Title
The Facade of Fit and Preponderance of Power in Faculty Search Processes: Facilitators and Inhibitors of Diversity

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The Facade of Fit and Preponderance of Power in Faculty Search Processes: Facilitators and Inhibitors of Diversity

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Education

by

Damani Khary White-Lewis

2019
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Façade of Fit and Preponderance of Power in Faculty Search Processes: Facilitators and Inhibitors of Diversity

by

Damani Khary White-Lewis
Doctor of Philosophy in Education
University of California, Los Angeles, 2019
Professor Sylvia Hurtado, Chair

Slow progress in diversifying the professoriate has prompted renewed interest in faculty search processes. Yet little remains understood about the interlocking individual-, committee-, and departmental-level dimensions that facilitate and/or inhibit faculty diversity. The purpose of this study is to investigate how faculty search committee members individually evaluate and collectively select prospective early career faculty. The conceptual framework guiding the study weaves several theories: person-environment fit to test a normative model of intrapersonal candidate evaluation, power to understand committee and departmental dynamics, and critical race theory (CRT) to comprehend how both perpetuate inequities. This multiple embedded case study triangulated 31 semi-structured interviews with administrators, deans, department chairs, search committee members, and documents across four disciplines.

Results indicate the conditions that marginalize candidates of color in faculty search processes. Fit, as a system of assumptions, practices, and tactics designed to evaluate and select
candidates based on organizational needs, was minimized in faculty searches. Instead, faculty relied mostly on idiosyncratic preferences to evaluate research, teaching, and service credentials, which were laced with direct and indirect criteria that implicate race and ethnicity. Faculty deliberations were bound by a normative climate of collegiality, as well as expert and legitimate power, which impacted the strategies faculty used to communicate and actualize their preferences to colleagues. Deans, department chairs, and departmental colleagues also impacted search procedures and outcomes through establishing hiring priorities, interventions, and theories of change, which had varying degrees of power and attention to diversity, dependent on the case.

Findings on the façade of fit and use of power reveal how the review and selection of candidates is as much, if not more, about committee interactions, elevating departmental reputation, and larger institutional dynamics than about the candidates themselves. Implications lead to critically reframing current interventions in the faculty hiring praxis and research. Results also reveal potential new avenues for increasing faculty diversity, such as reconfiguring how departmental hiring priorities are generated, and reimagining how departmental and institutional interventions are designed, enacted, and enforced.
The dissertation of Damani Khary White-Lewis is approved.

Mark Kevin Eagan

Jessica Christine Harris

Maia Young

Sylvia Hurtado, Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2019
Dedication

To my parents, John and Constance Lewis, who always dreamed of writing a book – here is our first of many.
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VITA

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background of Faculty Diversity in U.S. Higher Education

Diversifying the professoriate remains a contentious issue at American colleges and universities (Finkelstein, Conley, & Schuster, 2016). Data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) show that in 1987, 3.2 percent of full-time instructional faculty members were Black non-Hispanic, 2.1 percent were Hispanic, 4.5 percent were Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.9 percent were American Indian/Alaskan Native (Kirshstein, Matheson, Jin, & Zimbler, 1997). Nearly three decades later, 2015 NCES data show persistent disparities across racial and ethnic lines, with Black non-Hispanic faculty constituting 5.8 percent of the full-time professoriate, 4.7 percent being Hispanic, 10.1 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 0.46 percent American Indian/Alaska Native, and another one percent identifying as two or more races (Snyder, de Brey, & Dillow, 2018). Within the same 26-year span, white faculty members have remained overrepresented among full-time instructional faculty at institutions of higher education, approximating 75 percent – or over three in every four professors nationwide. Despite decades of debate, initiatives, and affirmative action policies, faculty diversity has moved at a stubbornly glacial pace (Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2008).

Debate on this disparity has traditionally centered around three themes: (1) the lack of available Ph.D. students of color, (2) Ph.D. students of color forgoing careers in academia, and (3) institution’s inability to recruit these purportedly highly sought-after scholars (Smith, Wolf-Wendel & Busenberg, 1996; Smith, 2000). For instance, Cole and Barber (2003) contend that the occupational choices of Ph.D. students of color are the most significant contributor to their low representation among college faculty. They argue that the “small numbers of minority faculty at various universities is almost exclusively a result of the small number of minority
Ph.D.s being produced and not a result of prejudice or discrimination on the part of institutions of higher education” (p. 7). Moreover, anecdotal beliefs about the nature of academic hiring suggest that when students of color do choose careers in academia, they are the subject of bidding wars at the most selective institutions – decreasing the pool of eligible faculty of color at less selective institutions.

However, contrary evidence casts doubt on several assumptions related to hiring diverse populations of faculty. Several studies provide evidence that refute an exclusively supply-side argument to enhancing faculty diversity (Myers & Turner, 2004; Trower & Chait, 2002; Turner & Myers, 2000). Research demonstrates that increasing the supply of minoritized Ph.D. holders only has a marginal, and even sometimes negative, effect on their representation (Myers & Turner, 2004; Turner & Myers, 2000). Instead, market forces such as private sector salaries and wage differentials are more important in increasing minoritized representation in the professoriate than Ph.D. production (Myers & Turner, 2004; Turner & Myers, 2000). Even with doctoral production in mind, national data reveal that faculty diversity is still disproportionately low in disciplines that produce greater amounts of Ph.D. students of color, such as in Psychology and Education (Trower & Chait, 2002). Evidence also suggests that the bidding war assumption, another pervasive myth of faculty hiring, is vastly overstated. In a study of the employment outcomes of prestigious doctoral fellowship recipients, Smith and colleagues (1996) found that across all disciplines, only 11 percent of scholars of color were actively sought after, making them no more likely than their white counterparts to receive the most lucrative and enticing employment offers. Even in the sciences where scholars of color are the least represented, scholars of color were not pursued by academic institutions at greater rates (Smith et al., 1996).
Prior research on faculty diversity paints an insufficient portrait of the discourse, as it primarily focuses on the perceived shortcomings of faculty of color, yet neglects the institutional practices and normative climates that may inhibit their hiring. Indeed, many contemporary aspects of higher education warrant critical investigation, as several scholars observe that its functions – from admissions practices (Karabel, 2006) to the curriculum (Patton, 2016) - have their foundations in a problematic history. Blank, Dabady, and Citro (2004) elaborate further, stating, “organizations tend to reflect many of the same biases as the people within them. Organizational rules sometimes evolve out of past histories (including past histories of racism) that are not easily reconstructed, and such rules may appear quite neutral on the surface. But if these processes function in a way that leads to differential racial treatment or produces differential racial outcomes, the results can be discriminatory” (p. 63). Thus, a peripheral research stream has shifted away from the perceived deficiencies of faculty of color and has instead turned inward, investigating the extent to which faculty search committees and academic hiring practices may inhibit faculty diversity (Gasman, Kim, & Nguyen, 2011; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017; Smith, Turner, Osei-Kofi, & Richards, 2004).

**Problem Statement**

Critics have publicly described search committees are inhibitors of faculty diversity, because they are “not trained in recruitment, are rarely diverse in makeup, and are often more interested in hiring people just like them rather than expanding the diversity of their department” (Gasman, 2016). In contrast, some universities have implemented a series of checks and policies to ensure fairness in the hiring process. For instance, Oregon State University has created the position of “search advocate,” which has yielded early favorable results (McMurtrie, 2016). Other colleges and universities have instituted a number of search
training and monitoring procedures in order to enhance faculty diversity (McMurtrie, 2016). Given institutions’ increased interest in equitable hiring processes, research on faculty search committees has resurfaced as a line of educational inquiry within recent years (Freeman & DiRamio, 2016; Rivera, 2017; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017; Tomlinson & Freeman, 2017; Wright & Vanderford, 2017). Yet the solutions to faculty diversity that institutions seek may remain elusive due to substantial gaps in the literature.

The two streams that constitute the search committee literature – racism and racial bias in searches (Beattie & Tidwell, 2012; Beattie, Cohen, & McGuire, 2013; Gasman et al., 2011; Kayes, 2006; Luz Reyes & Halcon, 1988; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017; Turner et al., 1999), and candidate characteristics that inform faculty’s selection decisions (Freeman & DiRamio, 2016; Landrum, 2004; Tomlinson & Freeman, 2017; Wright & Vanderford, 2017) are limited in three fundamental ways. First, these studies are largely conducted in silos without adequate integration. For example, studies suggest that racial bias is a barrier in faculty hiring, particularly through tokenism and shifting definitions of “qualified” candidates, (Gasman et al., 2011; Turner, 1999). Yet describing racial bias in hiring as a monolith fails to examine which selection criteria are the primary vehicles of racial bias, and which are not. Conversely, selection characteristic studies identify applicant characteristics that most impact faculty selection decisions, such as an applicant’s graduate institution (Tomlinson & Freeman, 2017), “match or fit with department” (Landrum, 2004, p. 15), or social rank (Wright & Vanderford, 2017). However, simply reporting characteristics without connecting them to racial bias research also underestimates their role in inequitable faculty hiring.

Secondly, too few empirical studies of search committees utilize organizational research to study an inherently organizational phenomenon. Search committee processes are not merely a
collection of isolated candidate assessments or biases, but are situated within committee, departmental, and institutional contexts with great levels of differentiation. The biases and selection characteristics demonstrated in the literature are likely impacted by organizational characteristics, such as selection stage at the committee level, and discipline, leadership, and historical and contemporary politics at the departmental level. Since most search committee studies only examine a single committee (e.g. Wright & Vanderford, 2017), single discipline (e.g. Freeman & DiRamio, 2016; Gasman et al., 2011; Sheehan, McDevitt, & Ross, 1998), or single stage of selection (Landrum, 2004), it is conceivable how this level of variation has not been adequately explored in the literature. Yet divorcing search committee procedures from their real-life contexts underestimates how racial biases and selection characteristics can operate and differ as a function of these important organizational dimensions.

Collectively, these limitations result in a literature base that poorly replicates actual search committee procedures and does little to inform practice on faculty hiring. Documenting faculty search committee procedures without adequate integration, organizational research, or real-life contexts make it difficult to isolate the inequities in search processes with a level of accuracy and precision necessary to promote change. It is likely that the selection of candidates is as much about the committee, department, and institution than it is about candidates’ credentials themselves, yet these dimensions have remained significantly understudied.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to investigate how faculty members of a search committee individually assess and collectively select prospective early-career faculty. By (re)visiting central assumptions and functions of faculty search committees using both critical and organizational frameworks, this study attempts to position search committees as complex
organizational processes situated in larger departmental and institutional contexts. It is likely that the selection characteristics and racial biases documented in the literature exist on different planes of search committee behavior: intrapersonal dynamics (i.e. individual evaluations of perceived candidate quality), interpersonal dynamics (i.e. group-level instances of power, cooperation, and communication), and that these constructs are impacted by committee-level and departmental-level organizational characteristics, such as selection stage, discipline, and leadership. Thus, the aim of this study is to more carefully document how these different mechanisms either facilitate faculty diversity or reproduce inequality. The specific research questions this study seeks to address are:

1. Do faculty members consider organizational fit in selection? If so, what are the different dimensions (i.e. type, characteristics, weight) of fit?
2. How do internal and external power dynamics emerge and influence individual assessments of fit?
3. What role does race play in committee assessments of fit and power dynamics in selection processes?
4. How does perceived fit, power, and race vary by selection stage within a single committee, and/or vary across discipline-specific committees (cases)?

Scope of Study

This study situates search committees within three layered theoretical perspectives: person-environment (P-E) fit within selection (intrapersonal), power dynamics (interpersonal in context), and a system of racialized higher education that encapsulates both fit and power, analyzed through critical race theory (CRT). P-E fit is a framework widely employed within organizational behavior and management literatures, broadly defined as the compatibility
between individuals and their environmental surroundings (Kristof, 1996). When used in research on selection and hiring decisions, it highlights the different stages and dimensions of employers’ perceived congruence between prospective employees and aspects of the workplace. Assessing fit in hiring practices is believed to be important among employers across a variety of sectors, due to its close relationship to organizational commitment, satisfaction, and productivity (Chatman, 1991). Yet previous studies have investigated whether employer’s assessments of candidates were actually based on an organizational fit model – an array of practices and assumptions designed to systematically evaluate and select candidates for workplace compatibility – or merely the result of their own individually held preferences (Adkins, Russell, & Werbel, 1994; Cable & Judge, 1997; Rynes & Gerhart, 1990; Bretz, Rynes, & Gerhart, 1993). Although many have already challenged the term “fit” in the search committee literature (e.g. Danowitz Sagaria, 2002; Moody, 2015; Reece, Tran, DeVore, & Porcaro, 2019; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017), they only critique the liberal use of the singular term, rather than the larger framework it is indicative of. This study follows suit of the empirical fit literature and similarly tests whether or not faculty search committee members actually screen for fit during selection processes, and the varying parameters (type, characteristics, weight) of those assessments.

This study also situates search committees within an interpersonal framework of power within organizations. Although faculty search committees operate through consensus building and shared decision-making, power imbalances between internal and external actors still exist, which may result in different candidate evaluations holding varied weight in selection processes. Research suggests that discrepancies between social actors’ preferences during decision-making is often resolved or exacerbated due to power, and that power can be measured
through its sources, conditions, and consequences (Pfeffer, 1981). Higher education research suggests that faculty and administrators convince, persuade, and even bully others using several tactics when decisions need to be made (Kezar, 2011; Kezar & Lester, 2011). Within faculty circles, these tactics may be strengthened or weakened based on certain characteristics unique to higher education, such as rank, time-in-department, subject expertise/expert knowledge, and relationships with colleagues (Kezar & Lester, 2011). This study hypothesizes that selection preferences and decisions are not isolated, yet interact with those of other colleagues (i.e. dean, department chair, search committee colleagues, and departmental colleagues) who may have different preferences regarding candidate evaluations. The effectiveness of these preferences in leading to hire will likely depend on faculty members’ power and influence within the committee, derived from various factors such as rank, time-in-department, and subject expertise.

Finally, this study positions search committees within a broader racialized climate of higher education using critical race theory (CRT). Originating in legal scholarship and adopted in education research and practice, CRT highlights how race and racism are embedded in normalized and subtle mechanics of institutional life, perpetuating racial disparities in K-12 education (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and higher education (Patton, 2016). Particularly in faculty careers, CRT research documents how processes such as promotion and tenure appear to be equitable on the surface, yet actually perpetuate racial inequities, such as neglecting to recognize and reward how faculty of color engage in disproportionately higher levels of service compared to white faculty peers, and valuing less mainstream journals and research agendas in determining scholarly productivity (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Stanley, 2006a; Urrieta, Mendez, & Rodriguez, 2015). The current
study suggests that search committees are not outside the realm of a racialized system of education, and hypothesizes that the mechanics of search committees (i.e. intrapersonal candidate evaluation and interpersonal power dynamics) also perpetuate racial inequities in faculty hiring and selection.

In order to capture the multiple dimensions of search committee work, this study uses a qualitative, multiple-case study approach. Multiple-case study methodology allows for an empirical, in-depth examination of a phenomenon across various manifestations within their real-life contexts (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2017). This approach was chosen over a single-case study for several reasons. One common concern related to single case studies are whether findings illuminate the phenomenon under investigation, or rather reveal unique or peculiar features of the individual case alone. Multiple-case study analysis addresses this concern through literal and theoretical case replications, providing more analytic depth and stability of findings (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2017). The benefit of comparative methods is also observable in studies of fit in selection (see, for example, Rynes & Gerhart, 1990; Bretz et al., 1993). For example, Rynes & Gerhart (1990) used recruiters from multiple companies to determine if raters’ evaluations varied more within the same company or between different companies. Results indicated that evaluations varied more between recruiters of different companies compared to those within the same company, suggesting the presence of an organizational effect within a single company. Using a multiple-case study design within the same institution not only yielded individual search committee cases, but also facilitated the creation of larger theoretical propositions across cases, examining continuities and differences across variables previously unexplored in the literature, such as selection stage, discipline, and leadership dynamics.
Multiple-case study analysis requires the triangulation of several sources of evidence to construct robust case studies. For this study I conducted semi-structured interviews of upper-level administrators, deans, department chairs, faculty search committee members, and collected various forms of documentation throughout the process. In multiple-case study research, the context must be clearly distinguished from the phenomenon of interest so that the researcher may study both. Thus, in order to fully understand faculty search committees, I also examined the departmental contexts in which they reside through interviews with upper-administrators, deans and department chairs. These interviews were essential, since these stakeholders had extensive background knowledge of the department, determined how much money was available for recruitment and hiring, aided the department in creating their hiring priorities, and had a vote in who joins their academic ranks.

After identifying departments and interviewing the corresponding administrators, I conducted repeated, semi-structured interviews of faculty members within four search committees, and collected appropriate documentation. All search committees were selected via purposive sampling from the same institutional site: a four-year institution with high research activity located in the western United States. This was to ensure some level of uniformity across the cases; other conditions were also held constant to control for extraneous effects. Therefore, cases chiefly varied on characteristics of interest to the study, such as selection stage, discipline, and departmental leadership. Within-case analyses were conducted using the constant comparative method, while between-case analyses were conducted using cross-case analysis. Both levels of analysis were used to identify emergent, comparative themes within a single search committee and across several different search committees. Using this qualitative design with multiple sources of evidence, this study aimed to understand how perceived fit, power, and
selection appears within a single committee and how it may appear similar or dissimilar across multiple committees.

**Contribution of the Study**

This study makes several contributions to important, yet often disparate literature bases. Research on selection characteristics within faculty searches has increased within the last few years (Freeman & DiRamio, 2016; Lee, 2014; Tomlinson & Freeman, 2017; Wright & Vanderford, 2017). These studies predominantly focus on identifying the candidate characteristics that faculty deem important in selection, such as an applicant’s graduate institution, perceived fit with department, and number of publications. Yet interestingly, they collectively devote little attention to the racial dynamics that have previously been documented in search committees (e.g. Gasman et al., 2011; Light, 1994; Luz Reyes & Halcon, 1988; Turner, 2002). This may be because more recent studies assume that racial bias has already been sufficiently addressed, or is a non-issue. Thus, this study rectifies this chasm within the search committee literature by integrating both sets of studies in order to create a balanced representation of search committees. By using two organizational frameworks to investigate candidate evaluation and selection, and an underlying CRT framework to investigate their contributions to inequities, this study attempts to understand how faculty search committees perpetuate racial inequities in hiring.

In addition to theory, this study also makes a methodological contribution to the search committee literature. Most studies either investigate one committee (e.g. Wright & Vanderford, 2017), one discipline (e.g. Freeman & DiRamio, 2016; Gasman et al., 2011; Sheehan et al., 1998), or one stage of hiring (e.g. Landrum, 2004). Moreover, many of these analyses are not comparative, failing to demonstrate if their results would be observed in other settings and
contexts. One study conducted by Rivera (2017) makes an important methodological divergence from the search committee literature by using qualitative ethnography to analyze hiring practices across multiple disciplines and stages at a single university. However, this study is limited to an analysis of gender and marital discrimination, and does not address race. This study builds on previous literature by expanding the methodological approaches used to study faculty search committees as it relates to faculty of color.

Finally, this study also makes an important contribution to the P-E fit literature. A larger critique of organizational theory is that it underestimates the role of race and racism (Ashcraft & Allen, 2003; Nkomo, 1992; Ray, 2019). Indeed, a review of the P-E fit literature yielded mixed results regarding the use of race and racism in research. For example, in a study predicting recruiters’ assessments of fit, Adkins and colleagues (1994) controlled for a variety of characteristics, such as GPA, campus activities, sex, race, and social skills. Expectedly, the authors devoted significant attention to results regarding perceptions of general employability and fit, yet failed to discuss results related to race despite statistically significant results. Analyses revealed that recruiters rated white applicants as more generally employable and having better fit within the organization compared to “minority group member(s) (Asian, [B]lack, or Hispanic),” even after controlling for all other variables. The authors missed an opportunity to address an important finding that connects to other results of racism experienced by people of color in employment and hiring (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000). Thus, this study contributes an important race dimension to a literature base that broaches the topic insufficiently.
Significance of the Study

A diverse professoriate is necessary for a 21st century higher education sector. Studies demonstrate that faculty of color engage in high-impact teaching practices at greater rates, connect scholarship to practice (Umbach, 2006), and are repeatedly expressed by students of color as important for their mentorship and personal growth (Libresco, 2015). Moreover, it is important for colleges and universities to rewrite their historic legacy of exclusion across the educational spectrum that has systematically denied people of color access to the lowest and highest rungs of education and academic careers for over a century. Lamentably, faculty diversity still lags behind student diversity at two- and four-year institutions across the nation.

First and foremost, this study contributes to the practice of faculty diversity efforts at American colleges and universities by positioning campus administrators and faculty as change agents, rather than focusing exclusively on applicants. Change agents are already critically evaluating search committees, implementing strategies and solutions to increase faculty diversity at their local institutions. These reform efforts are reflected in the increased attention they have received in numerous public venues, such as Inside Higher Ed, The Chronicle of Higher Education, The Washington Post, and Nature (Becker, 2016; Flaherty, 2017; Gasman, 2016; McMurtrie, 2016). Yet many of today’s reform efforts are founded on a literature base that requires a theoretical and methodological update. The current study intends to support faculty hiring reform by revisiting its central functions, potentially revealing new interventions and reassessing the implementation of current ones in order to enhance faculty diversity.

Additionally, this study aids aspiring academics by demystifying a process that is largely misunderstood. In a study of academic hiring in the sciences, 180 postdoctoral fellows were invited to participate in mock selection committee interviews, and results indicated that
employers believed “a vast majority of applicants did not sell their skills effectively or demonstrate research programs independent from supervisors” (Henderson & Syed, 2016, p. 1). Moreover, 70 percent of trainees indicated that they had no previous idea as to what occurs inside faculty search committees (Henderson & Syed, 2016). Indeed, faculty candidates are often only equipped with anecdotes from advisors and/or colleagues who have gone through the process themselves. Although this study is only conducted at one university and does not generalize toward all institutional types and programs, it is a step toward preparing faculty hopefuls with information acquired through a prolonged, empirical investigation of faculty search committees. By addressing the disparity at both ends – enabling campus change agents first and foremost, while equipping applicants with knowledge of academic hiring – this study attempts to carefully explore faculty search committees and contribute to the growing literature on increasing faculty diversity.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Faculty search committees are an assembly of faculty members within an academic department that attract, identify, evaluate, and recommend potential candidates for employment at the university (Lee, 2014; Turner, 2002). The process for faculty selection is layered and prolonged, involving faculty, academic support units, and upper-administration from anywhere to four to six months. Lee (2014) argues that this tradition of shared governance in faculty selection is worth preserving, as it yields “a higher quality candidate, greater diversity, and a better organizational fit – and, therefore, greater retention” (p. 1). Yet as the prime conduit for academic hiring in a climate calling for increased transparency and faculty diversity, the proliferating literature on faculty search committees illustrates a more nuanced picture.

This chapter is divided into two main parts: a review of the literature on faculty search committees and the theoretical frameworks that guide this study. First, I present a review of the essential topics in the faculty search committee literature, divided into key sections: background, racial bias, selection characteristics, and strategies and solutions. The literature is organized in this way as to first provide a brief background for this research project, then delve into its major topics – racial bias and selection characteristics – and finally connect these topics to an ever-growing collection of strategies and solutions recommended to improve search committee functions. After the literature review, I then turn to the theoretical framework. The theoretical framework guiding this study is informed by the gaps identified in the search committee literature. It contains research on person-environment (P-E) fit, power in organizations, and critical race theory (CRT), and how these theories will be applied to search committee research. I conclude by summarizing how these frameworks together provide a deeper understanding of faculty search committee work and selection processes.
Literature Review

Background

The first empirical studies of search committees were not of faculty searches, but rather of presidents and deans (Birnbaum, 1988; McLaughlin & Riesman, 1985; Twombly, 1992; Lutz, 1979). McLaughlin and Riesman’s (1985) first study of presidential search committee portrays a more organized, linear approach to searches. In a study of searches at 65 institutions, they found that after committees were assembled, members debated on appropriate selection criteria based on their varying interests, and maintained confidentiality during deliberations despite pressures of public disclosure. However, Birnbaum (1988) describes a less linear picture, arguing that there is no single model for presidential searches. Instead, search committees are as much, if not more about committee members as symbols that permit various campus constituencies to display or enhance their status within the institution (Birnbaum, 1988). Reconciling these findings in a study of dean selection, Twombly (1992) argued, “elements of both structured and anarchic decision processes occur in searches, and that these perspectives are generally complementary” (p. 681). While searches have a definite beginning and end, and typically follow an observable sequence of events leading to selection, the mechanics of participation, context, and time creates variation in searches that may lead to different results (Twombly, 1992). From these early studies it becomes clear where a divide emerges as to the central functions and dysfunctions of faculty search committees.

As achieving a diverse professoriate became a more pressing concern, scholars began increased study, such as investigating the supply of doctorate-holding minorities, and market forces that may encourage them to pursue industry instead of academia (Carter & O’Brien, 1993; Knowles & Harleston, 1997; Trower & Chait, 2002; Turner & Myers, 2000; Smith et al.,
Several scholars turned inward with an eye toward the institution, using the first studies of search committees as a foundation to investigate the extent to which faculty search committees influence faculty diversity (Higgins & Hollander, 1987; Owens, Ries, & Hall, 1994; Luz Reyes & Halcon, 1988). Although research on faculty search committees, academic hiring, and selection was initially a small portion of the larger faculty diversity canon, it steadily progressed into various recognizable forms.

Similar to the early research on administrative searches, the state of empirical research on faculty search committees is generally divided into two approaches: racial bias and selection characteristics. Research on racial bias in search committees dates back to the 80s, and problematizes search committee functions through a more critical and constructivist lens. Collectively, these studies suggest that the main issues within faculty search committees are the biases faculty members exhibit during search and selection, such as denigrating engaged scholarship (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Gasman et al., 2011; Light, 1994; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017) and implicit bias (Beattie et al., 2013; Beattie & Tidwell, 2012; Smith, Handley, Zale, Rushing, & Potvin, 2015). The second strand of research on faculty search committees, selection characteristics, did not emerge until the early 2000’s. These studies generally consider search procedures as more linear and organized, and problematize search committees less than studies of racial bias, and focus on the types of candidate characteristics faculty consider during selection (e.g. Landrum, 2004; Tomlinson & Freeman, 2017; Wright & Vanderford, 2017). Another class of research outside of the two approaches focuses less on empirically identifying functions and dysfunctions of searches, and instead offers strategies and solutions to improve them (e.g. Lee, 2014; Moody, 2015; Turner, 2002). These studies and guides are most often informed by racial bias research rather than selection characteristics, and
provide a range of strategies to improve selection procedures such as creating clearer standards for evaluation (Lee, 2014; Turner, 2002), and implicit bias trainings (Fine, Sheridan, Carnes, Handelsman, Pribbenow, Savoy, & Wendt, 2014; Smith et al., 2015).

Despite three decades of research and practice, faculty diversity across the nation remains slow. A review of the literature reveals three substantial gaps, which may partially account for the lack of progress. First, there is poor integration between studies of racial bias and selection characteristics in faculty search committees. For instance, studies of racial bias often do not consider what faculty may ideally be searching for, such as a certain type of curricular or methodological knowledge. Yet research on selection characteristics often ignore how certain characteristics, such as considerations of curricular or methodological knowledge, may be laced with racial bias, or are configured in ways that preferences majoritarian candidates in selection. Only a handful of studies have integrated these two streams of literature with a level of success (i.e. Danowitz Sagaria, 2002; Rivera, 2017; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). A study that captures both in a balanced approach is useful in order to attract a wider audience of faculty, administrators, and practitioners that wish to minimize bias in all search processes. Yet even studies that integrate both racial bias and selection characteristics do not situate these observations within organizational factors, possibly ignoring differences by committee composition, selection stage, discipline, and departmental leadership – making it difficult for faculty, practitioners, and administrators to identify where to concentrate reform efforts. Thus, even with an audience, a lack of organizational perspectives makes it difficult to generalize and transfer findings to local contexts that greatly differ by variables underexplored in the literature.

Lastly, these limitations are exacerbated by a lack of comparative research. Most studies of search committees either investigate one committee (Wright & Vanderford, 2017), one
discipline (Freeman & DiRamio 2016; Gasman et al., 2011; Sheehan et al., 1998), or one stage of hiring (Landrum, 2004). Comparative research is necessary in order to detect differences in racial bias and selection characteristics by the aforementioned organizational conditions. The forthcoming literature review demonstrates how the search committee literature has progressed, and the areas that would benefit from either a conceptual and/or methodological update.

**Racial Bias in Faculty Search Committees**

The earliest studies of faculty search committees were predominantly concerned with the racial biases held of faculty in faculty search committee processes (Chused, 1988; Owens et al., 1994; Luz Reyes & Halcon, 1988). They problematized faculty search committees, arguing that the slow progress in faculty diversity is due in large part to the biases held of search committee members. In an autoethnographic study of how search committees limit Latino/a participation in the academy, Luz Reyes & Halcon (1988) identified five forms of covert racism that occur in faculty searches: tokenism, type-casting syndrome, the one minority-per-pot syndrome, the brown-on-brown research taboo, and the hairsplitting concept. For example, the brown-on-brown research taboo refers to the disparagement experienced by scholars of color who study issues related to their own race and community. Their research agenda is devalued and regarded as less scholarly by a research canon that advances the pursuit of knowledge as purely objective and removed. Although this has been well documented in cases of promotion and tenure (Stanley, 2006a; Urrieta et al., 2015), this phenomenon is particularly relevant in hiring, especially when candidates of color are evaluated by a predominantly white faculty who may judge the merits of research based on their own normative perspectives and expectations of what constitutes “scholarly” research (Luz Reyes & Halcon, 1988).
Another example of racial bias is the one-minority-per-pot syndrome, which refers to the unwritten quota system that faculty operate under during searches: that if a minority faculty member is already in the department, there was no need for another (Luz Reyes & Halcon, 1988). In this sense, minority candidates are treated as tokens – one faculty of color signals that the department values diversity, yet more than one faculty of color in the department purportedly compromises the academic reputation of the department. Chused (1988) also identified tokenism as a significant barrier in diversifying law school professoriate. Based on national data of law school faculty, he found that only one fourth of law schools had greater than 6 percent of their faculty positions occupied by minority scholars (Black, Latino, Native American, and Asian American). Tokenism was especially concerning because turnover among law school faculties was high at that time, providing search committees ample opportunities to hire minority scholars.

Although the earliest studies of racial bias within faculty search committees were not marked with today’s level of empiricism, they laid the foundation for future studies of racial bias in faculty search committees. Later studies corroborate the earliest forms of evidence using both quantitative and qualitative methods (Beattie et al., 2013; Danowitz Sagaria, 2002; Delgado-Romero, Manlove, Manlove, & Hernandez, 2007; Gasman et al., 2011; Moody, 2015; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). Racial bias has been documented in several different ways, most notably (1) denigrating diverse backgrounds and scholarship, (2) fit as code for racial bias, and (3) implicit bias.

**Denigrating diverse backgrounds, characteristics, and scholarship.** Numerous studies demonstrate one of the most prominent forms of racial bias in faculty search committees: how committee members, and larger institutional structures, devalue the
backgrounds, characteristics, and scholarship typically held of candidates of color (e.g. Light, 1994; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017; Tuit, Danowitz Sagaria, & Turner, 2007). In recruitment, research demonstrates how the networks and channels faculty members utilize, or fail to utilize, perpetuate racial biases in who has access to the search (Gasman et al., 2011; Light, 1994; Turner & Myers, 2000; Tuit et al., 2007). The most passive form of bias in recruitment comes when faculty believe that they play no role in who is attracted and recruited to the search process. Gasman and colleagues (2011) found in their interview of search committee members that “several considered the diversity of the pool as mere happenstance – based on candidates’ personal preferences, such as geographic location of the institution” (p. 217). A passive approach to the search process meant that faculty did not invoke any networks or personal connections, and believed that candidate pools were exclusively a function of candidate interest, knowledge, and ability. Yet research also shows that when faculty members do advertise the position to networks or leverage personal connections, they often do not tap into minority interest groups/organizations, or minority serving institutions such as HBCUs, Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) or especially Asian American, Native American, & Pacific Island Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs), believing that such efforts would be special treatment, or lower expectations within the search (Gasman et al., 2011; Turner & Myers, 2000).

During selection, faculty members may continue to devalue the backgrounds and contributions of candidates of color in different ways (Bronstein, 1994; Light, 1994; Turner & Myers, 2002; Turner, 2002; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). For example, scholars of color, especially in the humanities and social sciences, often conduct research on issues related to race, racism, sexism, and other social inequities in their communities (Antonio, 2002; Stanley, 2006a). Yet in multiple contexts – hiring, tenure and promotion, and evaluations – this research
can be regarded as less rigorous, or “not real scholarship” (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Turner & Myers, 2000). Particularly in hiring processes, candidates of color who conduct this type of research can be devalued by faculty who do not value their scholarship – similar to Luz Reyes & Halcon’s (1998) concept of brown-on-brown research documented decades prior. It is for this reason that Light (1994) argues that faculty diversity is most greatly inhibited by faculty members’ proclivity to eschew those with research training and agendas that are different from their own, and instead hire those candidates with research agendas and ways of thinking mirror their own. He states:

“most of us agree we need more minority faculty in our programs. Most of us are also willing to advertise in the right journals, make the additional contacts, broaden our committees, pull out the stops to bring minority candidates into the search. Where we often fail is in valuing differences…The problem we face is less that there aren’t any minority candidates out there, which is the most common refrain from search committees. Rather, the problem is more that there aren’t any minority candidates LIKE US out there.”  (p. 165-166)

Light (1994) essentially argues that even with diverse considerations in recruitment, search committees can still go awry if, during selection, faculty are unwilling to confront their own biases for hiring faculty that most resemble their academic and educational trajectories. Most importantly however, this does not assume that candidates of color are incapable of graduating from the “top” institutions, or having research agendas that do not speak to race and ethnicity. But due to a host of factors, such as historic racism, community ties, family obligations, limited financial support, hostile campus racial climates, and limited networks, well-qualified minority candidates enroll in a wide variety of schools and have a wide variety of
research interests, rather than following the typical trajectory of elite universities and prevailing paradigms (Mickelson & Oliver, 1991).

**Fit as racial code.** Several studies make specific note of how the mention of “fit” during selection acts as racial code, disadvantaging candidates of color (Danowitz Sagaria, 2002; Kayes, 2006; Tuitt et al., 2007; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). According to the higher education literature, fit is an elusive construct; although several survey-based studies of selection characteristics find that fit is one of the most important, if not the most important, characteristics considered during faculty selection (Landrum & Clump, 2004; Sheehan, McDevitt, & Ross 1998; Wright & Vanderford, 2017), they do not identify how faculty participants describe fit in their own words, leaving the term in the amorphous.

Studies of racial bias problematize the concept of fit, and find that it is often more fluid and subjectively applied than studies of selection characteristics find. The most common critique is that in the absence of common standards for evaluation, “fit” is used as an add-on to deny certain types of candidates based on individual biases, rather than tangible differences that exist between the candidate’s materials and the needs of the department and/or institution (Danowitz Sagaria, 2002; Ng & Burke, 2005; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). For example, Danowitz Sagaria (2002) found that fit became an added requirement that was judged after certain criteria had been met, yet was code for determining if candidates had the appropriate cultural capital, including language, presentation, appearance, and style of social interaction that were palatable to the predominantly white search committee. Thus, candidates of color who were otherwise qualified to perform the duties of the job were critiqued for characteristics that were subjective, countering the perceived meritocracy that some faculty members espoused.
Moody (2015) explains that individuals unwillingly make a number of cognitive shortcuts and errors during selection and hiring procedures. She illustrates fifteen different cognitive errors and shortcuts that evaluators make daily within search committees, including the concept of “good fit/bad fit.” Although it is necessary for a job candidate to meet the needs of the department and position description, good or bad fit often is stretched to mean “will I feel comfortable and culturally at ease with this new hire or will I have to spend energy to learn some new ways to relate to this hire?” (p. 9). Thus, according to Moody and other higher education scholars, when fit is invoked in faculty selection it often has more to do with collegiality and uniformity, rather than a candidate’s academic credentials and their match with the department’s needs.

**Implicit bias.** Research on implicit bias has proliferated at a discernable rate within the last 30 years (Banaji & Greenwald, 1995; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998; Nosek, Banaji, & Greenwald, 2002; Greenwald, Banaji, & Nosek, 2015). Implicit bias research derives from several well-established concepts in social and cognitive psychology, such as semantic nonconscious memory, automated cognition, and the notion that decision-making is subject to inadvertent biases and mental shortcuts (Jost, Rudman, Blair, Carney, Dasgupta, Glaser, & Hardin, 2009). Thus, in an extension of these works, scholars identified bias – or the attitudes, prejudices, and stereotypes that affect our explicit behavioral choices in an unconscious manner – as a logical steppingstone. Since then, numerous studies have supported the prevalence and predictive nature of implicit bias (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Nosek et al., 2002; Greenwald et al., 2015). For instance, scholars such as Anthony Greenwald, Mahzarin Banaji, & Brian Nosek of Harvard’s Project Implicit have contributed to the popularization of the topic, find that implicit bias can be measured in several contexts, and
suggests it can predict explicit behavioral choices. Yet others have challenged implicit bias research, citing replication studies with underwhelming evidence and low difference scores (Blanton, Klick, Mitchell, Jaccard, Mellers, & Tetlock, 2009; Tetlock & Mitchell, 2009). Regardless, the volume of research on implicit bias and its impact on workplaces, organizations, and institutions suggests it is around to stay.

Implicit bias research has found particular traction in topics related to private sector workplace hiring and discrimination (Derous, Buijsrogge, Roulin, & Duyck, 2016; Jost et al., 2009) Scholars argue that the implicit biases held of employers partially explains various workplace inequities in hiring and promotion (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Jost et al., 2009). For example, a now standard example of implicit bias is Bertrand & Mullainathan’s (2004) study of resumes and hiring inequities based on race. Researchers submitted fictitious resumes to a variety of employment advertisements in Boston and Chicago, manipulating resume quality and applicant names that signaled racial stereotypes (e.g. Jamal, Tanisha, Emily, & Geoffrey). Researchers found that White names received 50 percent more callbacks for interviews compared to Black names, and that the racial gap was consistent across industry and occupation (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004). Bias in hiring and employment has been consistently evidenced through research over a variety of sectors (Jost et al., 2009).

Research and practice on implicit bias has spilled over into the higher education landscape at a noteworthy rate (Beattie & Tidwell, 2012; Beattie et al., 2013; Fine et al., 2014; McMurtrie, 2016). Similar to its advent in the private sector, scholars and practitioners argue that faculty members’ implicit biases may explain the low numbers of faculty of color across American colleges and universities. In one of the first and only studies of implicit bias in faculty hiring, Beattie and colleagues (2013) investigated the extent to which implicit and explicit
attitudes toward racial/ethnic minorities contributed to selection decisions of both a lectureship and administrator position. Researchers presented 96 participants (48 White and 48 non-White) with several implicit and explicit tasks, such as (1) rating the quality of matched CVs that differed by race and gender (yet were similarly qualified) against pre-defined job descriptions, (2) shortlisting two applicants for an interview, (3) taking a multi-ethnic implicit association test (IAT), and (4) taking an explicit “feeling thermometer” to rate how warm or cold respondents felt towards White and non-White people. The design of the study was to assess the extent to which implicit and explicit measures differed from each other, and to determine if implicit measures predicted behavioral outcomes related to fictitious hiring and selection decisions.

Results of the study revealed several important findings related to implicit bias and selection for a faculty position. For the lectureship position, white participants were nearly three and a half times more likely to select white candidates (77.1%) for the interview compared to academically comparable Black candidates (22.9%). A majority of white participants in the study (60.4%) shortlisted two white candidates, whereas very few (6.3%) shortlisted two minority candidates. When both implicit and explicit measures were taken into account, white participants held a strong pro-white bias, while even participants of color demonstrated a weak pro-white preference. Researchers concluded that when participants are provided with a constrained task of systematically analyzing CVs by comparing their qualifications with pre-defined set of job specifications, they arrived at more accurate conclusions about the applicant’s qualifications for the position. Importantly, “It is only when they are subsequently placed under explicit time-pressure (i.e. given 60 seconds) and instructed to perform a relatively open-ended task (i.e. shortlist two applicants for interview) that White participants disregarded their previous suitability judgments and shortlisted two applicants from their own ethnic background.
(Beattie et al., 2013, p. 194). This research provides emergent evidence on the nature and prevalence of implicit bias in faculty hiring and selection, although more empirical research is certainly needed.

Given that this research literature is currently the prevailing paradigm in both practice and research related to faculty search committees, it is important to note the applicability, trajectory, and limitations of these findings applied to the work. According to Beattie and colleagues (2013), implicit biases are a better predictor of behavioral choice than explicit measures when the task is open-ended and is constrained by time. Yet when the task is more specific with more available time to make decisions, implicit bias explains explicit behavioral choices less well, leaving more room for explicit and expressed attitudes to understand human behavior and choices. When mapped onto the search committee literature this research has several implications. First, there is room for additional research on whether implicit or explicit measures better predict behavioral choices made after the short-list is generated, given that the task of deciding between two to four finalists is more specific, less constrained by time, and introduces additional elements such as in-person interviews and a job-talk. Thus, greater room for understanding both the short-list and interview stages of selection is important, especially given that candidates of color may make the short list yet still systematically not become the final hire after the interview stage (Smith et al., 2004).

Finally, emerging research suggests that there are negative implications for relying too heavily on implicit bias to redress societal woes. A recent study found evidence of how framing racial bias in terms of implicit bias reduced Whites’ perceptions of intent in instances of discrimination, which then reduced perceptions of perpetrator blame, the severity of the discriminatory act, and the necessity of punishment for the perpetrator (Onyeador, 2017).
pattern of evidence was observed across three different experimental settings: customer service interactions, policy shootings, and workplace meetings. Across the three different scenarios, framing racial bias as implicit undermined “White observers’ evaluations of the severity of racial discrimination by reducing the perceived intentionality of perpetrators of discrimination.” (p. 80). Applied to the search committee literature, exclusively framing racial bias as implicit may similarly reduce faculty members’ perceptions of intentionality and necessity of punishment for explicit discrimination, especially if faculty believe there is nothing they can do about the bias. This creates even more space to identify alternative and/or complimentary strategies and measures for understanding the multiple dimensions of search committee procedures – and the bias inherent within them – outside of implicit bias.

**Selection Characteristics in Faculty Search Committees**

Research on selection characteristics – the other approach to studying faculty search committee – most closely resembles the more linear approach toward studying personnel selection in higher education (i.e. McLaughlin and Riesman, 1985). Unlike research on racial bias, these studies problematize faculty search committees considerably less, and instead provide the characteristics and traits faculty consider when making selection decisions. Moreover, these studies do not use faculty diversity as an orienting framework to justify inquiry, rather use other – yet still important – rationales for understanding faculty selection characteristics. These studies assert that openings for tenure-track faculty positions have gone down while competition has gone up in the U.S. (Tomlinson & Freeman, 2017), and that students in the life sciences - who make up a significant portion of all Ph.D. recipients - go on to receive tenure-track positions at a rate of only 14 percent (Wright & Vanderford, 2017). Not much has changed even from two decades prior; Sheehan and colleagues (1998) explain that
many psychology Ph.D. students who apply to tenure-track positions in Psychology are unsuccessful due to a lack of understanding of the hiring process. These studies suggest that an understanding of what characteristics faculty weigh heavily during hiring and selection can better prepare aspiring faculty candidates for a process that is largely understudied and misunderstood.

In their survey of 98 search committees, Sheehan and colleagues (1998) identified which criteria Psychology faculty valued most when evaluating candidates’ applications and later in their interviews. Results indicated that letters of recommendation, fit between applicant’s research interest and departmental needs, and experience teaching courses related to the position were the most important criteria used to evaluate applicant’s written materials. Yet when faculty evaluated candidates’ interviews, written materials (i.e. letters of recommendation) and background (i.e. teaching experience, experience teaching courses related to the position) mattered less than the interview, colloquium performance, and “fit.” These findings are largely consistent with Landrum and Clumps (2004) survey assessment of faculty search committees, who found that “fit,” research record or potential, teaching record or potential, and letters of recommendation were the most important characteristics considered. Importantly, neither study provides a definition of fit, while the later study collapses research and teaching “record” with “potential,” two constructs that in many cases can carry different meanings.

In both studies, not only did faculty value research and teaching records, but also weighed the prestige and rank of candidates’ graduate institutions in the hiring process. Indeed, despite various objections and reservations (e.g. Dichev, 2001; Pike, 2004), prestige and ranking systems have long been higher education’s “currency” used as an indicator of academic quality (O’Meara, 2007). Rankings today influence a number of different facets of faculty
careers, such as promotion and tenure (Gardner & Veliz, 2014), workplace satisfaction (Gardner, 2012), and most notably for the current study, academic hiring (DiRamio, Theroux, and Guarino, 2009; Freeman & DiRamio, 2016; Mickelson & Oliver, 1991). In a study of social networks and top-ranked higher education administration programs, DiRamio and colleagues (2009) found that 70 percent of faculty members at top-ranked higher education programs received their doctorate from another top-ranked school. Related to selection characteristics, these researchers inferred that faculty in search committees used an institution’s and/or department’s reputation as a characteristic – like research and teaching productivity – to inform hiring decisions (DiRamio et al., 2009). This corroborates findings from Wright & Vanderford (2017) who found that candidate’s training institution reputation was “a primary determining factor for attaining a [assistant-tenure track] faculty position,” (p. 886) and Mickelson & Oliver (1991) who found that candidates were most often eliminated on the basis of their graduate school.

