



**“Hire” Education: Exploring The  
Role Of Unconscious Bias And  
Search Committee Preparedness  
In The Recruitment And Selection  
Of Diverse Faculty And Staff**

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# Objectives

- Discuss unconscious bias and its impact to the hiring process
- Share the findings of my research study
- Provide recommendations and actions for improving the hiring process
- Discussion and Q & A





# Unconscious Bias

- Refers to biases that we are not aware of and that can affect our understanding, actions, and decisions
- Affects the way individuals interact with and perceive others
- Bias can affect even the most culturally
- Bias can impact ability to logically process factors needed to make important decisions
- Bias can impair the integrity of the hiring process in organizations

Turner, & Grauerholz, 2017; Thornton, 2017; Kayes, 2006

# Examples of Unconscious Bias in Hiring

## Gender Bias

Steinpreis, Anders, and Ritzke, examined factors that influenced search committee members when reviewing the curriculum vitae of male and female candidates.

The findings showed that curriculum vitae identified with a male name were viewed as more favorable, even when both male and female candidates had the same qualifications.

Steinpreis, Anders, and Ritzke, 1999





## Examples of Unconscious Bias in Hiring

### Race and Name Bias

Wood, Hales, Purdon, Sejersen, and Hayllar, conducted a field experiment to test the extent of racial discrimination in the recruitment process. The test involved matching candidates of varying races and ethnicities (Black, White, Chinese, and Pakistani) to 987 employment vacancies over an 8-month period.

The findings showed that candidates with names perceived as White were viewed more favorably.

Wood, Hales, Purdon, Sejersen, and Hayllar, 2009



# Managing Bias

- Recognize that you and everyone else have unconscious biases understanding, actions, and decisions
- Where you have unconscious bias, make the effort to learn more about members of that group
- Try using memory joggers to remind yourself of the need to remain vigilant
- Remember: when you're under pressure or when there is a great deal of uncertainty, unconscious bias is more likely to play a role in your decisions
- Recognize that having unconscious biases does not mean you are a bad person

# My Research Study

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# Literature Review



- Higher education tends to reflect the broader society—what is happening in the nation is also occurring on the campuses of colleges and universities
- The homogenous nature of assimilation in the U.S., where people of common backgrounds come together rather than diversify, is a contributing factor
- It is important for today's college students to acquire skills that will allow them to work effectively in heterogeneous environments

(Soria & Johnson, 2017; Jacquette et al., 2016; Kim, Park & Koo, 2015; Karkouti, 2016; Simon, 2015; Hurtado, 2007; Gurin 2002; Gurin, 1999)



# Literature Review

- Students often cite concerns with faculty and staff diversity to improve on their campuses.
- Only 16 percent of the nation's college professors are minorities, with the majority of the nation's Black faculty teach at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).
- As the student demographic becomes increasingly diverse, faculty demographics remain fairly stagnant.

Turner, & Grauerholz, 2017; Thornton, 2017; National Center for Education Statistics, 2017; Kim & Lundberg, 2016; Kayes, 2006; Milem & Hakuta, 2000; Noel & Smith, 1996

# Literature Review



- The crucial role of search committees is often overlooked as a barrier to diversifying faculty and staff and how institutional culture plays a role in recruitment and retention of diverse faculty staff
- Tests of unconscious bias have shown that people of all backgrounds demonstrate unconscious preferences on the basis of gender, race, and sexual orientation; and most people favor the group they are a member of
- The unconscious bias of an organization is embedded in the strategic plan of an organization or how policies and procedures are developed, and if an organization is truly unbiased, the attributes, characteristics, and behaviors of all the members of the organization will result in feeling included and promote inclusivity

(Cuellar, 2017; Segal, 2017; Nichols, 2013)



## Research Questions

What are the perceptions of current hiring practices in higher education?

How does unconscious bias in the hiring process affect faculty and staff diversity?

How can future training better prepare members of search committees to make more effective hiring decisions?

# Theoretical Framework

## Schneider's Attraction-Selection-Attrition Model

Schneider (1987) asserted that “the people make the place” and that the people in the organization determine organizational culture, climate, and practices.



Schneider, 1987

# Methods, Procedures, Type of Analysis, and Limitations

**Methodology:** Qualitative study - Research questions were investigated using a phenomenological approach.

**Participants:** Nine participants included human resources professionals and academic deans employed at colleges and universities in the Midwest U.S.

**Procedures:** The study utilized semi-structured interviews based on research related to diversity in higher education, unconscious bias, and the structure and preparedness of search committee members.

**Analysis:** Each interview was transcribed for data analysis. The qualitative analysis involved identifying common themes that emerged from the data associated with perceptions of search committee structure and the hiring process

**Limitations:** Participants were limited to human resource professionals and academic deans



## Findings

- Current Hiring Practices
- Search Committee Composition
- The “Fit” Factor
- Effects of Unconscious Bias
- Improving the Hiring Process

# Recommendations

The findings of this study reveal a need for strategic changes in hiring practices:

- Greater involvement from human resources professionals with knowledge and experience of best practices.
- Behavior modification training focused specifically on overcoming unconscious bias for individuals participating on search committees.
- Shift the focus to clear and timely position descriptions, to avoid subjective considerations such as “fit” being a factor in selection.
- Increased transparency and better structure for assembling search committees.
- Develop a well-constructed recruitment and selection process that is fair, equitable, and consistent.



# QUESTIONS?

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