates in the pool but did not shortlist them, why not? If your long list does not include minoritized candidates, consider it a failed list and be willing to start over.

Step 4: The Interview

Interview Schedule for Dr. V. L. Stone
Elementary Education Position

Tuesday, April 7	
6:00–8:00 pm	*Dinner with Drs. D. Waterson and P. Lawrence* *Rainy City Brewing Co. Pub and Restaurant*
Wednesday, April 8	
8:30–9:30 am	*Continental breakfast with dept heads (Robert Johnson Hall, Rm 110)*
10:00–11:30 am	*Research presentation to faculty (RJH, Rm 112)*
12:00—1:30 pm	*Lunch with committee members (Faculty Club)*
1:30–3:00 pm	*Interview with full committee (RJH, Rm 112)*
3:15–3:45 pm	*Meeting with Dean Swenson (RJH, Dean's Suite)*

The seemingly neutral layout of a typical campus visit should be considered more critically, as it serves as the most intensive interaction between a candidate and the institutional committee. In this way, it is important to consider the concept of embodiment and how it shapes all institutional interactions.

Racial power manifests institutionally, but it is also inscribed on bodies themselves. While we often acknowledge race in the bodies of racialized others—particularly when it is perceived as a commodity that we want or need—we do not often see how Whiteness, too, is embodied by a hiring committee or how it bears on racialized others who interact with the committee. Herein lies a dilemma. To continually mark the bodies of some candidates as *diverse*

(as we too have done in this essay) is to reify the normative power inscribed on the bodies perceived as White. While there is not currently a way around this dilemma, it can at least be diminished with attention and consciousness. One of the dynamics we can attend to is how the diverse candidate's embodiment implicitly raises both doubts and expectations for the committee; doubts about whether or not the candidate can be a person of color and also be a generalist who won't "just" be interested in race issues and expectations that the candidate can function as a representative of the diversity the campus claims to desire. These doubts and expectations are present in the candidate's interactions with the committee, whether the committee is explicitly aware of them or not.

In addition to performing well during all parts of the interview, candidates of color must also navigate the default conditions of White normativity within the HWCU institution at large. Along with the conditions of White normativity, they also have the parallel track of their racialized experiences to attend to as they prepare for the day, what W. E. B. DuBois (1903) termed "double consciousness." For example, *Is the campus in a city or a small town? Will I be safe after hours there? Will I encounter any other peoples of color (or otherwise minoritized peoples)? What microaggressions will I face and how do I stay focused in spite of them? Do I speak openly and honestly about my work on race? Do I talk about how my identity shapes my work?* Against this backdrop, well-meaning advice by a committee member to "just be yourself" does not alleviate the multilayered stress a candidate of color may feel. Indeed, it can actually increase that stress because it reveals how little the well-meaning committee member understands racial dynamics. Our point here is not that hosts should be so careful as to be distant and reserved, but that committees need to recognize their own embodiment as well as each candidate's and understand that every interaction occurs within a sociocultural and political context, no matter how benign it may appear.

While many candidates of color have a great deal of professional experience navigating White dominant spaces, a primarily White department still has an impact on their interview experience. Every question conveys information to the candidate about the department's consciousness, or lack thereof. In a HWCU, a candidate who is of color but does not challenge racism and Whiteness will more likely be seen as an asset, as unbiased and relatable (Ahmed, 2012; Henry et. al, 2017). The committee will presume that such a candidate can "help" with diversity initiatives and will do so as a team player, not "pushing race" or "seeing racism/racists everywhere." In these ways the candidate will be implicitly racialized, while at the same time positioned as unbiased and "naturally" competent on issues of diversity.

Conversely, a racialized candidate who also conducts diversity-related research must manage the committee's perception that they have a single-focus expertise, which may present in such questions as: *This is great, but how will you teach all the other students? How does this relate to other students?*

— The Diversity Question

Some institutions have a bank of questions for committees to choose from. These questions may not address racial diversity at all, leaving it up to the committee to include the discussion. The add-on nature of these questions, and that they are so often optional and thus not included at all, communicates that the capacity to understand oneself in relation to their sociopolitical context is not central to the department. When a question *is* asked, it is typically something like *How do you manage diversity in your courses? How do you support diversity, respect, and inclusion in your classes? How do you work with diverse students?* Yet these questions proceed from the unmarked norm of Whiteness. They do so through their presumption that the White candidate is neutral, that diversity exists outside of oneself, and that difference is something that should or could be controlled and managed. These questions also do not account for the dynamics of unequal power relations embedded in the classroom and the institution at large.