Freeman & DiRamio (2016) sought to qualitatively understand why faculty at top-ranked higher education programs valued the prestige and rank of candidates’ training institution. Using interview data from 39 program coordinators, heads, and deans, researchers identified ten themes as to why rankings was deemed important by faculty search committees. For instance, many faculty members believed that candidates from similarly ranked higher education programs shared similar values related to organizational culture, maintaining high research activity, and acquiring external funding (Freeman & DiRamio, 2016). Additionally, faculty explained that they were closer colleagues with faculty in similarly ranked programs, and could corroborate that candidates were well-trained in such a way that would lead to success in their own program. Although this study was not framed with faculty diversity in
mind, the authors assert that such thinking may result in a reproductive cycle in offers for
tenure-track faculty positions, eliminating those from “lower-ranked” graduate programs.

**Selection Characteristics and Racial Bias**

Collectively, these selection characteristic studies illustrate the characteristics faculty
search committees consider during selection, with some characteristics varying by selection
stage (Sheehan et al., 1998), institutional type (Landrum & Clump, 2004), and reputation
(DiRamio et al., 2009; Freeman & DiRamio, 2016). However, none of these studies properly
use race as a consideration in selection. Only Landrum and Clump’s (2004) study surveys
faculty on the importance they place on race in selection, which, unsurprisingly, is low (25th out
of 31 items measured). Yet this approach does not come close to capturing the nuance and
complexity of race in hiring decisions, especially given the volume of literature that document
racial inequities in hiring (e.g. Betrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Rooth, 2007), and how certain
words like “fit” can have racial connotations (Danowitz & Sagaria, 2002; Sensoy & DiAngelo,
2017). This review of the literature only found two studies that sufficiently covered both racial
bias and selection characteristics in search committees: Danowitz Sagaria (2002) and Sensoy &
DiAngelo (2017).

Danowitz Sagaria’s (2004) investigates how administrator search processes may be a
contributor to the limited success in diversifying administrative units at predominantly white
colleges and universities. Although this study was of 13 administrative search committees, it
still highlights important tensions between selection characteristics and racial bias that may
occur in faculty search committees. She found that search committee members used four filters
to judge candidates: a normative filter, valuative filter, personal filter, and debasement filter.
The normative filter resembles the selection characteristic literature, in which faculty consider
qualifications such as education, accomplishments, and prior experience. Although there was a “strong commitment and sensitivity to equity and diversity” (p. 687) in this phase, it began to break down in later filters. For instance, candidates were evaluated through a valuative lens after they met a basic level of employability through the normative filter. Yet in the candidate’s own words they were often assessed for “fit,” which meant being screened for the appropriate cultural behavior that made search committee members feel comfortable, such as their language, presentation, and style of social interaction. Black men and women felt that these characteristics, which had little to do with their ability or talent, diminished their chances of receiving the position. This is akin to Luz Reyes & Halcon’s (1988) concept of hairsplitting, which happens when candidates meet the necessary academic criteria, yet are skipped over in the final decision due to highly subjective and/or idiosyncratic factors.

Both Danowitz Sagaria (2004) and Sensoy & DiAngelo (2017) identified ways in which racial bias can infiltrate selection characteristics throughout multiple stages of the search. In Danowitz Sagaria’s model this is known as the debasement filter. Through the debasement filter, search chairs doubted black candidate’s interest in the position, expected them to respond to the campuses minority issues, and devalued their experiences and competencies. Two of these forms of racial bias – expecting candidates of color to respond to minority issues, and devaluing their experiences and competencies – emerged through characteristics of selection in Sensoy & DiAngelo’s (2017) analysis of search committee processes, specifically in Step 3: The “Objective” Scrutiny of the CV, and Step 4: The Interview. In stage 3 for instance, the activities that are (over)expected of faculty of color once they are hired at an institution (serving on committees that deal with minority issues, mentoring students of color, etc.) are the very same that are typically not “countable” during the review of CVs (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017).
Moreover, it is these activities that take candidates of color away from doing the “countable” research and publishing that gets recognized in hiring. Thus, while selection characteristic research may capture how faculty value certain criteria items during search and selection processes, they miss the critical edge of how these characteristics can be selectively applied to perpetuate racial bias in the hiring process. Further, it misses how certain characteristics that are not valued are over-expected from faculty of color yet are under-expected of others.

Jointly, these studies demonstrate the importance of considering both selection characteristics and racial bias in faculty search committee change efforts by examining the ways in which the former may perpetuate the latter. The next section of this literature review is dedicated to examining the litany of strategies and solutions offered in the search committee literature in order to improve hiring outcomes for candidates of color.

**Strategies and Solutions in Faculty Search Committees**

A number of studies and guidebooks provide solutions on improving search committee processes and outcomes. These solutions and strategies address different aspects of the process, from recruiting prospective candidates, selecting a candidate, and enticing the candidate to accept the search committee’s offer. Yet as evidenced by the research on racial bias in search committees, pitfalls exist at each stage, warranting a multi-staged approach. For instance, candidates of color cannot be extended offers or incentivized through start-up funding if there are none recruited in the general pool of candidates. Similarly, searches can attract candidates of color yet over the years continually fail to hire them in favor of candidates that meet the status quo. In fact, Smith and colleagues (2004) found that in search committees that reached diverse final candidate pools, only 12 percent resulted in the hire of an underrepresented minority
faculty member. Thus, solutions required across the search process may work differently in different phases of the selection process.

**Recruitment strategies.** Two important strategies for diversifying the recruitment pool are using expanded networks with diverse audiences, and leveraging the position description to emphasize diversity. Recruiting diverse candidates into the pool is essential – Bilimoria & Buch (2010) identified a strong, significant linear relationship between the percent of female and URM applicants in the candidate pool and their representation on the short-list. Yet as previously discussed, there is great variance in terms of how, where, and among whom faculty members of a search committee network the position to generate the candidate pool (Gasman et al., 2011; Turner & Myers, 2000). Who has access and knowledge of the search can make a difference between a regular contact who has time to prepare a competitive application, or other candidates whose typical channels are overlooked and find out too late to compile a competitive application (Turner, 2002). As such, various authors contribute a variety of strategies for search committees to consider to cast the largest net and reach a critical mass of scholars of color. For example, committees can begin with establishing contact with faculty of color within their own department or other departments at other institutions, contact deans and department chairs at other institutions, create networks with institutional types that educate greater numbers of graduate students of color, or establish contacts with interest groups and national organizations such as The Compact for Faculty Diversity (Light, 1994; Smith, 2000; Turner, 2002).

Position descriptions are an important recruitment tactic, as they indicate the nature of work the candidate will be expected to perform, specifies the subfield, and signal to the candidate if the position is worth applying to (Tuitt et al., 2007; Turner, 2002). Yet traditionally, scholars have found that position descriptions specify overly narrow subfields, do not signal
diversity, or fail to convey a campus climate that proactively values the contributions of scholars of color (Light, 1994; Tuitt et al., 2007; Turner & Myers, 2000). Research indicates that when the position description is broader and signals diversity, it contributes to ideal conditions for creating more diverse candidate pools and increases the likelihood of hiring a candidate of color. In a quantitative analysis of the search committee conditions that lead to such hires, Smith and colleagues (2004) found that broader position descriptions that indicate diversity were significantly associated with committees not only recruiting faculty of color, but hiring them as well. Research from organization behavior provides additional evidence on the relationship between position descriptions, applicant behavior, and diversity (Schmidt, Chapman, & Jones, 2014; Wille & Derous, 2017). One study found several characteristics of job ads either enhanced or detracted from ethnic minority interest in the position, such as subtle cues, and signaling traits that carry inherent negative meta-stereotypes. Thus, Sensoy & DiAngelo (2017) recommend that administrators and search committee members do more to signal and operationalize diversity through evidence and practices, rather than in the abstract since many campuses already now have legally compliant diversity statements in position descriptions. This is a pervasive practice but not a deep practice that affects committee behavior, since it is primarily directed at informing applicants about non-discrimination policy.

Selection strategies. The three most common solutions for diversifying candidate selection have been diversifying the committee, creating common standards, and implicit bias trainings. A diverse search committee is important for several reasons. Even before selection and evaluations, a diverse cadre of scholars based on race, gender, training background, and research agenda will likely have access to different types of networks, increasing the access and call for applications. During selection, a diverse committee also ensures that multiple
perspectives enter the search process in evaluating candidates, and makes it less likely that
talent with nontraditional credentials are overlooked (Smith, 2000; Turner, 2002). For example,
Peppas (2006) sought to understand if different minority subgroups within organizations valued
different traits when making hiring decisions, particularly given the increasing representation of
Hispanics in the workplace and their different cultural values. Results indicated several
significant differences in what Hispanics and non-Hispanics valued in job applicants, with
Hispanics placing greater importance on subjective traits such as community involvement and
initiative, and less emphasis on school reputation. It is perhaps for these reasons that Smith et al.
(2004) descriptively found that when diverse hires were secured, a significant portion of those
search committees had at least one underrepresented minority faculty member on them.

While research points to diverse search committees as a useful strategy, it also exercises
some caution. Outside of simple numerical representation of underrepresented faculty groups,
power dynamics should also be taken into consideration (Light, 1994; Turner, 2002). Placing a
minority assistant professor on a committee of more senior colleagues creates an imbalance,
especially if the assistant professor constantly reminds colleagues to consider less traditional
indicators of talent (Light, 1994). Moreover, faculty members of color, regardless of rank,
should not feel overburdened to serve on too many committees or be the “diversity voice,”
which may lead to tokenization and alleviate other members from considering diversity in the
search and selection process. Future research should approach these challenges by investigating
how diverse a committee must be in order to lead to selecting candidates of color, and how
early-career professors can navigate issues of service overburden, power, and tokenization.

Unlike student admissions, there are less standardized measures to assess candidates
such as GRE and TOEFL scores, and undergraduate/graduate GPA. Although candidates with
numerous publications in top journals, number of citations (H-factor), and amount of grant funding fair well in research institutions, faculty must grapple with other measures which are less quantifiable and generally more subjective, such as writing examples, letters of recommendations, and CVs (work and research experiences). Although the selection characteristics literature illustrates which items faculty value more than others, most findings lack transferability and ecological validity since hiring decisions are not made unilaterally, yet are made within a group dynamic. Although faculty may believe they are rating candidates purely objectively, they bring their own expectations and value system into the process. Thus, it is ideal for search committee members to have common standards for evaluation during selection stages (Light, 1994; Turner, 2002; Lee, 2014; Moody, 2015). Light (1994) refers to this as “deciding what to value in the files,” and suggests that faculty create a rating system to ensure that the committee makes a fair, rigorous, and consistent assessment as to what “currency” shall be used in the selection process. Practical guides on improving search processes and outcomes provide a foundation on how to define what the “currency” is for evaluating candidates. Moody (2015) recommends creating a matrix of evidence to support positive and negative claims about candidates and their credentials (yet advises against simply ranking candidates), while Lee (2014) provides over 30 different types of characteristics to consider when evaluating candidates. The research on creating common standards is clear that a routine and organized system should be created before the search commences with evaluation.

Even when common standards are generated and shared amongst committee members, research shows that implicit bias can still infiltrate the search for new faculty (Beattie & Tidwell, 2012; Beattie et al., 2013). As such, the prevalence of implicit bias trainings across American colleges and universities has sharply increased, with seemingly many four-year
institution engaging in some form of bias reduction intervention (Fine & Handelsman, 2012; McMurtie, 2016). The research literature recommends ideal standards and conditions for implicit bias trainings that would benefit search committee faculty (e.g. Bilimoria & Buch, 2010; Kayes, 2006; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017), while others empirically test implicit bias trainings on search committees to demonstrate their effectiveness (Fine et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2015). For instance, it is recommended that any implicit bias intervention consider the role of intercultural sensitivity, especially given that many predominantly white faculty members may be initially defensive to implicit bias research (Kayes, 2006). Research also suggests that in order to mitigate and reduce implicit race bias, individuals should be aware of their bias, concerned about the effects of that bias, and participate in long-term interventions that expose them to habit-breaking techniques (Devine, Forscher, Austin, & Cox, 2013).

Two studies of implicit bias and faculty search committees provide interesting early results, yet are only limited to diversity of gender and not race (Fine et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2015). In order to increase gender diversity outcomes among 23 STEM faculty searches at a single university, Smith et al. (2015) created a three-step intervention founded on self-determination theory, which focused on (1) increasing faculty members’ competency of implicit bias, (2) enhancing their perceived autonomy to deal with implicit bias by providing concrete strategies to control it, and (3) improved their relatedness with the search by connecting search committee members to support staff during the process. Results suggested significant differences in hiring outcomes between the intervention and non-intervention group, with the intervention condition having a greater proportion of women in the short-list. Fine and colleagues (2014) focused on similar outcomes, and found that their intervention had a strong positive relationship to making an offer to a woman candidate. Although these studies
exclusively capture gender and not race, they provide important emergent evidence on the effect of implicit bias trainings on faculty search processes.

**Yield strategies.** Once a candidate is selected, there are strategies for procuring their hire, particularly for candidates of color. One strategy that has shown success is providing candidates of color with incentives, indicating that the search and larger department values and desires their potential contributions (Knowles & Harleston, 1997; Moody, 1988; Smith et al., 2004; Tierney & Sallee, 2008; Turner, 2002). Incentives such as reduced teaching loads, professional development, startup research support, and other forms of special hire strongly predict hiring a candidate of color (Smith et al., 2004). Yet Tierney & Sallee (2008) explicitly state that incentives only work some of the time, especially if support for faculty of color is not woven into the fabric of the department and institution. In a study of search committees and hiring outcomes at 18 institutions, they found that incentives for incoming faculty of color, such as special hiring funds and research funds, were found at campuses that had both high and low levels of representational faculty diversity. Similar to Smith et al. (2004), Tierney & Sallee (2008) suggest that numerous factors create the ideal conditions for hiring faculty of color.

Given that there are multiple factors that help procure a candidate of color, the literature shows that some candidates still may not choose the institution despite incentives if the institution’s racial climate is undesirable (Ng & Burke, 2005; Tuitt et al., 2007; Turner & Myers, 2000). Research suggests that faculty candidates receive signals from potential institutional workspaces, such as signals related to the satisfaction, compensation, and productivity of employees (Bangerter, Roulin, & Konig, 2012; Tuitt et al., 2007). Ng & Burke (2005) find that candidates also receive signals on the company’s approach to diversity and inclusion, otherwise known as diversity management. In a study of 113 MBA job seekers,
results indicated that women and ethnic minorities found diversity management as important when accepting offers of employment (Ng & Burke, 2005). Similarly applied to the higher education literature, scholars of color routinely report that a climate that fosters diversity is important, not only in hiring, but in promotion and tenure and workplace satisfaction as well (Stanley, 2006b; Turner & Myers, 2000). If candidates perceive that the workplace climate for diversity is lacking, they may be less likely to envision a successful, long-lasting career at the institution and accept the offer. Thus, all members of the campus community – faculty, department chairs, deans, administrators. – must work on the institution’s campus racial climate for not only yield, but other aspects of retention and department reputation as a good place to work.

Theoretical Framework

There is a growing body of literature on the functions and dysfunctions of faculty search committees. The two most common approaches to studying this phenomenon have broached it from both critical and linear perspectives. While both perspectives are necessary, there has been little integration between the two approaches, likely contributing to our limited understanding of the role search committees play in faculty diversity. Moreover, a lack of organizational research leaves the literature base monolithic and unwieldy, making it difficult to generalize the racial bias and selection characteristics evidence onto different organizational factors and settings. Incorporating the organizational context surrounding faculty searches is vital, as it is likely that the selection of candidates is as much, if not more, about the institutional-, departmental-, and committee-dynamics than it is about the candidates’ credentials themselves.

This study fills these gaps through advances in both theory and methods. Concerning theory, this study situates faculty search committees within three interconnected frameworks:
person-environment (P-E) fit, power in organizations, and critical race theory (CRT). Person-environment fit examines the determinants of recruiters’ perceived fit between candidates and their organizations, while power in organizations envelops these evaluations within a real-world context of influence and constraints. CRT contributes a more critical perspective of both theories within search committee functions, highlighting the ways in which candidate evaluation perpetuates racial inequities, and how power displays and conditions also stunts faculty diversity. Thus, these three theories together provide more transferability to the search committee literature base. Each section is organized by a review of the literature and prevailing studies, and an application to higher education and search committee literature. I conclude by summarizing how the collective theory can guide new inquiry into search committee processes and outcomes.

**Person-Environment (P-E) fit**

At the innermost level, this study utilizes person-environment (P-E) fit from organizational behavior to understand the individualized level of faculty attitudes and perceptions of candidate qualifications. Perhaps most interestingly, one of the most common phrases faculty use to explain hiring decisions is whether or not the applicant “fit” within the department and/or institution. Indeed, research has examined fit as a selection criterion (Landrum & Clump, 2004; Sheehan et al., 1998; Wright & Vanderford, 2017), a barrier to candidates of color (Danowitz Sagaria, 2002; Tuitt et al., 2007; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017), and most recently in administrative personnel decisions (Reece et al., 2019). However, none of these studies employ an actual fit framework from organizational behavior, leaving the term as subjective and poorly articulated as when it was first found. Using a person-environment fit framework specifies an empirical model of employee search and selection, providing analytic
depth to a term that has reached ubiquity. It also provides a suitable testing ground to determine if the normative model of personnel selection holds for faculty searches.

P-E fit researchers acknowledge the pervasive yet elusiveness of fit within organizations (Judge & Ferris, 1992; Kristof, 1996; Rynes & Gerhart, 1990). The common consensus is that P-E fit is defined as the extent to which an individual and their environment match on important characteristics (Werbel & Gilliland, 1999). As businesses and organizations have become more complex, researchers have modified theories of fit to incorporate different dimensions. For example, distinctions exist between different types of fit, such as person-organization (P-O) fit, person-job (P-J) fit (Kristof, 1996). Whereas P-J fit measures the extent to which an individual has the skills to meet the needs of a job, or if the job meets the needs of the individual (Edwards, 1991), P-O fit measures the congruence between an individual’s values with the organization (Kristof, 1996). Further distinctions are made between complimentary and supplementary fit (Cable & Edwards, 2004), perceived and actual fit (Cable & Judge, 1997), and needs-supplies and demands-abilities (Kristof, 1996). Research suggests that employees that experience fit, perceived or actual, within the organization experience a host of positive outcomes, such as workplace satisfaction, organizational attachment, and reduced likelihood of departure (Chatman, 1991).

To this end, the fit research has predominantly been employed as a consequence of hiring, rather than as an antecedent of hiring. Yet a subset of fit research extends the construct into research on selection and hiring decisions, which is the focus of this study. The primary questions and topics these studies consider that are most germane to the current study are (1) whether recruiters, interviewers, and employers consider organizational fit during selection (i.e. general employability, idiosyncratic preferences, or firm-specific fit), (2) the type of fit
considered during selection and whether they are discernable (i.e. person-organization fit or person-job fit, complementary/supplementary fit) and (3) identifying the essential characteristics considered during selection, and how they are weighted.

**Is organizational fit considered?** In the first study of fit within selection decisions, Rynes & Gerhart (1990) sought to understand if recruiters considered *firm-specific fit*: evaluations of candidates that included something more than just determining their *general employability* for any organization or job, and/or personally-held *idiosyncratic preferences*. The authors argue that if assessments or general and/or idiosyncratic, rather than firm-specific, then it would make the term “fit” useless, since assessments did not actually consider the needs of the organization or job, yet were rather just individually-held preferences that were not stable across recruiters within the same organization (suggesting a lack of cohesive, higher-order organizational values or needs). Researchers found that recruiters evaluated applicants on the basis of firm-specific fit and considered several organizational characteristics in those evaluations. Further, fit assessments were more stable between raters of the same organization than between raters of different ones, suggesting that there were commonly held organizational values that impacted selection.

However, later evidence suggested the contrary: that recruiters most often channeled non-firm specific characteristics when describing fit evaluations (Bretz et al., 1993), and that P-O fit was largely idiosyncratic and had a minor relationship with an organization’s selection decision (Adkins et al., 1994). In an attempt to reconcile these findings, Cable & Judge (1997) attributed divergent results to measurement differences - whereas Adkins and colleagues studied *actual* fit, studies prior to that measured *perceived* fit. Cable & Judge found that it was perceived fit – or the perceived congruence between an interviewer’s perceptions of an
applicant’s values and an organization’s values – and not actual fit (i.e. statistically derived congruence between an applicant’s values and the organization’s) that contributed to interviewers’ selection decisions.

**What type of fit is considered?** Using the available literature on fit within selection at that time, Cable & Judge (1997) established that perceived fit, rather than actual fit, contributed to selection behavior and hiring decisions. Researchers have since extended beyond this point and have sought to understand the different dimensions of fit considered within selection, and the phases of selection in which these different considerations occur (Chuang & Sackett, 2005; Chen, Lee, & Yeh, 2008; Kristof-Brown, 2000; Ostroff & Zhan, 2012; Piasentin & Chapman, 2006; Sekiguchi, 2004, 2007; Sekiguchi & Huber, 2011). First, studies indicate that recruiters and employers differentiate between perceived P-J fit and P-O fit assessments during selection, and that assessments of both are dependent on different applicant characteristics (Kristof-Brown, 2000; Sekiguchi & Huber, 2011) and selection stage (Chuang & Sackett, 2005). Kristof-Brown (2000) found that perceived P-J fit was informed by recruiters’ sense of an applicant’s knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs), while their perceived P-O fit was more closely related to an applicant’s personality and values. This corroborates earlier evidence by Rynes & Gerhart (1990), who found that interpersonal skills, goal orientation, and physical attractiveness contributed to P-O fit assessments instead of “objective qualifications” such as GPA and years of experience. Moreover, Kristof-Brown (2000) identified P-J fit assessments as more closely correlated with hiring outcomes compared to P-O fit assessments.

Temporal dimensions also bind perceived assessments of fit, although there is debate in regards to what ends (Chuang & Sackett, 2005; Sekiguchi & Huber, 2011). Chuang & Sackett (2005) found that P-J fit was more important than P-O fit during overall selection, and also
found evidence for different effects dependent on selection stage. Specifically, while perceived P-J fit is more important during earlier stages of the search, P-O fit took greater precedence as the search continued into later stages (i.e. the single interview and final interview). However, Sekiguchi & Huber (2011) posit a non-linear model for assessing fit during selection. In their model, high and low values P-O and P-J fit interact to inform selection decisions, yet are also based on previously underexplored variables, such as contract duration and career type.

**Fit criteria and weight.** While research demonstrates the various dimensions of fit during selection, it also contributes a number of specific selection criteria that are invoked as recruiters and employers consider applicant fit (Bretz et al., 1993; Cable & Judge, 1997; Chaung & Sackett, 2005; Kristof-Brown, 2000; Rynes & Gerhart, 1990). For example, Bretz and colleagues (1993) identified 13 characteristics that were found in at least two-thirds recruiters’ descriptions of the “best-fitting” candidates, most notably: (1) job-related work experience, (2) articulateness, (3) job-related coursework, (4) appearance, and (5) general communication skills. Adkins and colleagues (1994) contributed GPA, number of jobs held, and value congruence as similarly important during selection. Yet research also indicates that some characteristics matter more than others to recruiters and employers. Criteria items that are considered knowledge, skills, and abilities are more closely related to P-J fit, which are weighted more heavily overall during selection, especially in the early stages (Chuang & Sackett, 2005; Kristof-Brown, 2000; Rynes & Gerhart, 1990). Characteristics concerning values and personality traits are more closely related to P-O fit, and are considered less important overall when making decisions, yet become gradually more important as selection proceeds (Chuang & Sackett, 2005). This matches with Rynes & Gerharts (1990) original articulation of general employability versus firm-specific fit – that characteristics such as personal values,
political orientation, and personality traits “become particularly important once preliminary screening establishes that all (remaining) candidates meet minimal job requirements.” (Ricklefs, 1979, as cited in Rynes & Gerhart, 1990).

**Search committee literature integration.** The P-E fit literature provides important theoretical depth and direction to a construct previously underexplored. First, it indicates that recruiters and employers do assess a level of perceived organizational fit that is above evaluations of general employability and/or idiosyncratic preferences (Adkins et al., 1994; Cable & Judge, 1997; Rynes & Gerhart, 1990). In regards to type of fit, employers generally assess complimentary P-J fit first – or the perceived congruence between a candidate’s knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) and those required to perform the job – in order to determine if the applicant is minimally qualified (Chuang, & Sackett, 2005; Kristof-Brown, 2000). Yet in later stages of the process, supplementary P-O fit - or the perceived congruence between a candidate and the organizational values and culture - becomes more important as recruiters and employers extend beyond requisite skills and seek to understand if a candidate’s personality and values match the organization’s (Chuang, & Sackett, 2005; Kristof-Brown, 2000).

However, some questions arise as to whether faculty members within faculty searches strictly adhere to this linear model of evaluation, or even employ a fit-based evaluative framework during selection processes at all. Sekiguchi and Huber (2011) advanced a non-linear evaluative fit model, and hypothesized that contract type and task elements (i.e. managerial tasks vs. knowledge-intensive tasks) affected the extent to which P-O and P-J fit indicators were weighed to evaluate candidates at any given point. Results indicated that P-O fit was weighed more heavily for managerial positions, likely because those jobs require greater levels of work
interdependence and adherence to organizational values to strengthen cohesion. Conversely, P-J fit was more relevant for knowledge-intensive jobs, where shared organizational values are generally less pervasive due to the higher levels of professional autonomy.

As a knowledge-intensive vocation, the differences between faculty careers from other professions may extend beyond the P-O/P-J binary, and may even yield warped evaluative frameworks from those described in the fit and selection literature. Faculty members are afforded high levels of autonomy, and there is virtually no interconnectedness in their primary task elements (i.e. research and teaching), and minimal significant interconnectedness in service. This is exacerbated at research universities, where research is used as the primary determinant for hiring and service is far less regarded. Moreover, faculty receive little to no training on how to conduct actual hiring procedures, have tiered allegiances to their department and to their field based on local and cosmopolitan orientations (Rhoades, Kiyama, McCormick, & Quiroz, 2008), and make decisions on personnel who could reasonably be their colleague for life – increasing the perceived pressure to “get it right.” These factors complicate the P-O/P-J binary in previous selection studies and lead to the possibility of increased reliance on idiosyncratic preferences, as originally described by Rynes & Gerhart (1990). Structurally speaking, faculty members’ evaluative frameworks may have little to nothing to do with the organization, especially if they view the work itself as having nothing to do with their own work and/or the greater department – giving them a high degree of independence to create and enact their own idiosyncratic assessments of candidates. Thus, adhering to previous studies of fit is important, but unique characteristics of faculty careers may prompt departures from the literature.
Power in Organizations

This study also utilizes theories of power to understand the interpersonal dynamics of faculty behavior in search committees. While P-E fit provides an important analytic lens to understand individual attitudes of recruiters and employers, it often focuses on those who have the power to make unilateral hiring decisions. Yet selection in faculty search committees differs in key ways from how selection operates in industries typically captured in the P-E fit literature. For example, academic departments are characterized through a culture of shared governance and decision-making, with search committees being no different. As such, individual assessments of fit do not operate in a vacuum nor do they hold unilateral weight, thus no one evaluation can predict new faculty hires alone.

Although plenty of theories capture interactional patterns and group decision-making within organizations, theories of power were intentionally chosen because although search committees operate in a climate of shared governance, important power (im)balances still exist based on background, ideology, and division of labor. Otherwise stated, one faculty members’ perceived P-J or P-O fit assessment of an applicant may hold more or less influence within the committee compared to their peers based on their rank, time-in-department, expert knowledge, and relationship with colleagues, which may be further modified by aspects of their identity (e.g. race, gender, and age). Differences in opinions and expectations for the search may even exist outside of the committee, between the department, department chair, and dean. Particularly in committees with limited time and resources, these power differences may partially explain which assessments play major and/or minor roles in hiring decisions. Thus, these differences between higher education and industry necessitate a framework that situates individuals’ fit
assessments within larger interpersonal and institutional contexts in which the power scales may not be even.

The predominant power theories employed for the current study is Pfeffer’s (1981) theory of power in organizations, and sources of power (French & Raven, 1959; Raven, 2008). These theories of power stem from earlier works of power from sociology and psychology disciplines, from authors such as Lasswell (1936), Weber (1947), and Dahl (1957). Pfeffer’s (1981) model of power in organizations builds upon this foundational literature, and defines the construct as the ability to affect and/or change another social actor’s behavior, despite resistance, to bring about a desired outcome (Dahl, 1957; Emerson, 1962; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1974). Power in organizations involves distinct elements that separate it from other intragroup relation theories, such as inherent coalitions, conflict, preferences, resistance, and interdependence of social actors (Pfeffer, 1981). He argues that understanding power within organizations is important because decisions must be made in organizational settings that have an inherent division of labor with diverse preferences, yet finite resources. An analysis of power is founded on several principles: (1) identifying the social actors and measuring their levels of power, (2) identifying the sources of their power, and (3) identifying the typical conditions in which power is generally employed.

**Measure of power among social actors.** Power within organizations is an inherently relational construct; a social actor – an individual, subunit, or organization - is not said to have power unless that power is within context of a specific relationship. Social agents exert power over external entities in order to exercise preference and judgment in decision-making agendas (Pfeffer, 1981). Based on the relational nature of the construct, an analysis of power must first define the social actors involved in order to determine the level of power they employ. Pfeffer
(1981) argues that social actors should first be arranged by interest and preference, stating: “the criterion is to cluster social actors together to maximize their homogeneity in opinions, preferences, and values which are relevant to the political issue being investigated” (p. 36). Because power is context specific, the groups are unfixed, change based on the political issue being investigated, and can be arranged by using a number of social features such as identity, tenure within the organization, or position in the hierarchy. However, hierarchy should not be immediately conflated with power; a division of labor does not necessarily mean a division of preferences. For example, the positional authority granted to the dean does not inherently mean that they are at odds with the search committee. If both social actors agree on the intended process and desired outcomes of the search, no conflict may arise.

However, the situation can look different if the social actors (the units of analysis) have differing preferences for the desired outcomes of the search. Using the same example, the dean may value diversity or national prestige, and if the search committee’s proposed hire fails to meet one or either of those objectives well, tensions may exist. Yet if the dean does not state a preference or objective for the search, then power is diffused away from the dean down toward the search committee and department faculty, where other imbalances may still exist. Given the relational nature of power, the grouping changes from between the committee and other actors to within the committee. Further, now that a clear hierarchy no longer divides the social actors, it becomes necessary to identify new social actors based on different groupings.

After identifying social actors and meaningfully grouping them, the second portion of Pfeffer’s (1981) power analysis is measuring the amount of power the units of analyses have. Power can be estimated through several means: determinants, consequences, symbols, and reputation. For instance, many power analyses are determined through investigating the
consequences and results of choices in terms of who and what they affect (Pfeffer, 1981). By recognizing situations in which decisions and resources are likely to be based on social actors’ varying interests (the issue), and then directly investigating the extent to which such actors either gained or lost in those decisions made (the outcome), power analyses can be generated. Reputational indicators can also be used to identify where preference differences exist by asking participants directly who they believe has power, yet this method has been critiqued (Pfeffer, 1981; Polsby, 1960). Pfeffer (1981) states that the reputational method for diagnosing power is limited, especially when the “normative structure of the organization stresses the illegitimacy of power and politics…asking questions about power and decision-making clearly violate[s] normative beliefs about the nature and character of universities and academic life” (p. 56). Based on this literature, the current study identifies social actors, divides them based on context-specific issues, and analyzes power using a blended approach of consequential and reputational measures.

**Origins and sources of power.** Research on power within organizations is also concerned with identifying the different sources of power (French & Raven, 1959; Pfeffer, 1981; Raven, 2008). Using the previous example, if faculty members are arranged into meaningful social units by their preferences and values, and then these preferences lead to various displays of power, it then becomes important to understand the source of that power. Because power is context-specific and is generally studied within its real-life boundaries, identifying the sources of power precedes the display of power, in order to generate stronger linkages. Pfeffer (1981) argues that two things determine the source of power for organizational actors: the importance of what they do in the organization, and their skill in doing it. Yet this aspect of the model does not appropriately capture the within-group differences in faculty
search committees, because it is generally believed that each committee member performs the same function, and is entitled to do so by virtue of holding that post – negating the aspect of skill. Instead, French and Raven (1959) provide an important articulation of the sources of power, which has been employed by higher education researchers to understand power within college and university settings (e.g. Watkins & Tisdell, 2006).

In their seminal work, French & Raven (1959) attempt to understand the major types of power exchanges that occur within dyadic relationships between two “agents.” Similar to Pfeffer (1981) and other power analysts, the researchers defined power in terms of influence between social actors, yet also take a more psychological approach to understanding changing behavior by inquiring the extent to which power can change a target’s explicit and/or implicit actions and behaviors. A social agent’s ability to influence a target (i.e. power) is derived from several sources: reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, referent power, and expert power. Reward power refers to the ability for a social agent to offer a positive incentive if the target complies; whereas coercive power refers to the ability for the influencing agent to punish the target for failure to comply with the desired behavioral outcome (French & Raven, 1959).

Reward and coercive power are likely ineffective sources of influence within faculty search committee deliberations, given the shared-governance nature of such bodies. However, legitimate and expert powers may be viable sources of power within these contexts. Legitimate power refers to the legitimacy of the influencer’s claims, and the extent to which the influencing agent acknowledges the influencer as a legitimate agent based on a variety of factors (French & Raven, 1959). If the target perceives the agent as legitimate, then they are likely to be influenced by their preferences. Expert power concerns how well the target refers to the influencing agent as an expert, and defers power to them based on that assessment (French &
Raven, 1959). Because faculty careers are greatly enhanced through legitimacy and expert knowledge in a variety of settings, these are more likely to appear as sources of power within faculty search committees.

**Typical conditions that necessitate power.** Finally, it is important to review which settings typically necessitate power. Even with a division of preferences and varying sources of power, certain conditions and settings necessitate the use of power more than others. In the absence of these settings, power analyses become far less necessary. Pfeffer (1981) outlines several elements that produce the conditions for conflict and necessitate the use of power among actors: interdependence, heterogeneous goals, and scarcity of resources. The condition of interdependence arises when the decisions made of one actor affects what happens to others, which is typical of joint activities (Pfeffer, 1981). Interdependence is important because it binds actors together to create a sense of either shared accomplishment or failure. If actions and outcomes are not interdependent of each other, then there is little incentive for actors to invest time into the effort. Moreover, the goals between actors should generally be heterogenous to activate power differentials. Applied to search committees, although the goal to hire a faculty member is homogenous, the methods and factors that form the basis of who to hire who differ based on varying sources of power and heterogeneous values and opinions. Finally, scarce resources create the ideal conditions for power differentials, as only a limited number of choices and options exist within a finite process.

These three conditions are enhanced when actors deem the decision important, and there is a clear distribution of power (Pfeffer, 1981). Put otherwise, if actors feel that the parameters surrounding the decision-making are trivial, there will be a limited investment of time and political resources. Similarly, a distribution of power enhances the conditions necessary for
power, because if power were centralized within one position then group decision-making would be forgone for unilateral decisions. Faculty search committees thus contain several ideal conditions for power and influence: faculty members must rely on each other to accomplish the work yet may have heterogeneous and divergent goals about how to accomplish said work. Moreover, the resources are limited, yet the process is still deemed as important since the new hire will presumably fill needs within the department for the foreseeable future. Since power is distributed amongst members of the committee, different sources and measures of power may influence or even moderate the extent to which preferences (i.e. assessments of P-O and P-J fit) inform the hiring decisions and outcomes.

**Search committee literature integration.** Research on interpersonal power within organizations has been translated into higher education research to explain the power dynamics faculty and administrators encounter when attempting to foster institutional, grassroots-level change (Kezar, 2011; Kezar & Lester, 2011). This research found that faculty, staff, and administrators attempt to achieve grassroots change based on their own values, ideologies, and preferences through distinctive displays of power, such as oppression, silencing, controlling, stalling tactics, and microaggressions. It was through these means which power and influence were conveyed, yet with varying levels of success to achieve grassroots level, institutional change.

Applied to the current study, forms of interpersonal power may emerge in the hiring process, and ultimately interact with P-E fit preferences. For example, the transferal of fit perceptions through communicative and shared decision-making is already demonstrated in Cable & Judge’s (1997) model of perceived fit in selection decisions. In order for recruiters to perceive a candidate’s values to determine organizational fit, the candidate must - at a basic
level - communicate those values. Whereas actual fit statistically models the candidate’s values to determine congruence, communication is key in perceived fit, which is most characteristic of search committee functions. Even though a candidate may have perfect fit with the organization, if they are unable to communicate this, then employers and recruiters may perceive an incongruence. Thus, conveyance of values moderates the available cues an interviewer can then make inferences from to determine organizational fit.

In this example, having a P-E fit preference is necessary but insufficient in a context of shared governance and decision-making. Such a preference must be shared, communicated, and transmitted – similar to Cable & Judge’s (1997) model of perceived fit. The successful transmission of a faculty members’ P-E fit preference may likely depend on varying factors related to power, such as the sources of power (e.g. legitimate, expert), the measures of power, or the conditions in which power is enhanced (e.g. interdependence, heterogeneity of preferences, and scarce resources). The ways in which these preferences are conveyed to other faculty members can certainly be collegial and need not be antagonistic; yet individual preferences based on a variety of background factors may create divisions that are commonly documented in the power literature. In the presence of search committee members who wield more power and have differing views, another committee member’s P-E fit preference may not gain the necessary traction to equally inform selection decisions. Moreover, a particularly influential committee member may block the advancement of candidate, despite other espoused yet weaker preferences, if they feel so strongly about a candidate’s credentials. Differences in preference may also exist between the dean, department chair, or even other departmental faculty not on the search committee, whose power increases when candidates are brought onto campus for visits and during the final vote to advance to administrative approval. These
examples illustrate that a power framework is necessary to complement a fit framework, particularly in a process that requires group decision-making between actors with varying backgrounds, preferences, and sources of power.

**Critical Race Theory (CRT)**

Lastly, this study utilizes a CRT framework to critique prevailing systems and theories that have historically failed to include people of color. CRT is a theoretical framework that critiques the omission of race and racism in societal laws, practices, and social structures. It originated in legal scholarship, and emerged from several critical events in the 1980’s. As the civil rights progress procured in the 60s and 70s began to wane (and in some cases, roll back), incidences of more subtle and institutional forms of racism became clearer (Crenshaw, 2011). For example, tensions between the Harvard Law School Dean and students on the lack of faculty diversity, curricular options, and administrative response evidenced how race and merit perpetually created situations of preferring an “excellent white professor over a mediocre Black one” (Crenshaw, 2011, p. 1267). This case, among others, became mounting evidence for the ingrained, subtle, and ubiquitous nature of racism across the country even despite civil rights laws and antidiscrimination law. This compelled scholars who were dissatisfied with the rate of racial progress to convene and consider the ways in which liberal racial reform and antidiscrimination law contribute to slow racial progress, rather than facilitate racial progress (Crenshaw, 1988, 2011; Delgado, 2009). Thus, CRT originated from legal studies as a way for Black students and Black faculty to challenge the “institutional practices of legal education that in their view generated the narrow conceptions of discrimination and equality that underwrote the retrenchment [of racial progress]” (Crenshaw, 2011, p. 1308).
Scholars have used CRT to critique dominant societal structures and practices for well over three decades, and several reoccurring principles characterize their analyses. These are: (1) the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism, (2) the challenge to dominant ideology, (3) the commitment to social justice, (4) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and (5) the interdisciplinary perspective (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). For instance, the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism posits that racism is ubiquitous in American society because it is a normal, enduring, and logical system designed to benefit some and not others, and is thus not aberrant or unusual (Bell, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) use schools to illustrate this tenant, arguing that if racism were merely isolated and unrelated incidences, we would expect greater variance in educational excellence in public schools, rather than stable inequities across school systems along racial and gender lines. This is perhaps because schools are bastions of purported color-blindness, meritocracy, and equal-opportunity, constructs that critical race theorists argue through the second principle are “camouflage for the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in U.S. society (Calmore, 1992, as cited in Solorzano, 1997, p. 6). This principle, as well as whiteness as property and color-blind racism, are important analytic arms of CRT, and have been instrumental in analyzing and critiquing educational spaces.

**CRT in education.** Delgado & Stefancic (2012) explain, “critical race theorists hold that color blindness…will allow us to redress only extremely egregious racism harms, ones that everyone would notice and condemn. But if racism is embedded in our thought processes and social structures as deeply as many critical theorists believe, then the ‘ordinary business’ of society – the routines, practices, and institutions that rely on to do the world’s work – will keep minorities in subordinate positions.” Historically, education and schooling have been viewed as
apolitical sites of equal opportunity, positioning students from all backgrounds and
demographics to successfully enter the middle class (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings &
Tate, 1995; Patton, Haynes, Harris, & Ivery, 2014). Yet despite this common perception,
schools remain sites of disproportionate outcomes along gender, racial, and class lines (Ladson-
Billings & Tate, 1995). Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995) ushered in CRT into the education
discipline, arguing that it enabled a strong critique of an education system that, at the time,
evaded thorough analyses based on race and racism. Focusing on the seemingly mundane
functions of K-12 schools, scholars identified several racialized disparities within these
educational environments, such as disparities in instructional quality, assessment/performance,
school funding, and pervasive stereotypes of students of color (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-
Billings & Tate, 1995; Rousseau & Dixson, 2005; Solorzano, 1997). To illustrate, the property
tax function of school funding has, and continues, to leave urban schools underequipped and
underfunded (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Such structures that appear seemingly equal, yet whose
remedies are not found in civil rights and anti-discrimination law, become viable inquiry
through a CRT analysis.

**CRT in higher education and faculty careers.** In the last decade, higher education
researchers have used CRT to similarly investigate the “thought processes, social structures, and
ordinary business of higher education,” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) given the pervasive nature
of inequities along race, gender, and class lines (Harper, 2012; Patton, 2016; Patton, Harper, &
Harris, 2015; Patton et al., 2014). Patton (2016) argues that the functioning of higher education,
too, is deeply racial, particularly as it relates to student access, faculty, curriculum, and
institutional diversity. A higher education system that is stratified along racial lines by
institutional type (Patton et al., 2016), a professoriate that is stratified along racial lines by rank
and tenure status (Snyder et al., 2018), and a culture that is more reactive than proactive to recent strings of racially-themed incidents (Garcia, Johnston, Garibay, Herrera, & Giraldo, 2011) is clearly evident, non-isolated, and prevalent across colleges and universities across the U.S.

This racialized climate permeates throughout faculty careers, with faculty of color reporting greater feelings of having to work harder to be perceived as a legitimate scholar (Eagan, Stolzenberg, Berdan Lozano, Aragon, & Suchard, 2014), greater levels of discrimination (Hurtado, Eagan, Pryor, Whang, & Train, 2012), and lower rates of perceived fairness (DeAngelo et al., 2011). Scholars who use CRT to examine faculty careers in particular have explored individual experiences such as experiences race and racism (Patton & Catching, 2009; Solorzano, 1998) and institutional structures such as inequities in the promotion and tenure process (Croom & Patton, 2012; Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Urrieta et al., 2015). However, faculty hiring has been underexplored in the CRT literature related to faculty careers. Yet the broader studies of faculty careers provide an emergent look as to how seemingly typical systems within faculty hiring and search committees can still negatively affect faculty of color.

Delgado Bernal & Villalpando (2002) describe an “apartheid of knowledge” in which mainstream research communities across disciplines devalue scholarship related to race and equity. Due to be perceived as biased and overly subjective, faculty of color are disproportionately disadvantaged in systems that require integration into mainstream research channels to demonstrate research productivity, such as citation counts in promotion and tenure, and reward and pay systems. Urrieta and colleagues (2015) find a similar trend in their investigation of Latina/o faculty members navigating tenure and promotion. Not only did
participants feel that their research was undervalued, but felt that their service – the same
service that faculty of color are expected to engage in at disproportionate rates – went
unrecognized and unrewarded. It is perhaps for these reasons that the Black women professors
interviewed in Croom & Patton’s (2012) study of racial/gender disparities among the full
professor rank described the process as problematic and exclusionary.

Although studies of CRT and faculty hiring are limited, these general faculty studies
provide an example of how an institutional function process such as promotion and tenure can
be interpreted through a racial lens. Yet despite the value and contribution of these studies, they
are exclusively from the perspective of participants interacting with a system, rather than of
participants within the system themselves. Although a tenant of CRT is the “centrality of
experiential knowledge,” – positioning participants exposed to a system as experts in their own
experiences with said system - both perspectives are necessary to reveal the finer mechanics of
how candidates and/or faculty of color are marginalized. This leaves room for critical analysis
and proposition development of faculty search committees as a system through a CRT lens to
study the mechanics (i.e. fit and power) of hiring inequities.

In his discussion of different theories of power, Pfeffer (1981) makes a cogent point
about the advantages and disadvantages of using different theories of power to shed light on
aspects of organizations in the same analysis. He states: “…insight can be gained from the
application of all the frameworks in the same situation. This statement is true, but only within
limits. At some point, the various perspectives will begin to make different predictions about
what will occur, and will generate different recommendations concerning the strategy and
tactics to be followed” (Pfeffer, 1981, p. 30). Applied to the current study, it becomes clear
where CRT is at odds with theories of fit and power in terms of prioritizing race and racism as
the basis for decisions. Whereas CRT examines how prevailing institutional functions and paradigms marginalize communities of color, it is these very same functions and paradigms that are studied in P-E fit and power in organizations without considering race. While this study argues that the main mechanisms of hiring academic personnel in faculty search committees are fit and power (with other intersecting constructs such as merit included), it also seeks to examine the ways in which these seemingly commonplace constructs may also contribute to racial disparities, which is in line with previous CRT scholarship.

