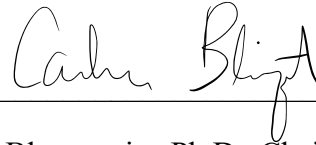




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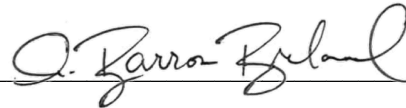
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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERVIEWER GENDER IDENTITY AND  
EVALUATION OF JOB APPLICANT ATTRIBUTES AND ABILITIES IN HIGHER  
EDUCATION

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By

LAWRENCE R. DOTY

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A DISSERTATION IN PRACTICE

Submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School of Creighton University in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in  
Interdisciplinary Leadership

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Omaha, NE

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### Abstract

This dissertation-in-practice (DIP) outlines a quantitative cross-sectional exploratory pilot study on the topic of interviewer gender identity and job applicant evaluation. Through the introduction of the topic, review of literature, and methodology, the real-world relevance and challenges surrounding equal-opportunity employment for women in the United States was explored. Specifically, the study explored the relationship of interviewer gender identity and job applicant evaluations. ANCOVA and Independent *t* test analyses were conducted; however, limitations due to sample size restricted the statistical analyses from drawing conclusions. Descriptive statistics were used to reach conclusions. 91.67% participants reported a gender identity of female (N = 11), with the remaining participant identifying as male (N = 1). The perceived gender identity of applicants was reported as 75.00% female (N = 9) and 25.00% male (N = 3). The study revealed opportunities for the participating institution to further explore strategies that add mechanisms to recruit a more diverse applicant pool, create greater consistency in the interview process to mitigate bias, and align equity strategy with strategic priorities to create a culture appealing to *all* stakeholders.

## **Dedication**

This dissertation in practice is dedicated to the memory of Kathy McCloskey Doty and Leo Bailey, Sr. Kathy challenged the oppressive norms of gender inequity as a leader in higher education. She is not here to read this, she lived and experienced it. Her passion inspired me; her fierceness helped me become the person I am. Leo showed me how to write, how to emotionally express experiences in this world with the pen. May this exploratory pilot study, and what we may learn beyond, honor their memories.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my committee members, Dr. Bloomquist and Dr. Walker. Thank you for providing counsel that helped me learn as a student, grow as a leader, and be a more altruistic member of society. I would like to thank my program advisor, Dr. Leah Georges, for helping me find my way back and creating a plan to finish my doctoral studies. I have been blessed by extraordinary family and friends who have supported me on this journey. Thank you to my mother, Nancy Bailey, for believing in what I could do without being limited by the *should* do. Thank you to my wife, Lianna Doty, for picking me up when I was down, providing perspective about our great life, and helping me be my best self. Thank you to my brother-in-law and sister-in-law, Tim and Peggy Lavanger, for helping me to keep moving forward and always having my back. Thank you to my father, Robert Doty. Your commitment, focus, and intelligence have provided an example I strive to impersonate daily.

To my son, Jack Tulio Doty. You are the legacy of my life. May this show you the possibilities of life; people, including me, may not always understand your passions or agree with your decisions. You get to experience how kindness, authenticity, and an understanding of other individuals' truths can make our world better one experience at a time. You get to decide how your life impacts our society. I am honored to be your father and know you will continue to bring light to others.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Chapter one of this dissertation in practice (DIP) introduces the topic of gender identity and interviewer evaluation. Through the exploration of interviewer demographic data and corresponding applicant evaluations, this study intended to build upon the extant literature to inform future practices at a non-profit, geographically-dispersed institution of higher education. Chapter one reviews the statement of problem, purpose of the study, research question and hypotheses, aim of the study, definition of relevant terminology, methodology overview, and reflections of the scholar-practitioner.

### **Statement of Problem**

The Equal Pay Act of 1963 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 established laws to prevent discrimination in the workplace (Dobbins, 2009; Mello, 2019). Many organizations deployed equal-opportunity and diversity programs in hopes of promoting compliance with federal regulations (Dobbins, 2009). However, organizations use many different types of equal-opportunity practices to comply with federal regulations which have influenced the rate of inequities that continue to exist (Dobbins, 2009). While most programming yields beneficial results, practice alignment and accountability measures with programmatic intent have shown varying success in achieving non-discriminatory workplaces. Specifically, racial minorities and women remain underrepresented in leadership roles and higher paying positions due to ineffective or poorly implemented equal-opportunity practices. For example, some practitioners may view equal-opportunity practices as an impressionist effort to appease legal entities, clients, or public perception and therefore do not implement transformative changes (Rivera, 2012). According to

Baum (2021), “sixty percent of employed Americans have experienced or witnessed discrimination at work on the grounds of race, gender, age, or LGBT identity (p.16).”