Some of the responses we have heard from candidates to these types of uncritical questions are:

I taught in a rough inner-city school/tribal school.
My wife is Thai.
I consulted in Baghdad.
I'm a minority myself; I am a ___.
I grew up in a small town, so I understand the need to feel included.
I taught English in China for two years so I understand feeling excluded.

These answers proceed from the unmarked norm of Whiteness in their presumption that simply being near peoples of color, holding fond regard across race, experiencing marginalization in another axis of difference, or any experience of difference at all can result in constructive interventions against oppression. They also function to exempt one from complicity in systems of oppression or the further need for critical engagement.

A candidate's race plays a powerful role in how they are held accountable to engage with complexity and nuance in arguably the most complex and nuanced social problem of our time: race relations. While candidates of color are expected to be able to speak to this topic, White candidates (and White men in particular) are not only permitted ignorance but can openly profess ignorance and still be seen by an uncritical committee as honest, even charming, but certainly not unqualified (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012). In a classic example of the lack of institutional accountability for faculty diversity, an advice column in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* explained how to answer the diversity question without acknowledging that there are conditions under which a candidate might be unqualified to answer (Utz, 2017). To offer tips that presume that anyone can "pass" the diversity question with just a little preparation gained from an advice-style column reinforces the lack of insti-

tutional accountability to diversity. It also relieves the hiring committee of accountability to its institution's professed commitment to diversity; it doesn't have to see a candidate's inability to speak with nuance and complexity to this issue as reason for disqualification or endure the discomfort of standing behind the decision to disqualify a candidate based on that inability. In our experience, a candidate's response to a question on diversity has never been the determining factor in the decision. In this way, these questions simply function as cover for the committee and the institution itself, as they are rarely taken seriously. (One of us was present at an interview when a diversity-themed question was asked and two of the White male members of the committee chose that moment to get up and refill their coffee cups, while a third opened his laptop to check e-mail.)

— Constructive Alternatives

While our ads and public narratives (such as mission/vision statements) may *tell* candidates that our institutions are critically conscious, institutions rarely *show* this consciousness in action. The interview is an opportunity to do so. While most of us sitting at the hiring table will be White, if we have a critical consciousness, we are better equipped to create a welcoming and affirming climate for underrepresented candidates. If we do not have a critical consciousness, we are less likely to recruit (or retain) these candidates. So what shape are *we* in? If we state that we want candidates with experience in urban schools, the committee should know how to assess this experience. Again, we must be prepared to expect accountability. This means that if a committee member is not able to assess answers to diversity questions as strong or weak, then that member is simply not qualified to serve on a hiring committee at an institution that professes diversity as a core value and mission.

To be more responsive to these dynamics, consider strategies such as the following:

- *Integrate diversity into every question in a meaningful way.* In turn, listen closely for complexity and nuance, critical reflection, humility, and self-awareness. Ask follow-up questions and hold high expectations. In so doing, it is communicated from the start that the issues are taken seriously and that faculty will be held accountable to these values. Some questions might be:

  What are some of the techniques you use to teach in a culturally responsive way?

  Can you trace the history and key politics of your field? How has it responded to calls to move away from "great white men" and toward more inclusive/diverse scholarship?

  You are asked to teach a general Elementary Teaching course. Who are the five to ten authors the students must read, and why? [Listen for diversity of authors in each candidate's response.]

How do you recruit and support racially diverse graduate students? What success have you had? Challenges?

What role models are there in your field for nontraditional students (e.g., female students, LGBTQ+ students, Indigenous students, students of color, and students with disabilities)?

More and more students are demanding faculty accountability on issues of race and equity. How have you responded? What areas of growth do you see for yourself?