Concerning fit, higher education literature identifies several issues with the construct. For example, they find that it is considered an “add on” to create an additional barrier for faculty of color (Danowitz Sagaria, 2004; Tuitt et al., 2007) – especially those who do not come from traditional research backgrounds, paradigms, and institutions (Light, 1994). Moreover, the types of criteria used to assess fit can disadvantage candidates of color, such as graduate institutional type, types of service that is valued, and research agenda (Light, 1994). Although P-E fit literature also delves into the parameters of fit (i.e. what criteria recruiters and employers use to assess P-E and P-O fit, when, and how often), they do not investigate how race potentially confounds these variables. CRT suggests that assessments of fit and their timing may be less linearly applied as advanced in the P-E literature, and that determinants of P-J fit, P-O fit, KSAs, and values and personalities may vary depending on other factors such as race, research agenda, and whether or not diverse experiences and pathways to the professoriate are perceived as traditional and exceptional.

Related to power, higher education research finds that faculty exercise influence in order to communicate preferences during selection (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). Even within the power in organizations literature demonstrates how power is exercised in order to communicate
preferences, yet this is generally more substantiated through empirical research (i.e. identifying powerful social actors, measuring their power, identifying their sources of power, and assessing the conditions of power). Yet the higher education literature still complements this by suggesting that faculty members, unless required by external forces, generally perceive calls for diversity as a criteria item as preferential treatment and/or lowering the standards of the search (Danowitz Sagaria, 2002; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). Power may be used to emphasize or de-emphasize the assets of diverse candidates or backgrounds, or the need to consider race as a factor at all.

**Theoretical Summary**

The most prominent gaps in the search committee literature base were a lack of integration from its two most prominent components (racial bias & selection characteristics), and lack of research on group behavior and decision-making in organizations, ultimately ignoring how context shapes decision-making. As a line of research inquiry and practice, these gaps portrayed decision-making and selection processes in faculty search committees as a single, monolithic level, rather than as a complex organizational process with different variables, preferences, and hierarchies. The proposed theoretical framework attempts to fill these gaps through employing theories of P-E fit, power in organizations, and CRT.

As academic hiring decisions are made within groups, it was important to employ two theories that captured both the interpersonal and intrapersonal dimensions. At an individual level, P-E fit provides a number of important directions as to how faculty evaluate candidates for the position and the department, what criteria they use, and during which stages. Placed alongside the higher education literature, it uncovers the determinants and consequences of individual evaluative frameworks, a common but under-theorized aspect of selection research in
higher education. Yet because search committees are a collection of faculty and not a single recruiter or employer, an intrapersonal framework is necessary, which was sorely lacking in the extant literature. Although higher education has been traditionally marked with a culture of shared-governance, power dynamics still pervade vertical and hierarchical relationships, shaping opportunity in both implicit and explicit ways. Theories of power reveal how individuals within organizations influence others, the conditions necessary for that influence, and the source of that influence. Placed alongside P-E fit, the theory reveals how some individual hiring preferences may have more or less weight in influencing the final hiring decision compared to others.

As the impetus behind the study is a concern for the representation of color in the academy, the third and final framework was critical race theory (CRT). CRT provides a more critical perspective to the inquiry, highlighting the ways in which traditional theories of P-E fit and power operate within an organizational setting such as faculty search committees, contributing to the dearth of faculty of color observed across the U.S. While findings demonstrate how aspects of perceived fit and power operate as normal mechanics within faculty search committees across different selection stages and disciplines, a CRT emphasis focuses on how these normal mechanics may also be configured in order to seek out desired preferences and goals.
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS

Paradigmatic Stance

At a fundamental level, this study is concerned with two enduring phenomena in social science research: understanding individual and group behavior in organizations, and the extent to which these behaviors contribute to a changing society. The constructivist and critical paradigms, two prevailing paradigms in social science and education research, typically guide the pursuit of these questions. The current study follows a similar path; the methodological choices are informed by these two paradigms in order to more carefully examine the interpersonal and intrapersonal dimensions of faculty participation in hiring and selection.

The constructivist paradigm advances that knowledge is socially constructed, and that there is no single, observable reality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In place of a single reality, individuals construct multiple ones based on their own lived experiences and interpretations. Thus, qualitative research with a constructivist approach is more concerned with documenting the convergences and divergences of those lived realities, rather than controlling settings in an attempt to uncover a single one. This attention to subjective experiences aligns well with the critical paradigm. Typically, critical research extends beyond the constructivist paradigm of documenting individual’s interpretations, and endeavors to connect them to change, justice, and empowerment (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Critical research is notable in feminist theory, postcolonial theory, queer theory, and critical race theory, and is focused on creating positive change in the communities that are studied. Thus, the outcome of critical research is not to simply extract data from researched communities for the benefit of the researcher, but to leverage those data in some tangible manner to empower individuals and communities.

Epistemological leanings inform the research questions we ask, the methods we employ, and how we interpret the data we collect (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Creswell, 2013). For
instance, the fourth research question related to race has roots in the critical perspective, since previous research already documents how institutions of higher education marginalize communities of color (Patton, 2016). It may be the case that faculty perceptions of fit and exercises of power may be no exception in the higher education space. Thus, both the constructivist and critical paradigms provide important context to this methods chapter. This chapter outlines the methodological approach, study design, data collection procedures, and analytic techniques that were employed to better understand faculty search processes.

**Research Purpose and Questions**

The purpose of this study is to investigate how faculty searches individually evaluate and collectively select prospective faculty at a public, research-intensive institution. The specific research questions this study seeks to answer are:

1. Do faculty members consider organizational fit in selection? If so, what are the different dimensions (i.e. type, characteristics, weight) of fit?
2. How do internal and external power dynamics emerge and influence individual assessments of fit?
3. What role does race play in committee assessments of fit and power dynamics in selection processes?
4. How does perceived fit, power, and race vary by selection stage within a single committee, and/or vary across discipline-specific committees (cases)?

**Study Design and Methods**

**Multiple case study design.** I employed a qualitative, multiple case study approach in order to document social attitudes and behaviors within an organizational phenomenon in its real-life context (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2017). Since multiple case studies are a variant of the larger
case study method, it is important to first review this methodological tradition. Case study research is a predominantly qualitative approach in which a bounded system (a “case”) or multiple bounded systems are studied at length in their real-life context (Yin, 2017). This research design is recommended when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly distinguishable, as is the case with many social phenomena such as school performance in a state-wide system, or small group behavior nested within an organization (Yin, 2017). As such, case study methodologists encourage the use of multiple forms of data collection – such as interviews, documentation, observations, and archival research - in order to distinguish the phenomena of interest from its real-life context and ascertain the nature and relationship of both (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2017).

Some confusion abounds as to what makes an appropriate “case study,” particularly as the term has alternative meanings in different settings (Yin, 2017). Within social science research, case studies are strengthened when several conditions are met. First, cases must be real-life entities and institutions, particularly those whose functions are observable and cannot be manipulated. When cases are entities and institutions, rather than a single function, process, or abstraction, it enables the holistic, in-depth examination of its multiple processes and their interactions. For example, a college classroom would be appropriate setting for a case study design as it is an observable, concrete entity, rather than the “student learning” that takes places inside of it. Since numerous processes happen concurrently alongside student learning, such as teaching and student interaction, a case study approach attempts to understand how these multiple processes interact in tandem within that case (the college classroom). Additionally, it is unlikely that the researcher can manipulate the functions inside the classroom, since teaching and learning in a real-life context is paramount to the research objective.
Because institutions have numerous internal and external functions happening simultaneously, it is important for some level of boundedness to be achieved – another condition that strengthens case studies by distinguishing the phenomenon from its context. When the case is bounded, it defines the limits of the phenomenon, establishes boundaries for data collection, and strengthens the connection between the case, context, and the research question(s) (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Stake (2006) explains the importance of boundedness when he states: “qualitative understanding of cases requires experiencing the activity of the case as it occurs in its contexts and its particular situation. The situation is expected to shape the activity, as well as the experiencing and the interpretation of the activity. In choosing a case, we almost always choose to study its situation” (p. 2). Returning to the college classroom as an example, if the case is the classroom, the boundary becomes the university, which enables the researcher to define the parameters of inquiry and understand the role of context in shaping the phenomenon of interest.

Finally, when a case is an established entity that is bounded by a real-life context, its inquiry should serve a general purpose. Yin (2017) provides several rationales for determining appropriate cases, either being critical, unusual, common, revelatory, or longitudinal. For example, case studies can either be a critical or an unusual case, being either ideal for testing the propositions of a guiding theory, or deviating so far from canon theory that it presents itself as an ideal study to unearth new theory. Additionally, a case study may be a common case – capturing the circumstances of an everyday situation – or a revelatory case in which the researcher has unique access to a previously underexplored phenomenon (Yin, 2017). Finally, the fifth rationale for case study research is longitudinal, which means studying the same case at two or more different points in time (Yin, 2017).
Based on the requirements of case study research, a faculty search committee presents itself as an ideal case study. A faculty search committee is an entity with various processes and functions, which I as the researcher am unable to manipulate. It is bounded by the greater department and institution which influences it, and exists somewhere between a common and a revelatory case. However, a single case study approach is limited in that it may simply be revealing more about unique features or artificial conditions surrounding that specific case, rather than the general phenomenon under inquiry. Multiple case-study design retains many of the elements of single case studies that make the methodology strong, yet also has distinct advantages. For instance, looking at a range of similar and contrasting cases increases the internal validity, while case replication provides more analytic depth and stability of findings (Miles et al., 2014; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2017). Thus, a multiple-case study methodology was employed over a single-case study design.

A multiple-case study approach also introduces a few additional concepts to the study of faculty search committees. First, the primary focus of a multiple case study approach partially shifts away from the individual cases and toward the quintain – the umbrella of collective cases or target phenomenon under study (Stake, 2006). The intention of collecting data on multiple cases is that each case study should share a common characteristic or condition that bind them together, making them more representative of the whole, or quintain. Robert Stake, a noted multiple-case study researcher, explains that “multicase research starts with the quintain. To understand it better, we study some of its single cases – its sites or manifestations. But it is the quintain we seek to understand. We study what is similar and different about the cases in order to understand the quintain better” (2006, p. 6). Thus, studying the similarities across several faculty search committees across different selection stages and disciplines (the cases) should
facilitate an enhanced understanding of search committees at a public research-intensive university (the quintain). Studying the quintain also ensures that the inquiry is focused on collective themes and divergent cases, rather than solely peculiar or unique features concerning a single committee.

The new focus on the quintain presents what some call the “case-quintain dilemma” in multiple-case study research – blurring the lines between how much attention should be devoted toward the individual cases that comprise the quintain, and how much theory-building should occur at the highest level of analysis (Stake, 2006). To be clear, it is important to not let the uniqueness of the cases get lost in a multiple case study design. Each case becomes the subject of an entire case study with its own analysis, and then convergent and divergent evidence is sought across a replication of cases. Even significant detail is devoted toward the rationale behind the selection and replication of cases. Yin (2017) states that “each case must be carefully selected so that the individual case studies either predict similar results (a literal replication) or predict contrasting results but for anticipatable reasons (a theoretical replication)” (p. 55).

Additionally, case replication should represent some theoretical interest, and not simply an intrigue in whether two cases should simply be similar or different (Stake, 2006). Otherwise stated, the cases that represent the quintain should (1) at some level, remain a focus, and (2) represent a compelling rationale for replication, rather than to simply have more cases.

Applied to this study, each search committee case was investigated in depth in order to understand its functions, and how assessments of perceived fit, power, and race manifest within them. Replications of these cases were sought, as multiple case study design suggests that with enough replications, commonalities, convergences, and divergences will emerge that address the research questions and propositions held of the quintain – or how perceived fit, power, and
race manifest themselves within faculty search committees. This addresses the first three research questions and represents what Yin (2017) describes as a *literal replication*. Yet replication is also sought because there is sufficient evidence in the literature that suggests these functions and manifestations may differ by discipline (Clark, 1987), and selection stage (Cable & Judge, 1997; Chaung & Sackett, 2005). This addresses the fourth research question, and Yin’s (2017) concept of a *theoretical replication*. Case study formation and replication contribute to an enhanced and more nuanced understanding of faculty search committees, and their departmental and institutional settings.

**Units of analysis.** In multiple-case study analysis, it is important to be explicit about the units of analysis, given the numerous cases, subcases, and contexts under investigation. Cases have “an inside and an outside. Certain components lie within the system, within the boundaries of the case; certain features lie outside” (Stake, 2006, p. 3). In the current study, the case is a faculty search committee, and replications of this case represent the larger quintain of faculty search committees at a public, research-intensive institution. Certain components exist within this system (embedded subunits), while other features exist outside of it (the context).

Concerning the inside, a single case study may contain units of analysis at more than one level. When this occurs, the case is said to contain embedded subunits (Yin, 2017). Both single case study and multiple case study approaches can have embedded subunits within them (Yin, 2017). When embedded subunits are within a multiple case study, subunits can be compared *within* a single case, and the cases can still be compared *between-groups*, creating two layers of analysis (discussed further in the data analysis portion of this chapter). In this study, the embedded subunits are the two primary selection stages that occur during search committee selection – the first stage that includes a set of faculty interviews and documents when the
committee determines the short-list, and the second selection stage incorporates faculty interviews when the committee selects the final candidate from the short-list.

Case study methodologists also emphasize the importance of boundedness when discussing the unit of analysis, as it helps distinguish the case phenomenon from its context, and limits the amount of data to be collected to study the phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2017). The context in the current study is the academic department. Both the case and the context have means for data collection and investigation, which are expounded on in the data collection section. Figure 3.1 provides an illustration of the multiple case study design with the appropriate units of analysis, inclusive of the cases, embedded subunits, and contexts.

Figure 3.1: Embedded multiple-case study design

Image adapted from Yin, 2016
Site selection rationale and description

The context is expected to influence the cases’ activities and functions (Stake, 2006), thus warranting inquiry and description. The primary contexts were the academic departments the searches resided in, rather than the overall institution, for several reasons. Although the institution contained numerous factors that influence hiring decisions, choosing it as the binding agent would mean an almost endless data collection effort, with many points of collection most likely having little to do with search committee processes. Instead, academic departments were the primary contexts for the search committees, as recent higher education literature demonstrates how departments have a significant degree of variation (Kezar, Gehrke & Elrod, 2015), and considerable influence on search committee procedures (Gasman et al., 2011). Because all searches still come from the same institution, I briefly highlight pertinent features the university’s functions and history related to faculty diversity specifically.

The institutional site is fictitiously named Northfield University, a large, research-intensive institution located in the western region of the United States. Similar to other research-intensive institutions, the faculty diversity at Northfield University has yet to reach comparable levels of student diversity. The faculty of color statistics also resemble national statistics on full-time, tenure-track faculty, yet the institution has marginally worse representation of Black faculty (4 percent), marginally better representation of Latina(o)/Chicana(o)/Hispanic faculty (6.6 percent), and a notably greater percentage of Asian/Asian-American faculty (18 percent). Several years ago, multiple racial discrimination incidents among faculty prompted an external investigation of the university. The final report revealed several troubling indictments of the university’s racial climate, and critiqued the mishandling of its processes. In response, the institution first appointed investigators as part of a discrimination prevention office and then
developed an office akin to a chief diversity officer’s suite, dedicated to using evidence-based research and practices to promote diversity widely, including faculty diversity. Prior to these events, the institution had a position for faculty diversity that oversaw searches and facilitated hires of diverse faculty, as well as target of opportunity FTE. With the scaled up suite, the procedures for hires are more formalized for equity and inclusion.

A prominent central administrator oversees the office, and employs several strategies to increase faculty diversity. Staff members described the office’s primary functions within two domains: coaching and gatekeeping. The coaching functions of the office support departments and search committees prioritize diversity through offering search trainings and resources. Although search committee trainings occurred prior to the office’s installation in 2015, they were less robust and only required the search chair and one other committee member to attend. Now all committee members are required to attend and must be certified after training; the certification expires after four years, after which search committee members must repeat the training. The office also distributes a select number of FTEs per year to aid departments in their recruitment efforts, particularly those that have identified diverse candidates they would like to make additional offers for hire.

The gatekeeping domain of the office formally monitors search committee procedures through various external checks throughout the process. The first check is at the search committee planning stage, which requires departments to submit materials on the search committee’s composition, job ad, and dissemination strategies. After the job ad is disseminated and the application period has closed, an applicant pool report is generated, which compares the gender and racial makeup of the applicant pool to national availability statistics. The third check occurs before the committee notifies candidates of their finalist status; the office compares the
short-list to national availability statistics to ensure that there is racial and gender parity within the short-list.

The staff also offers additional resources outside of their search briefings, such as a hiring guide with recommendations on creating the job ad, specifying evaluation criteria, and conducting equitable campus visits, a primer on state policies and diversity, and a sample evaluation rubric. Some have praised the university’s efforts, stating that it has made a “palpable difference in the culture, just in the last five years” (Dean Schwartz, Social Sciences). However, others have described the institution’s handling of the search committee report as tepid and reactive, rather than strong and proactive.

**Committee and department selection rationale and descriptions**

Selection of the search committees from the institutional site was based on purposive sampling. Several criteria were used during case selection to ensure that cases were chosen in line with typical case study selection procedures (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2017). At the study’s onset, I intended to only consider those committees that were actively searching for an assistant tenure-track line, rather than an open or associate/full line. However, two committees expanded their criteria during the academic year: the humanities search became an open search due to an additional incentive offered by the Provost, while the life science search expanded to include early associate professors for an undisclosed reason. In these instances, I attempted to limit the interviewees to assessments of assistant professor prospects, yet allowed for other evaluations when faculty felt that they could standardize their assessments. This was to ensure some level of uniformity across the cases, while allowing the cases to vary on characteristics of interest to the study, such as selection stage, discipline, and committee composition. One committee was selected from several traditional letters and sciences divisions: social sciences, humanities,
life/behavioral sciences, and physical sciences, bringing the total to four for the current study. Regarding the number of cases, there is no clear consensus as to what number of cases constitutes a compelling quintain. However, Stake (2006) indicates that multiple case studies are limited if fewer than four cases are chosen (or more than 10), arguing that less than four cases do not show enough interactivity between the phenomena and their contexts. In what follows, I provide descriptions of the study’s departments that were conducting searches.

**Social Sciences.** The social science department is one of the larger departments within the division, with 38 FTE. They have both an undergraduate and graduate curriculum, and are ranked near the top 10 within their field. Faculty members are divided by subfield specialty, with varying interests related to the study of methods, diversity, theory, and domestic and international affairs. As described by Dean Schwartz, the department – and by extension the larger discipline itself – is “somewhat bifurcated in terms of how faculty pursue their work.” Compared to the other departments, these divisions were a strong force in shaping how faculty pursue their work, relationships with colleagues, collaborations, hiring priorities, and resource allocation.

Many participants were keenly aware of the internal and external resources at the department’s disposal. The Department Chair described their department as one with a “very serious resource problem,” making it difficult to “attract the graduate students that we want.” Resource allocations were also perceived to impact faculty hires, since the department is not in a position to replace every retiring faculty member. The Department Chair believed that these constraints make it more difficult to recruit and hire candidates of color. Resources at the divisional level were also believed to be the source of strain; she states,
I think the Dean is also very constrained. He doesn’t have as many FTE as he would wish or as he thought he would have I don’t think. I think all of social science has been damaged by the resources that were given to the new public policy undergraduate majors, so they got a lot of FTE last year and this year and that probably came from us. I think that he is in general more sympathetic to the smaller, newer departments and less sympathetic to the big departments like us, so I don’t think we do particularly well in the competition for slots. (Dr. Gibson, Social Sciences)

The departmental subdivisions, and perception of internal and external resources likely impacted the current search process under investigation. One year prior to the current search, the department made several hires in the subfield most closely related to diversity, despite some faculty pushback. The Dean reflects,

A lot of the old guard in the department felt like we only have X number of resources, and we should be spending it in [their] area, which is where top 10 departments get their ranking. For them it [diversity subfield] is like a subsidiary of the major part of the profession. I mean that’s how some people think. (Dr. Schwartz, Social Sciences)

According to the Dean, some of the more senior faculty who did not belong to the diversity-related subfield were not excited about this new direction, especially because they felt that the resources would be better spent in another division that was rewarded in the rankings (yet is not diversity-focused). The Dean went on to explain the department has had other difficulties with race in the past, such as the “take it or leave it” attitude regarding one of last year’s hires in the departmental vote, and the tenure review of another faculty member, both cases belonging to the same subfield related to diversity.
The search was for an assistant professor, tenure-track line within the department. The committee was an omnibus committee, comprised of representatives from three different divisions within the department. Although there was department-wide representation, the committee was initially given just one FTE to secure a candidate for hire.

Life Sciences. The life science department was the largest in this study, with nearly 70 faculty members, 40 staff members, and around 200 graduate students. They offer courses at both the undergraduate and graduate level, and have eight subdivisions all ranked highly. The divisions relate to topics around brain function, health, methods, and learning. Compared to the other departments in this study, these divisions were the least rigid in shaping faculty work, relationships, or hiring.

The Department Chair described the department’s growth and need for resources as central in understanding faculty hiring. With over 3,700 majors, the department has grown 55% over previous years, yet growth in faculty and physical space has not been able to keep up. The Department Chair stated, “That’s driven by our growth and enrollment, which is, as I said, for undergrads, is 55% in ten years with no net gain in faculty. So the business case for hiring is enormous. If I have about 63 FTE…just on the arithmetic of that, well I ought to have about 100 faculty if I grow 55%.” Despite this, the department created a systemized means of conducting searches for new faculty hires using a strategic plan. Although other departments in this study had other strategic hiring initiatives, the life science department had the highest emphasis, adherence, and strength to their strategic plan. Originally devised in 2014 and again in 2018, the strategic plan outlines future faculty hires as far out as five years in advanced. This is because the department can no longer “simply hire that person or that person,” (Dr. Steele, Life
Sciences) yet must conduct hiring in light of curricular, physical, and financial considerations. The Department Chair elaborated,

We really can't run that way. And where do we have the biggest undergrad enrollment growth, or the biggest short fall in coverage of courses? Also, what are exciting areas? Where's the direction of the field going? We know we wanna stay at the front line of everything. So the department juggles that, writes a strategic plan; this year we wanna do this, next year we wanna do that. Then it turns out somebody retired or we gotta fill in something, so there's a bit of wiggle room in that. But the strategic plan and resources, I can get from the Dean. Limited, most of all, by space, actually. By dollars.

Their 2014 strategic plan resulted in several successful hires across the department, and the 2018 strategic plan resulted in the current search for an assistant tenure-track line, in a topical area related to biological and social determinants of human health. The committee was a five-member committee comprised of four members of the department, and an external member from a different department yet with expertise on the subject.

Humanities. The humanities department is the largest within the humanities division at Northfield University, with nearly 55 FTE. However, the department has experienced shrinkage over the years – down from 65 FTE. One faculty member elaborated:

We've shrunk as, being the humanities, we've shrunk considerably as a department.

You've seen this nationwide, there is a re-entrenchment of what they call the core of the curriculum, which are the historically kind of centered fields, if you wanna call it that.

And nationwide, this has been the case. (Dr. Graham, Humanities)

Compared to the life science department’s “growth,” and the social science departments “stagnation,” faculty in this department have thought even more carefully about faculty hiring.
The Department Chair elaborated on the messages he’s received from upper administrators, signaling that hires could no longer be made on the basis of a retirement, yet more based on a “rationale for growing the department in certain areas that are seen to be of value, not for simply protecting the status quo.”

Another impact on hiring conditions within the department is the lasting legacy left by its curricular redesign. With the help of a private foundation, the humanities department underwent a significant shift in its undergraduate curriculum, from one focused on the “canon” authors and texts to more interdisciplinary approaches with a combination of historical and literary periods. However, the curricular change was met with divided reactions from the faculty, ranging from praise to scorn. According to the Dean, it became “unfortunately fairly factional,” with faculty divided on what constituted an “appropriate degree” from the department. He expanded,

As innocent as a curriculum revision can sound, the wounds were real. There are people who got hurt in those conversations who are still hurt, and who still haven’t been able to remake trusting relationships. And the factions that came out were unfortunately a faction that expressed itself and was regarded, probably rightly, as being fairly conservative. There was another group of people, younger scholars, more diverse scholars, who felt, "No, this change has been long overdue. Let's go for it. Let's remake it.” And unfortunately this discussion of curriculum led to those kinds of things. The echoes are still there, they come up when new searches are being proposed. (Dr. Howard, Humanities)

These factions and divides have been apparent in previous hires. For example, in a dual-career retention offer situation, one younger faculty member felt that her bid for retention, contingent
on a spousal hire, was receiving pushback from more conservative faculty within the
department. Moreover, the department has a history of failed searches. Three searches related to
some form of regional identity - with two being marginalized regions and identities - failed in
the last five to ten years, with one failing several times (largely attributed to the pool according
to faculty participants, rather than departmental dynamics). One faculty member attributed this
to having high standards within the department, and not wanting to hire a candidate they
deemed as “un-tenurable,” yet did not deny the co-existence of departmental dynamics
simultaneously playing a role either. The current search – an open rank search for a professor
focused on topics related to British and Feminist Modernism with a focus on diversity also
failed. The committee was a three-member committee, all within the department and two
considered experts on the topic.

**Physical Sciences.** The physical science department – like the humanities and life
science departments - was similarly large, with 60 faculty members. This is likely due to the
merge they underwent 20 years ago, joining forces with another department with a similar
scholarly focus. The department has several subfields represented, related to topics of
theoretical computations and mathematical models. The Dean described the department as one
undergoing changes; he stated:

> Our department is broad, old, heterogeneous…it’s changing now, but when it started,
there was a very large number of faculty who were beyond retirement age, but were
holding onto that [faculty] position; some contributing strongly to science and the
teaching, some not contributing to the science and the teaching. So clearly that was a
department where there were opportunities to make the department better. (Dr.
Singleton, Physical Sciences)
Comparatively speaking, the department is not in retrenchment like the humanities department, yet national trends do show that jobs in the field have shrunk, which explains why there were many faculty beyond the retirement age in the department previously. This also contextualizes the current search; one faculty member elaborated:

Another thing to note, is that there are very few jobs in this field. And so, the few jobs that are [available], basically everybody really qualified will apply for the job. And so, we’re seeing the entire pool, and out of that we’re trying to really select the very top fit. It also depends a bit on what area of [physical sciences] you’re talking about. But in my area, which is the theoretical side of things…just the ratio number of people seeking jobs to available jobs is very high. (Dr. Gomez, Physical Sciences)

In addition to national job-market trends, the current search was also shaped by a large gift the department received from a donor. The gift of nearly twenty million dollars was expected to “raise the department into the top 10.” One faculty member of the search explained that despite “some arguing, a lot of effort, and a lot of grief in this” the department “listened to reason” about the importance of the search. This comment is specifically referencing the nature of hiring procedures within the department. Although the department typically goes in a specific order based on subfield needs (much like social sciences), the current search jumped in priority due to the gift. The search is for an assistant professor, tenure-track line within the department. The committee was comprised of four departmental faculty members, with one external member in a peripheral field.

**Access to site and committee participants**

Gaining access to the search committee participants was paramount, since case study research involves prolonged, in-depth investigation of the phenomenon in its real-life contexts.
As search committees are generally more private, interdepartmental affairs, several steps were used to gain access. First, I generated buy-in among upper-administrators. I met with the deans of various disciplines and divisions at Northfield University by requesting a 45-minute informational meeting and interview. After the interview, deans notified me of searches happening in their divisions during the academic year, and provided contact information of department chairs. I then requested 45-60 minute informational meetings and interviews with department chairs to notify them of the study and request their participation. Department chairs then provided me with names of the search committee chair and search members, who I then contacted on an individual basis. Faculty search members had the option to opt out of the study, with some choosing to do so. The aim was to achieve access to a majority of search committee members, which was achieved in three of the four cases.

**Data Collection**

A major strength of case study research is that it calls for multiple sources of data and evidence to construct the case study findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2017). Using various sources of data to corroborate findings and support evidence is known as *triangulation* (Yin, 2017). When data sources are triangulated, convergent evidence can be found that strengthens the construct validity of the case study. In a constructivist approach, triangulation is not necessarily about finding the one true answer, yet it is ensuring that descriptions are accurate and participant’s voices and perceptions are captured with precision (Yin, 2017). In this sense, multiple realities are recognized and divergent views are identified, and triangulation minimizes the possibility of misunderstandings and misinterpretations. In the current study, I relied on semi-structured interviews of four different stakeholder groups and documentation data for triangulating findings.
**Semi-structured interviews.** I conducted semi-structured interviews with 23 participants: four deans, four general administrators, four department chairs (who at times also participated in search committee deliberations), and 11 faculty search committee members. Many of the search committee members were interviewed twice in accordance with the study’s methodological design, bringing the total to 31 semi-structured interviews. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) outline three different types of interviews: *highly structured/standardized, semi-structured, and unstructured*. Semi-structured was the preferred interviewing technique, as it allowed for a mix of pre-determined questions that must be asked in order to address the research questions, yet also accommodated other emergent avenues that enriched the case studies. I created unique protocols for deans, department chairs, and faculty search committee members to ascertain both context and committee functions. All interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and securely stored.

I first sought out interviews with deans and department chairs in order to (1) create buy-in for subsequent search committee faculty interviews, and (2) gain an understanding of the departmental and institutional context. The deans were important interview participants because they, in collaboration with other decision-makers, decide on the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) positions amongst the different divisions and departments, and other funds available for faculty recruiting and hiring. Additionally, both the dean and department chair appoint the search committee and help generate the hiring priorities for the department. Finally, because the search committee recommends a candidate to the whole department, the department chair provide important context as to the desires of other faculty within the department, and departmental subdivisions, politics, and history. Four deans, four department chairs, and four other administrators were interviewed in the fall of 2018. These were one-time, semi-structured,
30-60 minute interviews that covered the aforementioned topics related to search committee procedures and departmental context.

The second phase of interviews consisted of faculty members participating in the four search committees across the different divisions. Faculty were interviewed twice during the search process: once after the formation of the short-list, and once again after on-campus job talks, candidate selection, and the departmental vote. Each semi-structured interview lasted approximately 45-60 minutes and occurred between fall 2018 and winter 2019. The aggregate of interviews that happen after the short-list phase created the first embedded subunit, while the later collection of interviews comprised the second. The first stage of interviews pertained to questions on (1) essential characteristics of the department, (2) power dynamics between committee members, administrators, and departmental faculty, (3) considerations of racial/ethnic diversity in hiring, and (4) indexing candidates based on characteristics they believe make a candidate highly fit, poorly fit, and borderline. The second interview contained similar questions, yet were more tailored to the candidates invited to give job talks. In certain circumstances, some faculty could only participate in one interview once the search was over. In order to maximize participation and data collection, I accommodated this request by asking questions from both protocols related to each selection stage. Table 3.1 provides an overview of the search committees and participants in the study.
Table 3.1: Participant Demographics and Search Committee Processes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Social Sciences</th>
<th>Humanities</th>
<th>Physical Sciences</th>
<th>Life Sciences</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Open Rank</td>
<td>Assistant</td>
<td>Asst. / Early Assoc.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Dean</td>
<td>Man of Color</td>
<td>White Man</td>
<td>Man of Color</td>
<td>White Woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dept. Chair</td>
<td>White Woman</td>
<td>White Man</td>
<td>White Man</td>
<td>White Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee Composition &amp; Interview Participation</td>
<td>3 White Men 1 White Woman* 2 White Men declined</td>
<td>1 Black Woman 1 White Woman 1 Black Man declined</td>
<td>1 White Man 1 White Man* 1 White Woman* 2 White men declined</td>
<td>1 Asian Man* 1 White Man 3 White Women declined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberation Period</td>
<td>September to December</td>
<td>November to March</td>
<td>January to May</td>
<td>September to December</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = Committee member participated in a single interview with a blended protocol

**Documentation.** To corroborate interview and observation data, I also collected select documentation data related to search committee activity. Documentation is an important form of evidence in case study research, as it can corroborate and augment evidence from other sources by providing stable information (Yin, 2017). For example, search committees and departments were required to generate an ad for the position, which reflect the hiring priorities, requisite skills, and attention to diversity of the departmental faculty and leadership. These documents were important grounding for corroborating faculty members’ candidate evaluations, and retelling of departmental politics. Yet Yin (2017) also recommends exercising caution when collecting and interpreting documents. For instance, although a job description may indicate a diversity imperative, this may not translate into actual search committee members valuing diversity or behaviors. Therefore, I remained watchful and critical of documentation data collected, and used it only to supplement interview data.

**Case study database.** Interview and documentation data were compiled into a case study database. A case study database is a compilation of all the data from the case studies organized by case in preparation for forming the case studies. The case study database markedly
differs from single case study narratives, as they contained all of the data without interpretation or analysis. The case study database was an important, intermediary feature for the multiple-case study design for several reasons. First, the case studies created a large volume of data that, without proper organization, would have become overwhelming to conduct within- and between-case analyses on. In addition to the interview and documentation data collected, the case study database contained the analytic memos that correspond to the data, which were routinely compiled and updated after each interview. Secondly, the case study database increases the reliability of the entire study (Yin, 2017). In case study research, reliability refers to the replicability of the study, and is increased when the case study procedures are clearly outlined for another researcher to follow. Although the raw data cannot be made available to researchers due to anonymity and confidentiality protections, other aspects of the case study database such as interview protocols and redacted analytic memos could aid researchers in tracing study findings and interpretations back to their origins.

**Data Analysis**

**Coding.** After the interview and document data were collected and compiled, I engaged in a multi-step coding procedure to organize the data. In qualitative data analysis, codes are constructs generated by the researcher that translates data into smaller units for later purposes of “pattern detection, categorization, assertion or proposition development, theory building, and other analytic processes (Saldaña, 2016, p. 4). Coding happened in several stages. In the stage preceding interview coding, I created analytic memos to capture ideas after each interview. Analytic memos are written narratives that are routinely updated alongside data collection that track the researcher’s developing thoughts and identify emergent themes as the collection effort progresses (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). They were an important preliminary step to data coding
and analysis as it allowed me to make inferences as to what themes would develop, and provided new directions for future inquiry. Analytic memos provided me with the first glimpses of the coding infrastructure, and were used throughout data collection and analysis to generate new ideas and refine previous ones.

Data was input, sorted, and coded in Dedoose, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). First, I conducted open coding (Bazeley, 2013; Saldaña, 2016). During the open coding process I was guided by the literature, along with the initial analytic memos I generated, to create initial coding categories related to the constructs of interest. Yet it was also important to remain open to new possibilities and interpretations of the data, and not remain too adherent to the literature (Charmaz, 2014). Open coding was exclusively reliant on interview data, and documentary evidence played no role in developing the initial codes.

As I began to get a better handle of the data, I transitioned into first-level coding. More concrete themes from the faculty and administrator interviews emerged from the first level of coding. Different coding schemes were applied based on the appropriateness of the data, literature, and theories. Saldaña (2016) outlined over 30 different coding methods based on the purpose and orientation of the data. He argued that multiple methods of coding could be used within the same multiple-case study in order to create layered data. Two methods of coding cut across all coding procedures no matter the interview type – attribute coding, and structural coding – while two other forms of coding were more specifically applied.

Attribute coding – otherwise known as socio-demographic coding (Kuckartz, 2014) – refers to attaching participants’ characteristics and demographics to their quotes. This was important to form initial trends of how certain background or personal characteristics related to certain perceptions of fit, race, and group-dynamics. Structural coding is used to divide and
index initial themes, and was essential for categorizing passages in preparation for second-level coding. As the themes began to emerge in more nuanced ways, structural coding was invaluable to split and distinguish categories and themes within their broader umbrella categories, creating codes with deeper themes and meanings. In sum, these two coding methods created the first-level coding parameter that was used for all administrator and faculty transcripts: categorizing passages in preparation for second-level coding, and attaching demographic characteristics to these quotes and passages.

*Magnitude and versus coding* were used on a more situational basis, dependent on the transcript type and data. For example, magnitude coding was beneficial for addressing RQ1 in the faculty transcripts. This type of coding allows the researcher to indicate intensity, frequency, and direction of passages (Saldaña, 2016). It is generally appropriate when there is an interest in determining how often certain phrases are used, and understanding weight and emphasis placed on speech. Applied to the first research question, magnitude coding helped me to determine the prevalence of fit type, characteristics, and weight. Alongside the aforementioned attribute coding, I attached prevalence of fit type, characteristics, and weight to faculty attributes such as race, rank, and discipline. Versus coding was more relevant for the power analyses in both the administrator and faculty interviews, addressing RQ2 and RQ3. This method of coding is meant to assess the “conflicts, microaggressions, or competing goals within, among, and between participants” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 137). I used versus coding to categorize contradictory and/or complimentary goals, strategies, and theories of change between deans, department chairs, and search committee members. Finally, I also used versus coding to identify divergent participants, or those whose responses contradict the direction of the data, which was an important measure to increase the trustworthiness and validity of findings.
After first-level codes were applied to the interview and document data, I initiated second-level coding. While the focus during the first cycle of coding was to create many different categories, second-level coding identified patterns across these groups in order to create more consolidated categories that could be linked to theoretical propositions and research questions in the data analysis phase. Only one coding technique was used during this second level – pattern coding. Pattern coding pulled together the material from first-level coding into more parsimonious units in preparation for analysis and interpretation. Saldaña (2016) even explicitly states that this level of code is appropriate for setting the foundation for cross-case analysis by generating common themes. Applied to this study, this level of code generated the broader categories related to race, perceived fit, and power within each individual case in preparation for within- and between-group analyses.

**Analysis.** Once the data were coded, I began to answer the research questions through qualitative data analysis. Revisiting the case-quintain dilemma, a common mistake in multiple case study analysis is to immediately conduct cross-case analysis on prematurely devised case studies (Stake, 2006). However, case development is imperative before conducting cross-case analysis, as the cases likely contribute unique facets and understandings to the whole quintain - faculty perceptions and behavior in search committees at research-intensive institutions. Thus, data analysis was conducted in two phases: within-case analysis using the *constant-comparative method*, and between-case analysis using *cross-case analysis*.

First, I created the individual case summaries from the case study database and codes. The research questions, second-level codes from the interviews, and documentary data became the early thematic framework for the case summaries. I used the constant-comparative method to analyze and interpret these data to create within-case themes. The constant-comparative
method involves using inductive and deductive reasoning to compare clusters of data to determine their similarities and differences, bringing them closer toward addressing the research questions (Charmaz, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Within a single search committee, second-level codes were compared and contrasted with each other and in relation to the research questions regarding perceived fit, power, and race (RQs 1-3). Essentially, these emergent case-level themes only approached the research question, until they were compared with the other cases’ themes they could not answer them fully. This was the case because one committee may simply have been more reflective of unique features or conditions of that case, compared to the quintain that pools these themes into assertions. For this reason, Yin (2017) describes the within-case patterns as “tentative conclusions” (p. 196). It is not until assertions are made at the cross-case level that the research questions are fully answered (Stake, 2006).

Once the case-level themes were generated around the research questions, I created a matrix to investigate their relation amongst each other. Yin (2017) and Stake (2006) recommend creating a matrix as a visual display to easily observe the similarities and differences between the concentrated, case-level themes. The matrix indicated how each case uniquely contributed to answering the research questions, and the expected contribution and utility of the case to the larger themes (Stake, 2006). Upon completion of the matrix, I initiated the cross-case analysis to identify aggregated assertions related to the quintain. Cross-case analysis is the process of taking the individual case findings, along with their context, and assessing the extent to which they bind to create larger scale assertions related to the quintain. Thus, the assertions rely on grouping the themes across the individual case studies – along with their uniformity or disparity – to answer all four research questions (Stake, 2006). Because each theme did not fit neatly
within the newly developed multi-case assertions, it was also important to examine possible “contaminating differences among the individual cases” (Yin, 2017, p. 198).

In sum, data coding and analysis in multiple case study analysis was a deeply layered engagement. Figure 3.2 provides a graphic representation of the analysis framework, containing instances of constant-comparative analysis and cross-case analysis.

**Figure 3.2: Data Analysis Framework**

![Data Analysis Framework Diagram](image)

*Blue lines indicate within-case analyses using the constant comparative method; Red lines indicate between-case analyses using the cross-case analysis method*

**Research Design Quality**

Similar to other qualitative methodologies, case study research is strengthened when internal validity, external validity, and reliability are maximized (Yin, 2017). Although these tests are not new within the larger social science research frame, there are some specifics related to conducting quality case studies.
**Internal validity/credibility.** Internal validity refers to how well the data, measures, and findings reflect what is in reality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2017). When viewed through a constructivist paradigm, there is debate as to what constitutes “reality.” Merriam & Tisdell (2016) comment, “one of the assumptions underlying qualitative research is that reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing; it is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed, and measured as in quantitative research” (p. 242). These researchers instead refer to this construct as “credibility,” and suggest that qualitative studies focus on not whether the data, measures, and findings reflect the reality, yet reflect people’s interpretations of reality and their lived experiences.

To this end, several methods were employed to enhance internal validity throughout the study. One method was *triangulation* in the data collection phase. This refers to collecting different sources of evidence in order to assess the validity and strength of findings. I triangulated administrator, dean, department chair, and faculty interviews, alongside documentary evidence, to create the most robust depiction of search committees possible. The second means of increasing credibility was *member checking*, or requesting participants’ feedback on my interpretation of the data. I employed member checking by making the transcripts and notes available for participants to review and comment. Finally, I considered *rival explanations* in the data analysis phase. This occurs when the researcher considers contrasting evidence and plausible alternatives when interpreting data to create the case studies. This maximizes internal validity by rigorously considering competing alternates in theory building. Claims and propositions related to the research questions were carefully connected, tested, and vetted for possible competing explanations. I also identified divergent views and cases, and incorporated them into data analysis and reporting whenever appropriate.
Considering divergent cases and competing explanations is considered an important hallmark of single- and multiple-case study analysis, since it demonstrates that the research is not simply creating a case from the most notable or appealing findings (Stake, 2014; Yin, 2016).

**Positionality as credibility.** Finally, credibility is enhanced by explicitly stating my researcher *positionality*, a statement on how the researcher affects, and is affected by, the research process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In conducting a qualitative research project that positions that knowledge as constructed, examining my own position *vis a vis* the research on faculty diversity is an important procedure. My own presence, assumptions, and experiences as a young black male graduate student affects both how the data are collected, and how they are analyzed. For example, faculty hiring is one of the most controversial and racially sensitive selection processes on college campuses, perhaps second only to student admissions. As such, predominantly white faculty members at a predominantly white university were likely hesitant to discuss this topic with someone they may initially perceive as biased or self-serving. There is a strong likelihood that this factor contributed to the sample size, whereas someone with different demographic characteristics may not have encountered this problem. To account for this challenge, I purposefully used little diversity language in the recruitment emails, and reserved all questions related to diversity toward the end of the interview after rapport and trust was established.

However, this difficulty may also be attributed to my status as a graduate student outside of the department. Regardless of race, I may have been able to acquire greater access to committee members had I been a graduate student – or especially a faculty colleague – inside of the department. This resembles the attribution ambiguity that marginalized populations in America experience – is the feedback or outcome experienced due to race or another immutable
demographic characteristic, or some other unrelated factor? However, my identity also strengthens the research as well. As a graduate student outsider I did not take any piece of data for granted – departmental histories and legacies that insiders may deem mundane, and aspects of faculty careers that faculty may have become desensitized to overtime, were all considered appropriate data points in the current study.

Finally, my experiences as a black male graduate student extend beyond data collection, and invariably affect how the data were analyzed. I could not simply bracket or suspend my previous experiences engaging with a predominantly white faculty at a predominantly white university. Assuming that I, or anybody, could do so, would undermine the constructivist approach to qualitative research - which assumes that, despite our best efforts to bracket, our biases and previous experiences shape our understanding of the research project.

**External validity/transferability.** Another concern for assessing the quality of qualitative case study research is external validity. Otherwise known as transferability, this refers to the extent to which the study’s findings can be applied to other settings other than those in which the study was conducted. This construct can be enhanced by two means. The first suggestion is using *thick description* within data analysis. This is achieved through including quotes and a variety of evidence sources that create a rich depiction of the phenomenon and context under investigation (Yin, 2017). When thick description is used throughout data analysis, readers are able to infer their own level of generalization and applicability to their own settings. Another method for improving transferability is accounting for *maximum variation in sampling*. Maximum variation in the sampling procedure is achieved when the researcher purposefully picks a wide range of cases to get variation on the dimensions of interest (Patton, 2015). This is embedded in the study’s methods by collecting data on
different search committees by discipline. This way, the data collected and interpreted comes from a diverse range of people, enabling the reader to extend the findings beyond their immediate context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

**Reliability/consistency.** Finally, this study is concerned with the reliability and consistency of findings. Reliability refers to the extent to which the study can be repeated, and the findings replicated. In case study research, reliability and consistency are strengthened through the case study database. In this capacity, the case study database acts as an evidence trail, or a detailed description of how the study design and research questions inform data collection, which then leads to the raw data which is analyzed to answer the research questions. The primary foundation for the case study database - the interview protocols for different groups - is available in the appendix section.