Perceived gender equity has improved in recent decades with larger numbers of women entering the workforce, however, women still comprise a minority of leadership roles in many sectors (Pedulla & Thebaud, 2015). Females account for approximately 47% of the workforce in the United States, however, only 26.9% of chief executives are female (Mello, 2019). This influence corresponds with evidenced gaps in gender wages and representation (Rattan et al., 2019). Rattan et al. illuminate this gap through earnings data, “estimates of median weekly earnings show that among full-time wage and salary workers in the United States, women make only 81% of white men’s earnings” (p. 81).

The level of organizational diversity is reflective of the efforts to implement equal-opportunity hiring practices (Song et al., 2017). Since the 1990’s, a disproportionate increase in the number of female workers in the human resource field has driven a corporate shift towards equal gender opportunity (Dobbins, 2009). Research on hiring decisions has shown that gender role stereotypes have impacted equal-opportunity efforts as individuals are more likely to be hired for roles in which their gender aligns with the occupational stereotype rather than the occupational requirements (Rice & Barth, 2017). Gender bias in the hiring process has influenced many outcomes, such as suitability ratings and salary offers.

Research surrounding employment has often focused on the skills of the workforce or the supply of skilled workers available. Limited attention has been given to the attitudes and perceptions of those involved in the hiring process and how that might influence the equal-opportunity of those being considered in the hiring process (Agmon

et al., 2016). It is important to understand the decision-making process and how individual preferences influence decision-making strategies (Cornwall et al., 2018). Gender stereotypes can be found in the applicant evaluation and decision-making process for both men and women (Goldman et al., 2006). Long held social norms reinforce social role theory (Eagly et al., 2012) and role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) which limits the opportunities women have to enter, stay, and advance in the workforce. While research has been conducted on gender stereotypes, bias, and decision-making characteristics in the workplace (Koch et al., 2015; Woods & Eagly, 2016), what remains unknown is what relationship an interviewers' gender identity has with the evaluation of applicants in the hiring process. As a result of different decision-making strategies used by men and women (Hannagan & Larimer, 2010), more work is needed to understand how these differential strategies influence recommendations for hiring when in an interview setting.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this exploratory pilot study quantitative study is to examine the relationship between interviewer gender identity (independent variable) and evaluation of applicant attributes and abilities (dependent variables) at a mid-sized, geographically dispersed, non-profit university.

### **Research Question**

The following research question guided this quantitative exploratory pilot study: What is the relationship between interviewer gender identity and the evaluation of applicant attributes and abilities during the interview process? The research hypotheses were derived from the literature surrounding gender biases within the workplace, the

influence of bias on decision-making (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Hess, 2013), and the effects of gender-based language on perception or bias (Bruckmuller & Abele, 2013; Kendall & Tannen, 2015, Stout & Dasgupta, 2011). The following null hypotheses were investigated in this study:

**Null Hypothesis 1:** All interviewers will identify the same number of agentic and communal attributes for all applicants regardless of perceived applicant gender identity.

**Null Hypothesis 2:** All interviewers will rate the abilities of all applicants the same regardless of perceived applicant gender identity.

### **Aim of the Study**

The aim of this DIP is to inform strategies that promote diversity and equal-opportunity in the hiring process by exploring the relationship between gender identity and interviewer evaluations of applicants. The study's findings can be used to inform recommended changes to the interview process, interview participants' preparations, and interviewer development or training needed to promote diversity and equal-opportunity. The recommendations developed from the combined literature review and findings of this DIP study may provide guidance for non-profit and educational leaders to inform decisions surrounding policies and procedures to improve equal-opportunity practices.

### **Definition of Relevant Terms**

The following terms are used within this study:

*Ability score:* The agreement-level indicated for each question on the seven-point agreement scale was added together and divided by the total number of questions (seven) to create a total abilities score.

*Attribute score:* An average attribute score was calculated for each participant by adding the agreement-level scores indicated for the attribute evaluative statements together and dividing the sum by the total number of questions (three). That score was then be multiplied by the total number of attributes identified from the list to create a total attribute score.

*Diversity:* The perception or existence of differences between individuals or groups (Homan, 2019).

*Equal-opportunity:* Employment that does not discriminate against employees based on race, sex, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, disability, family history, genetic information, or military history (Smith, 2013).

*Person-Organization fit:* Level of perceived congruence between individuals' and an organization's values (Cable & Judge, 1997).

*Gender:* Gender refers to culturally defined roles, attributes, and expectations through the categorization of binary or non-binary roles; often studied as male and female (Heise et al., 2019, Pelletier et al., 2016).

*Gender Identity:* An individual understanding of the gendered aspects of oneself in relation to the cultural meanings of feminism and masculinity (Wood & Eagly, 2015).

### **Methodology Overview**

Quantitative, cross-sectional design was selected for this study due to the desire to learn more about the relationship between multiple variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The population for the study was comprised of employees who are asked to evaluate job applicants during interviews at a mid-western based, non-profit institution of higher education with locations that are geographically-dispersed throughout the United

States. The sample consisted of volunteer employee participants who elected to participate in the study when providing evaluative feedback to the hiring manager after job applicant interviews. Employee feedback was obtained through the institutions survey platform. Electronic surveys provide a more optimal environment for responses because respondents can remain anonymous, response rates may be higher, and the feedback can be more candid than in a paper survey or interview (Watson, 1998).