A group of students comes to you and says that there is racial inequity in the classroom's dynamics. How might you respond to its concerns?

- *View less formalized parts of the day as further opportunities to communicate your diversity literacy.* For example, have you asked about dietary restrictions? Is your interview occurring during an important period of faith (e.g., Ramadan, Yom Kippur)? Has there been an acknowledgment of unceded Indigenous territories to start the day and meaningful address of local protocols? What consideration has been given to accessibility within a potentially noisy space (such as a pub or large cafeteria) for candidates who might be hard of hearing, or have mobility limitations?
- *Consider which students you put in front of which candidates.* Because our field is multicultural education, during the interview process we are consistently put in front of the students-of-color groups and other activist groups on campus. Are these same student groups invited to meet candidates for all positions? If not, why? For example, consider having the elementary education candidate meet with activist students on your campus; the candidate would be pressed to demonstrate that they understood the historical impact of their field on marginalized peoples and the impact of that history on children in schools today.
- *Challenge your response to affect.* The affects (body language, facial expression, tone) that are traditionally read as neutral or friendly are de facto White cultural norms. These norms shape both how a predominantly White committee will be read as well as how that committee will read the candidates. Because the affect of White candidates will more easily match the expectations of a predominantly White committee, this candidate will appear to be a better fit over a candidate of color who might be presenting a different affect. Educate yourself on the power of implicit bias and ways to ameliorate it. Consider whether your response to a candidate is based on descriptive observations ("He didn't smile") versus evaluations ("He's not a team player"). For example, a White man who does not smile may be seen as a competent authority figure, while a woman of color who does not smile may be seen as angry and difficult to work with. Develop strategies to keep committee members alert to the reality of implicit bias.

Step 5: The Decision

> *I think she is great, and if we had a position that was specifically about urban schools, then she might be right for the job . . .*

Try this thought experiment: a predominantly White hiring committee with a White person as chair hires a White person. The next hire is a White person. The next hire is a White person. The next hire is a White person. It could go on for years this way, and the people who might raise a red flag are most likely only faculty of color or others working from a critical social justice framework. In fact, one of us taught in a department that went seventeen years without hiring a single person of color. Now imagine that a Black person is chair of the committee, and two or more members are Black. The committee hires a Black person. Most (White) people would raise the red flag right there, but certainly they would do so if the second hire and the third and fourth hires were also Black. But when a red flag *is* raised on the continual pattern of White hires, justifications often surface, including:

- There just aren't many qualified people of color in this field. People of color who excel usually don't choose to go into education because the pay and status are low.
- We did everything we could to recruit candidates of color, but they just aren't applying. We can't create people who aren't there.
- We needed someone who can hit the ground running.
- Are you saying we shouldn't have our jobs?

When a committee is ready to meet to vote and recommend a candidate for a position, two dominant discourses tend to emerge: fit and merit. As Ian Haney López (2015) argues, *fit* is the "dog whistle" of the hiring committee, or how committees signal race without explicitly naming it. From this perspective, "candidate fit" actually means their ability to keep White people racially comfortable and their likelihood of leaving Whiteness (or the status quo) undisturbed. Hand in hand with fit is the discourse of merit. These discourses and the assumptions they rest on need to be continually interrogated.

— Constructive Alternatives

If, as academic institutions, we truly want to correct the existing diversity imbalance on campus, we need to develop our stamina and skills in talking about identity at every hiring decision. To do so, practice the following strategies:

- *Avoid coded discourses, such as "adding diversity."* These discourses fetishize and commodify non-White bodies. When hiring committees are considering a candidate of color, the fact that the candidate would "add" diversity to the faculty is most always talked about, yet when a White candidate is at the top of the list, the fact that that candidate would *not* add diversity is not

talked about. Grapple openly with how every candidate will or won't contribute to your equity goals.