**Protecting confidentiality.** An important aspect related to the quality of this study is the confidentiality of participants. Search committees are the closed-door business of the department, and access is not guaranteed. I took several precautions to ensure that participants felt that their identities were protected and not revealed by the study. Confidentiality was ensured on three levels – institutional, departmental, and individual. At the institutional level, limited institutional identifiers were used, while departmental disciplines were described by their umbrella term, such as a social science or a physical science discipline, rather than using the exact departmental name. Participant’s identities are also protected through the use of pseudonyms. Although some of these provisions may counteract some of the thick description I aimed to achieve in the findings section, these confidentiality protections ensured that the data could even be collected at all. Furthermore, the quality of their participation may have been compromised if they felt that their identities were not protected.
Limitations

The current study is limited in a few ways. First, case study research in general is limited by the extent to which its findings generalize to a wider phenomenon. Moreover, the bounded aspect of case studies is both a strength and a limitation: the tradeoff for such a close connection to the context at times compromises the extent to which results can be generalized. It is for these reasons that Yin (2017) advocates for analytic generalization, rather than traditional generalization. He comments, “case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes…in doing case study research, your goal will be to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalizations) and not to extrapolate probabilities (statistical generalizations).” (p. 45). Thus, the goal of this study is to achieve analytic generalization - providing enough thick description for readers to infer what aspects of the study transfer to their own contexts.

Secondly, this study would have benefitted greatly from observing actual search committee deliberations. At the onset of this study, I attempted to observe search committee meetings to better understand the phenomenon. No committee chose to participate in these observations, despite having IRB approval and high-level confidentiality and anonymity assurances. In order to account for this limitation, I collected interview and documentation data to create the most robust depiction of search committees possible, which were also bound by strict confidentiality and anonymity procedures. Yet these precautions also limited the extent to which I was able to describe each search committee’s context in depth. Stated otherwise, the university is described in general terms lacking sophisticated detail, and the departments are not described by their specific field yet their general disciplinary context and division.
Finally, it was impossible to control for the position under call for each committee once the search got underway. At the onset of this study, I attempted to ensure that each committee was searching for an assistant tenure-track position, since expectations for candidates are different for mid-rank and senior-rank positions. As the year progressed after achieving departmental buy-in, two searches changed from their original description: the humanities search became open rank based on a new objective, and the life sciences department widened their search to include early associate professors. To account for this, I asked interviewees to standardize their assessments of candidates to the best of their ability. Despite this shift, both short-lists still included a strong proportion of would-be assistant professors, which aided the study.
CHAPTER FOUR: CANDIDATE FIT IN FACULTY SELECTION PROCESSES

Review of Fundamental Concepts and Definitions

In the more than 20 years of fit and selection literature, general employability, idiosyncratic preferences, person-job fit, and person-organization fit were the most enduring concepts, which formed the basis for the qualitative measures on fit for the first research question. Rynes & Gerhart (1990) first advanced general employability, idiosyncratic preferences, and firm-specific fit, with the latter subsequently divided into person-organization fit (e.g. Bretz et al., 1993; Adkins et al., 1994; Cable & Judge, 1997), and person-job fit (Kristof-Brown, 2000). All four concepts share common themes: (1) matching candidate characteristics with the job or organization (or lack thereof), (2) explicit measures of these characteristics (or lack thereof), and (3) moderate to strong consensus between raters of the same organization on those characteristics (or lack thereof). Participant responses in this study were coded as either person-job fit or person-organization fit if they satisfied all three conditions. Passages were coded as general employability if they lacked the first two conditions – with faculty describing qualities such as “strong researcher” or “exceptional teacher” as universally appealing, yet not matching measurable job and/or organizational requisites. Conversely, idiosyncratic preferences were characteristics that could be conceivably important for success in the academic position and/or department (e.g. perceived impact of research agenda, number and focus of publications), yet lacked specific measurement and consensus, indicating it was more reflective of participants’ own conceptualization of what was needed for the job and/or department.

The normative model of selection in hiring decisions begins with determining applicants’ minimal eligibility through evaluating their knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs)
– or person-job fit. In the second stage of selection, once candidates are deemed minimally qualified, raters assess their alignment with organizational goals, or person-organization fit, in the form of an interview. However, some research posits a less linear approach, and suggests that selection procedures differ by career sector (Sekiguchi & Huber, 2011). These hypothesized differences in the fit literature, placed alongside the established interest in faculty selection (Becker, 2016; Flaherty, 2017; Gasman, 2016; McMurtrie, 2016) and growing interest in fit as a concept in higher education personnel decisions (Reece, Tran, DeVore, & Porcaro, 2019) warrant an integration to test if this normative theory of selection is consistent in academic hiring.

**The Facade of Fit**

Results from participants’ interviews demonstrate significant discrepancies between the employee selection literature and faculty search committee processes. Compared to the normative model of selection, screening for fit in the faculty model – whether for the job or the organization – was significantly limited. Instead, the faculty model of selection was far more driven by idiosyncratic preferences than actual fit assessments. In the first stage of selection, faculty participants narrowed the list of hundreds of applicants in the general pool, down to three to seven candidates in the short-list. Faculty first screened for minimum qualification by determining candidate’s subject expertise alignment with the position description – a form of person-job fit. After that initial consideration, participants used their own devised preferences to measure research activity parameters (i.e. research impact, publication record, research funding) with minimal measurement or consensus to solidify the short-list of candidates. Although three of the four committees also conducted select phone interviews to finalize the short-list, the evaluative parameters employed did not markedly differ.
Short-listed candidates were then invited on campus to deliver job talks, and meet with the committee, departmental colleagues, and administrators. This constituted the second stage of selection, because in-person interviews are fundamentally different than earlier search stages since employers have better opportunities to assess more personable traits such as personality and values, and the batch of candidates is considerably smaller and presumably more qualified, making comparisons more manageable. In this stage, faculty first screened for subject expertise alignment within the department’s existing research infrastructure – a form of person-organization fit. After, they used a combination of individual preferences related to research expertise (and some consideration for teaching expertise), and unique departmental needs and characteristics.

Otherwise stated, idiosyncratic preferences largely governed the evaluative stages of faculty searches, whereas true fit assessments were limited to subject expertise agreement in small aspects of the search. Rynes & Gerhart (1990) explain that fit for the organizational unit and individual preferences are not mutually exclusive, stating, “the existence of certain idiosyncratic interpretations does not rule out the simultaneous coexistence of other shared perceptions due to common organizational membership.” The primary issue herein is that idiosyncratic preferences were masqueraded as fit assessments, and were largely responsible for gatekeeping candidates of color in faculty hiring, which I demonstrate in the following two chapters.

First, I examine the faculty selection model that emerged from the qualitative data, using interview segments from all four faculty search committees. I separate results by their temporal dimensions of selection stage, and investigate disciplinary differences when appropriate. Next, I then review the foremost ways that the faculty selection model is laced with logics and
assumptions regarding race and ethnicity – (1) vehicles of bias that combine selection characteristics with racial biases, (2) prevailing logics on the consideration of race in selection, and (3) a common campus hiring practice that illustrates the intersections of race and candidate evaluations. Overall, this chapter demonstrates how personal preferences and idiosyncrasies dominate the faculty selection model, and how these preferences are deeply interwoven with race, limiting faculty diversity. It is my hope to move beyond the discourse of “fit” as simply racial code, and more toward how faculty use a fit framework to cloak nearly all of their own individual preferences (included those regarding diversity) as departmental directives and decrees that disadvantage diverse candidates.

**Forming the Short-List: Subject Expertise and Idiosyncratic Preferences**

**Person-job fit - Subject expertise alignment.** Most akin to the normative model of personnel selection, faculty members across all four search committees first screened for candidates’ minimal qualifications before assessing other materials in the file. Minimal qualification meant that candidates’ research and teaching materials reflected the subject expertise requested in the job call. Since each committee received a significant amount of applications, this was seen as an important first step to remove candidates who – regardless of their merits – were not seen as viable for the position.

The strategy is that me and another of the search committee members would go through, and the first pass was to kick anybody out who did not meet the research area or background in terms of ... For instance, we have a PhD in physiology, and that was not going to work. Writing the ad was really important because even things like, "Do we want to say PhD in [*life sciences*]? But what if somebody has a neuroscience background?" And, "what if someone has a PhD in public health?" So, I kept coming
back to that as our reference point. That was really the first cut. And I don't remember how many people total, but it was mainly because either they had a PhD in something that was totally not germane, like pharmacology, or because their research clearly did not fit with what the very short description of it was in the ad.” (Dr. Williams, Life Sciences)

This exemplified person-job fit based on the definition of the term: matching candidate characteristics with the stipulated requirements of the job, an explicit measurement of that characteristic, and had strong consensus between committee members within the same search. Across the different departments, committee members engaged in little debate as to what constituted subject expertise alignment. However, as suggested by Sekiguchi & Huber (2011), this was not exactly linear either. Subject expertise was not an immediate pass onto further consideration; it also intersected with more important criteria items, such as research experience, publication record, and grant funding. One faculty member from physical sciences explained that during their “first pass, [when] weeding out people clearly not suitable for the position,” he eliminated “some people that are just in a different field,” but also those that showed “essentially, no publication record...they haven’t published anything in many, many years, and so they’re just not at all viable.” This was the case for those who completed their degrees and due to teaching or postdoctoral responsibilities were unable to publish. Although subject expertise was the primary filter early in the search, clear red flags such as no publications also disqualified some candidates for assistant professor positions at an intensive research institution.

Regardless, considering subject expertise at the beginning of the search represented the most significant first pass of candidate materials, and was the most stringent definition of fit
across the entire study. In the eyes of one faculty member, subject expertise was so important that he was unyielding in his decision to decline a highly qualified candidate, despite other positive characteristics. He explained,

Yeah. There was one extremely good woman who's Korean, and who's won all sorts of prizes and everything. And as I said, if the search had been open, she would've [hand gestures suggest “progressed further”]. She doesn't 100% tick the diversity box, but pretty much, because she's a woman, and she's Asian. So it was that, and she had these wonderful research proposals. But it wasn't comparative. And we suggested to her, and our colleagues said, “But look, she doesn't fit what's on the post.” And we have to say, “Well, I'm afraid that's the case.” And she'll no doubt pick up a very good job. She's got a brilliant career ahead of her. And I'm very sorry we can't have her, but for this position, she doesn't fit the bill. (Dr. Reynolds, Social Sciences)

In this example, despite “ticking the diversity box” as a woman of color, having “wonderful research proposals,” and having “won all sorts of prizes” she was still unable to advance further into the search because of her misalignment with the position description. As Dr. Reynolds suggests, an open search would provide faculty with more free and flexible parameters to consider varying research agendas, yet this did not characterize the current search. This highlights the unyielding nature of subject expertise in specific searches as an early winnowing filter in faculty search processes, and the one that most closely resembles fit with the organizational unit.

**Idiosyncratic preferences - research impact, record, and funding.** Assessing subject expertise agreement was important, yet many faculty members considered it a routine and mundane step in order to examine more important details that separated viable from non-viable
candidates. In other words, even after assessing candidates’ subject expertise in the first pass, there were still many candidates who were considered appropriate for the job, yet still not considered worthy of an interview. Thus, screening for subject expertise agreement still did not completely satisfy the “minimum qualifications” portion of the normative selection model, leaving behind a large chasm between the general pool and the short-list. This void – which constituted a far greater portion of the first selection stage – was filled by assessing what nearly all faculty deemed as the most important criteria in faculty selection at a large research university: research activity. Research activity was measured by (1) research impact, (2) research productivity, and (3) research funding – all principally driven by individual preferences rather than any semblance of organizational or departmental fit. The parameters and contents of impactful research, notable records, or sufficient funding were largely without articulation and lacked moderate consensus between members of the same committee, which would have indicated organizational fit in selection.

**Research impact.** Determining research impact in the first stage of selection was a consistent theme across all four faculty searches. This is understandable, since demonstrable scholarly impact is a criterion for achieving tenure at any large, research-intensive university. One faculty members in the physical sciences explains,

> We can be selective since there are so few jobs; we're really looking for people who really, really stand out as having a major impact. So, you want to see...if you haven't heard it already, something in that file to indicate something remarkable. Typically, you want to see that in the letters of recommendation, that people are really enthusiastic. There can be some glitches. It doesn’t have to be everybody, but at least one letter should be saying, “This person is fantastic. I know them well. I feel very confident
they’re going to go on to do some important work,” and so on. We see that. Of course you then you don’t have to just believe it. Back it up by looking at the files, and so on. But, anyway, you’re looking for something in that file that indicates this person is remarkable in some way or another. So, if everything is just fine, or even good, or something like that, then they’re not going to stick out. (Dr. Gomez, Physical Sciences)

Dr. Gomez, like many faculty participants in this study, begins to explain what he looks for in candidates in the general pool. Across departments, faculty members used words and phrases such as “stand out,” “impactful,” and “interesting.” Yet for a majority of participants, it was unclear as to what constituted impactful scholarship, and which materials revealed this. For Dr. Gomez, it was in “the published work…what you’re really looking for is some published work that’s been influential,” yet in this example the published work was simply used to corroborate what was provided in the letters of recommendation, rather than allowing the work to stand on its own. Dr. Gomez’ difficulty in articulating the dimensions of noteworthy scholarship may possibly be attributed to troubles with simplifying complex theoretical science to an outsider such as myself. Yet the under-articulated bounds of research activity were observed across disciplines, regardless of how accessible the research area may have been. Dr. Jones, a professor in the humanities, provided her thoughts on impactful research:

If I really understood the stakes of the [applicant’s] project, if that came across then I wanted to pursue that person's candidacy. The same was true with this, where it's much closer to my own field, but if they could convey a sense of excitement and importance about the work that they were doing, and difference, right? So it's somebody who's not working sort of on trend, you know, but is actually going outside the box a little bit in terms of their thought. It came simply down to that. That was, that's for me, where the
main burden of proof was. Then if it was somebody whose work I thought was really interesting, then I would read the writing sample. I think, because we're a [humanities] department, this was consistent across the members of the committee in our meeting yesterday, or whenever it was. Two days ago. That the quality of the writing was really important, so it was both about the argument, and what was being said, but just are these good writers? (Dr. Jones, Humanities)

Like Dr. Gomez, Dr. Jones uses phrases such as “excitement,” “importance,” and “interesting” when explaining how candidates can convey research impact. Dr. Jones gets closer than Dr. Gomez in articulating impactful research when she states, “If I really understood the stakes of the project, if that came across then I wanted to pursue that person’s candidacy.” This suggests that candidates that could situate their research in larger contexts of significance and timeliness – otherwise known as “the stakes” – activated a sense of “excitement and importance” to her. However, this was difficult to reconcile with the fact that Dr. Jones also forwarded a candidate onto the long short-list that had no alignment with the position description of British and Feminist Modernist Works, but was doing less pertinent research.

Dr. Jones: There was one candidate in particular, her project, she's at Harvard right now. She has the wackiest project that I thought was amazing. She's writing on self-help books, which for a [humanities] department you're like, "What?!"

Interviewer: Yeah.

Dr. Jones: But then she goes on to say that this is the most written genre in the United States.

Interviewer: Yeah. I was just about to say, I feel like I see them everywhere.
Dr. Jones: Right. So she's doing this amazing project on self-help books, and that was someone I gave a one to, and somebody else had given a three to. I was like, "No, you have to realize this is so weird and interesting. We need to talk to her more, because I've never heard of anybody doing a project like this." You know, it's kind of badly behaved in that way, and so then the other committee member was totally game and was like, "Great. Let's bring her in and see." So I think that that's sort of how things got resolved.

Both Dr. Gomez and Dr. Jones had difficulty describing impactful research, and even though Dr. Jones was closer, there were still discrepancies between her statement and her practice, and between her practice and other committee members’ opinions on impactful research. The closest measurement came from one participant in the life sciences. He explained that there are “varying views on what the impact of someone’s research program is,” and that if its “not on the top three list or top five list of chronic illnesses that are causing people to die in the US, then that got a bit less of a [vote for support]…that was sort of more borderline.” Yet similar to the previous descriptions, this still calls into question the concept of consensus between raters in evaluating candidates. Rynes & Gerhart (1990) explain, without consensus between raters, “the concept of fit may be more a comforting fiction than a strategically based reality” (p. 16). Not only did Dr. Williams’ measurement seem more personally contrived and somewhat arbitrary, but also it was also dissimilar to other committee members’ definition of impactful research in the same search. These are not mere differences in opinions about research quality between similar candidates, but fundamental differences in how faculty members quantify and operationalize research quality even on the same committee, and how those evaluations inform decision-making regarding hiring decisions.
**Research productivity.** Many participants had different explanations as to what constituted impactful research, ranging from factors that could be conceivably important for the job and/or department, to disparate and unrelated. Candidates’ research productivity was another important factor across the different searches when creating the short-list of candidates for interviews.

I think it really boiled down to three things. One was the kind of track record, well I would say four. One was the kind of track record they had in terms of number of publications and their sort of own research area that is original, interesting, and unique and y’know would fit well with the needs of the department. So evidence that their research program is on track. (Dr. Tidwell, Life Sciences)

In some instances like this, research productivity and research novelty were closely related. It was presumed that someone with several publications likely had an original topic, and vice versa. However in many cases faculty explicitly teased out research impact from research productivity, showing a clear preference for impactful research over sheer productivity – but desiring both whenever possible. This matches previous studies of selection characteristics in faculty searches (e.g. Landrum & Clump, 2004), which indicate that faculty place greater importance on the quality of publications compared to quantity.

There were definitely people who had been very productive in, I guess, I'm trying to say something other than "impactful way." Because of some of the work that we do in [life sciences], you get a lot of folks who come in from, say, the medical school. Like, there are PhDs in medical school settings where there's a high incentive to just publish. But then if you look at either the quality of the work, the contributions that it's making to the literature, or even the impact of the journal, it's
kind of not that great. And I remember in one of my first searches, there was this one person who had 70 publications, and I was like, “Oh, my gosh.” But then as you sort of drill down, you go, “Oh, it's not that substantive compared to this student who could've had less than a handful of really solid papers that were really impactful.” We're looking for the person who is both productive, but also productive in meaningful, substantive ways, and when I think of the people who rose to the top, there is definitely some that had way more publications than others. But even the people who didn’t have that many publications, the area of inquiry was really interesting, or new, or cutting edge, and the quality they were doing was good. (Dr. Williams, Life Science)

Several participants across the searches shared a similar sentiment: that productivity for productivity’s sake did not warrant much consideration. Yet similar to research impact, there were under-explained contours of research productivity – which publication venues were the most coveted, and how many were appropriate? In place of standards, several faculty participants either struggled to provide them, or used the amount of a favorite candidate as an anchor.

There was one man who was not a potential candidate, who didn't make it. And he fitted the bill in all sorts of other ways. Comparativist, he was Indian, he was at Yale. So he looked great, but he'd been out [since the] PhD, [and] hadn't published anything. [We were a] bit worried about finding out this was somebody who was gonna come to the university; then, of course, have a quite large teaching load. [He was] very able, very clever, very gifted in all sorts of ways. It certainly would have been a good call. But he didn't [publish], and there
was this question mark about him. And we had to weigh him up against another person who had much better publication track records, and we decided on them in the end. (Dr. Reynolds, Social Sciences)

The candidate possessed many favorable traits: his subject expertise aligned with the position description, attended a very prestigious institution, and was deemed “very able [and] very clever,” by the faculty participant. However, Dr. Reynolds was concerned about how the responsibilities of faculty life would affect his already low publication record. He was also unable to articulate if there were a certain number of publications that would exhibit capability, or resolve the doubt in his mind. Instead, it appeared that the opinion of the candidate’s publication record hinged on the record of another candidate’s, otherwise known as an anchoring heuristic (Tversky & Kahneman, 1973). Dr. Reynolds may not have known that his assessment of one candidate’s publication record (the anchor) impacted his assessment of another’s - who could have had any number of important differences or advantages in their career.

**Grant funding.** Demonstrated evidence of acquiring research funding was an important criterion across the four search committees. Particularly in the life sciences and physical sciences, acquiring a grant was a standard success marker. Dr. McGuire, Chair of the physical sciences department, explained, “programmatics do matter too, you know. People that are funded bring in students and complete a picture and, uh, often the whole is more than the sum if it's parts in a research group.” Even in the social sciences and humanities, grant funding was often used in candidate descriptions to illustrate their success.

Grant funding was the least idiosyncratic of the three research parameters evaluated in selection. Unlike publication record and impact, some faculty participants were able to directly
connect this criterion to success on the job, similar to Dr. McGuire. This was largely limited to
the life science and physical science departments, rather than the social sciences and humanities.

Two members of the life science committee explain:

For people who could have had the opportunity to get external funding, that did
play a role, in part because in [life sciences], you can't do it without having some
funding. If you were a grad student, if you got a fellowship, like a NIH
fellowship, or if you had even written for funding in any way that was helpful. If
you were a post doc, or an assistant professor, you'd had some funding, that was
also important too. And so, I say this, but at the same time, in [life sciences] ...

Even though, actually, several people on the committee have lots of funding, it's
not the first thing we look at. So, yeah. (Dr. Williams, Life Sciences)

If a person is a postdoc, it’s great if they have a grant like a [NIH] K-award or
something like that, or a T-32, oh sorry an F-32 not a T-32. Actually to be honest
with you, that is one thing that differentiates the people who rise to the top, is the
people that are able to get funding. So even if they’re a postdoc, y’know…I
think, we have one postdoc coming in to interview and she is currently on a
[NIH] K-99, so she arranged for funding. And that’s not easy [to do as a recent
graduate], that’s not trivial. So we thought that was a mark of distinction of this
applicant. (Dr. Tidwell, Life Sciences)

Here, Dr. Williams and Dr. Tidwell explain the importance and relevance of grant funding in
similar ways. Although research has demonstrated that NIH awards are disproportionately
awarded to White scientists over minoritized scientists despite comparable research records and
educational backgrounds (Ginther, Shaffer, Schnell, Masimore, Liu, Hakk, & Kington, 2011), faculty in the life sciences still used this as a primary criterion in selection. Both faculty members also explain how expectations regarding funding shift based on the candidate’s career stage – whether they were still a graduate student, postdoctoral scholar, or early career assistant professor. Yet this level of articulation and consensus was not observed in the social sciences or humanities. This may suggest that the latter disciplines have less of an emphasis on research funding in candidate appraisal, as it seemed that any form of external funding was valued, regardless of what type or amount.

**Divergent Case: Screening Personality, Collegiality, and Links with Teaching**

*During short-list formation.* In the normative model of personnel selection, candidates are not typically screened for affective traits such as personality until the later stages in selection. This makes sense: faculty first and foremost want to assess candidates’ ability to at least perform the job, and it is difficult to glean personality and collegiality traits until later once candidates interview for the position. Moreover, many faculty members – in an attempt to display impartiality and sound judgment – protest that they do not even consider such factors during selection. However, in some divergent cases, faculty explicitly mentioned assessing personality and collegiality factors during the formation of the short-list without any contact with the candidates. Dr. Reynolds described how previous interactions with a purportedly difficult graduate student informed his collegiality filter in faculty selection:

Oh, [one factor is] a willingness to cooperate with other people. A willingness to perhaps take on tasks that you're not necessarily gonna be noted for. And an ability, simply, to be part of the team. Put it that way. And these are things that, in a very small community like this [social science department], they matter. I
had an experience quite recently. Graduate student. I can't give you his name, but he was someone who, every single step of the way, he's insisting on defining what he has to do. And you actually get to the extent of going to the union to complain that the terms of his contract were improper. It actually turned out he was wrong, and they were right; the terms of his contract were perfectly decent. And you think, “This is the kind of person, you can't possibly write a letter on and say this is a good colleague.” This is the worst kind of person. And we've all encountered people who are in this spot. I won't name them, of course. And there are people in other universities who just are a ball under feet. You keep tripping over them wherever you go, because you're looking for some sort of ability to cooperate with other people, and you find that they're trying to trip you up all the time. (Dr. Reynolds, Social Sciences)

Like this participant, faculty typically had stories behind their rationale to screen for personality and collegiality this early in the search. For this faculty member, an experience with a graduate student heightened his attention to considering personality in the short-list formation. But it is unclear if this focus improperly eliminates candidates of color, where unfortunately the dominant narrative is that they come in and “challenge the system,” as a graduate student once did in this example (Danowitz Sagaria, 2002). In some instances, it seemed that considering collegiality in the search did resemble simply assessing likeability or agreeableness.

Dr. Tidwell: And then y'know in that second [committee] meeting I was describing in where we did the long short list, we talked about each person really in some depth and even though he [the candidate] was on the long short list we were looking at…nobody was really terribly excited about him, I kinda felt bad
because he’s obviously doing good work. For whatever reason I felt for example that he was a little too slick…

Interviewer: Did you gather this from the phone interview?

Dr. Tidwell: Phone interviews we haven’t talked about yet, but I didn’t call him. I looked at his website and read some of his work and the way he kind y’know, bragged about himself, for some reason it kind of rubbed me the wrong way.

It is clear through Dr. Tidwell’s use of pauses and “y’know” that he struggled with his explanation for feeling “rubbed the wrong way” about this candidate. This form of evaluation normally occurs during the final stages of evaluation, yet Dr. Tidwell took it upon himself to consider materials outside of the file when considering this candidate (i.e. personal websites). It is unclear if something about his materials suggested a “slick” personality, but it appears that the participant did at least find the candidate’s work sufficient.

Another faculty member used personality and collegiality, not for their own personal tastes, but primarily to assess teaching capabilities. Although it is likely that this is not the best science to determine teaching quality in lieu of actual materials or seminars provided by the candidate, some faculty felt that it was sufficient. This did not appear to be a departmental effect or baked into certain department’s cultures. Rather, it appeared that certain champions in each committee were attuned to teaching needs, whereas other faculty on the committees were less so. Dr. Cho described how a candidate’s self-presentation during a phone interview signaled to her that the candidate might not be the most qualified teacher.

Dr. Cho: And I will get them [the letter writer] to explain to me, and they're actually pretty good at explaining. If I don't understand something in the [recommendation] letters, it's like, okay, why is this person so excited about this person? And what does
this mean? I mean we had one letter that sort of seemed to indicate about this person that he was a little strange, and we did some probing, and we have to try to decide if someone's gonna be a good teacher or not.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Dr. Cho: And if they're goofy and if they don't answer questions straightforwardly, and if they get real stubborn, that doesn't sound like a person who's gonna be a good teacher. And so this guy didn't make the short list. (Dr. Cho, Physical Sciences)

But basically, I think you have to think when you're employing someone. Can I work with this person? Is this person gonna be able to work with me? And are they going to be able to work with the students cooperatively as well? Because if they can't cooperate with you, the chance is they won't be able to cooperate with the students either. So it's obviously an important part of this. We tend to focus, I think - and the way the whole thing is set up, the whole selection process - much more on scholarship than anything else. And that, I think, is right. But there are these other aspects to it which are much more difficult to judge at the time, when you really do need to take them into account. (Dr. Reynolds, Social Sciences)

Teaching and personality continued to be a factor later on in the search, too. Yet again, one or two people in each search committee predominantly advocated for it.

Interviewer: I guess what I'm trying to get it is what extra does like a job talk sort of enable you to screen for, look for in a candidate?

Dr. Jones: Teaching personality primarily.

Interviewer: Interesting.
Dr. Jones: I mean this is where the Q&A is instructive, is that you're watching somebody think of their feet, which what you have to do in a classroom. We don't do teaching demonstrations in this department in part because I feel quite strongly that the job talk actually is itself a teaching demonstration, or it shows you those methods clearly on the ground. *(Dr. Jones, Humanities)*

Generating the short-list was a combination of person-job fit, and personal preferences. However, the bar for subject-area expertise alignment was relatively low and lenient, compared to the high and shifting bar for research impact, productivity, and funding. At times, there were considerations of teaching record, which was typically facilitated through an examination of candidate’s personality and collegiality, rather than actual teaching indicators. There were some notable departmental differences in the formation of the short-list. For example, social science was the most explicit about using institutional reputation; life science had the heaviest emphasis on research funding, and the humanities department valued teaching the most of all four committees. These disciplinary differences were the most pronounced in the second stage of selection of on-campus interviews, especially when trying to settle differences between two to three final round candidates.

**Recommending the Final Hire: Preferences and Unique Departmental Criterion**

After the formation of the long short-list and short-list, between three to six candidates were invited to campus to deliver job-talks and participate in campus interview activities. At the conclusion of the on-campus visits, search committee members convened again to determine which candidate(s) they would recommend to the department for hire. In the normative model of selection, this stage occurs once all candidates have been deemed minimally qualified, and have exhibited some level of talent that warranted further investigation. Indeed, in the faculty
model of selection all candidates brought to interview achieved some level of minimal qualification, and many faculty expressed that they could reasonably see any of the interviewed candidates as viable colleagues.

Yet this begs the question, how do faculty members make selection decisions between capable candidates in the second round of selection? And does it differ significantly from the first selection stage? In the normative model of selection, research shows that employers begin to screen for value-congruence beyond candidates’ knowledge, skills, and abilities – otherwise known as person-organization fit (Chuang & Sackett, 2005; Kristof-Brown, 2000). In this stage, employers attempt to ascertain if candidates can perform the job and perform in such a way that also maximizes organizational values. However, screening for organizational values and congruence was largely absent in the faculty model of selection. First, faculty participants screened for subject expertise again to ensure that a candidate’s research agenda was not too similar to those already within the department – the most akin to person-organization fit. After establishing this, faculty doubled-down on previous criterion (research impact, publication record, and funding) in a less linear fashion. Finally, each department had an additional “hoop” or criterion that was specific to the department’s structure and legacy.

**Person-organization fit – Subject expertise alignment re-examined.** Subject expertise was revisited as faculty tried to make decisions regarding what they perceived as a pool of highly qualified candidates. Faculty saw this level of screening important in order to not replicate research efforts within their department. It was possible that a candidate’s research and expertise matched the characteristics of the job (person-job fit), yet were incompatible with the department (person-organization fit).
Another thing is overlap with people here. There was definitely people who had overlap with substantive research areas that people here were working on. So, we wanted to have something that wasn't like what we were doing. So, that’s another good example [of items that would “take people off” the finalist list] (Dr. Williams, Life Sciences)

However, there were some divergences too. Some assessments of subject expertise alignment were intertwined with assessments of their methods, impact, record, etc. No matter the perceived importance or significance of these factors, duplication of efforts was seen as a negative factor in selection. Similar to Dr. Reynolds’s comments on subject expertise in the first round of selection, many of these assessments were unyielding.

That could be someone who, "We have five of you already." [Social science] has a lot of different methods. Some people do experiments. Some people do surveys. Some people do archival work. Since we are a PhD program that's producing PhDs that compete for top jobs, we've got to be able to train people across all those methods. If we have five people who are great at experiments and someone rolls along and they're extremely talented and they do experiments and we don't have anyone who does surveys, we're gonna need to make a hire in the survey area. Something like that.

We load up on that. I would say that that's not a default for us that we wouldn't hire that person. The department's MO has typically been always to privilege talent. But at some point, you have to train the graduate students. You have to be responsible in training them. We do want to make sure we can train them across all the methods, across all the subjects. (Dr. Reeves, Social Sciences)

This example illuminates the presence of some fit in faculty selection, but to offer breadth in methods for training. Despite experiments being perceived as more rigorous in the social
sciences, this faculty member states that if they have adequate representation of faculty who conduct experimental methods in the department, they would prefer someone who can teach survey methods. However, she does leave room for the possibility of hiring the experimental researcher. Dr. Kelly expressed a similar opinion in the physical science’s search, stating “we have a bias towards fields that are more connected to experiment, because our last hire was more theoretical. But on the other hand, if we find the right person in the more theoretical area, that’s what we should do.” Although person-organization fit was present, exceptions to the rule were notably present too. Stated otherwise, if the candidate’s status were high enough, even P-J fit would be a negligible factor.

**Magnifying preferences: Research impact, publication record, and funding revisited.** Determining excellence in research in the second stage differed slightly than it did in the first. At this point, it was likely that candidates were deemed qualified in two or three of these regards; otherwise they would not have been brought onto campus. However, job talks did provide faculty with additional details to make decisions, most often related to their research impact.

And so, it all sort of came back to this criterion of who's got the most impactful, exciting [research]…would really add something to our department. Those kinds of evaluations on a kind of...I mean, certainly on an individual basis, but we did have to compare people against each other. But it was always about that criteria, as opposed to simple numbers, so to speak.” *(Dr. Williams, Life Sciences)*

Similar to the first stage, there were fundamental differences as to what constituted exciting and impactful research.
Dr. Tidwell: So she argued, the search committee member who's in the [health-related subfield] area made a very strenuous and strong argument in favor of one of the candidates. I thought her work was boring. That's why I didn't like her very much. But that's not a really valid criticism, especially in the face of somebody who can tell you why it's important.

Interviewer: Oh, okay. Yeah.

Dr. Tidwell: You can be bored by things and excited by things, but this is why we have colleagues, so they can help us understand each other.

Interview: Yeah.

Dr. Tidwell: So when [other search committee member] put it in that context, I thought well, you know, this makes a lot of sense. Also the woman that I just mentioned whose work I thought was boring, her work actually is a really good example of exactly what we advertised for. In other words, we wanted to know about [different life science-based] aspects of health, so that's exactly what this person does. (Dr. Tidwell, Life Sciences)

Dr. Tidwell describes an initial disagreement between he and a colleague. Even though one member of committee made a “very strenuous and strong argument” in favor for a candidate, he found the work “boring.” Although one can be personally bored with someone’s research and still see the innovation and relevance in it, he conflated boredom with not liking the candidate. But Dr. Tidwell also had a change of heart due to another faculty members’ expertise, and likely because the candidate was a “good example of exactly what we advertised for.”

What differentiated identifying research impact in the second stage compared to the first was the nature of comparisons between candidates. In the first stage of selection candidate’s
research programs were judged more closely based on their own merits, due to wide competition and multiple slots for on-campus job talks. Yet because faculty members felt compelled to narrow their options even further in later stages, they began to draw comparisons between a standout in their own mind, and all other candidates. Here Dr. Tidwell draws a comparison between the “boring” candidate, and another candidate he was “thrilled was going to be made an offer.”

So right, when they come for an interview, your opinion can be elevated or it can be not. I don't think the talk of the boring woman changed my mind really one way or the other. I just thought, well, she seems like she's doing interesting work and whatever. It's kind of boring, but she's doing good work. So I didn't get excited.

But the post-doc, her talk was really much more interesting. Some people when they give a talk they try to connect it to the outside world in a way, they try to put it in context. So she was really good about putting it into context, the wider context.

In the case of the “boring” candidate, although her work was strong enough to make the short-list, she was apparently ranked lower for something outside of her control. It is for these reasons that experts advise that committees create threshold lists over ranked lists (Bohnet, 2016; Moody, 2015), in order to discourage weighing candidate credentials against another’s.

Research productivity remained important in this stage of selection. In the case of the humanities search, a very qualified candidate who was conducting novel research was not extended an offer due to limitations in her research productivity.

The next one that came was actually a woman of color and very much a public intellectual, and doing public things that we thought redefined the notion of the academic and taking on race in Britain and the whole question of the nation. This person
was also very attractive to us for those reasons. She's re-conceptualizing the thing. But already a weakness was she hadn't, didn't...even though she was a full professor in England, she didn't really have what we call a monograph. A book, that's a monograph, which is mostly what the American universities require. And she had edited volumes. She had a biography of a kind of forgotten modernist woman writer. But she didn't have a monograph. And the new project was supposed to be that. So we had a lot of hope for it. And again, it was the thing, the new project, if she kind of blew us away with the new project, she would've had it. (Dr. Hughes, Humanities)

Dr. Hughes clearly elucidates several of the candidate’s qualifications and desirable characteristics, such as being a public intellectual that redefines important areas related to the position description. This intersects with her research record; the prevailing disciplinary logic that Dr. Hughes refers to is having a staple book or monograph to demonstrate continued research activity. The omission of this book was so compelling that she was not offered the position, despite her qualifications and the shortcomings of two other candidates with glaring issues, resulting in a failed search.

Finally, grant funding continued in importance in final selection. In life science and physical science, this generally meant support from NIH, NSF, or other agencies responsible for science funding. In the social sciences and humanities, any form of external funding appeared as a mark of distinction.

So the one guy that I mentioned who is associate, he definitely has a ton of support from all kinds of foundation and stuff like that, not just NIH. The other two women that are coming – one today and one next week – yknow…I haven’t looked at their CVs in the last couple of days but I’m pretty sure they’re both pretty well funded from NSF and
NIH. Those are kind of the gold standard things that we look for, and y’know this is a science-based department. And y’know, we need grant money and grant money is good for the university too. So that’s an important thing. *(Dr. Tidwell, Life Sciences)*

**Unique departmental criterion.** Research criterion was important, but was not the principle parameter since most candidates already met several requirements before being invited to campus. More important in the second stage was some alignment with a unique criterion related to departmental history and politics. Parallel to research impact and productivity, there was high agreement on the category itself, yet less on the contents of those categories. Several of these factors are also not currently captured in the selection characteristics literature as possible selection parameters, underscoring the importance of including both committees *and* departments when studying faculty hiring. Each departmental criterion had varying degrees of consensus, measurement, and proximity to the job and/or organization, yet none of the four criterion fit neatly into the normative model of selection.

**Social Science: Recruitability.** The social science department was the most attuned to a candidate’s recruitability – or the likelihood that the candidate would accept if offered the position. Although some participants considered this when forming the short-list, it was minimal; it was most prominent in the second stage of selection when deciding whom to offer the position.

In the back of everyone's mind, to spite the fact that we want to compete for the top of the pool, we also are looking for opportunities to leverage people who may have reasons to come to *[Northfield’s location]*. We want to try to keep an eye out for anything that might suggest that the person's open to living in a city like this in *[Northfield’s location]*. That could be anything from we think they're under-placed in their current jobs.
talented person who is an assistant professor in a place where we think they're under-placed relative to it, the same kind of talented person on the job market for the first time who's getting offers from the top 10 places. We may choose to interview that first person, because we feel like we have a bit more of an opportunity to turn that into a hire. *(Dr. Reeves, Social Sciences)*

Also, I believe in what I call "bottom fishing." Like [Northfield University] cannot get the best graduate students and it can't usually hire the best faculty. It does a better job with hiring the best faculty, but try to go for the hottest hotshot in the market I think is just a waste of our time. We're not going to get that person. If Harvard and Princeton and Stanford are bidding on that person, I'd rather try to find somebody that I think is almost as good, that we could get. That's how I think. *(Dr. Frazier, Social Sciences)*

These quotes illustrate the importance of context in understanding faculty selection. Simply rank-ordering how faculty consider traditional factors such as research impact or research novelty neglects the practical importance of securing a hire. It seemed that this was an important consideration because there were real-life pressures and implications associated with not securing a candidate for the department. Dr. Reeves shared, “We don't want to have searches year after year, after year, after year where we're not hiring anybody, we're not hiring anybody.” Another participant suggested there was a departmental history of not securing hires, losing out to other big name schools in the field; Dr. Perry imparts, “the very best people can easily get picked off by a high ranking university unless they have some other reason why they want to be in [Northfield’s city], so this has been perennially a problem.” But not all departments had that history or experience. One participant in the humanities explained: “No. We never think
anyone’s too good for us. Maybe they are. But we never operate under that assumption. We always operate on the assumption that we can get them. And we do. We get a lot of people.”

Using the normative selection model to understand recruitability reveals interesting nuances. Despite having no real measurement, or even relationship to success on the job or organization, all four faculty members had an innate sense as to which candidates were easily recruitable and which were not – suggesting the presence of an organizational effect. Whereas the previous idiosyncrasies in the search were about maximizing status, recruitability shows that risk aversive nature of faculty searches, too. Recruitability is not in and of itself a candidate characteristic, rather an amalgamation of several characteristics derived to understand risk and minimize loss in faculty searches.

What I liked about this guy was, I thought his research was good. I thought it was on a topic that was a little bit off beat, which is how it is that low income people don't…[essentially] how does that sort of interest connection get short circuited. And he had I think it was like seven papers in like our top five journals and had been out for a few years and he was at University of Tennessee. And so I thought we could get him and I thought he was as good as any of the junior people. So this is my philosophical thing. I like going for people with proven records at places where you might be able to get them away from, as opposed to getting into the thick of the competition for the best, for the very top ones in this year's crop. The very top ones in this year's crop are going to have five offers from places as good or better than [Northfield University]. Whereas if you could go for, I'd call it bottom fishing. If you go for a guy like this guy, if you're really
writing your judgment, then you're probably going to get him. I think the 
expected value [of the candidate] was higher. (Dr. Frazier, Social Sciences)

Conversely, recruitability could also negatively affect a candidate’s chances, particularly if they were perceived as being too qualified, or unlikely to commit to the institution. Although Dr. Reeves explained that they would “probably still offer them a job…[even] if there were someone who were very talented who had 10 job offers from the other top 10 departments,” other faculty members shared slightly different stances. Dr. Frazier, describing a sought-after candidate, explained:

So I would have liked that guy. He was the best. I wouldn't have gone for him. I would have gone for somebody that I thought was just almost as good and that we would have had a better chance for.

In Dr. Frazier’s mind, the candidate was unlikely to come based on the materials presented in their file and their job talk. Although the candidate would have conceivably raised the status of the department, Dr. Frazier expressed he would rather have someone “almost as good and that we would have had a better chance for.” When recruitability detracts from candidates, it resembles the “extra hoop” that higher education researchers argue candidates of color experience (Danowitz Sagaria, 2002; Tuitt et al., 2007; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). The prime perception is that candidate of color are more difficult to recruit because they are highly sought after and receive more offers. This was even expressed in the humanities search.

I think, to be honest, especially if the ones who…it's obviously faculty of color who are…to give you an example, faculty of color are the hardest, and those are the ones you're getting multiple offers for and everything. (Dr. Hughes, Humanities)
In the social science committee, the compounding effect was also rooted in a candidate’s partner-status, which has also been documented in the literature (e.g. Rivera, 2017).

We've got one moonshot. Who's it gonna be? In the end, so it turns out, he tells us half way through his visit like at dinner or something that his partner is on the job market. I was like, "Oh, gosh. Now we'll never get [this candidate}..." (Dr. Reeves, Social Sciences)

Taken altogether, recruitability was a very stable construct across the four social science search committee participants, predominantly occurring during the second phase of selection. Despite having faulty measures and poor relation to organizational fit, this criterion had high consensus based on shared organizational membership. At times, it elevated certain candidates, yet it also potentially detracted from other candidates, especially candidates of color and candidates with spouses.

**Life Sciences: Being a scientist.** The unique departmental characteristic in the life sciences was the concept of “being a scientist.” Like social science’s emphasis on recruitability, there seemed to be moderate to high consensus as to what constitutes a “scientist.” Yet it is difficult to identify the source of the consensus – whether its attributed to some shared organizational membership or departmental legacy, larger science culture in academe, or if faculty members were acting based on their own personal ideal science standards. Yet there are some indicators that suggested that being a scientist had some key characteristics, unlike social science’s emphasis on recruitability. According to this search committee member, it was about being “lab-based,” and the nature of the data.

Then the other person that we ruled out...there was some, I mean this is really just down to the person, but there was a feeling. I felt certainly, that he wasn't as much of a
scientist as some of the others. So he didn't have a lab for example...I mean he did, he collected data, but the others are really lab-based. (Dr. Tidwell, Life Sciences)

In this sense, screening for science ability seemed less about calculating and minimizing risk compared to social science, yet more concerned with maximizing status and accomplishment, rather than any particular fit.

When I say health, physical health is very much what we're thinking about. If we sort of put those aside, then the borderline cases would be something like a grad student or a post doc, for example, who had a really strong mentor. So, somebody that we would all know and really think very highly of as a mentor, access to data from that mentor, which is fantastic data that anybody would want. Has had some success publishing papers off of it. Maybe has gotten a fellowship, like a NIH fellowship, to fund their graduate school or to fund their post doc. But in terms of being an independent researcher, mounting studies that were driven by questions that...I guess the ability to run a lab. Let's say the student only did secondary analysis, but never ran their own study or had any evidence that they did. That was a big one for me, and it was definitely one that as we talked about it more, that would take people off [the finalist list]. (Dr. Williams, Life Sciences)

This particular example reveals the binding nature of “being a scientist.” Both Dr. Williams and Dr. Tidwell describe being a scientist as some order of lab activity, and having original data collection. Dr. Williams also added a dimension of independence. However, these descriptions also reveal other interesting features of being a scientist as an evaluative framework. The position description did not specify a particular methodology – be it
experimental or survey methodology. Juxtaposed with Dr. Reeves’s comments on survey methods vs. experiments, this begs a few questions: is favoring primary data collection over secondary data research purely status driven, is there a disciplinary logic across life science departments that primary data collection is preferred or ‘real science’, or is it some combination of these factors?

It is also very likely that an anchoring heuristic occurred that worked against the specific candidate. In the words of Dr. Tidwell, the other three candidates for consideration were more “basic science,” so the fact that this candidate’s work was not lab-based was magnified, despite aligning with the position description, not duplicating another faculty member’s work, and having other positive attributes.

So that was not an issue with the second person that we ruled out. He has this amazing long track record and really very influential, or he's beginning to be. But I wasn't terribly happy because a lot of it's really secondary data collection which means all kinds of things. And it's just my view of how science should work is, you should really know a whole lot about your data, and he didn't know a whole lot about his data (Dr. Tidwell, Life Sciences)

Ultimately, the criteria of being a scientist eliminated the candidate that was conducting secondary data analyses. However, this candidate was also the only one of four conducting research on a vulnerable population, which seemed to garner some, yet less, attention.

Turns out though that this one guy, the guy that we thought was really great but not the right fit for the job, he studies anti-gay bias. And so that's like, well, he's a real expert and he's done a lot of studies, so that would be really good for [Northfield University’s] [Equity office] initiatives. You just can't go wrong with that way of thinking. So we kind
of said that to the Chair and the Dean, please take a look at this guy if you think you might need something, but I don't know.