- *Attend to the reality of implicit bias.* If, as a hiring committee, you are all (or predominantly) White and are excited about a White candidate, ask yourselves if there might be something going on that should be grappled with. Revisit the case for the White candidate and consider how much of the case is based on *descriptive* qualifications ("integrates multiple perspectives in their research as evidenced by . . . ," "demonstrates commitment to equity as evidenced by . . .") rather than *evaluative* ones (friendly, relaxed, great sense of humor, cool style, fits in, students love her).
- *Revisit the institutional mission and vision statements.* As a committee, you should ask whether your practices and outcomes are in line with the institution's professed values. If not, then be honest about the department's unwillingness to be accountable to those values and remove any misaligned statements from marketing and other materials promoting your faculty.
- *Acknowledge and address power dynamics on committees.* Junior faculty are most vulnerable in their positions on committees. At the same time, they may actually be more current on research related to diversity if this is their field or they were mindful to attend to subjectivity in their research. Yet they often don't challenge their tenured/senior colleagues due to concerns about career progression. Talk openly about your positions and plan how you will mediate the power differentials. For example, the chair might explicitly state that all perspectives are necessary for a successful search and express an expectation that there will be no retaliation for disagreements. The chair should also be mindful to facilitate the discussions in an equitable way by, for example, calling for go-arounds to ensure that all voices are heard, not allowing the most powerful members to set the agenda by speaking first and most, and checking in with quieter members both inside and outside the meetings.

"Yeah, but . . .": Common Narratives of Resistance

Our constructive alternatives will be challenging to operationalize, but we have to be honest in asking ourselves, *Do we really want to open the gates to greater faculty diversity?* If we are indeed committed, and this commitment goes beyond simply marketing the bodies of racialized students to sell our campuses as diverse, we need to be prepared to do *everything* differently, because everything in the institution was set up to reproduce the existing order. Thus, every step of the hiring process is an opportunity to interrupt the reproduction of racial inequity.

Here we identify common objections and explicitly speak back to them from a racial equity framework.

Won't putting diversity ahead of subject-matter expertise bring down the quality of our institution's research profile?

Diversity literacy and subject-matter expertise are not mutually exclusive, and we need to challenge the implicit bias that continually positions them as such. Further, our measures of quality must be interrogated. If we continue to base quality solely on factors such as the tier of publication, then, due to the institutional and cultural supports that exist for mainstream work, White, male, middle-class, and otherwise privileged scholars will have the equivalent of a "wind at their backs" (Kimmel, 2002) and will continue to excel by these measures, with research that does not further the cause of racial justice continuing to be elevated. Might we instead consider research that does not further the cause of racial justice to be, in fact, *lesser* quality research?

You're just advocating for diversity because it's your area of scholarship. Why not make math education a mandatory subject for all candidates to demonstrate expertise on?

Let us be clear. We are not advocating that diversity be put ahead of subject-matter expertise. We are advocating for an understanding that *one cannot be considered to have subject-matter expertise if one cannot position their field within a sociopolitical context.* For example, if a STEM education candidate is not able to articulate how STEM education can meet the needs of a diverse group of students, recognize that up until now it has not, and have some analysis of why that is and how it might be remedied, that candidate is not qualified in STEM education. Especially as schools become increasingly separate and unequal, we must consider this ability as integral to all positions rather than as optional, desired, but not really weighted.

We are all for diversity, but isn't privileging candidates of color over White applicants just reverse racism?

Racism is different from racial bias. While all people have racial biases, *racism* refers to the collective impact of that bias when it is backed by the weight of history, legal authority, and institutional control. When these dimensions are present, racial bias is transformed into racism, a system of racial oppression. By definition, racism is not fluid and cannot be wielded by individuals regardless of their racial positions; thus, reverse racism does not exist (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017).

Also, there is an abundance of empirical evidence that people of color are discriminated against in hiring and have been for generations and into the present (Cheung et al., 2016; Derous, Buijsrogge, Roulin, & Duyck, 2016; Hasford, 2016; Rivera, 2015). Unfounded beliefs that diversity goals require unqualified peoples of color to be hired over Whites are insulting because they are based on the assumption that a person of color could not possibly have been the most qualified.

In the case of two candidates who are equally qualified but one is a person of color and the other is White and the workplace is not racially diverse, consider that the person of color is actually *more* qualified because they bring a perspective to the workplace that is missing.

Aren't we setting up new hires to fail if we bring them into a hostile workplace?

While this statement is meant to exhibit concern, it actually conveys acceptance of a racially hostile workplace. If we are aware enough of the racial hostility that we can make this statement, why is it being allowed to continue? Why are we not up in arms about our climate and putting all effort into changing it?

Unexamined Whiteness does make for a hostile work environment for peoples of color, and support will be needed for new hires. Efforts to change the climate and support faculty of color should occur simultaneously. But while this need for support is often positioned as a deficit of candidates of color, consider all the resources put into diversity workshops for White staff. Why do we not see this need for training as a deficit of White employees? Why would we continue to hire candidates who we know will need this education? Why are we willing to wait for them to receive it, even as we know that these training sessions are only occasional occurrences and rarely ever mandatory? In fact, most faculty may not ever receive this training or respond constructively to it if they do. Why is the harm that unaware faculty perpetrate on students and colleagues in the meantime acceptable? We are in support of continual training; racial justice learning is ongoing and our learning is never finished. Still, we do not recommend hiring people with virtually no interest or foundational education.

There just aren't qualified diverse candidates out there.

Change is difficult for many, especially when the change in question is to a system that serves and privileges us. We tend to make excuses and put up roadblocks for inaction rather than take risks, be innovative, and be accountable to diversity goals *no matter what* challenges may emerge. In addition, there are nondiverse candidates who specialize in diversity content and can bring the critical expertise that is much needed. Students have demanded that White faculty with the skills to engage in diversity with complexity and nuance also be hired (not just well-intentioned open-mindedness, which almost all faculty will have). When we consider White candidates with these skills and perspectives, our pool opens even wider.

These are really good suggestions and thank you for raising them, but the job description was approved by senior administration and it cannot be changed. Besides, if we ask them for changes, we risk losing the position altogether.

Leadership often argues that many of the components of a search have already been approved and thus cannot be changed. While this may sound

reasonable, consider what is actually being said: *We developed these practices without a lens on equity. Now that we have begun to profess valuing equity, we can't change them.* Of course, this is not true; institutions can and do change policies all the time. But we must have the will. Centuries of exclusionary policies will not shift without commitment and the courage to fight resistance. If we cannot demonstrate that we have this commitment through our actions *and their outcomes,* in good conscience we should stop making the claim that we are campus communities that promote diversity, respect, and inclusion.

Conclusion

> Demonstrating the value of racialized and Indigenous scholars in the academy . . . means disrupting established ways of doing things and challenging normative notions of selection, appointment, and promotion.
>
> —*Frances Henry et al.,* The Equity Myth

The default of historically White institutions is the reproduction of racial inequality. From that premise comes the understanding that we cannot rest on our good intentions or self-images and expect our outcomes to change. As Frances Henry and her colleagues (2017) remind us, "For many racialized and Indigenous faculty, whose numbers have increased only slightly over the past three decades, the policies and diversity initiatives are only a foil to deflect criticism of a system that is doing little to change itself" (p. 8). Rather than exempt ourselves from the lack of change, we must consider the inevitability of our complicity. Our task, then, is to identify *how* our complicity is manifesting, rather than to establish our so-called openness or neutrality.

Pushing against tradition and the normative practices that have been institutionalized and function to exclude diverse faculty at every step is profoundly challenging. We are up against historic and current differentials in power, privilege, and access that are manifesting concretely (even as their existence is denied). Interrupting these processes requires that we reconsider a multitude of commonsense practices. With this in mind, we offer small steps that can be taken at each point in the academic hiring process. But first we must have the will. We ask our White colleagues to consider how a lack of knowledge, apathy, seeing oneself as "the choir" without need for specific effort, and any resentment toward this work function to hold racial inequity in place. Ideally, we understand the ongoing and lifelong struggle inherent in changing deeply embedded patterns and practices. But if we do not have the knowledge and skills that develop out of sustained intentionality rather than mere good intentions and are not actively working toward attaining them, we must not position ourselves or our programs as "valuing diversity" or "encouraging diverse candidates." To claim that HWCUs value diversity and seek a diverse faculty without fundamental changes in our processes is meaningless, though not benign.

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