The others, their work is really basic science and so they don't really have that connection to the [Equity office] agenda that [Northfield University] has, like this other guy does. This guy would be just like perfect for that. Sometimes it works out and sometimes it doesn't. (Dr. Tidwell, Life Sciences)

Interestingly, the faculty participant introduced a fit parameter when he described the candidate as not the right fit for their search. Despite being an appropriate “fit” for the institution’s diversity initiatives, that was not seen as a valuable hiring consideration for the search committee, Department Chair, or Dean. Although being a scientist had strong consensus and moderate measurement in this search committee, it seemed narrowly focused on ideal views of science, rather than expansive ones that considered multiple approaches to research or benefit to the community and university.

**Humanities: Authenticity.** The humanities department had a particularly unique departmental hiring criterion related to authenticity of scholarship. Compared to social science’s emphasis on recruitability and life science’s focus on being a scientist, the authenticity framework had much lower consensus among committee members, despite originally seeming high from one faculty member’s perspective.

Modernism now has become a global modernism, that's the way the field is being defined, but a lot of people that say they're doing global modernism, they do it in a very surface manner. And one of the major bugaboos for the interview team, and everybody on the team agreed, is that we did not want what is called a diffusionist idea of modernism. That is, it started in Europe and spread to the rest of the world because that
has been completely criticized for the kind of you know, making Europe the center. (Dr. Hughes, Humanities)

The lack of consensus likely originated from a disagreement on the authenticity of a particular candidate’s scholarship. In the eyes of one faculty member, the highest rated candidate - a white woman - suffered from this.

Dr. Hughes: She gave a really kind of you know, a presentation that was impressive, impressed a lot of people. But also, the ones who were negative about it had problems with the way in which she was using colonies as simply a backdrop for white women to whatever, you know, sort of find themselves, whatever it is.

Interviewer: Was she a white woman?

Dr. Hughes: Yeah. She was a white woman. Yeah. And some of them found that...well, her presentation was on some avant garde women in Mexico and they talk about…she talked a little bit about interaction...you know, think about it, you've got Frida Kahlo, you got, what's his name? All the major. You've got the major modernists, if they're anywhere, they're in Mexico and there's absolutely no interaction [in her scholarship].

And obviously, there was an interaction, the expats who were in Mexico, they probably didn't interact with the...obviously they probably didn't even know the language, you know. But the one negative comment was that, people who were negative felt like there wasn't...more could've been made of that [interaction] than...It was too easily dismissed, you know?

And [we] found some serious, serious, serious I think, omissions of black scholarship and post-colonial scholarship that wasn't evident at first because she footnotes them all. But footnotes all of these work that's been done, so you think that she's read it all. But I
actually went and read the work myself and found that, for instance, a leading black scholar has a whole chapter on one of the black women modernists that she has her whole chapter on, does not mention his work at all. Major black feminist scholars not mentioned at all. And then there were even more serious errors in terms of just...for me, just plain wrong. It was just wrong. (Dr. Hughes, Humanities)

For this particular search committee member, it was not merely determining the candidate’s research impact or how sophisticated the methods were, but it was clear that authenticity to the scholarship by and about people of color that was at the heart of the case.

Yeah. It's like I always say…I do talk about Shakespeare in my new book and if I'm gonna talk about Shakespeare, I damn well better make sure I know, right? All of that stuff if I'm gonna do it. And if I didn't, people would be really upset with me. So, why is it okay the other way? You know what I mean? (Dr. Hughes, Humanities)

To Dr. Hughes, if she as a Black woman were going to study Shakespeare, she would have to do so correctly because Black women in American society are held to higher standards on the basis of both race and sex, especially when they conduct research that is perceived as outside of their area. Thus, she questions why it would not work in the reverse – for a white woman to misappropriate work by people of color. Still, another faculty participant on the committee had a different interpretation of the candidate’s work.

Interviewer: Did you share some of the same reservations that your colleague had related to that specific candidate?

Dr. Jones: I didn't, but I'm willing to defer to her, it is much closer to her field. She works on Caribbean literature. The text that the candidate was writing about was a work of Caribbean literature. I don't know it. I'm willing to say like, oh, there might have been
a misreading here and that misreading might have been about race, although I'm not completely convinced that is as an egregious misreading as this person thinks. I'm much more open to thinking that this candidate was working in good faith to expand the parameters of what we think of as British modernism and to work on text that have traditionally not been part of the cannon. And that she might have stumbled. I think that's perfectly plausible, but her stumble doesn't reproduce a kind of racist reading and for me that was, that's the difference. That it's not that she then reproduced a sort of white paternalism, let me tell you what's really happening here or I didn't see the kind of the stakes of this misreading. Which could be my own bias, you know I'm not sure. All I know is that the faculty meeting did end up being a kind of referendum on racial politics in the department.

Although it seemed like the two participant’s parameters were sufficiently calibrated (i.e. both not wanting a “diffusionist” idea of modernism), it seems that both faculty members’ implementation of those parameters onto a candidate’s work drastically differed. Dr. Jones suggested that the disagreement might also be partially attributed to departmental political dynamics:

The other thing that happened in that faculty meeting was we had a target of excellence hire who was being considered at the same time. I would say that should have never had happened. We should have never been having two hiring discussions in one meeting, but this happens. He was a black Shakespearean scholar. So you have a young black scholar working on Shakespeare, he's currently a post doc, a postdoc in this department and [another institution] had offered him a job. The terms they were giving him were not so friendly. They were saying you can't have your postdoc, we want you to come
immediately.
Which is, weirdly just seems like, “what are you doing?” So what that did is it made
everyone go like, “oh my god, do we need to hire him too, right;” it did this instant
thing. Very quickly we were then considering whether or not we were gonna hire this
person and the department didn't take well to the rush right, because [another institution]
also had given some ridiculous deadline to make his decision. Like it was very coercive.
I mean, great, he has been offered a tenure track position at [another institution], like in
a way like we should never have moved because it just got so complicated once we did,
but the department decided that we wanted to possibly pursue this option and then there
was a conversation about him as a scholar. The fallout of which was that he was a, he
does these very intricate readings of contemporary African American culture and
Shakespeare. Which makes some traditional Shakespearean scholars unhappy. We had
had a conversation, well it was like there was an elephant in the room, like we were
having a conversation about race as a department and then there was a vote, and the vote
was that the black scholar can't study Shakespeare, can't work on Shakespeare, not in
our department right. So he didn't get the job.
Some of the comments that were made, I was not thrilled with about him, like “does he
really love Shakespeare,” like that kind of thing. And you're like, “what are you, like
you really need to stop talking because you are about to say something horrible.” Like
that's horrible enough that you were about to do something that I don't think you want to
have done, you know, but there was sort of like that kind of conversation. Like, “is he
really a scholar?” So that had happened and then we had a conversation about a white
lesbian scholar who works on Caribbean literature as well as other literature and female
revolutionaries pretty much is what her work is about.

Both of those arguments may in fact be true, but also like the way these all got kind of knitted together because of circumstance were for, I have to say, like I was incredibly uncomfortable in the meeting.

Dr. Jones’s story illustrates the interlocking nature of departmental political dynamics and search committee activity. Although it cannot be fully tested whether the previous hiring event affected the current search, the similarities are stark. Certainly authenticity was the central concern in both cases, yet in concerning ways. It seems that the traditional Shakespearean scholars critiquing the Black candidate’s scholarship on Shakespeare polarized another group of scholars who believed that the White candidate’s treatment of Caribbean literature was insufficient in terms of referencing scholars of color. In the view of Dr. Jones, there seemed to be a tense, retributive power dynamics occurring in the departmental meeting which affected the department’s final decision not to recommend the candidate to the Dean in the face of lack of consensus on authenticity of scholarship.

**Physical Science: Subject expertise.** Physical sciences’ committee was the only to explicitly consider subject expertise beyond minimal qualification verification and departmental fit. The first two instances of subject expertise were commonplace across the different searches: inspecting candidate’s alignment with the position, and revisiting their subject expertise again to compliment the department’s research profile. However in this third instance, the physical science department was also using subject expertise as the difference-maker between qualified candidates in the second round of selection.

We do the candidates in different fields also because this search is reasonably broad.

And so, it's different areas within this broader area. So, then, you're partially using the
saying "What area of [physical sciences] do I think is promising, and exciting, and important," and so on.

And then different people just have different tastes on that, and it's probably driven to what directions they themselves work on because everybody thinks their area is the most important, and that's probably why they're working on it in the first place. So, then you're getting into mixing up these things. The person, and the field, and so on. (Dr. Gomez, Physical Sciences)

According to Dr. Gomez, search committee members used candidate’s subject expertise as a criterion item in deciding the final hire – regardless of whether or not the department was already represented in that area. Thus, it does not seem that the hire was satisfying some departmental need or organizational need, rather a more personal need – or an individualized opinion on what the department needs rather than a collective one. This could also be because the search was “reasonably broad,” and committee members had to consider the maximum amount of information when making split hair decisions between qualified candidates – including their research area. However there is less evidence to support that claim. More evidence points to a cloning bias, or the tendency to seek out like entities and characteristics.

The cloning bias may be an artifact of departmental history regarding how the search was formed. Interviews with the search Chair and Department Chair reveal that the current search was not top in the queue until the department received a significant donor gift. As Dr. Kelly indicated, it took “some arguing…a lot of effort, and a lot of grief in this” until the department “listened to reason” regarding the importance of the search. Since this new faculty colleague will have a prominent role in the development of the area stipulated by the gift, faculty who were not originally animated by the prospects of an unanticipated search may still
see an opportunity to converge their own research agendas with the momentum of the new search. In this sense, using subject expertise to narrow the candidate pool in this form is more about the department than about the credentials and capabilities of candidates themselves.

**Divergent case in securing the final hire: Screening for potential.** Despite faculty members’ predominant reliance on traditional success indicators such as publication record and grant funding, some participants shared their thoughts on the role of considering potential during selection, particularly at the final stage.

But yeah, but then is their best work behind them? There's those kinds of things. The younger person, their best work may be ahead of them, potential is always something that I look for. Potential. So it doesn't have to be somebody who's all well-groomed and kind of has everything in place, I think, that some of the more exciting work, people are working on the cutting edge of new ideas, may not be as well-formed, you know? (**Dr. Hughes, Humanities**)

According to Dr. Shape, it was important to not only consider their previous work, but to determine their potential for future work. Unpacking Dr. Hughes’s quote, it seems that potential is generally derived from a candidate’s research impact, and has intersections with other factors such as publication record. If a candidate’s publication record was not sufficient but their research impact was, that could demonstrate favorable potential. In this sense, it gives candidates the benefit of the doubt if a few things may “not be as well-formed.” However it remains to be clear if this operates in the reverse: what if candidates did not have good research ideas but many publications, or if they demonstrated a convincing research agenda but have not secured any grants yet? Determining a candidate’s potential – despite its benefits – was also difficult to measure. One faculty participant shared,
Dr. Jones: That's the hardest student to grade because you don't know if there's potential there, or if they're just like a good solid B and there's nothing wrong with that.

Interviewer: Right. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Dr. Jones: But I think we're taught that you always look for the potential, and it's like, "Maybe there is none."

Interviewer: Yeah, it's kind of hard too.

Dr. Jones: Which is a harsh thing to say too.

Here, Dr. Jones grapples with the difficult judgment that, despite best efforts, some candidates may not demonstrate as much potential as others. Several faculty participants wrestled with this concept as they were considering candidates in the second stage, particularly because nearly all of them were considered minimally acceptable for the position.

**The Intersections of Race and Evaluation in Candidate Selection**

**Vehicles of Bias that Perpetuate Inequities**

I have critiqued previous search committee literature for failing to consider both selection characteristics and racial biases simultaneously (Chapter 2). Studies of selection characteristics rely too heavily on a linear logic of candidate selection that does not account for race and racism, whereas racial bias studies often detail biases in the general, failing to examine the specific criteria that perpetuate inequities and which are less likely to do so. After considering the many selection characteristics participants channeled in the faculty selection process, I now turn to consider the prevailing barriers for candidates of color.

**Broad and narrow research agendas.** When search committee members assessed research activity during all phases of the search, many described quality through the lens of broad vs. narrow research agendas in candidates. Although faculty participants had varied opinions on what constituted either broad or narrow research, there was consensus across
committees against research that appeared to be too narrow. One faculty member in social sciences explains:

We were looking for people who I would describe as interested in bigger questions, so not necessarily narrow. Specifically meaning people who are creative and imaginative, who are maybe bringing ideas together in really interesting and productive ways, as opposed to someone who has a very narrow interest in the one way that committees...structure their agendas. We, as a department, tend to be a little bit more ecumenical in our approach to things (Dr. Reeves, Social Sciences)

In the words of another professor in the physical sciences, hiring candidates with broader research agendas carried various benefits for navigating the field:

What typically happens is that people end up being quite narrow in their interests. And so, they may really impress other people working in that very specific little subfield. And they can do very well at that for a period of time doing research in that little area, but when you're hiring a faculty member, you expect that over time they're going to [evolve]...you want someone a bit broader, who has a broader vision, because the field can change, and so on. So, you want someone who's fairly flexible. And sometimes, then, you meet someone, you start talking to them, you realize they really don't know so much about other areas, or don't even really necessarily have a huge interest in other areas. And so, then you say to yourself, "Okay. Well, if we hired this person, they're just going to be working on this little area for the next 30 years even if that area becomes uninteresting." And then, that, for us, is a big minus. So, we want someone who comes across as just broadly interested...I mean, of course at any given time you can be
somewhat specialized, and so on, but you still have to have the motivation and broader knowledge that will let you move around in the field. (Dr. Gomez, Physical Sciences)

The types of candidates and research agendas that were considered broad and/or narrow varied across the four searches. In the social sciences, for example, two candidates of color with dissertation topics related to equity were perceived as narrow.

…the discussion always seemed confined to a very restricted question and then a very mathematically-based attempt to answer that question. Without much of the kind of sociological, anthropological discussion that I would expect to see. One of them, for instance, was inquiring into why certain kinds of groups of peoples are treated [differently] by the state in Colombia and it was all based on data, and she hadn't done any kind of sociological inquiry into the background of these people and certain things just seemed to be blatantly obvious. That if you ring up a government official in Colombia, and you address that official as your majesty which is the equivalent of that you aren't going to be treated terribly well. You know, it wasn't as though she didn't know that, clearly she knew, but it wasn't part of the calculations [in her study]. (Dr. Reynolds, Social Sciences)

In this example, Dr. Reynolds is describing a short-list candidate who gave a job-talk to the department regarding their research study. In his opinion, the candidate did not have enough focus on theory, and was using statistics to solve a question that seemed to be “blatantly obvious.” Yet another faculty participant described the work as one that “found a very strong example to a standard idea in her field.” Indeed, many faculty participants expressed conflicting opinions on what constituted narrow research – ranging from the topic, methods, theory, or implications. At any point, a search committee member could describe research as too narrow
based on any of these factors, influencing other faculty members’ perceptions of the candidate.

Whereas one candidate of color’s research was narrow due to theory, Dr. Frazier believed that another’s research was narrow on topic, despite having a novel dataset.

…it really was pretty narrow. But it was on a big subject: immigration. Which wasn’t his only subject, he had a lot of other papers. But to humanize it, so what was narrow about it? He was interested in immigrant incorporation into the society and he had gotten US census data from about 1890 to 1930. He had used that data. And, World War I had resulted in a bunch of immigrants, a bunch of people, but including immigrants being drafted into the army and serving in that institution. As opposed to being left in their home communities, which were usually ethnic communities.

So the 1930 census had just been released or something like that. So he had the names of people...like who they had married, the ethnicity of who they had married, no, they had the last name of the person they had married. So they could get the ethnicity from that. So he was able to tell who had married in their ethnic group. I forget, I guess their incomes, he had their incomes as a function of having been drafted into the army in 1918. And then people who were 18 in 1916, there was a difference. So that was his research. And so he had brought the census data, and that was really cool what he did, but it was also very narrow. And so that was how I interpret it (Dr. Frazier, Social Sciences)

Across all searches, research was generally considered narrow if the topic or sample was purposefully constricted to focus on a certain population, region, or form of identity. Almost each time this was to directly research and impact marginalized communities, which is most
often conducted by people of color across disciplines (Stanley, 2006a). Moreover, the research of several candidates of color was considered broad enough to make the short-list, yet too narrow at the in-person meetings for the final position. There may be any number of reasons for this. For one, participants may have wanted to produce a more diverse short-list to preemptively satisfy central administrative oversight, yet were less inclusive when evaluating final round candidates. There is ample evidence of this across the four searches.

I definitely felt that we were given sort of a bit of a push to make sure that at least the list of people we were bringing out was somewhat gender-balanced and I don't know …if it'll play any role in the final cut, but certainly it's important at that stage that there be a sense of kind of fairness and balance to the gender mix. (Dr. Perry, Social Sciences)

Smith and colleagues (2004) similarly found that diversity in the short-list does not always result in more diverse final hires. In their study of 267 searches across two searches, they found that although 55% of the final pools included people of color, only 12% resulted in a hire of an underrepresented minority.

It could also be that faculty legitimately wanted certain candidates on the short-list, yet compared them to more traditional candidates during the final stage of selection, as was the case in the life science search. Dr. Tidwell believed that one candidate “wasn’t as much of a scientist as some of the others,” because he did not have a lab and collected secondary data, whereas “the others are really lab-based.” The being a scientist criterion in life science was the primary narrowing agent in the search, which limited preferences to certain types of data collection and lab activity. Although the final pool in the life science search contained all white candidates,
this criterion still removed the only candidate conducting research on a marginalized population.

**Institutional type.** Like all individuals, committee members are prone to make mental short cuts and errors, especially when the task is unclear and constrained by time (Moody, 2015). Although faculty members overlap in their review of files - thus increasing triangulation and reducing error - participants still employed strategies to more quickly infer quality. One method was looking at institutional reputation, and there is ample evidence that this was used to determine quality.

I put some weight on the school. I try to give everybody a chance, from no matter what school they're from, but if they're from Southwest Louisiana something rather, it has to be really good. But the Southwest Louisiana person, I read their personal statement and then like “how does this sound?” If it's really good from Southwest Louisiana, I'll look at it. If it's from Harvard, I don't read everything from Harvard, but I give them a little bit of leeway. Would be more likely to go to the research. *(Dr. Frazier, Social Sciences)*

According to Dr. Frazier, there is an inherent difference between materials from a candidate trained at a fictitiously non-prestige school in Southwest Louisiana (e.g. lacking research infrastructure, research ranking such as AAU status, and presumably lower prestige), and candidates from Harvard – channeled to evoke a sense of greater research capacity and institutional prestige. Due to these differences, he is more likely to read the Southwest Louisiana case in depth, but less likely to read the Harvard case with as much scrutiny due to assumptions of quality. Assumptions regarding institutional quality were made throughout the searches.
The woman we’re interviewing the week after next, who's the other candidate who has a junior research Fellowship of Cambridge and that's a postdoctoral position, but it's slightly grander than the usual run of postdoctoral [work], and more difficult to get holds on too. And of course, they're paying [candidates] more, so it's a semi-position sometimes. You can teach [in that position] if you want to, you don't have to. And so that's a mark of the esteem. As I was at Cambridge for 15 years, I know the people who are appointed, and I get a sense of what that means; so I can pick up on that. I again looked at her writings, and they were outstanding. But it always comes back. These are all second. For me, these are secondary considerations. It's unlikely that you're gonna find someone who's writing strikes you as being extraordinary, you have to then find they're nowhere. It might happen. It could happen. The other way around is even rarer; that you'll find someone who's got a great position who's got nothing to say at all. It can happen. (Dr. Reynolds, Social Science)

Dr. Reynolds makes some assumptions related to candidates’ institutional affiliation. He states that it is rare to find someone who is doing quality work “nowhere,” intended to mean at an institution with little prestige. In this example, he’s using Cambridge as the institutional exemplar, which are competitive postdocs and is not “nowhere” according to him. Moreover, he is assuming that candidates who have “great positions” at these prestigious institutions rarely have “nothing to say at all,” which is similar to the mental shortcut and concession Dr. Frazier made for a candidate from Harvard.

The primary issue with conflating institutional reputation with a candidate’s research quality – and taking shortcuts to infer quality in place of actual reviewing all materials – is that highly qualified candidates could still come from less prestigious institutions that are more
diverse. Unfortunately, the institutions with the capacity to send more diverse candidates on to the professoriate are often shortchanged through policy-making and resource allocation (Sav, 2010). Although efforts to increase graduate student diversity are emerging at many high prestigious institutions that have more developed research infrastructure and funding, these are still riddled with white supremacy, and still primarily facilitate non-minoritized candidates onto academic posts (Posselt, 2016). Some faculty members were aware of these systemic inequities and tried to suppress the use of institutional type during the search.

I'm not just looking for some star. So this comes to the criteria, like as I told you before, is I treat all university degrees as equal. So there isn't a kind of like, I suddenly see someone from a particular institution, and go like "Oh, this person's from…," and like immediately give them more attention. They're all equal. (Dr. Hughes, Humanities)

**Letters of recommendation.** Similar to using institutional type as a filter, several faculty participants relied heavily on letters of recommendation to deduce quality. Significant evidence has demonstrated ethnic and gender bias in letters of recommendation for faculty job candidates, with white and male candidates more likely to be described using active and academic characteristics, and women and people of color less so (Madera, Hebl, Dial, Martin, & Valian, 2018; Ross, Boatright, Nunez-Smith, Jordan, Chekroud, & Moore, 2017). Although this study could not confirm the presence of such biases in letters of recommendation without inaccessible primary documents, they still introduce the potential for bias and are concerning from a networks perspective. Scholars indicate that people of color can go unnoticed if they are not part of the primary trust networks of senior faculty (Posselt, 2016; Turner, 2002). For this reason, Moody (2015) describes “provincialism” as a cognitive error in faculty search
processes, or “undervaluing something outside of your own province, circle, or clan” (p. 9) and overextending trust to those within personal networks.

The use of letters of recommendation was particularly interesting in the physical sciences, where it seemed commonplace and non-controversial to weigh letters heavily in the earliest stages of candidate review.

Well, in the beginning it's easy. You look at the letters and then say, "Okay, no good. No good. Okay, good. No good." Letters of recommendation, from the experts. From my colleagues, people I know. Some people I don't know. But that's the first cut. And I could tell you roughly how one week started with 130 applicants or so, that's a lot of people to go through. You go through, your eyes are ready to pop out by the time you're finished. And that basically, we eliminated more than half. So then we had about 60. So that was just ones we're not interested in, because the letters just aren't good enough. And if the letters are not good, probably it's not gonna [be put forward]. There's multiple reasons. First you can't even make a case [to colleagues], and second of all, there's probably a reason why the letters are no good. (Dr. Kelly, Physical Sciences)

In this case, it is clear that Dr. Kelly is relying on letters of recommendation to inform first cuts made to the general applicant pool. Using letters of recommendation alone, he eliminated more than half of the candidates because the letters “just aren’t good enough.” It also reveals a conflation of letter quality with candidate quality, when he states “and if the letters are not good, …there’s probably a reason why the letters are no good.” There may be a myriad of reasons why one letter may be better or worse than another, which can be evidenced in other parts of the file upon closer examination, but members also rely on letters for opinions from those they trust or highly regard. Letters of recommendation have a role in candidate evaluations, yet are most
problematic when they are used as the first pass of determining candidate qualification.

The use of letters of recommendation overall suggests that there is some utility for even members unfamiliar with the field. An outside member of the search in physical sciences said the following when discussing the merits of a candidate:

I came to the same conclusions as the other people. So we would come in, we went off and read the files, and then came back with our results. And I just had to go sort of by letters, reading letters. I mean I would sort of read the other stuff, too, but couldn't really understand. Well, no, that's not true. I mean, part of it is, can the [candidate] explain their research in a way that someone who's outside can understand it? So there is a little element of that, if they were good at explaining that then that helped a little bit, too. But mostly it was the letters.

And so I read the letters, it's kind of Greek to me. This stuff's so mathematical, so theoretical, but I know a little bit. But [other committee members] try to explain to me. But I can certainly read a letter and I can certainly tell if something sounds a little odd to me. (Dr. Cho, Physical Sciences)

For Dr. Cho, the letters were used to fill gaps in her knowledge related to the discipline, particularly as an outside member of the search. Even members familiar with the discipline used letters of recommendation in similar ways.

At the same time, some of the areas are quite specialized. Even in the [physical sciences] department, it's not so easy for most people to understand, say, the work of the people in this particular search. Yeah. It can be quite technical. A lot of tools and things like that are not in the toolbox of every [scientist]. But there are people that are actually really detailed...technical comments on someone's work is relatively small. (Dr. Gomez,
Relying heavily on letters of recommendation can create initial preferences, and it seems their utility extends beyond quickly determining quality within a confined time schedule. The letters were also used to cover knowledge gaps in a wide area of expertise. It may be the case that subfields in this particular discipline are more different than they are alike, and due to the high degree of specialization and differentiation even within subfields where few search committee members are experts in that particular topic or method of research. Some search committees intentionally requested letters later in the process, as opposed to the general pool, which cut down excess materials in the file. For Dr. Jones, this was seen as beneficial, since it let her form her own understanding of the candidate’s materials rather than “relying on some sort of nepotistic structure.”

We haven't received letters of recommendation yet, so that will come later, which I also really like that approach. That was new to me so that you're not just relying on some sort of nepotistic structure of somebody saying, "Yes of course this person is amazing," and then we're like, "Well that's a really senior scholar saying that this junior scholar is really amazing." That's not been part of the conversation at all, and I find that really refreshing. Those letters can come later. (Dr. Jones, Humanities)

Considerations of Diversity as a Selection Characteristic

The vehicles of bias demonstrate how commonplace and ostensibly mundane quality indicators such as research impact, institutional type, and letters of recommendation can have consequences for candidates of color. Race and ethnicity also emerged more explicitly; faculty participants also shared their opinions on considerations of race, ethnicity, and other forms of diversity as direct criterion items, in and of themselves. These were gathered by understanding
faculty members’ personal views and logics regarding diversity (or, *diversity logics*): when asked about the importance and scope of considering diversity in the search process, where do faculty members bring up diversity unprompted, and how (if at all) do they support inclusive processes? Most diversity logics were related to recruitment (i.e. placing ads in diverse networks), where it is widely considered appropriate to consider diversity due to compliance with equal opportunity law and practices. Far less referenced, and more varied, were diversity logics in evaluation (both for the short-list and the final hire). In the evaluation stage of the process, faculty participant’s diversity logics varied across a range from not considering diversity at all, to explicitly describing how one integrates identity in material review. This next section details how and where faculty fell along a five different perspectives, including the: (1) legality perspective, (2) equivocal perspective, (3) color-blind perspective, (4) equalizer perspective, and (5) integrative perspective.

**Legal Perspective.** While federal law mandates equal opportunity and fair hiring practices, those with the legal perspective were the most hesitant to consider diversity in evaluation due to their interpretation of state law. The predominant view is that the state law prevents racial and gender preferences in admissions, hiring, and contracting, without much consideration for how this law does not supersede federal equal opportunity requirements, which provide more flexibility in evaluation. Northfield University is located within such a state with legal restrictions in the use of racial and gender preferences in personnel selection, and several participants (deans, department chairs, and faculty) described these.

Interviewer: And then what role, if any, do you feel like those considerations of diversity play in faculty selection?

Dr. McGuire: I – I would say from talking to people there’s generally a genuine feeling
that they hope the search winds up with female candidates…I honestly feel it’s a genuine hope, and people do some work at it. People are cognizant also of the fact that it’s not legal to give someone, uh, a heads up…Uh, you know, a leg up on it. Leg up…sorry. On the other hand…then people are also cognizant of the fact that it’s, you know, kind of a close call, that, you know, you might be dealing with biased data. (Dr. McGuire, Physical Sciences)

Well, [physical sciences], in general, is pretty poorly represented amongst females. And our department, especially, has an imbalance. And so, that would be a general plus [to get a female candidate]. But...we're not supposed to let that influence our decision-making. (Dr. Gomez, Physical Sciences)

Faculty members and administrators who predominantly espoused this view were primarily fixated on the perceived legal woes that could come from considering different forms of social identity in selection. However, it also seemed that participants with this perspective were not thinking holistically about different ways to integrate social identity into search parameters, regardless of the purported legal limits. The campus has taken steps to remove doubt from search committee members’ minds about how to approach diversity in faculty searches, explained a Dean:

In terms of what we’re allowed to do and how we do it. So I think that there was a period within the university, when because of the fact that we were so litigation averse that um, we were fearful of being called out for violations. There was almost like a chilling effect where people thought, you couldn’t even mention the topic of race or ethnicity. So we can’t even have that discussion, and so it’s just like, we’ll do a search
and whatever happens, happens. Which didn’t lead to very good outcomes. Since then, the creation of [Northfield University’s Equity office], gave us license to talk about things that people thought they could no longer talk about. Run by a legal scholar who studies these types of things…and has been very clear about what the legal limits are. What can be done and what should be done. And so that’s been really helpful in terms of establishing a framework that orients people towards the possible. (Dr. Schwartz, Social Sciences)

Despite having a new office dedicated to faculty diversity remedies, and a legal expert in a powerful central administrative position to help inform hiring practices, the legality perspective still remains at Northfield University – and likely other campuses with similar state and local policies that are not clarified when it comes to meeting federal affirmative action compliance. Dr. McGuire’s comments about a “hope that the search winds up with female candidates,” also provide additional evidence that the “whatever happens, happens” perspective that Dean Schwartz spoke of still exists.

**Equivocal Perspective.** Faculty members who espoused equivocality in their perspectives were not as hesitant to consider diversity in evaluation compared to those with a legal perspective. These participants explained that there was much ambiguity and uncertainty in how to enact the institution’s diversity imperative, which stagnated their personal efforts to do so. Much of the ambiguity was related to what “counted” as diversity, which is a legitimate concern. Not only was there confusion about what constituted a racial and ethnic minority, but also there was confusion surrounding other forms of diversity and subfield specificity.

And there were people I talked to on the committee, I mean everybody thought that if somebody was an underrepresented minority, that that would be an advantage. Now, we
had a discussion when we were trying to make our final decision, and also trying to
decide who to bring in, what qualifies as an underrepresented minority, because the
boundaries of that are not clear. One person we brought in for a talk was Brazilian, a
woman from Brazil. It was never made clear to us, and nobody knew for sure whether
this would count or not. Another candidate we did make an offer to was Asian
American, and it was never quite stated whether that would be, thought to be
underrepresented. (Dr. Perry, Social Sciences)

Some faculty participants who wanted to advance racial and ethnic diversity in their
departments were legitimately confused as to what counted and what did not, separating them
from the legality perspective. However, some folks with the equivocal perspective used that
confusion as a way to short-change racial & ethnic progress in favor of other forms of identity.

Dr. Reeves: We had all kinds of diversity. What was interesting to me is a lot of it is
happening naturally, just like we don't know things about people, and then it ends up
being like a kind of diversity. That's just a nice moment. For example, we had one
candidate who was hearing-impaired. From the paper file, I didn't know that. Another
one of the candidates who we put to the final list, is similarly but different, was in a
wheelchair. Again, these are things we didn’t know about people. We had some racial
diversity, ethnic diversity. We had gender diversity. Really, it kind of just percolated up
that way. I would think that was good. (Dr. Reeves, Social Sciences)

Ability status is an important form of diversity without a doubt. Yet in this case it is clear that
ability status was not mentioned to prop up this form of identity, but to detract from the search’s
lack of racial & ethnic diversity. Moreover, only racial diversity was qualified with “some,” yet
not similarly used for gender diversity. Finally, the use of “percolated up that way” is
suggestive of the “whatever happens, happens” attitude that is common in both the legality and color-blind perspectives.

**Color-blind Perspective.** The color-blind mentality was tied with the equalizer perspective for most pervasive attitude across the faculty searches. These were participants that were largely comfortable with the diversity imperative of the university, but had troubling views on how to best approach it. The color-blind perspective in search processes was primarily achieved by treating all candidates the same, regardless of their identities. One faculty member shared her perspective on how to approach diversity within the search:

Well, I really like there's this little thing in the *diversity initiative* packet that the office here puts out. It's like a cartoon drawing, and I really like it. I think about it a lot. These kids are standing behind a fence, and there's something happening on the other side of the fence that they want to see. One kid's tall and one kid's short. The tall kid can just see over the fence and learn how to play football better or whatever. But the short kid can't because the fence is taller than him. In the next frame someone brings a box over, and so the little kid stands on the box. Now he's as tall as the tall kid and they can both see in. They both have the opportunity to learn from this professional football game. They become better football players, whatever. Then on the graphic it says, "This is equity." I love that. I think that's an excellent way to convey to people that you don't want to be disadvantaging people for things that they themselves had no agency in creating. This kid, it's not this kid's fault that he's not tall enough to see over this fence. He didn't build the fence. He didn't decide how tall he was gonna be.

That's one of the things that, for me, is really important, that every file gets the same kind of evaluation, whether that's because you have a process that you do. You start in
the same place. Dah, Dah, Dah, dah, you work it, every file, through the same way. I
don't know how other people do it. You spend, each file's gonna get a half hour, so no
matter what you're doing, you're spending a half hour with every file. But whatever that
process is for you, every file is getting it. That's a tremendous ask for 400 files. (Dr.
Reeves, Social Sciences)

This passage reveals the intricacies of color-blind attitudes toward diversity. The picture
in question is provided in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: Equality vs. Equity

In it, three children are arranged as Dr. Reeves indicated; yet a fence blocks nearly all of them
from viewing the baseball game. To adjust for this, the graphic shows in a second pane that
providing the individuals with differently sized stepping stools enables them all to see the game.
Dr. Reeves takes this to mean that all candidates should thus be treated the same: “every file
gets the same kind of evaluation…you start in the same place each file’s gonna get a half hour.”
However, a deeper inspection of the graphic reveals a significantly different interpretation, one
that differs from Dr. Reeves’s rendition. In the picture, if each individual were given the same treatment, there would still be inequality between the children: one would be able to see the game extraordinarily well, whereas others would not. It is by giving each individual customized solutions based on their immutable characteristics and circumstances that each of them can properly observe the game. Applied to search committee procedures, a color-blind attitude – or treating all candidates the same – does not achieve this desired effect. Across all departments, treating all candidates the same, and thus de-emphasizing diversity, was relatively common.

But within the search, we cast – I think – the widest net we could possibly imagine, just asking well…advertising in all kinds of different listservs, including listservs that are not necessarily related to [discipline] for example. I’m not…having said that, we didn’t get a very diverse set of applicants, I don’t think. I mean I wasn’t thinking too much about that when I was looking at the…um…the files, I wasn’t thinking about that at all actually. But my sense after looking at this whole thing was, we just didn’t get a whole lot of people of color for example applying for the job. I’m not sure if there were any.

(Dr. Tidwell, Life Sciences)

First, the primary diversity logic herein is one of recruitment, rather than evaluation – which was also common across not only faculty members but department chairs and deans too. This participant also stated that they were not “thinking too much about that when I was looking at the files, I wasn’t thinking about that at all actually,” which in this case means evaluation. Finally, despite proclaiming that the committee and department casted “the widest net we could possible imagine,” he still does not take personal onus on himself or others for the end result of lacking diversity. This falls in line with other participants’ color-blind perspectives on diversity.
in faculty searches – that diverse candidates will just “pop up” or appear in the general pool or onto the shortlist, due to chance rather than deliberate intention.

So another feature of this though was that all of these people were diverse. But I'll tell you honestly, that wasn't anybody's criterion at all. It just turned up. Like we had the seven people, let's see one of them was the theorist. There are two theorists. Maybe that's why I can't think of the third [subfield-specific candidate], is because there were only two. But anyway, so there was only one though north European male. It's just that's what turned up. And so that was kind of an interesting thing. (Dr. Frazier, Social Sciences)

**Equalizer Perspective.** The equalizer perspective was as common, yet less troublesome compared to color-blind attitudes. The equalizer approach toward diversity acknowledged that considering race and ethnicity had a place in faculty selection, yet did not approach it as progressively as the integrative perspective. Instead, race was used to “settle a balance” between like-candidates. This perspective has a lot in common with the perspective of wanting to hire based on “merit alone,” but considered race and ethnicity when the “merits” were considered equal.

Well, so you're concerned about diversity, so that was discussed. It's always discussed. I would say that all else being equal, people would prefer people to go for diversity. There wouldn't be any hesitation about it. The question that a person might have is "Are those perceptions that all else is equal fair?" So, we naturally think that we're fair. I believe that would if...I just don't have any doubt that if all else were equal, or even close to equal, there's some probably better, but I'm not completely sure. In that kind of a situation, I, at least, would definitely go for diversity and a lot of times it does come
down to, for your final decision like "I think this one's better, but I'm not completely sure that that person's better." Where does diversity fit into that? It's a tie breaker is the most you can say for it. (Dr. Frazier, Social Sciences)

According to Dr. Frazier, diversity is best incorporated in evaluation by using it as a tie-breaker between equally qualified candidates. More interestingly, he brings up a dilemma – what constitutes as equally qualified in subjective reviews? Asked differently – are credentials truly ever equal when there are so many different possible configurations of inputs and opportunity?

This was a challenging question, particularly for the social science department.

It's difficult to know what the balances are. What are you looking for? But it was, certainly with this case, this search in particular, but I think it was with all searches now, that it's very much a thing that tips the balance one way or the other in the case of a candidate. On the other hand, you have to make absolutely certain it's the thing that should make a difference between two candidates who are equally matched. That means that that's very difficult, because equally matching two candidates is very difficult. (Dr. Reynolds, Social Sciences)

Dr. Reynolds similarly admits the challenge of determining equal qualification in faculty searches. This is especially true in searches that did not employ the most up-to-date best practices in faculty searches, such as rubrics (Lee, 2014) and threshold lists (Bohnet, 2016; Moody, 2015).

Integrative Perspective. The integrative perspective was the most progressive attitude toward incorporating diversity in evaluation, yet was the least represented among faculty participants. This method considered diversity holistically, not just as a characteristic to break ties, but also as a characteristic that impacts the materials themselves, and thus their assessment
of candidates. This line of thought advanced that diversity, particularly race and ethnicity, impacts how candidates navigate academia and shapes what opportunities are afforded to them, or not. Dr. Jones provides an example of this perspective through the lens of gender equity.

I'm thinking about this one candidate in particular we looked at. Obviously how long somebody has been out, so this is somebody who had been away from, who'd been out of grad school for 12 years. Had one book, and three articles, so just on paper didn't have nearly as much material as other people who we were putting forward, who hadn't been out as long. I always think, "Well you never know. You actually can't use that as a main criteria, certainly not for female candidates." Because if somebody has a child, that's a year off the clock that is totally invisible in a CV.

Interviewer: Right.

Dr. Jones: And I think women get judged, I mean I certainly was, and I know that women get judged all the time about this.

Rather than critiquing the candidate’s publication record, or anchoring it to someone who has been in academia for equally long, she sought to expand her notion of productivity by incorporating the candidate’s gender. It is not that Dr. Jones is excusing the candidate’s publication record, or completely ignoring it; rather, she is not letting it be used as the “main criteria” in her evaluation of the candidate. Dr. McGuire, Chair of the physical sciences department, provided a similar rationale in line with the integrative perspective.

Dr. McGuire: It's interesting, you know, you're not really allowed to, on the short list, explicitly say, "Oh. Let's add eight people. Let me bring in one, uh, person from a particular under represented group." It's actually not even legal to do that. But, now you start thinking about, well, maybe the letters for these…you know, 'cause you always get
these letters [for the candidates]. Maybe the letters for this person have been down
graded because someone expects less of them.

Interviewer Hmm. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. McGuire: And so with that understanding we have, at least in the committees I've
been in, we've been able to maybe increase the underrepresented fraction in the short list
pool. That if you hadn't thought about, that you would have. That's sort of up to the
individual members of the committee. I wouldn't say that's a departmental policy. I think
also the general feeling is that you shouldn't even give the smallest 1% edge based on
any demographic, uh, properties. But, then like I said, there's, you know, you might be
getting some bias from the previous inputs.

It initially appears that Dr. McGuire is wrestling with two contrasting perspectives – the
legalistic and integrative approaches, yet a deeper investigation shows that he uses the
integrative approach to counteract the perceived legal challenges of considering diversity. He
explains that although it is unwise to simply add a person from an underrepresented group, you
have to consider their materials holistically. It may be the case that the “letters for this person
have been down-graded because someone expects less of them.” He again provides the common
notion that you should not give preference based on any demographic characteristics, but then
counteracts that again with the fact that any “previous inputs” – letters, other written materials,
opportunities, etc. – may include bias as well. This perspective does not inflate candidates of
color’s materials unfairly, but takes into account the inequitable opportunity structures inherent
in training and pathways to the professoriate.
Two Slots for Diversity – Diverse Candidates as Perennially Second Best

Another way that race interacted with search committee members’ evaluation of candidates was through codified practices that impacted selection procedures. Several deans across Northfield University provide search committees with additional resources and FTEs to incentivize diversity hires.

I was gonna say on the positive side, uh, we have been given the opportunity to do searches that, you know, when we find multiple candidates who are great, we can sometimes make a little bit more offers than we started with. [Northfield University upper-level administrators] have been helpful in giving us that kind of flexibility. I think the messaging has been fairly consistent from the top levels, and certainly from the divisions as well, we are looking for maximum consideration of candidates at all levels.

So there's that. (Dr. Howard, Humanities)

The practice alone is not nefarious – it enables faculty to make more than one offer to candidates, strengthening their department. Many search committees have used it to offer candidates of color an offer when they perceived it would not be possible otherwise. Yet the primary issue herein is that the policy also (1) provides additional counterevidence on screening for fit in evaluation, (2) adds strength to other frameworks to explain candidate evaluation such as risk aversion, and (3) demonstrates that faculty do in fact think about race in evaluation, despite efforts to downplay and de-emphasize race and/or gender.

It is generally understood among faculty and department chairs that the practice is intended to increase racial and ethnic diversity in the department. Several faculty share:

Well we have a multi-field search, so we're looking in [social science subfields], and it's kind of, we're still hoping to persuade the Dean to let us make at least two offers after
we have good candidates. And in particular, I at least believe that the Dean is more likely to allow that if one or both of those candidates are non-white. So um, you know, that's an incentive. (Dr. Gibson, Social Sciences)

On underrepresented minorities, we have a fairly explicit incentive...no it's not that explicit I guess, but it's sort of the understanding is, from past experience that if a candidate is, who we think, who we really want, who we think is really strong is from an underrepresented group, we might be able to make a second offer. (Dr. Perry, Social Sciences)

Dr. Cho: Sometimes, of course, we try to go for two. We don't know if the Dean's gonna agree to it or not, but sometimes we'll go for two.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little bit about that? Like what are the factors that could contribute to that being a possibility?

Dr. Cho: Well, diversity actually is one of them, it could be. Well, yeah. We always want to hire more, the [physical sciences] group always want to hire more. (Dr. Cho, Physical Sciences)

Indeed, the practice of offering two candidates has been used to diversify the final hire, both previously and in current searches. Dr. Frazier shares at length a personal story of how the practice resulted in a diverse hire.

I started talking again, my use of the use of the term “game the Dean.” So I wanted to make the point that whatever is going on, diversity or just whatever, the Dean is giving out stuff – committees game him. It’s gonna be a part of it. But it’s gonna be a case
where gaming the Dean worked out to the benefit of diversity. This was not a committee I was on...20 years ago probably. Um, so we had finished the work of the committee. We had done everything...we made a number of offers. As many as the Dean was gonna let us make. But there was one other guy who everybody, well everybody thought was really smart, and had given a talk that impressed people. And he was in a diversity category. And he didn’t...we didn’t make an offer to him because we had other people we thought were better. But I said, I think I only said it to myself but I said it very clearly to myself – “I bet the Dean would go for this diversity guy and I bet he’s good enough. I would like to hire him. I’m gonna put this vita on the Dean’s desk” And the committee said “If you want, because we don’t have any more slots”.

So they voted it, and it went through. Totally gaming the Dean.

Well it was an omnibus committee like I was saying and we had made some number of offers, but this guy wasn’t among them. But he wasn’t...some people had liked him, I had liked him, and nobody had really not liked him, but they had just made their quality judgments and they just didn’t think that um, he just wasn’t in the top set, even though we had multiple offers we were making. But I thought, y’know, if after our slots were gone I thought the Dean would give us another for him and he did. And so that was gaming the Dean. And so sometimes, that one worked out. That was an interesting case. And I don’t believe I’ve said to anybody what I said to you, it occurred to me that this would go through if I got the committee to put it on his desk. It was not explicit and it was not openly discussed, and I did like the guy. I thought he was good, I thought we should hire him. He was among, y’know, as you’ve heard me say I think there’s a lot of people we should hire.
This faculty participant recounts a story of a previous search where the practice of offering an additional candidate aided in the hire of a candidate of color. However, it also illustrates the elusive nature of fit in faculty selection. According to Dr. Frazier, the candidate of color was highly qualified: “everybody, well everybody thought [he] was really smart, and had given a talk that impressed people.” If the candidate was so highly qualified, and diversity truly was a goal of the department and/or university, than it stands to reason that the candidate could have been offered the position without “gaming the Dean.” Moreover, Dr. Frazier imparts that the committee made “multiple offers,” meaning that there were even several opportunities to include this candidate among them. Yet the candidate, like presumably many candidates of color, was artificially and arbitrarily slotted as second best in order for the committee to maximize their perception of prestige while still making an offer to a diverse candidate. If true fit did prevail, then the candidate may have been offered the position without the aid of the practice – especially in light . Rather, this illustrates how the selection of candidates is about more than simply the candidate, but the surrounding evaluative frameworks and departmental politics surrounding the hire. In a current search, Dr. Tidwell shows that this is still used in practice.

Turns out though that this one guy, the guy that we thought was really great but not the right fit for the job, he studies anti-gay bias. And so that's like, well, he's a real expert and he's done a lot of studies, so that would be really good for [Northfield University’s Equity initiatives]. You just can't go wrong with that way of thinking.

So we kind of said that to the Chair and the Dean, please take a look at this guy if you think you might need something, but I don't know. The others, their work is really basic science and so they don't really have that connection to the [equity initiative] that
[Northfield University] has, like this other guy does. This guy would be just like perfect for that.

So we presented that as a possibility to the Chair, and that didn't work out. So he's not going to get an offer.

Similar to Dr. Frazier, Dr. Tidwell explains that a particular candidate was “really great,” yet not the “right fit” for the job. Even though the candidate was white, he was the only candidate doing research on a marginalized population and satisfied the institution’s diversity interests. Yet despite his work having a connection to the university’s diversity initiatives (which would have demonstrated an attention to true fit), he was still not chosen over two other candidates. Nevertheless, Dr. Tidwell still tried to use the practice to offer the candidate a position, yet it did not get approval from the Department Chair. In this example, too, engaged scholarship was relegated to a secondary position despite favorable reviews.

This practice of offering up additional candidates for potential faculty lines not only lends credence to the myth of fit, but it provides evidence that faculty consider race and ethnicity in selection despite claims of race-neutral objectivity.

Dr. Reynolds: I think it's a question of wringing these [faculty] lines out and saying well could we have [another]...because obviously the hope was always there's one line, but the hope is in fact we'll get two. Get two people so good the Dean will say “okay,” but what if the Dean is sympathetic to...my impression was if we had come up with a sort of Rollian [scholar] the Dean would not have considered that.

Interviewer: Come up with what?

Dr. Reynolds: Come up with someone who had studied John Rolls, he would not have accepted that. I can't really answer that question, I suspect there is a debate between the
Dean and the Chair. She's the one who has to negotiate as to what line we are going to be on.

Like many faculty, Dr. Reynolds is aware of the practice of putting forward more than one candidate that could potentially secure an additional hire. What differentiates this quote though is not only his recognition of diversity, but recognizing the *boundaries* of the practice as well. He states that Dean may not be sympathetic if “we had come up with someone who had studied John Rolls.” Imbedded in this statement is an assumption that someone who studies John Rolls would likely not meet diversity expectations set by the administration, and thus not qualify for the target of opportunity slot. This provides further evidence that studying faculty search committees and hiring outcomes requires an in-depth understanding of campus-wide as well as departmental policies, practices, and power, rather than isolated selection characteristics or racial biases.

**Fit and Race Summary – If not fit, then what else?**

This chapter has provided evidence that screening for fit in faculty search committees is widely non-existent, despite popular anecdotal beliefs. Whereas the familiar phrase is that a specific candidate did not “fit” within the department, results demonstrate the opposite: that fit indicators were remarkably inclusive, hardly disqualifying anybody. Far more exclusionary and disqualifying were the individual preferences that faculty members wielded, and the power and authority vested in them to act as individual arbiters of quality. These preferences regarding acceptable credentials were also interlaced with assumptions, attitudes, and beliefs on the nature of race and ethnicity within candidate evaluation. First, results indicate that the idiosyncratic parameters used to judge quality are inherently raced, such as research agendas of candidates of color being considered too narrow, or institutional reputation used to infer quality. More
directly, faculty members range in their individual attitudes of considering race and ethnicity as a selection characteristic in and of itself, with the majority espousing perspectives that do not advance progressive racial equity. Despite claims of meritocracy and color-blindness, the structural example lends support to the interlocking nature of diversity dimensions and candidate preferences.

Perhaps the larger questions are: so what if fit is a façade? And doesn’t everyone, including faculty, have preferences? Indeed, a number of factors shape faculty members’ preferences and expectations related to academic careers, such as general education over the lifetime, graduate training, networks, and on-the-job socialization. It is entirely conceivable that faculty employ these preferences and expectations in faculty selection because they “may use themselves as an individualized benchmark to judge P-O fit” (Kristof-Brown, 2000, p. 663). However the issue herein is not that faculty members have base preferences. The primary issue is that unrefined preferences, lack of training, and unbridled discretion and autonomy has contributed to a professoriate that is approximately three-fourths white and predominantly male (despite women being more represented at every other stage of formal education). The next chapter turns to how these preferences and assessments are facilitated through power, leading to hiring decisions.
CHAPTER FIVE: POWER IN SELECTION

Examining faculty members’ evaluative frameworks is an important, yet insufficient means to understand why some candidates are hired and others are not. In other words, the review and evaluation of candidate’s materials is bounded by both internal and external power dynamics. Inside the search committee, faculty members’ preferences are either strengthened or weakened by their ability to navigate the collegial climate and leverage different sources of power. External to committees, characteristics of the department, division, and institution impact selection decisions, such as departmental colleagues and subdivisions, dean preferences and vision, and university-wide policies and procedures.

This chapter explores how these layered systems of power impact candidate evaluation and selection decisions. First, I articulate how search committee members exerted influence inside the committee through their sources and measures of power. Then, I turn to how factors outside of the committee – departmental and institutional characteristics – created the conditions for power, and how non-committee members (i.e. departmental colleagues, department chairs, deans, and upper-administrators) applied differing forms of influence on search processes and results than those exhibited inside the committee. I also examine how these displays of power intersected with race and selection stage throughout, addressing the third and fourth research questions. Thus, the aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how the selection of candidates is as much, if not more, about the committee, department, and larger institution than about the candidates themselves.

**Internal Committee Power**

The most common descriptor of intra-committee deliberations across disciplines was “collegial,” defining both the nature of discussions and the tactics used to resolve disputes.
When disagreements emerged, they were primarily reconciled through consensus building, turn taking, and, at times, capitulation. These tactics were most effective in the formation of the short-list, because there were more slots to make decisions and thus less perceived pressure on decision-making. When collegial tactics failed to settle differences, participants leveraged legitimacy and expertise as more traditional forms of power. These sources of power were especially prevalent during later stages in the search, when narrowing down to a handful of presumably more qualified applicants required more difficult and contentious decisions. First, I review the climate of collegiality that characterized the majority of intra-committee deliberations. Then I detail how expert and legitimate sources of power were used in decision-making, and conclude by examining how these demonstrations of power differed by selection stage.

**Collegiality, Capitulation, and Consensus**

Across the four search committees, disputes between faculty participants were primarily resolved using collegial tactics. Particularly during the formation of the short-list, faculty took turns in deciding whom to bring to campus because they believed their preferences could reasonably be accommodated while accounting for the preferences of other faculty members. Participants took great care not to ruffle feathers during the process, since they would have to collectively welcome the new hire into a hospitable department. In this sense, search committee activities were the standard embodiment of the consensus culture that characterizes faculty decision-making processes, influencing candidate’s careers.

But nevertheless, there are interests at stake, clearly. And I think that the way it's been handled, and the way the chair of the committee has handled it, and the way everybody else has behaved toward each other, from my perspective, has been
handled in an extremely courteous, and efficient, and effective manner. (Dr. Reynolds, Social Sciences)

Different people on the committee have their own preferences for what areas they think are the most exciting. And so, what I'm saying is that taking that into account, given that they see things different from me, that the final list, I think, reflects everybody's point of view and preferences. I respect my colleague's opinions, even though I think, somehow, that, "Oh, I think these people would be the best," I realize that I may not...I can have my own biases. And so, the fact that other people disagree, then I think, "Okay. Maybe they have a point." So, all this to say, I think the people we arrived at is reasonable, even though if it was just myself in a room, I would probably come up with a different list. (Dr. Gomez, Physical Sciences)

Dr. Reynolds describes the collegial climate that characterized all four searches, using words such as “behaved, courteous, and efficient.” This study found little evidence of disagreeable tactics or rancorous behaviors, which may be due to how department chairs select search committee members for service. Though collegiality did not eliminate the presence of differing preferences or interests, which both Dr. Reynolds and Dr. Gomez raise. Chapter four demonstrated that faculty members predominantly use their own individual preferences to make selection decisions, with minimal to moderate consideration of organizational characteristics or values. Integrating the latter in the search procedures would likely yield more stable selection, yet in lieu of that stability, since “different people on the committee have their own preferences for what areas they think are the most exciting.” He goes on to admit that if it were just himself he would likely create a different short-list, yet because of the respect he has for colleagues,
seemed very satisfied that the committee’s consensus candidates reflected “everybody’s point of view and preferences.”

The literature states that power can be measured between social actors through their determinants and consequences, such as the differences in their base preferences and ultimate selection (Emerson, 1962; Pfeffer, 1981). If a social actor has a significant amount of their preferences reflected in the pooled-decision, they are said to have power. For example, Dr. Jones reflected on the candidates that made it onto the long-short list, stating: “well if you just look at the numbers, if you just think about it as who gave one’s [the highest rating bestowed onto a candidate], who’s number one’s were the ones who went through, they were mostly mine, but that’s also because I gave more ones than anybody else.” Although she humbly attributed this to her simply being more lenient than her colleagues, she was also the original architect of the position’s focus and job ad, which likely granted her expertise and augmented her influence, despite being the least senior general member on the committee. A single professor’s preferences being overrepresented in developing the short-list occurred in a minority of cases – the collegial climate predominantly lead to short-lists that contained balanced representation of all committee members’ preferences.

One interpretation is that participants lacked power in the short-list stage, because no single faculty members’ preferences dominated the short-list. For instance, Dr. Williams stated, “There might be someone for whom one person thought really highly and the other four didn’t as much. And so, we would discuss them, …there was usually capitulation.” The use of capitulation is noteworthy, because it suggests surrender or ceasing action. Yet suggesting that participants lacked or relinquished power would be an incomplete assessment. The data support a different finding: that collegiality was more important than pushing preferences for several
practical reasons. First, ensuring a collective sense of fairness maintained order and ensured sound working relationships. Moreover, majority rule without consensus building would result in a list that would alienate and dissatisfy certain committee members, and ultimately jeopardize the process.

In this sense, collegiality was its own form of power, and was invoked to galvanize collective action and ensure fairness in a real-life setting. Procedures were so collegial that some more senior participants took it upon themselves to ensure that younger faculty had even more of their preferences reflected in the short-list, to ensure the continued relevance and vibrancy of their department.

The powers for this kind of thing [faculty searches] are with the junior people. The senior people are on the committee, but the senior people come back and say "Oh [less senior colleague] didn't like this one at all, so it's out." He's a junior guy and [another junior colleague] is 20 years younger than me…so that was one thing, I wasn't going to give into fighting, I wasn't in a mood to fight. There was some things I would fight about but mostly I wouldn't be too inclined to fight and I thought that there were a large number of really good candidates. (Dr. Frazier, Social Sciences)

Well, first of all, it's a relatively small search committee - it's about five. I really think that the whole group - and I've encouraged the whole group to sort of weigh in - and there are many different opinions on what to do. We just hired an assistant professor, and I think his opinion should be very important. He knows a lot of stuff in the field, he knows people, he sort of knows things. And he knows the hot areas. I mean, he has a feeling for the hot areas, that's a thing. The young people just sort of gravitate towards...
the promising areas. And so I think his opinion's gonna be very important. So we're consulting...he's not on the search committee. He shouldn't be, I mean, we're spending time and stuff. But I think we could weed it down well enough. Although, we did get his comments on the short list. We did get him to look at some files and things. (Dr. Cho, Physical Sciences)

Both Dr. Frazier and Dr. Cho describe syphoning power to younger professors in different ways. Dr. Frazier, who has been in the department for over three decades, felt it was important to let younger colleagues on the committee make decisions. This is emphasized by his reflection on not being “in a mood to fight.” He felt similarly to Dr. Cho, who also directed more deference to younger colleagues because they “gravitate towards the promising areas.” In her case, the younger colleague was not a committee member, but was still in the department. In order to incorporate his feedback before the short-list was even formed, they solicited early comments. Both examples illustrate how collegiality was a form of power in and of itself that shaped behavior during faculty selection.

Expert and Legitimate Power

Although collegiality and capitulation were the primary means of group decision-making, there were instances in which this could not resolve differences. When differences could not be settled through turn taking, more traditional forms of power emerged. The primary sources of power used to reconcile difference preferences were expert and legitimate power. The other sources of power – reward, referent, and coercive – were not appropriate for internal deliberations: faculty worked hard to maintain an image of parity, so reverence was not sought or required, nor were they in positions to reward or punish their colleagues. Thus, expert and legitimate forms of power were far more commonplace to resolve differences in opinion.
Expert power was primarily invoked to resolve differences in faculty members’ understanding of candidate materials throughout stages of selection. Especially when evaluating the merits of research, more power was given to faculty members who had a deeper understanding of the research compared to less familiar participants. Faculty used their insider knowledge and understanding of highly specialized subfields to bolster their preferences. This is illustrated in the case of Life Sciences:

So those were the two that we didn't recommend for hire, but then the other two we just couldn't decide between. So I had a favorite as it were. I admire all four people, as I said, but I had one that I thought was my top choice. But then one of the other committee members, who's in the [health subfield] area, I have to admit, she read her work a lot more thoroughly than I did. And she knows how to read that kind of work. A lot of it is really foreign to me because they're talking about biochemical things that I just don't really know about...and all these neuro mechanisms.

So a lot of that was over my head, but the other search committee member, like I said, and she said this person's work is absolutely fabulous and here's why it's just right for this position. So she argued, the search committee member who's in the [health subfield] area made a very strenuous and strong argument in favor of one of the candidates. I thought her work was boring. That's why I didn't like her very much. But that's not a really valid criticism, especially in the face of somebody who can tell you why it's important. (Dr. Tidwell, Life Sciences)

The life sciences search committee narrowed their selection from four job talk candidates down to two. Here, Dr. Tidwell states his preference for one candidate over another; and had he been the foremost expert on the committee or derived some other sort of influence, his opinion may
swayed the decision-making. However, he deferred to another committee member that could
read the work more thoroughly than he could, and “made a very strenuous and strong argument
in favor” of the other candidate. This may have made the difference, but no one lost their
preferred candidate since, in this search, both candidates were brought to a departmental vote
and were offered positions. Thus, the power to allocate resources and flexibility offered by other
levels of approval (i.e. the two-slot option) made it easier to defer to expertise.

Expertise also made the difference in the humanities search as well. Several faculty
members were skeptical of the lead candidate’s authenticity, yet the search committee member
who did not share these reservations was still willing to defer power based on the perceived
expertise differential between herself and the chief complainant. She shared that she was
“willing to defer to her, [because] it is much closer to her field,” and that she may have
“misread” the work. Had she had more expert power, she may have been able to mount a
stronger defense as to why she believed the candidate was deserving of the position to the chief
complainant and departmental faculty.

Expert power was not only sought amongst committee members, but inside the greater
department as well. Because the social science committee was an omnibus committee
comprised of faculty from different subfields, there were greater opportunities for knowledge
gaps when reviewing candidate materials. For these reasons the department tended “to have a
pretty significant amount of subfield committee deference,” according to Dr. Reeves. If there
were debates regarding a candidate in an unfamiliar subfield, then the committee would solicit
input from faculty outside of the committee in that specific subfield. The level of deference and
power given to these colleagues is clear when she explains that “those of us who can’t evaluate
the work aren’t gonna push back, [because] we bring our expertise to the point that we can, we
really do respect the people whose expertise is coming in at that level.” Dr. Perry shared a similar sentiment related to the expertise of the greater department.

I can't remember precisely, but we roughly after a couple of conversations we sort of agreed on people toward the top of the list and then had disagreements about people toward the bottom of the list. And then we kind of tried to figure out ways we would resolve those disagreements. Like, oh, well I'll take another look and I didn't really look at this thing that they had done or let's ask so and so, and who knows a lot about this and see what they think of this person. So we try to kind of winnow it down and compromise a little bit and in the end of the day, I think we felt reasonably good about the people that we wanted to put forward. (*Dr. Perry, Social Sciences*)

To a lesser extent, legitimate power was invoked within search committee deliberations. This refers to the legitimacy of influencer’s claims or standing; if the target deems the influencer as legitimate then they are more likely to be persuaded (French & Raven, 1959). Yet because collegiality was the primary form of power and faculty made deliberate attempts to maintain an even playing field, this was seldom effective. At times the use of legitimate power was justified for reasons other than expertise. For example, search committee chairs exerted legitimate influence through their positional authority in different ways. Dr. Williams, the Chair of the life sciences search ensured that his committee followed the Equity office’s standards by using “a rubric [that] articulated the 10 criteria that we would be using.” In the humanities search, Dr. Hughes not only had expert power due to her research, but also benefited from legitimate power she possessed as the search Chair. For these reasons, Dr. Jones shared that it was even more difficult to make a case for the candidate that Dr. Hughes had reservations about.
Pressure and Power: Selection Stage Differences

Collegiality and forms of power varied by selection stage. In general, expert and legitimate power was magnified later in the search as more difficult decisions had to be made and participants sought to extend their preferences into the final hire. Throughout the searches, faculty described greater feelings of “pressure” to “get it right,” which amplified forms of power. In the words of Dr. Kelly, “if you hire mediocre faculty, the future is bleak, but if you hire great faculty, the future is bright.” Dr. Reeves also commented on the pressure on search committees to make impactful hiring decisions for the department.

But that's how everybody felt. There was a lot of hand wringing on these committees about the way we used to talk about it is, "Are you gonna bark with the big dogs?"

Compete for those best candidates at the top of the pool, or go for the people you think you can get? Like I said, we're down people [in terms of workload in the department]. These searches take a year. We can't have four years in a row where we have a search that doesn't result in a hire, or we're gonna be 10 people down, and we're gonna fall out of the top 10. We're not gonna be a thriving department anymore. If we fall out of the top 10, top faculty members here are gonna leave. They're gonna be picked off like that.

This is just gonna become a completely different department. Right? (Dr. Reeves, Social Sciences)

Dr. Reeves reflected how making good decisions and recruitability breeds pressure, which in-turn exacerbates power. The perceived pressure to secure hires seemed so great that she appeared to spiral into a worst-case scenario of a declining department and concerns about a failed search. Thus, it makes sense that power intensified preferences the most in the second stage of selection as opposed to the first, because the search went from selecting multiple
qualified candidates to selecting a single qualified candidate, and faculty members had different opinions about who was the most qualified and likely to accept the offer. Several other examples illustrate this point: in the Life Sciences expert power in the second stage helped propel a candidate one participant through was “boring” into receiving an offer as well as another candidate, while both expert and legitimate power in the Humanities contributed to a failed search instead of a successful hire. These forms of power were not displayed as much in the first stage of selection because there were more slots to invite candidates to deliver job talks, and generally greater hopes of securing a candidate.

The pressure participants perceived regarding the search meant that they not only relied on the input of their committee colleagues, but also leveraged the expertise and legitimacy of departmental colleagues. Dr. Kelly states it best: “there’s no faster way to annoy your colleagues than to exclude them from a decision. At least give them a chance for input.” As previously demonstrated in the example of Social Science soliciting departmental expertise and input, this made a significant difference. Yet departmental power was not only limited to the departmental vote of the faculty, but in other stages as well. Dr. Kelly continues by detailing the importance of departmental input:

Interviewer: Are there opportunities for the department to provide input on the candidates that are put on the shortlist?

Dr. Kelly: Yes. There’s a committee, the appointments committee, which looks at that. Basically we make a presentation. I didn’t do that, my colleague did that. And turns out that, by the way, is very very important.

Interviewer: When does that happen in the search?
Dr. Kelly: Well that happened earlier and it’s gonna happen again. We’re gonna present at some point. We’re gonna present again, but it’s very important that there be feedback, but for a reason that’s not maybe so obvious, sometimes there’s some misunderstanding that happens in searches, and I’ve seen this. It’s pretty spectacular. So the committee spends enormous effort making a decision, and then the decision is made and it goes forward, and then the thing explodes. It’s basically the department [faculty] votes no, and the reason is because the committee made a mistake, didn’t follow instructions. The system has to be designed to catch mistakes, whatever the mistake, so there’s some feedback.

In this physical sciences department, expert power was solicited from the department at multiple times, not just during candidate job talks or the final departmental vote. This is likely because the search in this physical science department was characterized by a high degree of research specialization, as was demonstrated in chapter four. Thus, seeking expert opinions earlier in the search as opposed to later reduced the chances of the committee making “mistakes.” Dr. Reeves shared a similar example in the social sciences:

Interviewer: So there’s departmental input for the candidates?

Dr. Reeves: Before we even got to the pool. I’m still talking about how we get to the 11 [long-short list candidates]. Okay. The committee is trying to cull down from 400 to some smaller number to 11 to seven. In the process of reducing down to the seven people we invite out, we have our colleagues reading the work and then that's all really important. Because it doesn't make any sense to bring someone out who the other four people in [departmental concentration] who aren't on this committee say, "This work has 18 flaws in it, and we can't put this person in front of a graduate student." Maybe the
members of the committee don't agree with that...they have to make some peace there, because that candidate's not getting hired if the people in the field don't want them. So, yeah. We solicit the feedback from the department before we issue the invitations [to visit campus].

Similar to Dr. Kelly, Dr. Reeves sought to quell potential opposition to the candidates later in the search by creating feedback channels earlier in the process for those outside the committee. Since the expert power that departmental colleagues have can either strengthen or derail a search committee’s progress, she felt it important to solicit feedback before candidates were even invited onto campus. It is preemptive tactic to ensure consensus is reached before the larger faculty vote.

**Internal Power Summary**

The collegial climate shaped both the nature of discussions and tactics employed within search committee activities. But collegiality did not preclude the presence of more traditional power tactics; faculty participants leveraged their expertise and, at times, legitimacy in order to exercise more influence on selection decisions. This was especially true of later stages of selection when slots narrowed and pressure increased. As originally hypothesized, power intercepted individual preferences and made palpable differences in candidate selection. One candidate who was nearly offered the position was not, resulting in a failed search, due to expert and legitimate power in the humanities. In the life sciences, a candidate who may have otherwise not received an offer did due to the expertise of a faculty member that championed her file. Although only one of these cases had race and ethnicity as the focus, I now turn to external power dynamics, which had significant implications for diversity and equity.
External Committee Power

The remainder of this chapter details how participants outside of the search committee (i.e. departmental colleagues, department chairs, deans, and upper-level administrators) influenced search committee activity and shaped hiring outcomes. The inclusion of these groups in a study of search committees served a dual purpose: ascertaining the necessary context required for multiple case study analysis; and these participants provided in-depth insight on the larger department, college division, and institutional level dynamics that impact hiring. This study found considerable evidence that key departmental and institutional features - such as departmental histories and practices, and institutional interventions - were not just merely the surrounding context, but had much to do with who was hired and who was not.

First, I explore how faculty, department chairs, and deans generated hiring priorities. This demonstrates how departmental histories and subdivisions affect the search before it even begins, ultimately displaying the department’s directions, priorities, and values. The integration with race demonstrates how narrowly determined hiring priorities can artificially constrain the search, and limit opportunities for diversity and innovation. Then, I examine how department chairs and deans specifically exert reward and coercive power before, during, and after the search through their use of institutional and personal strategies. This section also examines the extent to which these interventions are enacted through incentives and rules or sanctions to stay within fair practices to advance racial equity, which vary. I conclude by examining leaders’ theories of change, which undergirds the nature and expediency of their interventions, and examine how color-blind theories of change undermine progress by de-emphasizing racial identity.
Determining Departmental Hiring Priorities

How departments generate their hiring priorities is a significant aspect of faculty hiring. In many ways, creating hiring priorities are the department’s first opportunity to display their priorities and values: unique departmental characteristics, histories, and sagas shape who reviews the files, what types of files are reviewed, and when. This creates the conditions for power because it affects who even has the chance to be hired, and opportunities (or lack thereof) for diversity. Yet this important fixture is virtually non-existent in the search committee literature, perhaps for some reasons. It may be because popular caricatures of search committees are of faculty members bickering within the committee, directing scholarly attention toward internal dynamics over any preceding ones. Or perhaps some assume that hiring priorities are a static fixture of the department: whichever area will be the focus, and research should concentrate on the actual activities that search committees conduct. A review of search committee guidebooks (e.g. Moody, 2015; Turner, 2002) and empirical articles (e.g. Gasman et al., 2011; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017) support this, with no piece discussing hiring priorities. Results of this study provides contrary evidence, indicating significant variability in departmental hiring priorities and the factors that impact them – signaling opportunities to innovate and advance equity and diversity in faculty searches.

Departmental hiring priorities are iterative processes that involve the dean, department chair, and faculty. In most departments, faculty members meet in the spring to decide on the department’s hiring focus for the next year(s). Once faculty vote, the priorities are sent to administration, where they decide if the department is authorized to search or not. But there are numerous practical and theoretical considerations that impact search eligibility; Dean Howard explains,
I work with the faculty of individual departments to determine what the priorities are academically within the department, and that typically includes discussions both of the fields that we regard as most important…the areas that we regard as most important in research within a discipline, and the most promising people coming out, right. Who are the leaders in the field? Who can we find out there in the market to bring to UCLA? There's quite a lot of attention on my part to getting departments to think ahead in this very slow process of departmental change.

Dean Howard highlights some important, reflexive questions on hiring priorities: what are the most important areas of research within the department, where are the promising people coming out of, and who are the leaders in the field? Departments considered these questions alongside practical factors when devising searches. Three common features across the four departments most impacted their hiring priorities: (1) departmental subdivisions, (2) rankings, and (3) resources. I first review these factors in how they impact who can even be hired. I then turn to a more critical investigation of how race intersects with hiring priorities. These results further highlight the importance of hiring priorities, but show how they are a major untapped area of potential for advancing faculty diversity.

**Primary impacts on hiring priorities: Subdivisions.** The department’s structure of research subdivisions was the most influential factor on how hiring priorities were generated. In general, subdivisions affected whose “turn” it was to hire. Within some departments, the subdivision lines were extraordinarily rigid, increasing the pressure to secure a search for fear of not getting another chance in the foreseeable future. In other departments, the lines were more fluid, with departments creating searches within general domains and categories that
transcended departmental subdivisions. Dr. Gibson provided an example from her social science
department, which had the most stringent subdivisions within the study.

We've been able to be competitive with packages for new hires. That hasn't been a
problem. The problem is FTE…that we're not allowed to hire. So this year and last year,
we got one FTE. And that makes it difficult. I mean it just, you're not going to have a
very rapid turnover in the diversity of the department when you can't hire that many
people. And also it's, um…it increases the competition among the fields for who to hire
and makes people, you know, it's a lot easier to put together some kind of compromise
or deal with multiple factions in the department if you have at least two jobs to play
around with.

Dr. Gibson describes the difficulty in hiring - and hiring for diversity - when the department
only receives one FTE. Without being prompted, she also turned to the difficulty of “the
competition among the fields for who to hire.” The language she used is very suggestive of
intradepartmental competition: “compromise or deal with multiple factions in the department.”
In her mind the pressure is relaxed when there are at least two positions to fill. In departments
with strong subdivisions, pressure is exacerbated based on departmental history.

They…we…we put a lot of resources into uh, hiring in the [Diversity-based] field. Two
years ago we hired two senior people. Uh, one of them was amazingly expensive. And
um, so we, we have um, we have, well created, and now, beefed up that field, so that it's
maybe the best one of the - small number of best at any rate for that field in the country.
It's attracting very high quality graduate students…Um, but there's a feeling among the
other fields that [Diversity-based subfield] got two senior people and they haven't gotten
any hires in a long time. And if they're getting anything it'll be junior. So there's, you
know, people get competitive, and upset when they feel like they're not getting the fresh air. (Dr. Gibson, Social Sciences)

In this case, a subfield hired two senior professors that were very expensive. However, Dr. Gibson predicts that because of this, other subfields who “haven’t gotten any hires in a long time” will “get competitive and upset when they feel like they’re not getting the fresh air.”

Similar themes of competition were detected in the physical sciences, another department with rigid research concentrations.

    Basically, people take turns, if you wish. It is never a committee of wise men who then figure out...wise people, I should say. Who then figure out in some way, "This is the right direction and then we're gonna do that direction, and this is the order." There might be committees that make believe they're committees of wise people who know exactly what the right thing to do is.

    That's not exactly how it goes. It's basically people take turns. First it's this group, then it's that group. So in fact...well, it's not in some way that you might think it should be done. It's actually very hard to do that way, by the way, because to have people that wise to understand all the different fields and what exactly you should be doing everywhere, that's pretty hard.

    Normally the department is full of humans and people, they like to clone themselves. "There's one of me, I want two of me." So then that's the going around in turn. There's my turn, your turn. We kind of rotate. So that's done in kind of a...not a grand scheme of figuring out how to get ahead. And that's the general default, because people want to keep peace. (Dr. Kelly, Physical Sciences)
As observed in chapter four, subdivisions and research areas were used as a filter to inform hiring decisions – that in many ways can be akin to a cloning bias. Yet departmental hiring priorities may be the first forms of cloning bias before evaluation biases even emerge: by narrowly recreating positions rather than expanding the department into newer areas. I have coined this as subdivision conservatism, or the wariness to expand the department in different directions due to pressure caused by rigid subdivisional program areas and resources. When subdivisions largely govern who receives FTEs and who does not, faculty members choose to use those resources in safer, more assured ways that will result in purportedly more predictable hires.

The humanities and life science departments were less organized by subdivisions, and had more of an emphasis on overall departmental hires. The humanities department, for example fit squarely between life sciences (the least rigid) and social sciences (the most rigid) in terms of managing the politics of fields of study. Subdivisions were still important for hiring and other faculty activities, but the department was still trying to create positions in domain areas rather than “taking turns” among program areas.

We're not like Anthro, which has physical and cultural, linguistic, I don't know their [concentrations]. [Humanities], mostly the traditional division has been British and American, but that has all been broken down in recent years, see? Really, post colonial was the thing that...ethnic used to be in the American side, and then it was British, which was strictly British, and then post-colonial was considered commonwealth. It was hanging out in limbo. And it was that way when a bunch of...[another faculty member] and I, we were hired here to do post-colonial in [humanities] and we felt like we were in limbo. (Dr. Hughes, Humanities)
Dr. Hughes explains that her department is not like the Anthropology department with more strict subdivisions. The most “traditional division has been British and American” studies which has also been broken down. Yet according to the Dr. Graham, the Department Chair, there are still some factions, making them somewhat resemble the social science department. He explained that “each year it’s very uncertain whether the department will receive approval for a faculty search, or how many, and then in what areas. And that puts a certain amount of stress and strain on what could be called factions: different cohorts (faculty groups based on fields of study) in the department who have very different hierarchies.” Like the social science department, there is still a certain amount of strain on these departmental divisions. This was the least prevalent in the life sciences, where the use of a strategic plan to manage hiring priorities was also the strongest and tied the department together.

We hired a couple of people basically using that plan as the template, and then we revised the plan in 2017. And so, this biopsychosocial science of health position came out of that second revision of the strategic planning process. And then those positions were kind of scattered across five years. "We'll do these three this year, those three maybe the next year depending on how things go, and these three, or whatever, the next year after that." In terms of the decision to do this one, I can't remember. I wasn't involved in the decision-making about putting this position as the 2018/2019 one, but that was made at the level of the committee, which represented every area, and then the faculty voted on that. (Dr. Williams, Life Sciences)

And so there's been a number of attempts to really kind of formulate a vision for the department and so the strategic plan is really the result of that. And so there are hiring
priorities that are laid out. They're really quite clear. And biopsychosocial aspects of health was one of them that's kind of come up this year. Others are human learning and memory, and there's a psycholinguistic search that kind of failed, so maybe they're going to pick that up again. **(Dr. Tidwell, Life Sciences)**

Both Dr. Williams and Dr. Tidwell discuss the department’s strategic plan. Dr. Williams explained the pragmatic elements of the strategic plan, whereas Dr. Tidwell provided some of the outcomes: searches that cut across areas of the department rather than one specific subdivision. This difference between subdivision hires and departmental hires mattered greatly in terms of advancing diversity and equity, discussed later herein.

**Primary impacts on hiring priorities: Resources.** Resources were also fundamental in determining hiring priorities. Resources took several forms to impact what searches the department conducted that year. First, department chairs were keenly aware of the divisional ecosystem they resided in – acknowledging that their department was one of many within the division that desired FTEs.

Well, I think the Dean is also very constrained. He doesn't have as many FTE as he would wish or as he thought he would have I don't think. I think that all of social science has been damaged by the resources that were given to the new public policy undergraduate majors, so they got a lot of FTE last year and this year and that probably came from us. I mean, if you assume a constant-sum world which is what I think we have at [Northfield University].”So I think he's also constrained. He has a lot of departments. I think that he is in general more sympathetic to the smaller, newer departments and less sympathetic to the big departments like us, so I don't think we do particularly well in the competition for slots. But I think he's, you know, he's been, the
Dean's office has been very, very quick and very efficient in getting out offers that were sufficient to attract candidates once we choose them. (Dr. Gibson, Social Sciences)

Dr. Gibson perceived Northfield University as a “constant-sum world,” in which divisional FTEs that are directed toward somewhere must invariably come from their department because they typically teach a large number of undergraduates on campus. It may well be that new FTEs were developed for the undergraduate major, which will divert undergraduate workload, but that is not the perception. The perceived sympathy for “smaller, newer departments” – such as the new public policy undergraduate curriculum – is seen as detracting from the more established, larger departments such as the one in this study. Yet not all department chairs understood or agreed with the divisional calculus that distributed FTEs:

So what that means is that even in the abstract model, you just never know what will happen, because there's always the possibility that at one of those late conversations between the Dean and the Executive Vice Chancellor, the Executive Vice Chancellor will say, "Well, this department, it looks like, really has a much more urgent need. So even though I've been indicating that yes, there'll be one FTE for [Humanities] this year, I'm changing my mind." So that, from my position as Chair, I have to say, is one of the most frustrating things. And partly I understand that it's probably unavoidable, but it also creates a lot of tension in the department, because people spend a lot of energy typically, in making cases for the particular field that they want to see approved for a search. And then if they think that things are moving in one direction, that there's momentum, and blah, blah, blah, even just getting to the point of something that would look like a departmental consensus, which is hard enough, if things don't play out, according to
what the predictors are indicating, then there's a sense of disappointment, or of having been put through a bait and switch. So it's very frustrating.

And it's largely caused, of course, by the fact that the budget is simply what it is, and the resources are fewer, and the competition is very intense for these increasingly precious faculty lines, since we are shrinking. We're trying to grow, but the growth index is really measured globally, that is to say, within the humanities, by an overall shrinking of the faculty, ladder faculty resources. (Dr. Graham, Humanities)

Dr. Graham expresses his frustrations with administration’s role in shaping hiring priorities.

Since it takes a significant amount of time and energy for the faculty to agree on the direction of the department, he laments the “bait and switch” that he perceives administrators engage in – either not providing an FTE for the year, or suggesting the department go in a different direction. Not only do administrators play a crucial role in determining the divisional resources at large, but they also set the precedent for hires to replace retiring faculty – another function of resources.

The normal is, we've been told this for several years, certainly even before I was Chair, we have been told that searches will no longer be approved in a kind of reflexive way, on the basis of a retirement [replacements]. The rationale has to be more than that. If it's only that, it will not be approved. And of course, that speaks partly to a financial issue, which is to say, you have to come up with a rationale for growing the department in certain areas that are seen to be of value, not for simply protecting the status quo. But that no longer is seen as a solvent, or as a viable or a persuasive argument. (Dr. Graham, Humanities)
We've been told that we are in steady state and would be allowed to replace retirements, but in fact [promises] were not being kept, we're not being allowed to exactly replace retirements, and, from the point of view of diversity, recruitment - you know, being able to recruit a fair number of people is a really important element of that, because of course, given the history of academia, most of the people who are retiring are white. And the pool for people who we would be recruiting is much more diverse than the pool of people who are old enough to retire. And that really is one of the constraints on what we would like to do. (Dr. Gibson, Social Science)

So the department juggles that, writes a strategic plan; this year we wanna do this, next year we wanna do that. Then it turns out somebody retired or we gotta fill in something, so there's a bit of wiggle room in that. But the strategic plan and the resources, I can get from the Dean. Limited, most of all, by space, actually. By dollars. (Dr. Steele, Life Sciences)

So, the Chair will consult widely on what research areas we should be expanding into repairing, for example, if someone leaves or retires. (Dr. McGuire, Physical Science)

All four of the department chairs described their department’s stance on replacing retirements. The general consensus was that hires based solely on retirements were not strong enough rationales to warrant an FTE, with some differences by discipline. Replacing retirements was the least likely in the humanities and social sciences. Particularly for the humanities discipline, this mirrored national trends. For the social sciences, it seemed they had more leeway than the humanities, but still limited. The case for replacing retirements seemed
stronger in the life sciences and physical sciences, which may also mirror national trends on their growing enrollments. For the former, they described it as “wiggle room,” yet it is still limited “by space…[and] by dollars.” Yet in the physical sciences, the Department Chair mentioned replacing retirements without any form of apprehension. This has implications for diverse hires since replacement of retirements, faculty will often seek similar research foci and characteristics.

**Primary impacts on hiring priorities: Rankings and prestige.** Finally, rankings and prestige played a role in determining hiring priorities, though not as strongly as subdivisions or resources. Faculty members often leveraged the department’s rankings in order to justify new hires. Dr. Kelly provides an example of this when he states, “you could say it’s a simple question, ‘How do we raise the department into the top 10?’…we have a 20 million dollar endowment to build in a particular area that’s fundamental to lifting us to the top 10.” To him, a new hire was seen as imperative to improving the status of the department overall. New hires were also seen as important for subdivisions, too. Dean Schwartz elaborates:

And you know, they're a top, I think they're like I forget their ranking, they're like number 11 or 12 or something like that. They're a strong department…every area, is, is angling to strengthen itself, and tried to make the argument that, you know, we're the key to the overall ranking of the department. And if we lose this person, or if we don't bring this person in, then the area is no longer gonna be viable, so we're gonna fight tooth and nail when there is a search to have it be in our area.

In a department like social sciences with very strong subdivisions, it makes sense that “every area is angling to strengthen itself;” by making the argument that they are the key to the overall ranking of the department. Most interestingly, both of the departments with strongest
subdivisions – social sciences and physical sciences - saw rankings as lifting specific subdivisions that would *in turn* raise the department, rather than just the department being raised collectively. Life sciences and humanities, which had less of an emphasis on departmental subdivisions, described how rankings would lift the entire department, rather than a factional area. This may have as much to do with how rankings are devised, based on specific program areas, as it has to do with local faculty department structures.

**Hiring Priorities and Diversity: Untapped Potential**

Hiring priorities represented a significant opportunity to advance diversity for some departments, yet less so for others. As previously mentioned, subfield conservatism was the result of subdivisions and resources jointly impacting hiring priorities. At minimum, it discouraged faculty from expanding the department in new and different directions. At worst, it resulted in the cloning biases described by Dr. Kelly: “they like to clone themselves. ‘There's one of me, I want two of me.’ So then that's the going around in turn. There's my turn, your turn. We kind of rotate.” When asked about “any challenges to enhance faculty diversity,” Dean Howard imparted the following:

I think if I had to generalize, it would be that departments...faculty members making decisions in departments are worried enough about the health of the Humanities overall, that they tend to be fairly conservative when they name the field they want to hire in. It takes some extra encouragement to say, "Look, you are the faculty building the institution, reach far. Open up a new field. Change the direction of the disciplines covered in your department. You can be that creative in your making of the department."

I think under financially difficult circumstances, and people still do have the memory of the 2008 cuts and so forth, people will often think, "No, my job is just to keep this line,
and the best way to keep the line is to create it as exact-, you know, exactly as it was,” which of course limits any kind of intellectual diversification.

Here, Dean Howard suggests that subfield conservatism is a barrier to faculty diversity. He explained how faculty members “tend to be fairly conservative when they name the field they want to hire in,” due in large part to resources for FTE and factional divisions. The factional divisions exacerbate this – if a concentration area has not received an FTE in recent years then they are likely to reduce as many perceived risk factors as possible to secure a position. When faculty members repeatedly hire in specific research areas – especially those with minimal or no focus on diversity – it artificially reduces the search potential prior to the committee even being formed.

However, there were some ways that departments made their hiring priorities less narrow and more inclusive. This was primarily achieved by making hiring priorities that were responsive to diversity, both (1) structurally and (2) explicitly. The structures of hiring priorities, in this case, refer to the actual mechanics of how priorities are devised and constructed. Dr. Graham, Department Chair of the humanities department, provides a lengthy discussion of how the structures of hiring were changed in his department, and how they resulted in more inclusive hiring foci.

So that's pretty much been the norm. There would be one meeting in which the hiring priorities were discussed. And typically what would happen would be people representing various preferences would stand up and they would deliver a speech. And then there would be some conversation. And then there would be a general conversation about all the various perspectives that had been aired, three or four or five field areas would be represented.
And my experience from many years is that many faculty were dissatisfied with that process, and that has a lot to do with the internal dynamics of the department, which is to say that sometimes the people who would speak, they would speak with maybe five or six people really fervently supporting them, and many, many other people would not be supportive, but would not say so, because they didn't want to expose themselves as being opposed to a particular field area.

So even before I became Chair, I was aware of conversations in the hallway after these meetings, where people would be mostly frustrated, because they felt that there was a kind of tacit silencing process that was going on. Whether it was real, or whether it was simply imagined is really hard to tell. Sometimes it was real, based on who the people were that were speaking, sometimes it was just imagined. But there was a sense of the ideal of having a robust conversation moving toward consensus was rarely actually realized.

So, in my second year as chair, I decided to change the process quite radically, really. And what I did was I told the faculty that instead of having that kind of conversation which historically had shown itself to be less than ideal, for all the reasons that I just described, that is to say, how can you know that it's a consensus when 12 to 15 people in the room are feeling as if they can't be candid? And that may be unique to this department, but somehow I don't think it is. I think any time you have a large department with various constituencies who simply don't have much to do with other areas in the department, I think that's gonna happen. And especially in a hierarchical system where you have assistant professors and associate professors, and full professors [emphasis added]. To say nothing of the internal dynamics according to which some
people assume a certain capacity to pronounce, and to state a position that seems to be more important than another person’s view. So the politics of the conversations is a very delicate matter [emphasis added].

I don't mean to overdramatize this, if that's what I'm doing, but it's just complicated. So I changed the protocol and I invited the faculty to send written comments about their preferences to the executive committee of the department. And the executive committee would review of their written submissions and they would have a meeting with the Chair, we would go over all of the written suggestions and we would come up with a short list. And I would present the short list to the faculty, and then there would be a discussion about the short list. And that's what we did in spring of 2017. That's what resulted in the two searches, the medieval and the Native American [emphasis added]. Right now, it's very hard to have these conversations in a way that...how to put this? I'm still convinced that asking colleagues to send written suggestions to the executive committee is the best way to start the process, because it allows us to get the maximum amount of information from people who are really invested, and they can do it safely, without risking airing an opinion that they feel might be challenged. People are very wary of having disputes in the open, or disagreements, because they feel as if there's gonna be some kind of retaliatory mechanism that will come back to bite them, if there's an open disagreement about something. Its just part of the culture of the department, and this is one of the areas where it really shows [emphasis added].”

Here, Dr. Graham compares the old process of determining hiring priorities to the revised model, yet numerous characteristics of the department and academia broadly made the previous voting method inefficient. First, there are “various constituencies…in a hierarchical system [of]
assistant professors and associate professors and full professors.” These power imbalances already make it difficult for more junior faculty, who are generally more diverse according to Dr. Hughes, to provide input in the process. Yet this is also exacerbated by the culture of the department, that Dr. Graham characterizes as one with “open disagreements.” These factors resulted in a process that left numerous faculty members “dissatisfied” in the department.

The change to written comments and voting may be seemingly mundane, but Dr. Graham considers it a remarkably commonsense solution. By changing the voting methods, it encouraged younger faculty who may not have less power to share their opinions. This not only resulted in the Native American search, but also the current focus of British and Feminist Modernism – two concentration areas that are not strict concentrations or subdivisions but have a departmental emphasis. Life science took a similar structural approach toward their departmental hiring priorities by using a longitudinal strategic plan.

I'm really committed, and the department is supportive, and the Dean's very committed. We don't do searches because someone retired. Or we don't do searches because it's the turn of the cognitive area, or the clinical area or something. There's a strong tradition of doing things that way in academia. Given our resource constraints, given how fast the field is moving, given we wanna stay at the edge, we need to not think that way, really at all. It's our judgment of what's important to be hiring. What areas to be investing in given where the field is. I wanna be careful. It's not like we're trying to be everything. No unit can be everything. You have to say, “Where is the field, and where is it going? Where's the department, where could it go? What kind of place do you want the department to have? What role do you want it to have in the field?” (Dr. Steele, Life Sciences)
Dr. Steele explains how hiring in the life sciences differs from traditional academic approaches. They no longer do searches in a turn-taking order like other departments in this study due to resource constraints and wanting to stay at the cutting edge of the field. By asking important, reflexive questions related to the direction of the field, life sciences created a strategic plan that resulted in hires that span the department. Dr. Tidwell, a faculty member on the life sciences search committee, corroborates this when he shares the department’s projected searches: “there’s a translational science search. There’s a big data search coming up later…so there are…not all of them are specific to a particular area like social or cognitive or clinical or whatever. They’re really kind of bigger than that…But others like a big data theorist, well that could be a person in cognitive, it could be a person in clinical.”

Reforming the structures of hiring priorities is important, yet insufficient in advancing diversity. On the one hand, improving faculty input systems and having broad departmental hires minimizes subfield conservatism by encouraging the department to be responsive to emerging trends in the field, and think widely in creating their positions. Yet without explicitly infusing diversity – the second requisite of infusing diversity into hiring priorities – efforts still come up short. For instance, life science could have more departmental hires through their strategic plan (i.e. the structures) without any position having a connection to diversity aims (i.e. the infusing). Conversely, explicitly infusing diversity in a department that still relies heavily on subdivisions to determine hiring order merely clumps diversity in a few subfields without transforming the demographic or research composition of the department. Thus, the two require each other in order to advance diversity in faculty searches. The physical sciences demonstrates an example of responding to trends in the fields through hiring without infusing diversity.
Interviewer: Moving on to the next question then, is there a sense that any one or any sub-field really within [physical sciences] would be more...just more able to produce diverse candidates than another?

Dr. McGuire: So the fact...and you probably know this, when we do a search and form a pool, they [administration] actually, based on the sub-field, make a prediction for what the pool should look like based on the demographics of recent PhD's and other data. And so there is a difference. Now, I don't have that table in front of me...off the cuff, I would think that, say [biological subfield] compared to [plasma subfield] has more female representation. It's always been true in our department, probably others. [Astro subfield] has more female representation than, a straight [physical science subfield]. When it comes to underrepresented minorities, other than women, it's such a small fraction, that it's a little hard to say. Off the cuff, I don't think there's a pattern. But, that's another reason why we try to do broad searches is 'cause we're just more likely to find, kind of to represent diversity. So we usually get that [availability pool] table and see if there's...but, I think it would be for under represented minorities, I think it would be small statistics. You know, you're talking with single digit percentages, so it's not gonna be that meaningful. But, I'm sure you will see differences among female representation. And I think maybe you're also asking do we ever include that in deciding where to hire. But, I don't think it's explicitly [considered]...it's rarely top of the list. But, people at least take notice of it. Like, "Oh, if we're hiring in this field, it's a lot more white men gonna be coming through than in other fields." So, people know that. I don't know how much it affects the decision to search. But, it can make people more enthusiastic about a candidate that is found if they represent diversity or they're female.
In this physical science department, diversity is not explicitly woven into the hiring priorities. According to Dr. McGuire, diversity is more of a byproduct of a departmental choice, rather than *influencing* the departmental choice. Furthermore, Dr. McGuire had a general sense of where diversity was in the field based on available pool data provided to searches, yet this seemingly did not matter in determining hiring priorities. This demonstrates that departmental hiring priorities must first be grounded in the appropriate structures (e.g. inclusive feedback channels and strategic planning that create departmental-wide hires rather than subfield specific ones) and be intentionally infused with diversity. Humanities provide an example of accomplishing both:

One is we no longer can replace people when they retire. So lines just don't get renewed, and there is a sense from the administration that what we're supposed to do is create these kind of interdisciplinary, more broadly understood lines. Without a clear definition from anybody about what that means, or practically speaking what that means for the students. So sometimes I feel like that's been a very unhappy and sort of unsuccessful directive. On the other hand, it is what made me think about the job, the search that we're currently conducting right now in the department, I wrote that description and sent it to the Chair last spring, and then it sort of got reshaped as it made its way through the ranks.

And it did make me think, "Okay, if we're not just replacing lines, or if we can't just look at a curriculum and say, 'Look, there's really not enough people teaching 20th Century British Literature,'" which is my field and also that doesn't have enough faculty representation. I was able to think, "Well actually, what we really need is a feminist. We need a feminist scholar in the department," and ideally if you can't really ask for these
things outright, but in my mind, I was thinking this is a way to do a diversity hire, create more visibility in the department for scholars of color, minority scholars, while at the same time addressing what I thought was another need, which is 20th century British Literature. So to kind of bring these things together, and I think that I wouldn't necessarily have thought that creatively about a job description had I not known that there's no way that if I'd just sent forward a 20th Century British Literature description.

(Dr. Jones, Humanities)

The more inclusive feedback channels and emphasis on departmental hires resulted in the current search – British and Feminist Modernism with explicit emphases on racial and gender, and was not exclusively tied to a single concentration. Dr. Hughes reached a similar conclusion when she described the effect of “positions that cut across [the department],” explaining that “every position potentially becomes a diversity position in that way. You don’t have to say ‘Oh well, we’re just gonna do a diversity hire this year and then next year we’re gonna do just a regular hire. Every position can be potentially a diversity position [emphasis added].” Life sciences had a similar yet different innovation through their diversity science initiative, a structured program that prioritizes diversity across the department by placing diversity-focused scholars in any of the concentrations in the department.

However, there are still challenges to this approach. As Dr. Jones mentioned, there remains to be a “clear definition from anybody about what that means, or practically speaking what that means for the students.” She reflects: “I think it is hard because when you’re making these hires, especially since departments have shrunk [in faculty numbers] and people want to reproduce what used to be there, the willingness to make a hire sort of lightly, either outside of your field, or rethinking the stakes of your own field. That’s not always the easiest thing to do.”
Another challenge is that some departments and disciplines do not consider their work to be as connected to diversity in terms of research content. For the physical science department especially, no participants acknowledged how diversity impacts the content and quality of research.

Though less advised, another means of infusing diversity into the hiring priorities in fields that are less connected to diversity is rather than infusing the substance of the search area with diversity (like Dr. Jones), instead considering the gender and ethnic composition of the research area. This is less advised, because faculty may rely on availability heuristics (Tversky & Kahneman, 1973) – or assumptions of the demographic breakdown of the field based on their own networks – rather than using data, but this approach does have some advantages. Indeed, most faculty members have some basic idea about the diversity of certain subfields. For example, Dr. McGuire described the gender representation of certain subfields within his discipline compared to others, and Dr. Reynolds acknowledged that the Dean would likely not go for a “Rollsian” candidate for a second FTE during selection, based on his assumption of those who conduct this research. These trends are so well understood that Dr. Jones suggests if she had “just sent forward a 20th Century British Literature description” it “would’ve stopped probably right outside my office door. Like I don’t even know if it would’ve gotten to the Chair at this point.” Otherwise stated, faculty in all four departments understood the demographic [constraints] of subfields very acutely; yet rarely used those trends when generating hiring priorities.

Institutional and Personal Interventions

The second source of external power is the strategies and interventions deans and department chairs employ to advance faculty diversity. While hiring priorities set the conditions
for power (Pfeffer, 1981) prior to the search, interventions envelop the search both before and during. First I review the different levers and pulleys deans and department chairs had at their disposal to exert influence on hiring processes. These are divided into institutional strategies, which most deans and department chairs were familiar with at the institutional level, and personal strategies, which were less uniform and emerged from their own efforts. The most effective deans and department chairs had a blend of personal and institutional strategies, rather than relying too heavily on institutional interventions. Although there were no significant differences by selection stage, disciplinary differences are reviewed throughout. I then turn to the second intersection with race: how these strategies were, or were not, used to enforce standards to further the institution’s diversity interests.

**Institutional interventions.** Northfield University’s Equity office employed several strategies to support deans and department chairs, and many of the study’s participants were familiar with them. Some strategies were strongly encouraged and/or required of search committee members, such as attending mandatory search briefings, and sending out ads to diverse networks. Other strategies supported committees in conducting their work, like offering availability statistics for the general pool of candidates and the short-list. Here, I consider the three most prevalent institutional strategies that deans and department chairs leveraged to advance diversity.

The most prominent intervention was the mandatory search briefings organized by the institution’s equity office. All deans and department chairs in the study mentioned these trainings, and saw them as a crucial mechanism for advancing faculty diversity. Although past trainings required minimal attendance, they now require all committee members to attend and their certification in implicit bias training lasts for up to four years. The search briefings were
based on a flipped classroom model with two parts. First, participants watched a 30-minute video series on topics related to implicit biases, stereotypes, heuristics and mental short cuts, and strategies to mitigate them. After watching the videos, search committee members attend a one-hour training where they applied video concepts and search strategies in small groups. Mr. Harris, the lead administrator of the training, described his thought process behind the requirement, and the deliberate focus on implicit bias and heuristics over other theories.

In faculty, smart people hate to be trained so how do you actually get them to do a training that they don't resent? Because there's good evidence that again, if you create a huge amount of reactants and if you emphasize what might be called autonomy constraining kinds of recommendations, oh you're a bad person, you must do this, must do this and in a disciplining way, even if it might be deserved, it just doesn't work very well in terms of behavior on the back end.

Most people are [originally] really pissed off about [the training], “[this is] freaking stupid.” Then they click to the next one, it's like, “that's not so bad.” The whole nature of the videos is to actually just say look, it turns out our brains are really fascinating completion machines and we have predictable error rates in different kinds of ways. We call them different things, confirmation bias, this, that, there's overwhelming data that says we kind of screw up in a non-random way. Even if it's a quarter true, why wouldn't we then set up some defense systems or bumpers or lanes on the highway, whatever the metaphor is, guardrails, that would allow you to do things a little bit better because it just allows you to be who you want to be more accurately.

It's a very modest, it doesn't touch on corrective justice, it doesn't do a very aggressive deconstruction of the word merit because merit is always relational, it's always a
function of what you want. In all cases, it depends on what you want to do especially if you want to do it in a portfolio-based way where you need a team of people to perform and not just one.

We don't even play the more radical game, pushing on merit, talking about land grant obligations, corrective justice for slavery, internment, conquest, don't want to go there. Not because it's unimportant, it's just that...I'm a pragmatist so the whole point is just to create a little bit of self-critical humility that you're not perfect and there are ways to do things better. Once we get that, once we just flip the light bulb on so that people recognize, oh, turns out searching, there are better ways and worse ways to search. These seem plausible ways because there are actually biases in our brains, once you turn on the that light and suggest look, I'm not trying to be proselytizing, I'm just trying to say “look, you're not perfect. This is not your full time job and even the full time people don't actually know how to search that well. Let's just do it better.” It's a very modest, non-threatening intervention which could create it's own critiques but it's done for a reason.

Here, Mr. Harris’ shares his underlying logic in order to create buy-in among Northfield University faculty. His approach contains several strategies: an emphasis away from “autonomy constraining kinds of recommendations,” a focus on experimental social psychology concepts such as implicit bias and heuristics, and a deliberative focus away from the “more radical game, pushing on merit, talking about land grant obligations, corrective justice for slavery, internment, conquest.” While the training relies on coercive power to compel search committee members to attend, as searches cannot begin until all committee members are certified, it does not employ coercive tactics or content to motivate faculty behavior. Instead, this strategy is meant to “flip a
light bulb” in participants’ heads about inherent biases in human processing, and how these biases emerge in faculty search processes. Indeed, implicit bias training has been the standard for faculty search interventions across American higher education.

In his opinion, the pragmatist strategy was the most appropriate for creating training that will facilitate change on campus. Yet this does not indicate unawareness on his part regarding other theories that explain racial disparities in hiring and society. He elaborates:

Yeah. I think the potential [for implicit bias framing] is huge and the reason why I say that is it's the reason why our training is focused that way. It is a pragmatic choice. What I mean by that is, if I think about all the injustice in the world, history, structural racism, institutional racism, of course they play a huge role on why we are where we are. It's just that, I just know from personal experience that leading with that doesn't change behavior of people who already think they're doing the right thing and it's not their fault. I actually think an implicit bias intervention, when done very well, is actually the single most valuable thing we can do to faculty. Because what that does, it creates in the back of their mind, the possibility that they might be wrong. It's only by triggering the possibility that they might wrong, that you can stop subtle discrimination.

I think that's the real value of it. It's just a gateway drug. It's not meant to actually be the panacea, it's just that it allows people to be open to better search processes. Implicit bias again, is not meant to be the answer, it's meant to trigger in people the willingness to adopt answers. I think that's an important distinction because oftentimes people assume that because I'm focused on implicit bias, I think if I can change people's IET scores, I'm done. That's nonsense, first it's very hard to do and who cares? That has nothing to do with it. I just want their ‘aha’ moment, to allow them to be open to adopt all these check
lists. Most of them have nothing to do with implicit bias. But it's actually all about fairness.

Faculty participants generally shared positive anecdotes regarding the training. However, a few faculty members expressed an opinion that the trainings were “not news to [them],” and in one case one felt “uninspired.” Mr. Harris had some thoughts on faculty resistance, sharing that he, his staff, and the trainings needed to “over perform a certain kind of smarts... in a weird way you have to meet challenge directly on the merits, over perform a certain kind of smarts.” If the search trainings were not intelligently designed, then faculty resistance would multiply; he clarifies: “If there’s any question or challenge that they raise that you can’t answer better than they could articulate, then you’ve lost.”

In addition to search briefings, the institution’s equity office also required committee to engage in various checks throughout the process. The first check necessitated a search plan, which stipulated that committees provide their blueprint for disseminating the job ad to diverse audiences. One Department Chair shares,

Well, we uh, you know we advertise in multiple different places that are at least supposed to make sure that a more diverse pool sees our ads and sees that we're interested in them, so we advertise in women in higher education, in diversejobs.net, in uh, the National Conference of Black [Social Scientists], the career center. So we, for any places that we know about that might, might get a larger sample of people, we try to do that, though really I think no matter what people's ethnicity or gender or whatever they probably all look at the main job websites, which are The American [Social Science] Association. I mean, why wouldn't they?” (laughs) It would be silly not to. People looking for jobs. But anyway, we do that. (Dr. Gibson, Social Sciences)
The department also distributes the ad to specialized conferences and organizations in order to cast the widest net possible. Both in the search plan and the short-list report, faculty were provided with availability statistics – a breakdown of the racial and gender diversity of their field. By using data from several data sources including the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), the Equity office determines how the applicant pool and short-list candidates compares to national figures. Dean Singleton explains:

Every search has to be approved by the [central university Equity Administrator], and it includes, a search plan with data. The data is the availability pool, defined as the number of, PhD graduates in that discipline...with the hope and expectation that knowing what the availability is, then the search committees will be mindful. It varies, you know, 10% Hispanics, and 10% African American. That ideally the pool should as close as possible reflect the availability data...whether or not that's possible is discipline dependent. But at least, by making sure that every search committee has data and guidelines on how to execute the search with diversity in mind, I think that’s very helpful.

Dr. Singleton indicates that the availability statistics are not just provided for additional data, but to ensure that the pool closely reflects what is available in the field. But he also describes a dilemma that a few other faculty participants described: that availability statistics may not accurately depict the intricacies of the field. Some faculty participants were skeptical of the national availability statistics because they report data in the aggregate based on the entire discipline, rather than specific subfields. Staff members in the Equity office described this pushback, yet insisted that the availability statistics were the best measures to understand how search committees compared to the pool of eligible PhD-recipients. Regardless, deans and department chairs were keenly aware of how their search results compared to availability...
One Dean touted her division’s accomplishments, stating that they’ve “been hiring above the availability pool for African Americans, Latinas, and women in the last eight years.”

**Personal strategies and interventions.** Most deans and department chairs also had personal strategies to enhance faculty diversity. These personal strategies varied in implementation and source of power; the Equity office generally encouraged some interventions, such as diversifying the search committee and tracking the department’s hiring trends. Other strategies were entirely of the dean or department chair’s own doing, such as devising new initiatives, or encouraging collective action amongst faculty. Deans and department chairs were not required to institute these practices, nor would they be punished in their absence. Instead, many took it upon themselves to innovate in order to activate greater progress. Dean Howard shares:

I guess my observation about life in large institutions - maybe any institution at all - is that there's an interaction, a constant interaction between law or procedure as codified, needing interpretation, needing activation, and then practices that surround that. And then normally…practices don't normally violate policy, but they tend to lubricate policy (laughs) quite a lot.

And we talked about this a little bit earlier, the recruit system, just as software that pushes us through certain emotions. I think that is among the appropriate institutional things that should be in place. It exposes us repeatedly to the kinds of questions that are central to us. Who are you looking at? How are you getting the word out? If you're hiring in a field that is 98% men, then why are you doing that? So I think that's a very important institutional [approach] and, hmm, let us say somewhat impersonal approach to it. In my experience it only works very effectively when you combine it with a fairly
personal approach, which is not for the Dean to go and hector a search committee and say, "Do this. Do this. Do this." It always backfires at the faculty.

Dr. Howard provides an illuminating analogy on the intersections of personal and institutional strategies. Institutional strategies by themselves produce certain results, yet are strengthened when complemented by more personal approaches, thus “lubricating policy.” Yet not all deans and department chairs followed this approach – some were quite adept in their personal approaches while others relied heavily on the institutional mechanisms. The deans and department chairs that were employing a blend of strategies seemed to have the most success. Here, I detail the four strategies that participants engaged in.

Some deans and department chairs saw it as their personal responsibility to manage personnel, essentially stacking committees and service positions with individuals that were supportive of diversity. This also operated in the opposite direction: they were keenly aware of faculty who were antagonistic to diversity and did their best not to put them on committees that required progressive action. A Dean and a Department Chair both share:

We’re attempting to diversify ourselves demographically as well. We think that’s quite important for teaching the students that we have, and for being representative of the country and the state and so on. I guess there’s one person who’s opposed to that in the department who’s never put on recruitment committees. (Dr. Gibson, Social Sciences).

I know that when I was chair of [on-campus social science department], that was a concern of mine, making sure that when I appointed the search committee, that there was some diversity on the committee, you know, racial/ethnic diversity, but also diversity of, you know, field and perspective depending upon the nature of the search.
But, in each of our departments, committees could be put together that would virtually guarantee that you wouldn't have a single candidate of color. So part of what I do is to make sure that those types of committees don't get created. (Dr. Schwartz, Social Sciences)

Creating diverse search committees is a well-researched practice, and is strongly encouraged by the institution’s Equity office. Deans and department chairs were aware that non-diverse search committees would result in some form of reprisal from upper-administration. Department chairs in particular took several measures to ensure that committees had sufficient diversity. In Dr. Steele’s words, his responsibility was to break up the “old boy’s network” with whom he appoints as the search chair. He elaborated that “sometimes the best way to handle that problem is to put someone from a different background in a place, rather than try to educate the person from a more traditional background to do a better job.” This comment was made on the basis of race, and was a direct acknowledgement that there is a value in diversity. He and Dr. McGuire both sought to diversify their search committees on other parameters, such as rank and gender, respectively.

Many departments, in [life sciences] and beyond, one would say are somewhat top-heavy in seniority. Probably as a function when departments roll out to hire in the past. This is a strong department by any measure. Benevolent internally. So what I'm about to say I don't mean as a criticism of senior colleagues. I've tried to move the staffing of the committees, and especially the leadership of the committees - who the committee chairs are - to somewhat more junior people. Less senior full professors, and associate professors who generally haven't had much leadership experience of that sort. So part of my philosophy in doing this is I wanna broaden the input base. Everyone has input.
Again, it's a benevolent place. But who really has positions of, I hate to say power exactly, but call it responsibility. (Dr. Steele, Life Sciences)

Well, you know we form a search committee and we have always had at least one, at least recently, always have a female candidate on the committees, which helps. And that's interesting because we find sometimes they're reading of the letters and they're able to see what looks like a biased kind of language on the [letters] against a female candidate. We talk about it a lot. You know, it starts with this briefing that we get, which talks about implicit bias. But, we talk a lot about...not only our own implicit bias, but the implicit bias of people that are writing letters. We could be perfect, but the letter writers might not be. (Dr. McGuire, Physical Sciences)

Albeit important, personnel management was not only limited to search committee membership. Some deans in particular used their influence in selecting department chairs to ensure that those positions were also friendly to advancing faculty diversity. Dean Schwartz explains:

Interviewer: Is there ever any pushback with department chairs in that effort?
Dean Schwartz: Not department chairs, because I appoint the chairs (laughs). Well at least the ones we have. I mean the ones since I've been Dean…and I inherited some chairs who I think for the most part are on the same page with respect to those issues. But I would never appoint a chair who felt that way. For me it would be counterproductive in terms of what I'm trying to do. It's just not…it's not acceptable to think otherwise. I mean, so there's a lot of buy in with that, and in the future, going forward, as I appoint chairs, then for me that's always an important criterion.
Here, Dean Schwartz demonstrates both reward and coercive power. Because he is in a position to influence many forms of personnel appointments - search committees included - he appoints individuals that would not detract from his efforts to enhance faculty diversity. By placing the right people in the right positions, he can indirectly influence the decisions department chairs make, such as committee formation.

Another personal strategy that deans and department chairs used were tracking trends in the department. Several participants leveraged the department’s history of previous hires and overall trends in order to incite progress. By magnifying both positive and negative trends deans and department chairs compelled search committee members to try harder in their efforts.

One thing that [colleague] and I have talked about doing in these meetings with chairs, is looking back at the history of the department, and saying "Where have we been in this department? What's been our progress over the years and over the decades? And where would we wanna be 10 years from now?" In terms of everything, in terms of who the people are in the department, what fields we're teaching in the department, how many students we've got majoring? So redirecting people's attention to the long term and to the way that this particular hiring decision is gonna contribute in one way or another to the history of the department.

I think it's appropriate for us to be aware of what history recreated, and if that history is, “oh, it turns out again that it's exclusionary,” then we've got a problem. And I think the conversations that we're having are an invitation to the department chairs and search committee chairs to look at their history. To say, "Who are we? How have we been diversifying, if at all?" (Dr. Howard, Humanities)
Using the department’s history and asking reflexive questions of the department chair and search committee members was intended to evoke a sense of greater responsibility in shaping the department. Additionally, Dean Howard attempted to instill a sense of collective responsibility in creating a vibrant department that will last. However, Dean Howard stops just short of suggesting some type of action or punishment in the event of “exclusionary” trends, particularly when he states, “then we’ve got a problem.” Indeed, several deans had relatively little to say in regards to penalties.

Dr. Schwartz: So the way I would likely intervene with a department like that, is at the bird's eye level. Like, you know, from the vantage point of, like, two or three years of hiring.

If the patterns aren't moving in the right direction, we might, then…then I'll step in and say, "okay, that's not a viable area to hire in. You need to hire in this area. You know, but um, one year in, I, I…I don't have the data to make that argument yet. (Dr. Schwartz, Social Sciences)

But any given search may not work and if I see a department that over years is not…nothing is ever, you know, we're not getting anything for diversity then I'll sit down and talk with them and I'll just say, "Look. This isn't good. Your faculty is not getting more diverse." We have a lot of conversations about how to improve the demographic composition of Life Sciences and how the department's going to achieve that. (Dr. Gonzalez, Life Sciences)

It is apparent that both Dr. Gonzalez and Dr. Schwartz document hiring trends in their division and departments, and have thought about possible punishments for lack of progress. Dr.
Schwartz describes “step[ing] in…if the patterns aren’t moving in the right direction,” while Dr. Gonzalez describes a “sit down” and “conversations” if the department is not diversifying. However Dr. Schwartz does not describe his intervention with much confidence, and spoke very tentatively about the matter. Though this power appears coercive, it is also unlikely that he has the power to unilaterally advise the department where to hire. Dr. Gonzalez, who has been in the Dean position longer than Dr. Schwartz, may have reached a similar conclusion because her answer is more based on merely having conversations with departments.

Dr. Gonzalez and Dr. Howard’s emphasis on “we” when describing change in their divisions highlights another important method for galvanizing support for faculty diversity: *using collective sensibility and action.* Rather than approaching issues with “you,” some deans believed progress would be most optimally achieved if the faculty knew that they were just as committed to their own ideals. This was relatively common among department chairs, since they came from the departments in which they were trying to create the change. Yet some deans were more intentional about incorporating explicit collective sensibility, especially because faculty members sometimes perceive an adversarial relationship with their deans. Dr. Howard shared more:

I find that the most important moment is when you get faculty to acknowledge that we've got these impersonal and objective and institutional things in place for a good reason and that they, as faculty and therefore as members of the academic senate, have already invested in these things. They can't sit and complain about these unreasonable expectations. We as faculty put them in place.

Now come back and tell me what do you really think about how you're gonna build your department? How are you actually gonna reach the goals we were talking about over on
this impersonal side? It's that combination and getting people to speak openly, usually in meetings where they can speak in each other's presence about what the goal is. That's what I'm after, the engagement of conscience where the faculty themselves say, "We know what we're trying to do here, and this is how we can try to do it."

I mean look, this is the general subtend in truth, I'm looking for people to act and think in such a way that their institutions are meaningful to them. That the institution itself is meaningful to them. We make this institution, and then we act as if we're alienated from it, and that's not necessary. We're faculty members at an institution that has strong faculty governance. But yeah, I've been on the other side of the table. I've sat around cynically saying, "Oh, they this, they that." We are they [emphasis added] (laughs).

(Dr. Howard, Humanities)

Dr. Howard demonstrates the importance of collection sensibility on several levels. He is trying to help faculty understand that working “at an institution that has strong faculty governance,” means that they are not absolved of responsibility, and share an active role in shaping the community. It then behooves faculty to support the institution’s diversity-related activities and expectations, particularly because as members of the academic senate, they have already invested in them. This explains his phrase “we make this institution, and then we act as if we’re alienated from it,” and forces faculty to realize that “we are they” when they use the word “they” to talk about the institution’s actions.

The final and most direct method for intervening in their department’s hiring practices was through developing and sustaining initiatives. This method was not as widespread as some of the other approaches - only a handful of deans and department chairs had successfully created initiatives to advance diversity goals. Dr. Gonzalez, Dean of the Life Sciences division, was at
the forefront of these leaders. According to her, she came up with these initiatives to be “even more proactive, because just best practices alone weren’t getting us much progress very quickly.” As such, she developed an initiative that would grant FTEs to searches that explicitly rewarded mentorship and diverse contributions; she elaborates:

The second thing I think has helped is we've had a special initiative, which is called the mentored professor initiative. The mentored professor initiative is a division wide search for an outstanding scientist with a history and commitment to mentoring underrepresented minorities. The mentored professor search has generated incredibly diverse applicant pools. Again, because I mentioned before, that typically the people who have really been active in that area, are people that are underrepresented, African Americans and Latinas, females. So the search has every year...departments are essentially competing with each other so it kind of changes the wait. Instead of people thinking, "Oh, we've gotta take somebody." It's like, "No. This is somebody they want."

Departments are very proactive in that search. I think the way it's changed the climate is it's made people aware that best practices will bring in really highly talented individuals, which is to work hard, have broad pool. The second is there's a stereotype, or the implicit bias that people sometimes have towards people of color. Now they're seeing many people come through. So instead of kind of a token person on a search that you may have done because the Dean forced you or somebody, you're now seeing many candidates a year of color.

Dr. Gonzalez touts the initiative as impactful in several ways. It reaches diverse audiences because the program explicitly seeks “people who have been active in that area [mentoring underrepresented minorities],” creates a sense of urgency and competition between departments
that incentivizes the program, and changes the climate by exposing search committee members to viable scientists of color. In this sense, it rewards departments by providing them an additional FTE they may not have originally anticipated. Other notable examples of new initiative or systems included Dr. Graham’s hiring priority reform to widen feedback channels, and Dr. Singleton bringing in a psychologist to personally meet with members of his division on inclusive hiring, which according to Dr. Cho in the physical sciences, was a “good thing [for] everyone involved.”

**Limited Enforcement and Diversity Outcomes**

Institutional interventions were designed to support deans and department chairs incentivize diversity, and enforce common standards across departmental searches. The search briefings and committee checks were primarily enforced through coercive power, which compelled search committees to comply with institutional standards. Personal interventions were devised on a more individual basis, complemented institutional strategies, and were more rooted in incentives and positional authority, rather than coercive power. Although interventions were designed to insert equity into search processes and enhance faculty diversity, the consequences for faculty and departments for stagnation in these efforts were far less certain. There really isn't anything that policy wise that we can do that isn't already instituted at the institutional level. Outside of me being a cheerleader for diversity, and trying to set up incentives for departments to play along, which is what I do in terms of working with them with target of opportunities and some of the other things. And recognizing departments that have done a good job on that front. And possibly withholding resources from departments that don't. You know. And questioning those, who, let's just say have lots of missed opportunities.” *(Dr. Schwartz, Social Sciences)*
It is clear that the positive reward for advancing faculty diversity have been thoroughly vetted: incentives such as target of opportunities, and departmental recognition. However, it is also clear that he is less certain on the penalties: “possibly withholding resources from departments,” and “questioning” departments with missed opportunities. His apprehension for these approaches is also exemplified through frequent pauses when describing the measures. He further explained, “and then when it comes time for them to identify their short list, the pool is gonna have to at least mirror what’s in the availability pool. Uh, and if it doesn’t, they’re gonna have to account for it. So that’s probably the most we can do in this instance.” Yet it is not clear what Dr. Schwartz means when he says that committees will have to “account” for it.

Dean Gonzalez shares a somewhat different approach on the lack of negative reinforcement in departmental diversity outcomes. She states,

I will say at this point, we have culture that…When sometimes people say, "Well, if a department has not been searching for diversity or showing good practice, you shouldn't let them search," but I think all the departments, we've had a culture of inclusion for…it's been growing as I have been Dean. So it's not like I feel like, "Oh, I can't let a department search. They've been behaving poorly." That's not my concern, my biggest concern is, do they define positions that are defined so narrowly that we're not gonna get a diverse applicant pool?

Perhaps the most extreme form of negative punishment would be taking away a department’s ability to search, which she explicitly rules out. Instead, her approach towards search committees is more conversational, with the primary focus on ensuring that the position description does not artificially reduce the diversity of the pool. Yet neither she nor Dean
Schwartz explain what measures, if any, are available to curb negative behavior in search committee processes.

Faculty participants across departments and divisions were cognizant of administrative tactics, and recognized that there were far more “carrots” than “sticks.” Dr. Frazier elaborates: “So this is another aspect of it, in so far as the administration puts carrots and sticks in front of us. Well, it doesn’t really…if it uses sticks they’re not out there, but it uses carrots, a lot.”

Another faculty member was also critical of the administration, explaining that it must rethink its use of incentives and punishments. He offered the following critique:

So how do you go about improving the question of diversity, which obviously is a pressing, contemporary issue. This is something I think must be thought through better than it has been. Because the moment you get a lot of rhetoric about it, it doesn't…when we make applications, when we put in our reviews to say what we've done [for diversity] practically anything counts and it's a sort of a face saving device.

I think the University has to take it more seriously. I mean I think a group of people must have a sit down very carefully about what they think they’re getting out of it. And not just say wouldn't it be a great idea if we had more people of color, more Hispanics, more whatever, working in diverse subjects. Yes, it would be, but how do we go about getting them and what do we do to do that? Something more consistent must be done.”

(Dr. Reynolds, Social Sciences)

In his opinion, the institution puts on a front or a façade on the issue of faculty diversity. In terms of making the job ad (“when we make applications”) and submit short-lists to the Equity office (“when we put in our reviews to say what we’ve done), he claims that “practically anything counts, and it’s a sort of face saving device.” This is a critique of the institution’s
monitoring practices, and suggests that the institution’s bar for faculty equity and diversity is so low that it allows them to essentially count anything and avoid punishing faculty. One lower-level administrator had her own opinions as to why the punishment for not achieving equitable results was so limited.

It has to be a priority, and you have to put resources into that. And you have to have deans who basically make departments do it. Departments are always the obstacle. Deans are very reluctant to impose anything on departments because department chairs are the ones who then will write out an evaluation of the dean, you know? So you have to have a good relationship with your chairs. (Lower-level Administrator)

In the eyes of this administrator, deans do not take punitive actions against departments for their hiring and diversity outcomes for fear of retribution. Although this may be one possibility, more evidence in this study points to general uncertainty related to the effectiveness of punitive tactics, rather than retribution. This may also stem from the faculty culture of high-autonomy and maintaining collegiality, creating difficulties for deans to figure out the best measures to correct poor search practices.

Leadership’s Theories of Change

Theories of change are “predictive assumptions about the relationship between desired changes and the actions that may produce those changes” (Connolly & Seymour, 2003). In other words, they are internal frameworks on the nature of change and the necessary steps to materialize it. Most recently, the concept has been broached to understand how STEM faculty members promote systemic change on their college campuses, and how these change over time (Kezar, Gehrke, & Elrod, 2015). Theories of change are integral for understanding how change agents define and pursue success.
In this study, deans and department chairs shared their change theories, describing what it will take to actualize faculty diversity at Northfield University and more broadly across the country, and their contributions to those efforts. Their theories of change undergird their use of interventions, punitive tactics (or lack thereof), and their sense of urgency behind those measures. The sense of urgency is pivotal, since it shapes what is considered acceptable progress toward faculty diversity. Participant’s sense of urgency, deliberateness, and larger theories of change varied across the spectrum, such as very ambitious and progressive, balanced pragmatists, and incremental institutionalists. Some deans and their department chairs matched in their theories (i.e. two progressive theories of change, or two incrementalist approaches), whereas others were mismatched, creating some tension.

It is not my intention to rank theories of change, or downplay the effectiveness of incremental progress. It may be the case that different theories may be strengthened or weakened based on characteristics of the setting, such as institutional history, faculty culture, and faculty resistance. Yet in this study, it seemed that the deans and department chairs with the more progressive theories of change had the most success in diversifying their departments. Moreover, the theories of change were not mutually exhaustive: some faculty who were more progressive also shared pragmatist leanings, and vice versa. However, faculty who espoused the incrementalist perspective were generally more stable in that regard, and did not lean in the direction of other change theories. Here, I review the three predominant theories of change shared by the dean and department chair participants, and highlight their foundations of power onto search practices.

Theory of Change: Progressive and self-improvement oriented. Several participants embraced a very progressive, self-improvement oriented theory of change. Faculty exemplified
and put their change theories into action through creating personal strategies, emphasizing collective sensibility and action, and sustaining dialogue channels with search committee members. Particularly in the life sciences, the Dean and the Department Chair were on the same page regarding their change theories, which may explain their success. Both individuals have sustained initiatives, used data to support their decisions, and the Dean in particular received an institutional award for advancing diversity. Dean Gonzalez provides her underlying theory of change that undergirds much of her division’s success.

So if we're really going to be effective - and the final thing I'm gonna' say is - I can't say this enough. We've gotta' keep our foot on the gas because we are swimming upstream and if you don't, you just slide downstream so easily. The final thing I'll say is that best practices alone won't get us there without really exerted effort and that's because the slope, when you see the slope of change of best practices, the slope is so level. It's positive but it's slow.

I feel like I have to keep my foot on the gas pedal and as soon as I let it off, we'll regress. We'll regress back to our comfortable ways. So it's really just something you've gotta keep on the radar all the time.

Dr. Gonzalez provided a detailed account of her attitude toward departmental and institutional transformation. She first opens with an analogy on the nature of change at the institution, likening it to “swimming upstream:” in order to advance, you have to “keep [your] foot on the gas…and if you don’t, you just slide downstream so easily.” This is re-emphasized when she explains that the slope of change for best practices is very level, which indicates progress, yet should not provide comfort or solace. This change theory was matched by one of her department chairs, Dr. Steele. He shared several stories about the progress of the department,
but like his Dean, did not take comfort in these accomplishments. Instead, his change theory was one of self-improvement related to multiple facets of the search, from creating the job ad, disseminating the job, and adopting best practices such as rubrics more widely in the department. The work of these individuals may explain the success of the entire division. Dr. Gonzalez documents her progress relative to peer institutions on the front of faculty diversity.

Look at this, this is underrepresented groups. So in 2003 [to now]…that's 15 years.

[Peer institution 1] went from six to nine percent. [Peer institution 2]: six to nine. [Peer institution 3]: eight to nine. [Northfield University]: eight to eleven. [Peer Institution 4] has actually gone down. So they're converging on this. [Peer institution 5]: six to ten.

Actually, there's a reason for that. (Points to other institutions): Flat. *Tell me how quickly we're going to get to the demographics of the state with the slope of that line* [emphasis added]. I'm sure you're good enough at math to figure that out…so I'm glad that [Northfield University] is [doing well] but eleven? Really? We're talking about Latinos. You know? I mean, what is the state of [Northfield]? Around 10 percent African American? We're not...this is just pitiful. When I became Dean I'm going, “holy shit. If I just do business as usual, you're going to be like [peer institution 3] which is eight to nine.” So here's where we went for underrepresented. I started at 4.3, and I went to almost ten. Females, we've gone up a little bit so that's…let's go to some other campuses. So I went from four to ten. [Another peer institution’s life sciences division] went from five to seven. Let's see what [another peer institution’s life sciences division] did. [Peer institution’s life sciences division] went from one to three. Just looking at my thing. [Peer institution’s life sciences division] went from 2.1 to 2.5.
Other participants outside of the life sciences adopted a similar change strategy. For example, Dr. Howard in the humanities most regularly adopted the collective sensibility strategy to highlight departmental progress, influence search committee activities, and impact change. This likely stems from his self-improvement theory of change; he explains,

We've certainly hired some great people who've made a greater, you know, more diverse faculty. Have we gone as far as we could? I don't think I'd vouch for that right now, and the answer to that is going to lie in how people were making decisions in those basic discussions. That is, through a combination of our recruitment efforts and the things that I've been saying to chairs and faculty members, have we gotten as far ahead in finding diverse candidates?" I’m not sure we have.

It should also be noted that the two most progressive deans were also in their positions for the longest duration of the four deans. With a combined 17 years experience, it may be the case that they were not always this efficient toward institutional transformation. Time and experience wielding legitimate and reward forms of power may have encouraged these deans to take more progressive stances than some of their peers in other divisions.

**Theory of Change: Pragmatist.** The pragmatist theory of change was the most common among participants in this study. While they did not necessarily have the same gumption as the more progressive deans and department chairs, they were still deeply concerned with how to advance faculty diversity. The differentiating factor was that they alluded to the structures and forms of faculty resistance more than the progressive participants. It is not that the progressive deans and department chairs did not recognize the structures in place, or how their strategies may challenge them, they just seemed to describe their actions with more urgency and immediacy. Pragmatists were more likely to adopt slower forms of change. Dean
Schwartz shares his concluding thoughts on advancing faculty diversity, revealing his personal theory of change:

I guess to kind of sum it all up, I think my style is that I'm very passionate about this issue, which is why I wanted to do the job, because otherwise, you know, what's the point? By the same token, I'm a realist in terms of you know, how you lead faculty who are fiercely independent and protective of their autonomy and their agency. To get them to do things that are the right thing when they may not be oriented in that direction. So part of my challenge is to figure out what combination of carrots and sticks to use at what moment to get the outcomes I want. And so that's the balancing act that I think, as a Dean, I have to play, and I've done it for [over a year], and you know, I think we had a pretty good year last year, and hopefully going forward, we'll continue to have good results on the diversity front.

It is clear that Dean Schwartz is passionate about faculty diversity, and has instituted measures to materialize his goals. Yet his language also indicates his thoughts about change at an institution such as Northfield University. He describes himself as a “realist” in terms of “how [to] lead faculty who are fiercely independent and protective of their autonomy and their agency.” In order to get them to do things they may not immediately desire, he must figure out “what combination of carrots and sticks to use at what moment.” Although the lack of administrative “sticks” has already been discussed in this chapter’s strategies and interventions section, it should also be noted that this Dean has been in his position for the least amount of time. Thus, it makes sense that he is attempting to strike a very careful balance between realizing his goals and not making the faculty in his division upset.

Pragmatist participants were very attuned to the faculty resistance culture. This likely
informed their approach towards designing initiatives and the enforcement, invariably affecting
the speed at which the university realizes its diversity goals. Mr. Harris, a self-described
pragmatist and architect behind the institution’s search briefings, explains why the trainings
don’t “play the more radical game” through the lens of preempting potential faculty resistance.

Yeah, there are huge challenges because basically people resent...people view all this
work as a regulatory tax. It's no different than the EPA saying look, there's some lead
paint found, you've got to do it this way. It's like, well, it's not really lead paint or there
are not kids here, that's not really getting to the air. Even if you think that you care about
the environment, once the EPA comes in and starts messing with your stuff, you get
upset. Almost everyone views it as unnecessary and regulatory…too much of a
regulatory tax.

Generally speaking, you have to try wheedle people into thinking that yes, I'm asking
you to do a little bit more work but that that kind of regulatory oversight clearly
produces more benefits than cost because everyone will say, yeah but I'm not the bad
guy so why are you slowing down my search? The framing of all of this as a regulatory
tax is the understanding that I have to challenge and get around in different kinds of
ways. There's definitely resistances and the lower the hierarchy, the greater the potential
resistance.

Mr. Harris describes a key component on the nature of resistance in pursuing organizational
change: individual vs. systemic. Comparing the institution’s Equity office to the EPA, he
explains that both types of settings require some form of intervention: improving air quality and
improving faculty diversity. In both conditions, individuals feel like they are not the “bad guy,”
and thus should be absolved from any type of regulation or intervention. The word wheedle is
synonymous to coax, and both describe a more gentle and prolonged form of persuasion rather than “strong arm” or “coerce.” This indicates the type of change that Mr. Harris seeks: slowly coaxing faculty into believing that the “regulatory oversight clearly produces more benefits than costs.” He confirms this analysis in his broader vision of change at an institution like Northfield University.

I didn't have a deep view about the nature of culture change. I had studied some diffusion of technology literature, I knew some network analysis. I didn't really have a deep theory or a practice theory about how culture changes because it is a culture change, right? The best way to understand [Northfield University], it's a city-state. People think of it as a firm, [it’s not], it's an eight billion dollar a year city-state. The only way to understand large institutions like this, it's a city and if you think one person's in charge, no. You've got executive, legislative, you've got your governance, and you’ve got a weird population of a bunch of young people and a lot of old people. You've got senators amongst us, you've got regents, it's a city and to try to get culture change in a city is really challenging.

I now have a better understanding of culture change and it is driven by what I understand to be the insides of behavioral economics. Most of it is controlling the default rule and shaping the user interface such that what they're doing is best practices but they just don't know. The more invisible, natural, default that they understand the experience to be, the more likely they will actually do it. I have to actually just build it into the roads. That's the best way and these require incremental changes. Once it's done, then after a couple years, it's now part of the roads. People just assume that's how the on ramp looks. People just assume, of course that's how this gravel feels. We've done it for
years, I don't know, we've always done this. It's a weird way to take advantage of the fact that there's very little institutional memory within administrative structures often. Once you change what's normal, after a few years people just interpret that as wow, that's how we've always done it.

In describing Northfield University and higher education at large, Mr. Harris retires the “firm” analogy in favor of a “city-state,” with multiple constituencies and, at times, differing interests. In his mind, the only way to enact sustainable cultural change is to slowly embed the best practices “into the roads.” Yet this also illustrates another difference between pragmatist participants and more progressive ones. Whereas Mr. Harris is very concerned with institutionalizing best practices, individuals like Dr. Gonzalez argued that the “best practices along weren’t getting us much progress very quickly,” which may explain why individuals like her and Dr. Steele went beyond best practices and created new initiatives, some of which have not even been documented in the literature yet.

**Theory of Change: Incremental.** The last common theory of change was incremental change. Although these individuals were not antagonistic to faculty diversity, it was unclear if their fervor or motivations were as prominent as progressive and pragmatist participants. Further, their ideas and underlying logics surrounding change at Northfield University were even more gradual than pragmatists. Dr. McGuire shares some of his department’s efforts to address faculty diversity specifically.

We do have diversity committees in the department, who are bringing in more diverse speakers. You know, that might, in the long run, change some of the implicit biases that are in all of our heads, especially people maybe that have been around a long time. That’s an explicit goal of the diversity committee is to do that. Just take something as
small as putting up posters of female [scientists] in the hallway. Does that ultimately have effect on the climate? I don't know. And then, you know, over the years, then...some faculty have seen it, you know. Does it change their slight bias on a faculty search committee? It's a stretch to say that, but it may be that a hundred small things matter.

The types of strategies that Dr. McGuire describes are fundamentally different from those described and enacted by the progressive and pragmatist candidates. Instead of direct interventions on faculty search practices, he describes more indirect projects, such as speaker series and diversity posters. Although he acknowledges these as a potential “reach,” he offers relatively little direct solutions to faculty diversity outside of diversifying the search committee, compared to his colleagues.

His emphasis on “over the years,” suggests less urgency than other participants as well. The focus on more longitudinal change is highlighted when he states, “so I would say right now, my attitude towards [faculty diversity] has been to do many small, but concrete things. I know the problem won’t be solved by the time I’m done being chair, but to keep pushing along in that direction is sort of how we’ve been addressing it.” What differentiates this approach from progressive theories of change is that progressive participants did not seem comfortable with the problem not being solved during their tenure, and took measures to ensure that. Although it can be argued that Dr. McGuire and others practice more tempered realism, it could also be interpreted as not taking urgent action to a pressing contemporary problem, mirroring critiques of more pragmatic efforts in the pursuit of racial justice and societal change more broadly.

**Color-blind Theories of Change.** Although participants varied in their approaches toward systemic change, color-blindness was a consistent theme across all three, yet was most
common in incremental and select pragmatist participants. Despite the inherent contradiction, some participants believed that change – regardless on the speed or urgency of that change – could be realized without an emphasis on diversity, an underlying color-blind logic. Several participants regularly deemphasized diversity in their understanding of search committee practices and institutional change. Some were seemingly mundane, such as Dr. Gibson laughing at why candidates of color wouldn’t look at the “main job websites” which would reach candidates “no matter [their] ethnicity or gender or whatever.” Yet some were more pronounced. For instance, Dr. McGuire initially described how his department was diversifying search committees, yet soon-after he deemphasized the value of diversity, stating: “but then you could start asking, you know, how much did this person really understand the full demographic, [or] full spectrum of the experience of a particular group of people based on their own experience. You can have someone that came from a very wealthy background from another country, and that doesn’t have any necessarily, any first hand understanding of the people that represent diversity in the applicant pool.” He also deemphasized the role that gender plays in mitigating potential bias found in some letters of recommendation.

They [women] called out some language in some letters, which I thought was really interesting, that I might not have noticed. Um, but, it doesn't have to be a female member. I mean, I easily could be a male member who's more sensitive to these issues than a female professor is. [A man] could also call them out, um, but it's at least an opportunity.

The ways in which some participants de-emphasized diversity and identity in faculty diversity change strategies: diversifying the search committee, reaching diverse networks, etc. was indicative of a larger color-blind change theory suggested by some participants: that
ideological diversity was as important, if not more so, than demographic diversity. This sentiment also ranged from benign to more pressing across the different change theories. For instance, Dr. Steele, who is among the more progressive department chairs in advancing diversity, espoused color-blind language that suggested that diversity of ideals was a greater priority than demographic diversity, stating that his “diversity science [initiative] has nothing to do with the person who’s doing it, so that is a broad priority for us.” While this may have meant that anybody was eligible for the program, it may also suggest that demographic identity was less of a priority so long as they are conducting work on diversity. This is in direct contrast with the humanities department’s concern with authenticity related to diverse scholarship; some of their committee members would likely question how well the work could be conducted by non-diverse scholars. Dean Singleton shared a similar sentiment regarding the expectations he sets for searches within his division.

Which means that I will have an expectation to see women and underrepresented minority candidates in the pool. But sometimes it is not easy to recognize that, uh, someone from a diversity group can bring a new dimension to the department that might have other value that is not easily seen. I will say that my expectation is yes [for diverse candidates]. But uh, again, I will consider that if the best candidate for that position happens to be another white, Caucasian male, that it is someone who’s sensitive about diversity and the importance of diversity.

Although this Dean states that he has an “expectation to see women and underrepresented minority candidates in the pool,” he is also willing to accept “another white, Caucasian male, that is…sensitive about diversity.” This is not inherently nefarious; the Dean states an expectation for diversity but will also accept a candidate that is empathetic to diversity. Yet
compared to more progressive deans and department chairs, it also suggests his threshold for progress: progressive and pragmatist leaders held higher standards of their faculty, and were less likely to accept empathy for diversity for true diversity.

**External Power Summary.** Committee processes were inextricably linked to conditions of the department and greater institution. How hiring priorities were generated provided a glimpse into the department’s politics and structures, revealing what factors were considered important, and which less so, when creating the conditions for power. Some departments infused diversity into their hiring priorities through creating supportive structures (e.g. voting procedures, strategic plans, departmental searches) and explicit mention of diversity. During the search, deans, department chairs, and administrators exerted considerable influence onto search processes through their use of institutional and personal interventions. The power supporting these interventions differed from internal power dynamics due to hierarchy and positional authority, with deans and department chairs using more incentives and coercion to advance faculty diversity. Yet it is clear that the enforcement of these measures has received less attention than the incentives themselves. This may be due, in part, to their underlying theories of change, which shaped their perception of progress. While some deans and department chairs approached faculty diversity with urgency, others were more careful, yet could be critiqued for being too cautious to enact change. Altogether, the committees and departments with the most progressive deans and department chairs seemed to have the most positive outcomes, whereas those with mixed and/or less progressive leadership experienced less success related to diversity.
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

In 1964, United States Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart uttered the phrase “I know it when I see it,” in his attempt to describe what legally constituted obscenity in Jacobellis v. Ohio. This now-famous phrase was originally used when the Justice was unable to describe the legal threshold of what constituted hard-core pornography, opting instead for a “common sense test.” It is now ubiquitously used to describe orders of phenomena that are difficult to categorize yet many are commonly familiar with. The term “fit” in faculty search committees seems to have reached a similar level of “I know it when I see it”: used to evoke some semblance of shared understanding, yet lacking specific parameters and measurements. This single word has provoked many scholars into unraveling its mysteries (see, for example, Danowitz Sagaria, 2002; Reece et al., 2019; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017), yet with limited success. These studies fall short because they do not use an empirical definition of fit, or support conclusions with literature on candidate evaluation and selection, doing little to influence institutional behavior and decision-making. Thus, this study was originally motivated by a very simple question: using empirical literature on how employers consider fit in personnel selection, do faculty members actually consider fit in their own selection of candidates?

As the study progressed, I realized that understanding whether faculty members considered fit or not was not enough to understand who gets hired and who does not. Similar to racism in a societal context, preferences (or prejudices) do not contribute to national hiring disparities (or systemic inequities) alone; systemic inequities are the result of prejudices (or faculty preferences) requiring activation through power and action. Otherwise stated, in real-life contexts, committee members may have their own preferences, but preferences require power, influence, and direction in order to generate hiring decisions. Moreover, policies and practices
enacted by Deans, department chairs, and faculty colleagues also impact committee decision-making. Thus, both internal and external power dynamics envelop search committee members’ assessments, and situate them within broader departmental and institutional structures of history, factions, and leadership.

Finally, it was important to situate these frameworks – both fit and power – within a broader system of race and racism using Critical Race Theory (CRT). A CRT framing provokes traditionally race-neutral frameworks into centering people of color, and advances more critical questions: how does fit as a system of preferences and judgments subjugate candidates of color, and how might power be used in ways that advance and/or disadvantage them? Integrating race throughout both results chapters was purposeful, and speaks to the nature of how race and racism is deeply entrenched in modern-day practices and policies. The overall purpose of this study was to understand how these interlocking concepts operate within faculty search committees, the most essential and primary conduit of academic hiring at American colleges and universities.

**The Façade of Fit and Preponderance of Power: Summary of Findings**

In what follows, I situate key findings pertaining to each research question, articulate contributions to the primary theories and literature on faculty search behaviors, and review implications for research and practice.

**Research Question 1:** Do faculty members consider organizational fit in selection? If so, what are the different dimensions (i.e. type, characteristics, weight) of fit?

These results show that fit is limited to considerations of subject expertise alignment with the position description, and subject expertise alignment with the department’s research infrastructure. These criteria only eliminated a fraction of the pool in all searches; nearly all
other filter criterion used to winnow candidates lacked sufficient measurement, consensus, and/or relationship to the department, making them idiosyncratic preferences rather than criteria-based empirical fit. Stated otherwise, the fit assessed through subject expertise likely explained 20 to 25 percent of personnel selection decisions, whereas individual faculty preferences regarding predominantly research and few teaching parameters constituted the remaining 75 to 80 percent. Although the criteria categories faculty members assess at a research-intensive institution is remarkably stable across groups – quality researchers, good teachers, and agreeable colleagues–, the contents of those categories or what encompasses impactful research, how many publications and in what journals, and the markers of a quality teacher – are significantly varied and unarticulated. Moreover, the departmental criteria illustrate how searches are as much about the department as the candidates themselves, casts doubt on meritocracy, and demonstrates how searches are far less about fit than they are other phenomena, such as elevating status and managing risk.

**Research Question 2**: How do internal and external power dynamics emerge and influence individual assessments of fit?

Results indicate that internal power dynamics occur during committee deliberations, whereas external power dynamics emerge before, during, and after committee selection, both affecting individual assessments of fit in different ways. Inside the committee, maintaining collegiality was the highest priority, which affected the nature of discussions and tactics employed (i.e. consensus-building, turn-taking, deferring power). As the search developed and required more contentious decision-making, faculty members leveraged their expertise and legitimacy in order to exercise more influence on selection decisions. Collegial tactics ensured that all voices and preferences were accounted for, while more traditional forms of power
contributed to a failed search in the humanities department, and two positions (although neither candidates contributed to the institution’s racial diversity objectives), rather than one, offered in the life sciences department.

Outside of the committee, various external constituencies (i.e. Deans, department chairs, and departmental colleagues) impacted the search and influenced individual assessments. Hiring priorities influenced committee assessments prior to committee formation and evaluation. Departmental subdivisions, resources, and rankings impacted which searches were highly prioritized and which were relegated, invariably shaping the eligible pool of candidates to even be considered and opportunities for diversity. Both before and during the search, Deans and department chairs had a number of different strategies they employed to influence the process, such as institutional search briefings and personal strategies. Faculty recounted how these initiatives shaped their committee activities; such as the physical sciences Dean bringing in a diversity consultant, or social sciences interpreting the Dean’s priorities and diversity practices. Leader’s theories of change likely shaped the vigor and urgency of implementation, and the perception of progress. Committees and departments with the most inventive department chairs and Deans had the most positive procedural and hiring outcomes, whereas those with mixed and/or less inventive leadership experienced less success.

**Research Question 3**: What role does race play in committee assessments of fit and power dynamics in selection processes?

Ideals and assumptions about the role of race in selection were prevalent throughout fit and power analyses. In regards to perceived fit, search committee participants had various conceptions about how race and other forms of identity ought to be addressed in selection: ranging from the least progressive Legalistic and Equivocal perspectives, to the broader and
more encompassing Equalizer and Integrative perspectives. Regardless of whether faculty believed race and ethnicity should be a factor in selection, these also found their way in the search through vehicles of bias: individually-held notions regarding narrow research agendas, the value of institutional status, and letters of recommendation affected the landscape of opportunity for candidates of color. Despite purported claims of meritocracy and race-neutrality, the two-slot practice to encourage diversity, while beneficial, illustrated how faculty participants still considered race in evaluation, and reconfigured preferences and decisions in order to maximize outcomes in a real-life setting.

In terms of power, race primarily materialized in the external forces that shaped the search. Prior to the search, there were varying considerations of race when determining hiring priorities. Some departments created supportive structures that encouraged broader participation, which resulted in more diverse hiring priorities, while one department went even further and explicitly integrated diversity into the position description. Race was also central in Dean and department strategies; both institutional and personal interventions were used to promote diversity, yet with varying levels of success and enforcement. Although the reward and incentive structures to increase diversity were well developed, the negative reinforcement and/or punishment mechanisms were less clearly articulated, of which faculty participants were keenly aware.

**Research Question 4**: How does perceived fit, power, and race vary by selection stage within a single committee, and/or vary across discipline-specific committees (cases)?

I originally critiqued the search committee literature for its lack of comparative methods and variation, failing to generalize to wider settings. This study sought to examine how search mechanics of evaluation, power, and race varied by selection stage within a single committee,
and between different departmental disciplines. Selection stage results indicated that evaluation slightly varied across stages of selection, with greater consideration of person-job (P-J) assessment in earlier stages and person-organization (P-O) in later stages, in accordance with the literature. External power did not vary by stage of selection, yet internal power did: collegial tactics dominated the formation of the short-list, and more traditional tactics of expert and legitimate power were more prevalent during finalist selection. Considerations of race slightly varied; although no diversity perspective was more or less common during certain selection stages, considerations of broad and narrow research were more prevalent when selecting amongst finalists, rather than the general pool of candidates.

In terms of disciplinary differences, the humanities department had the greatest emphasis on organizational fit and integrating race and ethnicity throughout the search (through both an evaluation and power lens). The life science search had exemplary leadership that supported diversity through supportive initiatives and strategic hiring, yet had greater emphasis on individual preferences, and broad v. narrow research. The physical sciences had a similarly strong emphasis on individual preferences, yet less strategic leadership compared to life sciences and humanities. Further, they had the greatest proportion of less progressive participants in regards to considering race in candidate evaluation (i.e. Legalistic and Equivocal perspectives), theories of change (i.e. incrementalists), and had the greatest reliance on letters of recommendation to ascertain quality. Finally, the social sciences committee was the most moderate of the four searches: mixed power dynamics both inside and outside of the committee, and a moderate emphasis on both individual and organizational preferences.
Theoretical Contributions

Contributions to Fit Literature

While nearly all of the fit in selection studies have been similarly motivated by the question of whether fit actually exists in selection, this study still makes unique contributions in three underexplored dimensions: race, selection stage, and career type. First, an enduring critique of organizational behavior and theory is that they inadequately address race and racism (NKomo, 1992; Ray, 2019). The same can be argued for person-environment fit studies as a microcosm of the larger organizational behavior literature. For example, Adkins and colleagues (1994) were one of the original contributors on the study of fit as an antecedent of selection, rather than a consequence, and found a minor relationship between the two. They controlled for a variety of characteristics, including candidate’s race, yet failed to discuss results related to race despite statistically significant results. Analyses showed that recruiters rated white applicants as more generally employable and having better fit within the organization compared to minoritized groups, even after controlling for qualification variables. The authors were silent on this finding, which qualifies as a serious omission that could have advanced racial equity in workplaces and organizations. This study sought to partially rectify this chasm by deliberatively focusing on how the concept and theory of fit affects the hiring opportunities for candidates of color.

This study also contributes to the small segment of the literature on selection stage differences, providing credence to Chuang & Sackett’s (2005) findings. In line with Kristoff-Brown’s (2000) initial differentiation between P-O and P-J fit in selection, Chuang & Sackett hypothesized that employers weighed these concepts differently based on selection stage. They found that P-J fit was more important than P-O fit in the earliest stages, that P-J fit decreases in importance in later stages, and that P-O becomes more important in the final interview. In other
words, P-J fit coincided with assessing minimal qualifications, and P-O fit (their personality and values) was weighed more heavily after candidates demonstrated sufficient capability to at least perform the job. This study found similar evidence: that faculty screen for job capability in the earliest stages, and values and personality more so in later stages. However, this study also found an important divergence: the relationship is non-linear in academic settings, with some faculty using personality in order to partially assess candidate’s capability to perform the job. This may be because participants believed that personality was important for teaching and collegiality, two primary functions of the job and cornerstones of academia.

The larger finding of faculty members not considering fit in selection, and the smaller finding on the non-linear nature of considering personality in candidate evaluation may both be attributed to career differences, the third contribution of this study. Fit studies are largely quantitative and document more traditional, private sector jobs. Other job types and sectors such as blue-collar jobs, public sector jobs, and non-profit jobs are noticeably scant in the literature. Sekiguchi & Huber (2011) touch on this by differentiating between fit assessments and the position’s contract duration (permanent vs. fixed-term) and task element (managerial vs. knowledge-intensive), but additional studies are needed. This study provides emergent evidence on the nuanced nature of candidate evaluation in knowledge-intensive vocations.

Contributions to Power Literature

These results make a contribution to the primary power literature, and to how theories of power are applied in higher education. In terms of the power literature, this study sheds new light on both the measurements (Pfeffer, 1981) and sources (French & Raven, 1959) of power. Research states that power is an inherently relational construct between social actors, whom can be arranged by their interests and preferences. Traditionally, those whose preferences are
maximized in group-decisions are said to be most powerful, whereas those with less representation are less powerful. However, faculty members in this study intentionally attempted to level the playing field; attempts to stack the short-list with individual preferences would likely be met with resistance and hostility. In other words, the traditional measure of power is insufficient in academic settings, simply because a committee member has less of their preferences realized does not mean they lacked power. On the contrary, especially in the case of more senior members relinquishing power to more junior faculty members, status was more indicative of power than preferences alone.

Additionally, none of the current sources of power adequately capture the collegial nature of faculty deliberations. Again, collegiality did not preclude the prevalence of other forms of power; for example, expert and legitimate power were on display when the pressure to select a finalist increased. Reward and, to a lesser extent, coercive sources of power informed leader’s initiatives and interventions. Yet there were also instances where decisions were still made without any of these forms of influence. It would not be appropriate to characterize these interactions as lacking power, especially since participants still reached consensus in their decision-making with varying, sometimes competing, interests. Although collegiality is closest to referent power, referent power characterizes influence between individuals, rather than a system designed to promote consensus and parity. Additional work is needed in other academic settings to fully understand the power and influence of collegiality as this study affirms that these norms are strong in consensus-based decision processes.

Finally, results of this study contribute to the application of power frameworks to the study of higher education. The most relevant applications of power onto higher education practices show that faculty, staff, and administrators employ numerous tactics (i.e. oppression,
silencing, controlling) in order to enact their own ideals of change (Kezar, 2011; Kezar & Lester, 2011). Although some of these strategies may exist in the general population of faculty searches, they were not observed in this study. This is likely because power analyses in other higher education studies were of phenomena with more endurably different constituencies, whereas participants in this study were largely faculty and leaders within the same divisional structures and interest in departmental reputation. For the future study of group-based processes, especially in academic units, these forms of power tactics may be less relevant.

Contributions to Critical Race Theory (CRT) Literature

This study makes an important contribution to the CRT literature. Ray (2019) articulates it best when he states, “organizational theory scholars typically see organizations as race-neutral bureaucratic structures, while race and ethnicity scholars have largely neglected the role of organizations in the social construction of race” (p. 1). Indeed, I have already critiqued the organizational behavior literature for their omission of race and racism in organizational research. Yet CRT scholars are not blameless either; many studies have lagged behind in definitely articulating how race and racism is built into organizations and decision-making processes. When some studies purport to do so, they describe the “structures” of inequity – be it in education, health, housing, or otherwise – without articulating what the structures actually entail (Treviso, Harris, & Wallace, 2008). This study makes a contribution to the CRT literature by materializing the underlying structures of faculty hiring, such as the voting procedures used to generate hiring priorities, strategic plans that map out current and future hires, and top-down practices employed (or not) to advance faculty diversity. Further, this study elaborates on how each of these features are deployed to either enhance or inhibit faculty diversity.
**Contribution to Search Committee Literature**

At the onset of this study, I critiqued the search committee literature for three primary limitations: a lack of integration between its primary parts, lack of organizational theories, and limited comparative methods that situated committees in their real-life contexts. By using a multiple case-study approach and organizational theories to investigate both selection characteristics and racial biases, this study aimed to rectify those limitations. However, this study also makes contributions to the substance and content of these studies as well.

Several scholars (e.g. Danowitz Sagaria, 2002; Moody, 2015; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017) have demonstrated that the word “fit” is used as a gatekeeping mechanism to marginalize candidates of color. For example, Danowitz Sagaria (2002) found that it was used in place for having the appropriate “cultural capital,” meant to exclude those who did not behave in ways deemed appropriate. Yet this study reaches beyond fit as a word and investigates fit as a framework: a system and collection of assumptions, practices, and tactics that describe how faculty members evaluate and select candidates. In other words, it is not just how a singular word disadvantages candidates of color, but how an overarching framework on the nature of candidate evaluation – which has often been described as who “fits” and who doesn’t – disadvantages candidates of color in evaluation. This study found evidence that fit as a collection of practices attuned to the organization’s needs does not exist, yet is instead a collection of practices attuned to the individual’s needs and/or their own beliefs of what the department needs. It is through this, alongside their own racial attitudes, and larger departmental- and institutional-dynamics of power, which subordinate candidates of color.
Implications for Future Research

General Implications for Future Research

This study has several general implications for the study of faculty search committees within higher education. First, future work should conduct observations whenever possible. In this current study, conducting observations was approved by the IRB yet faced more difficulty in terms of faculty buy-in. Aggressive and preemptive buy-in strategies are likely necessary in order to conduct observations of search committee deliberations. Observations can strengthen future study by studying power dynamics and interpersonal communications in greater depth, and provide more clarity on how faculty members negotiate within a climate of collegiality.

Second, future study should consider including data collection at more than one institution. The current study’s focus on one institution could be critiqued, but there was abundant variance across departments within the same institution. Indeed, several scholars have noted the importance of departmental and disciplinary differences (Clark, 1987; Kezar et al., 2015), and this study found that different departments were sufficiently different enough to conduct multiple case-study analyses. The benefit of adding additional institutions therefore is adding institutional variance, examining the extent to which different institutional-wide practices and policies impact faculty hiring. This could be achieved by either comparing similarly high-research activity institutions like Northfield University, or different institutional types to examine how institutions do less with more (or not).

Using different institutions presents the opportunity to also include similar or divergent disciplines from those found at the original site, the third implication for future research. For example, comparing the same biology department at different institutions may yield either drastically different or remarkably stable results. Stable results would more strongly indicate the
presence of a “national field” effect, with like-departments operating similarly across institutions. Conversely, divergent results may indicate more unique differences, either attributed to the institutional climate, or unique circumstances happening within each departmental context.

**Alternative Evaluative Frameworks**

As previously stated, this study was not intended to merely debunk the use of a singular word, yet rather understand and interrogate the bundle of assumptions and practices that underlie candidate evaluation and selection, and the broader systems that envelop it. The normative selection model of person-environment fit from organizational behavior was an appropriate starting place, since it provides a great deal of empirical knowledge on human resource decisions, interviewing, and selection. This study found that this model of person-environment fit is not appropriate for candidate evaluation within faculty search committees. Since results of the current study dispute this model, I briefly provide three alternative frameworks that may better contextualize this data, and be of use for the future critical study of faculty search committees. I do not review alternate theories to power and CRT, as these were generally sufficient in contextualizing candidate evaluation.

**Status attainment and maintenance.** Since the fit bar was relatively low, the normative selection model cannot fully explain faculty hires alone. A metaphor for the fit model would be finding the correct puzzle piece (or candidate) for a puzzle, yet this analogy is limited because the board is only one-dimensional, and does not account for the ways in which faculty attempt to maximize prestige among many candidates who fit (via research novelty, productivity, etc.). Instead, a significant portion of this study’s evidence point to status attainment and maintenance as the prevailing framework in faculty selection. A status attainment framework amplifies the
puzzle piece analogy by adding a necessary second dimension (y-axis). First, candidates fit alongside the x-axis – or puzzle board, then are elevated or lowered along the y-axis based on how faculty evaluate their credentials in an attempt to maximize prestige and legitimacy. Otherwise stated, faculty members are not merely identifying someone that “fits” as is anecdotally described, but someone that will optimally raise the status and prestige of their subfield and department using their own ideals of quality and merit, with minimal consideration of diversity. However, the candidate that raises the status of the department the most may not the most suitable for the job.

Several aspects of the data support this perspective. First, cloning biases were evident across several searches, especially in the physical sciences. Cloning bias refers to the tendency to “undervalue a candidate’s educational credentials and career preparation” because they do not align with evaluator’s, or of stereotypically highly qualified candidates (Moody, 2015). Subject expertise was used as a filter to hire in areas the department already had represented, over areas that lacked adequate representation. The only counterexample was when Dr. Vavreck stated that they would hire a survey methodologist over a candidate that does experiments because “we have five of you already.” Yet even this stance was not entirely impervious to status maximization preferences, as she stated, “I would say that that’s not a default for us that we wouldn’t hire that [experimental] person. The department’s MO has typically been always [to] privilege talent.” In other words, if the status were high enough, P-J fit would even be a negligible factor. This was also observed in the life sciences’ major criterion of ‘being a scientist’ with a lab, and not some other form of research.

The equalizer perspective in evaluation also supports a status attainment framework. When faculty members only use race and ethnicity to settle a difference between candidates,
they are considering everything but race and ethnicity until the very end of the process. In this sense, committee members try to maximize status until they must consider the demographic characteristics of the candidate and comply with university goals. When race is treated as the “cherry on top” characteristic, faculty fail to see how it is an integrative characteristic in and of itself that shapes how candidates navigate academic settings and affects their research agendas, especially in the humanities and social sciences.

**Risk management and aversion.** Faculty participants were keenly aware about managing and minimizing perceived risk in selection. This demonstrates how selection characteristics alone cannot fully explain search outcomes, and that they are always situated in real-life settings where hires have to be secured at the end of the day. Indeed, there were significant pressures placed on faculty to secure hires, from the legacy of failed searches in the humanities department, to the history of candidates receiving multiple offers in the social sciences. The social sciences’ emphasis on recruitability provides a suitable example of risk aversion in faculty searches. The committee desired candidates that would raise the status of the subfield and department, yet were cognizant of whether or not the candidate was so capable it would be too difficult to recruit them. Thus, in Dr. Zaller’s eyes, “bottom-fishing” – or pursuing candidates one based on perceived attainability - was the most appropriate method to secure a hire, which selection characteristics alone would not account for. Using the previous two-dimensional metaphor as a continued example, if status attainment is how far along the y-axis candidates are elevated, risk management ensures that they do not elevate too high beyond attainability.

The two-slot practice is also suggestive of a risk aversion framework. At the heart of the practice is the adage of “having your cake and eating it too,” enabling faculty to make an offer
to the candidate they want (likely more traditional), but also giving them room to meet the diversity imperative set by the university. But imbedded in this is an assumption that marginalized candidates are considered riskier. One department chair reached a similar conclusion:

   Department Chair: So there was a little bit of risk of we didn't know how well people were assessing in that smaller field versus the larger field. If that person could've hired two, he would've done it. And, uh, I guess it still comes down to people, you know, allowing people to take more risks, in some sense…Uh, implicit in that is somehow you might find that people think…I hope it doesn't come out that, "Well, hiring a diverse candidate is riskier." I don't…I don't mean to say that. I just mean to say that when you start talking to this pool, and you start sort of talking about small numbers, you could be really interested in a candidate who represents diversity, um, but there's something about their fit that isn't perfect. Right?

This department chair acknowledged the perceived risk of using a single FTE to hire a candidate of color that might not be the right “fit.” To mitigate this risk, he suggests the answer lies in hiring two, “allowing people to take more risks.” Despite not wanting to suggest that candidates of color are risky, he does so. In this scenario and perhaps others, why wouldn’t the candidate “who represents diversity” be the most suitable candidate?

   **System 1 and system 2 thinking.** Higher education research in selection decisions is beginning to embrace the literature on cognitive biases and shortcuts in selection decisions (Moody, 2015). Although cognitive biases and short-cuts have a long history in behavioral economics and social psychology (e.g. Tversky & Kahneman, 1973; Tversky & Kahneman, 1974), recent advancements in system 1 thinking, system 2 thinking, and choice architecture
(e.g. Kahneman, 2011; Thaler & Sunstein, 2008) have promising implications for improving faculty searches. This literature details how individuals’ system 1 processing – unconscious and automatic – is triggered in decision-making under certain conditions (i.e. unstructured tasks, incomplete information, time limitations). Conversely, system 2 processing is slower, more deliberative, and is less prone to mental short cuts and simplifying strategies.

Making alterations to the choice architecture is an emerging line of inquiry in the search committee literature. The choice architecture refers to the decision-making context that envelops individual’s choices. This posits that rather than attempting to alter individual’s biases or mental habits, creating better decision-making habitats could encourage more deliberative system 2 thinking and reduce system 1 processing (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008). The choice architecture surrounding faculty searches already has some sound qualities, such as overlapping review of files and institutional checks, but other features of search committee processes found in this study may still allow system 1 thinking to prevail. For example, two of the four searches were limited to just fall quarter, and all four contained information gaps regarding the candidates (especially in the physical sciences case). Thus, it makes sense that committee members relied on materials to fill these gaps: institutional reputation to quickly infer qualify, and letters of recommendation by colleagues in the field to fill in knowledge gaps. Creating the appropriate choice architecture around searches may make faculty less reliant on these materials and system 1 thinking as a whole.

**Implications for Practice**

In truth, empirical fit is not nefarious. The discourse surrounding fit in faculty searches began as many critiqued the term as code to exclude minoritized candidates in hiring procedures (Danowitz Sagaria, 2002; Luz Reyes & Halcon, 1988; Moody, 2015). This study expanded on
that notion and found that fit, as a collection of assumptions and practices meant to evaluate and
select candidates, did not exist in academic faculty searches. Yet person-environment scholars
have found that fit does exist in other settings, and rightly so. The job- and organizational-fit
observed in other industries are built on consensus, measurement, and factors related to the job
and/or organization, all desirable features of personnel searches. This begs several important
questions: can, and should we be assessing for empirical fit in academic careers? And further,
are academic careers even designed in ways to promote this level of rigor in evaluation and
selection?

In regards to the latter question, this study’s findings related to fit are unsurprising when
placed in context, since the design of academic careers does not promote it. First, committees
are designed in ways that do not maximally consider faculty members’ research and
preferences. At minimum, many committees are assembled due to service gaps among the
faculty in the department, with some consideration of diversity too. Once placed on the
committee, high faculty autonomy allows faculty to articulate and impose their own standards
and benchmarks as to what constitutes quality research, sound teaching, and collegial dynamics.
Further, lack of training and rubrics makes it difficult for faculty to reach consensus on the
contents of those parameters. Academic careers and higher education broadly have long been
critiqued for ratcheting towards prestige and status as markers in lieu of standards (O’Meara,
2007). Thus, the fact that faculty hiring resembles the academic careers they are situated in
comes as no surprise. This leads back to the first question: how can institutions create the
capacity for criterion-based fit, or simply better evaluation procedures, within academic search
and selection procedures? Based on the results of this study, I outline several practical
implications to improve hiring processes and enhance faculty diversity.
Rubrics and Standard Criterion

This study joins the chorus of others in advocating for greater use of rubrics and standard criterion in searches (Fine & Handelsman, 2012; Lee, 2014; Moody, 2004, 2015; Turner, 2002). Findings of this study found that the criterion used to evaluate candidates lacked adequate measurement, which resulted in little to no consensus between raters. Rubrics that require faculty to document their assessments with supporting evidence would strengthen both of these factors and increase transparency. Rather than simply rating candidates on factors ranging from one to five, faculty must include supporting evidence on important parameters, such as what made the research impactful, and how many publications are sufficient. Greater detail will make committee members’ internal metrics more transparent, decrease the likelihood of anchoring heuristics, and procedure more fair candidate assessments.

Alongside greater measurement and consensus, faculty must also articulate their fit parameters beyond simply subject expertise agreement with the position and department’s research layout. This begs a greater question that would strengthen rubrics: just what is the department and institution about? Is there a common bond that unites the department beyond simply wanting qualified researchers, and what are important institutional goals that candidates may also satisfy? Typically there is a teaching and/or research hole the department needs to fill with the search for workload reasons, but surely departments are connected by more than just research and teaching qualifications. For instance, some departments are characterized by a strong social-justice emphasis, or the institution is attempting to improve its relationship with the surrounding community through engaged-scholarship. Although faculty in this study had a difficult time describing their departments, they still had implicit departmental assumptions that made their way into evaluation.
Having the committee articulate the departmental and institutional objectives in rubrics is not only important for applying even and fair standards, but would explicitly promote diversity as well. Many departments and institutions purport that they desire diversity, state that the racial and gender diversity of their department is lacking, and some even extol the benefits of faculty diversity while doing so. However, departments rarely enact this, or make it a meaningful criterion in searches. This practice would allow departments to make their values explicit while also benefiting candidates of color.

Rubrics with clearly articulated search criteria, require supporting evidence, and channel departmental and institutional priorities are essential, yet may still be insufficient if they promote ranking candidates. Although rankings may appear to introduce fairness and limit subjectivity, several scholars describe how ranking candidates (i.e. making a candidate number one, two, three, etc.) leads to poor search outcomes. For example, Moody (2015) explains that the rush to rank candidates “leads evaluators to prematurely state their position (he’s clearly number one); close their minds to new evidence; and then defend their stated position to the death.” Further, it promotes an anchoring heuristic, which lead faculty to use one candidate’s credentials as the measuring stick for others, without considering how the first candidate may have different inputs or accumulated career advantages. For these reasons, recent research advocates for threshold lists instead of ranked lists (Bohnet, 2016). Threshold lists require committee members to indicate all candidates they would be willing to hire, which avoids essentializing them and reducing complex social factors into mere numbers. Some have further advocated for appointment authorities, or experts that are well versed in management and selection research (Lee, 2015), to help make the decision among threshold candidates.
Altogether, these recommendations make rubrics more substantively and procedurally equitable.

**Clarity on Race in Selection**

Many of this study’s participants were either unsure on how to address race in selection, unclear as to what “counted” as diversity, or were even unsure if diversity could be considered at all. Administrators and faculty must better articulate the appropriate parameters of race and ethnicity, and other forms of diversity, in candidate evaluation. The emphasis on evaluation activities, as opposed to recruitment and post-hiring support/retention activities, is deliberate, since faculty were already far more knowledgeable on how to consider race in these efforts. Regarding the legalistic perspective, administrators must better articulate the boundaries of state law, and the interplay with federal law for fair hiring practices. Although this study was conducted in a state with onerous laws regarding searching for diversity, similar laws may promulgate across the country.

In terms of the Equivocal perspective, there must be greater clarity on the boundaries and goals of institution’s diversity imperatives. Without clear articulation, faculty may count anything towards the institution’s diversity objectives. This is not to say that facets of identity such as ability or military status are not important, certainly if these are institutional goals then faculty should strive to incorporate them in their evaluation activities. However, results of this study showed that faculty would espouse these dimensions of diversity in place of a focus on race and ethnicity. This will require that leaders authentically assert the benefits of diversity with empirical evidence – such as its effects on group efficiency (Page, 2007), teaching (Stanley, 2006; Umbach, 2006), mentoring (Kosoko-Lasaki, Sonnino, & Voytko, 2006), and
research in a changing society (Fenelon, 2003), simply outside of “state representativeness”
directive that some faculty participants (and even department chairs) halfheartedly imparted.

Institutional leaders must also address how to best approach diversity in evaluation. A
number of faculty in this study were still using outdated practices on integrating diversity in
candidate evaluation, such as equality perspectives (i.e. treating everyone the same) rather than
equity ones. This may have been rooted in their own epistemologies, or they were taking cues
from the institution around what constituted an approach to search procedures. Regardless,
faculty should consider candidates, especially candidates of color, with a more integrative and
holistic lens. This does not mean making exceptions for candidates of color, but searching for
alternate explanations when assessing credentials such as publication record or grant funding. In
the words of Dr. Saltzberg, it is likely that somewhere along their career path, someone
“thought less of them,” which impacts the opportunities afforded to them, their navigation of
career opportunity structures, and ultimately what appears on the CVs that search committee
members assess.

Inclusive Hiring Priorities & Position Descriptions

Before evaluation begins, faculty and administrators can put in place the appropriate
architecture to support inclusive searches. For instance, administrators need to encourage
faculty to think expansively about departmental needs and intersections with diversity, and
create the necessary channels for them to broadcast their opinions. This was best exemplified in
the humanities search, where the department chair created a new voting procedure to generate
the department’s hiring priorities, which led to a broader input base and more diverse searches.
In addition, departmental hires discourage field-specific subdivision conservatism and
concentrating diverse candidates into one subfield, and are further strengthened through
longitudinal strategic plans. Inclusive hiring priorities are made complete when the position itself directly has to do with diversity. If this is difficult to achieve, faculty and leaders could resort to using their understandings of the demographic breakdown of the field, and consider that alongside other factors (e.g. resources, rankings) known to impact a department’s decision to search.

Once the hiring plan is created and search approved, faculty broadcast it via the position description. There is already much work on inclusive position descriptions (e.g. Turner, 2002; Lee, 2014; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017; Smith et al., 2004). The general consensus is to make the position description as broad as possible in order to cast the widest net, yet results of this study provide some caution on this approach. While it is true that casting a broad net could potentially recruit more candidates of color in the general pool, this does nothing to affect narrow conceptualizations of what “fits” the position description. Instead, finding a balance between narrower tailoring for diversity and broad calls may be key. In the humanities search, tailoring the search for diversity not only resulted in a diverse pool, but adjusted faculty members’ evaluative lens to the need for diversity in the evaluation itself. Whenever possible, faculty should specifically consider the emphasis they want and infuse that with an emphasis on diverse or cutting edge ideals, which can only happen if the department creates the room for this emphasis in their hiring priorities. Although this diverges with conventional wisdom, it is a means to align the position description, candidate evaluation, and diversity goals.

**Administrator Power and Enforcement**

Finally, administrators must recognize their own power and influence in this process. In this study, Deans and department chairs influenced the search process through numerous means. These groups should think carefully about the faculty culture at their institution, and implement
initiatives that complement the culture without being paralyzed by it. Moreover, campus leaders across the board can galvanize support for faculty diversity through their appointments: Deans can install supportive department chairs and equity advisors, and department chairs should appoint supportive search committee members. Both of these strategies, creating initiatives and drumming up support, require authenticity and appropriate enforcement. This study found that faculty recognize and internalize both, and consider that throughout the search. For example, some committee participants were able to distinguish between administrators that were serious about diversity, and those that were paying it lip service. Further, Deans and department chairs must seriously consider the enforcement options at their disposal in order to communicate dissatisfaction with slow or no progress on faculty diversity.

Conclusion

This study was motivated by a simple yet enduring question in higher education: what are the barriers and opportunities for hiring more faculty of color? Across higher education research and practice we have witnessed the emergence of important scholarship focused on unveiling the mechanisms of reproduction, most notably in undergraduate admissions and graduate admissions. In undergraduate student admissions, we see higher education’s historical and contemporary legacy of exclusion put on display at some of the nation’s most purportedly progressive institutions (Karabel, 2006). In graduate student admissions, we see how faculty members reproduce inequities by searching for themselves amongst many qualified applicants (Posselt, 2016). These studies confirm what many have known anecdotally all along: who gets selected and who does not is as much, if not more, about the institution than it is about the candidates themselves. Yet this level of depth has not yet been achieved in the faculty hiring discourse, a debate spanning nearly four decades. This study aims to contribute to that gap by
revealing the intricate nature of faculty hiring across several different departments at one research-intensive institution.

At the heart of this study – and recommended implications for inclusive hiring – is challenging institutions to make their intentions, priorities, and values bare for all to see. Yet as the aforementioned research shows this is no easy task, especially since these processes are covert, and change in higher education is slow. Although the “slope of change of best practices [is] positive, but slow,” (Dean Sork, Life Sciences) more must be done. Achieving optimal faculty diversity in an ever-changing democracy will only be achieved in our lifetime by maximizing best practices through innovative research, bold ideas, and courageous leadership.
Appendix A: Interview Protocol for Search Committee Faculty – General Candidate Pool

Prior to the interview
Introduction and thank them for their time
Discuss purpose of the study and interview
Review confidentiality and anonymity assurances
Sign and collect consent form
Permission to record

Background & Context
1. Please state your name, rank, and department for the recording

2. How long have you been within the department? How would you describe the department?
   *Probe*: Structure of the department? (i.e. areas of study, size, ranking)
   *Probe*: Culture of the department? (i.e. collegiality, collaboration, history)

3. How would you describe the search process generally so far?
   *Probe*: What has been interesting/revealing about it? Is it what you expected?
   *Probe*: How would you describe it in relation to previous searches?

Assessing perceived fit (RQ1)
4. With some candidate profiles in mind, can you think of some profiles for the following cases?
   a. Best fit - Think about one or two candidates who you feel would provide the best fit in your department – what were some of the characteristics of these candidates?
      *Probe*: What materials of theirs most influenced this decision in your opinion?

   b. Poor fit - Think about some candidates who you feel would provide the worst fit in your department – what were some of the characteristics of these candidates?
      *Probe*: If they cannot recall easy rejected candidates, ask what criteria items would make somebody incompatible.

   c. Borderline fit – Who were some candidates that you considered borderline or that required more discussion? What was the reason that kept them in consideration?
      *Probe*: What could have improved their chance of making the short-list?

5. Think of a candidate who might be very marketable, in general, for the kind of position you are recruiting, but would not fit your department. What kinds of characteristics would that applicant have?
Determining power in context (RQ2)

6. Who from your personal short-list made it onto the committee short-list? Who didn’t, and why do you think that is?

*NOTE/Self-probe: Pfeffer (1981) notes that power can be measured both in terms of reputational measures (i.e. others mentioning who they perceive as powerful), and particularly in hiring and selection decisions – those whose preferences are most/least represented among the final pool (p. 47).

7. Can you think of a time where there were clear disagreements between committee members regarding candidate qualifications? Or who to place onto the short-list? For example, somebody you thought was a great candidate was somebody else’s borderline or easy reject?

_Probe:_ How was this case resolved?

8. Would you describe anybody (internal or external to the committee) as particularly influential in these decisions? Why?

_Probe:_ How is their influence felt? What signals and/or messages do you receive from your dean and department chair?

_Probe:_ What is your sense that the department will agree with the short-listed candidates?

Role of race in selection (RQ3)

9. Thinking about the entire search process, how and when have you considered race and gender, if at all? When should one?

_Probe:_ How much emphasis should it have compared to other factors?

10. Are you personally satisfied with the racial and gender diversity in moving forward with a short-list for interviews and further review?

*Is there anything I did not ask about that I conceivably should have, or is there anything that I did ask that you would like to clarify on?*

After the interview
Thank them for their time
Turn off the recording
Remind them of the follow-up interview
Reassure them of the confidentiality and anonymity protections
Ask if they have any questions
Appendix B: Interview Protocol for Search Committee Faculty – Final Candidate Pool

Prior to the interview
Introduction & thank them for their time
Discuss purpose of the study and interview
Review confidentiality and anonymity assurances
Sign and collect consent form
Permission to record

Background and Context
1. Please state your name, rank, and department for the recording

2. How is the search going so far? Can you clarify where you are in the process and next steps?
   Probe: May have just completed campus visits and interviews, or decided whom they should hire, or have already made an offer.

Assessing perceived fit (RQ1)
3. Are you satisfied with the batch of candidates that constituted the final pool?

4. Let’s talk about the final candidates, can you describe:
   a. What were the strengths and weaknesses of candidate 1?
   b. What were the strengths and weaknesses of candidate 2?
   c. What were the strengths and weaknesses of candidate 3?

5. With the final candidates in mind, can you think of who would fit the following cases?
   a. Best fit - Think about one or two candidates who you feel would provide the best fit in your department – what were some of the characteristics of these candidates?
      Probe: Top candidate? Not?
      Probe: What materials of theirs most influenced this decision in your opinion?

   b. Poor fit - Think about some candidates who you feel would provide the worst fit in your department – what were some of the characteristics of these candidates?
      Probe: If they cannot recall easy rejected candidates, ask what criteria items would make somebody incompatible.

   c. Borderline fit – Who were some candidates that you considered borderline or that required more discussion? What was the reason that kept them in consideration?
      Probe: What could have improved their chance of making the short-list?
      Probe: What materials helped you assess these characteristics the most?
6. Recall last time we discussed easy elimination, top candidates and borderline candidates. Did the interviews change any evaluations of yours or the committee? For example, did a top candidate become borderline? Did a borderline become a top candidate or reject?

 Probe: What contributed to those differences? Did you perceive your colleagues feel similarly? How did your departmental colleagues feel about the candidates and how was a consensus reached?

**Determining power in context (RQ2)**

7. Who was your personal preference for hiring? Who was ultimately selected?

8. How would you describe the overall group dynamic of the selection process?

9. Were there disagreements concerning the final hire – from inside or outside of the committee? What were some of the sources of disagreement? Were there any surprises?

**Role of race in selection (RQ3)**

10. Thinking about the entire search process, how was diversity addressed? How and when should race and gender be considered, if at all?

11. Were you satisfied with the diversity of the final candidate pool?

*Is there anything I did not ask about that I conceivably should have, or is there anything that I did ask that you would like to clarify on?*

**After the interview**

Thank them for their time
Turn off the recording
Tell them that I will be in touch for member checking purposes, and to share findings
Reassure them of the confidentiality and anonymity protections
Ask if they have any questions
Appendix C: Interview Protocol for Deans

Prior to interview
Introduction and thank them for their time
Discuss purpose of the study and interview
Review confidentiality and anonymity assurances
Sign and collect consent form
Permission to record

Personal Background
1. Can you please state your name and title for the recording?

2. Related to search and hiring procedures, what are your primary responsibilities?

Divisional Context
3. What is your personal guiding practice for search committee involvement?
   Probe: Close involvement? Observer? Mix?

4. What sorts of institutional-level strategies and/or interventions are in place for enhancing faculty diversity?
4b. Are there any that are specific to your division?
   Probe: How effective are they? What have been the previous results? Any challenges?

Faculty Search
5. Deans have an interesting birds eye view of different departments, how would you describe the [redacted] department compared to others? What makes the department unique in the division?
   Probe: Departmental history, composition (divisions, ranks), ranking

6. What is the backstory behind this specific search, if any?
   Probe: How are hiring priorities determined for the department?
   Probe: Do you think these factors will influence the search call, process, or outcome?

7. Do you have any personal goals and/or priorities for this search?
   Probe: A certain research agenda, or a certain methodological approach?

8. What are qualities and characteristics you would hope committee members base their assessments of candidates off of?

9. How, if at all, have you communicated personal goals and/or preferred criteria qualities to search committee members?

10. What role, if any, should considerations of diversity (race, gender, etc) play in the search?
    Probe: Any challenges?
Is there anything I did not ask about that I conceivably should have, or is there anything that I did ask that you would like to clarify on?

**After the interview**
- Thank them for their time
- Turn off the recording
- Tell them that I will be in touch for member checking purposes, and to share findings
- Reassure them of the confidentiality and anonymity protections
- Ask if they have any questions
Appendix D: Interview Protocol for Department Chairs

Prior to interview
Introduction and thank them for their time
Discuss purpose of the study and interview
Review confidentiality and anonymity assurances
Sign and collect consent form
Permission to record

Personal Background
1. Can you please state your name and title for the recording?

2. How would you describe the department? How is it different from other departments within the division and/or across other institutions?
   *Probe*: Structure of the department? (i.e. areas of study, size, ranking)
   *Probe*: Culture of the department? (i.e. collegiality, collaboration, history)

3. Related to search and hiring procedures, what are your primary responsibilities?
   *Probe*: What is the general departmental practice for searches?

Departmental Context
4. What is your personal guiding philosophy for search committee involvement?
   *Probe*: Close involvement? Careful Observer? Mix?

5. What sorts of departmental-level strategies and/or interventions are in place for enhancing faculty diversity?
   *Probe*: How effective are they? What have been the previous results? Any challenges?
   *Probe*: Any coordination with the division and upper-administration?

6. What signals or forms of communication, if any, do you receive from the division and upper-administration?
   *Probe*: What are the Dean’s expectations of the search?

Faculty Search
7. What is the backstory behind this specific search, if any?
   *Probe*: How are hiring priorities determined in the department?

8. What are your personal goals and priorities for this search?
   *Probe*: A certain research agenda, or a certain methodological approach?

9. What factors contributed to the composition of the committee?

10. What are qualities and characteristics you would hope committee members base their assessments of candidates off of?
11. How, if at all, have you communicated personal goals and/or preferred criteria qualities to search committee members?

12. What role, if any, should considerations of diversity (race, gender, etc) play in faculty searches? When? And what are the challenges?
Probe: Are these things exacted?

Is there anything I did not ask about that I conceivably should have, or is there anything that I did ask that you would like to clarify on?

**After the interview**
Thank them for their time
Turn off the recording
Tell them that I will be in touch for member checking purposes, and to share findings
Reassure them of the confidentiality and anonymity protections
Ask if they have any question
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