Participants were asked to respond to three sets of questions (1) their demographic questions and the applicants perceived gender identity, (2) their assessment of the applicants' attributes, and (3) their assessment of the applicants' abilities. The survey instrument was created by analyzing current practices of the participating institution and creating a standardized approach through partnership with the participating institutions human resource department. Data obtained from the surveys was exported from the institution's survey platform into Microsoft Excel and then imported into SPSS for data analysis.

An analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was run controlling for the covariant of perceived applicant gender identity, independent variable of interviewer gender identity and dependent variables of attributes and abilities. Assumptions were tested by reviewing independence of observations, outliers (histogram), distribution of residuals for each category of the independent variable (descriptive statistics), and homogeneity of variances (Levene's test).

### **Delimitations, Limitations, and Personal Biases**

Delimitations of the study surrounded organizational size and structure. The institution where this study was conducted is mid-sized with an approximate enrollment

of 7000 students and population of 1400 employees. The structure that has been implemented to support the mission and operations of the university may differ from other institutions of smaller, similar, or larger populations. The size and organizational structure of any institution informs the needs that hiring is seeking to address.

Limitations of the study included survey design, electronic survey deployment, and market conditions that influenced hiring opportunities of the participating institution. As mentioned previously, electronic survey deployment provides a more optimal environment for higher response rates; however, it also poses greater challenge due to the intricacies of constructing an effective electronic based questionnaire and developing instructions for the respondent to successfully use the instrument (Watson, 1998). The survey design limits feedback to specific areas of applicant evaluation with one field for comments at the end of the survey, should a respondent want to provide narrative to the hiring manager. While the areas are conducive to obtain evaluative feedback across all departments and locations in a structured manner, which limits potential interviewer bias (Levashina et al., 2017), it negates the opportunity for respondents who would prefer a different format of feedback (in-person, or with narrative explanation) or have evaluative feedback outside of the standard areas.

The sample size was also a limitation of the study. 91.67% participants reported a gender identity of female (N = 11), with the remaining participant identifying as male (N = 1). The anticipated sample size was adversely impacted by market conditions within the industry of higher education. Within a week of the study launch, the participating institution prescriptively informed hiring managers that replacement and new full-time employment opportunities would be limited due to financial forecasts. Comparatively, the

participating institution had an average of 45 full-time position postings from January 2022 – March 2022; by August 17, 2022 the full-time position postings had declined 71.61% (N = 10). The sample population was neither representative of the current employee population, nor substantial enough to generalize across the population of the participating institution. (Babbie, 2017; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The contextual elements of the market also limited the study through the analysis of job type. The sample contained interviewers reviewing applicants for roles across a spectrum of hierarchy levels in the organization (faculty, associate vice president, and admissions advisor). A larger sample would have provided opportunity to analyze characteristics and qualities for different levels of employment positions at the participating institution. The participating institution lacked prescription regarding who, or what roles, participate in the interview process. While specific departments may have established steps for the interview process, the interviewer selection process (applicant evaluators) was inconsistent across departments at the participating institution.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) state, “Being objective is an essential aspect of competent inquiry; researchers must examine methods and conclusions for bias” (p.7). I have worked at the participating university for over 14 years. Potential personal bias may exist because I have experiences and relationships with employees of the university. However, to mitigate the impact of my personal bias I have chosen to use a quantitative survey study design which helps because respondent identification information will be anonymous in the data set; however, my history within the institution does influence the conclusions drawn and recommendations provided. Therefore, my DIP committee helped

me mitigate the impact of my bias by providing feedback and direction when my bias may have influenced my interpretations.

### **Reflections of the Scholar-Practitioner**

Heelan (1992) reasoned that the postmodern condition of knowledge has stirred a crisis of disillusionment in the academe. “For many centuries, Catholic and secular higher education shared the same assumption, that universal, perennial, objective truth...is available to human reason unhampered by bias” (Heelan, 1992, p. 92). Behuniak (2003), quotes Pedro Freire, “washing one’s hands of conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral” (p. 359). Equal-opportunity legislation was born from activism, implemented in practice by personnel departments, spread through proclamation of best practices, and driven by organization knowledge and intent. Reflective persons are deliberate; and true reflection encompasses the environment and atmosphere of ethical deliberation (Byron, 2008).

Equal-opportunity is represented in most organizations from a legal perspective, while practices and outcomes may not indicate that such opportunities exist (Arneson, 2018). Most organizations have equal-opportunity policies in place to meet compliance measures of federal law, and to avoid the possibility of negative litigation or public relations. One of the most challenging theories of any discussion of equity or equality is that of silence implying complicity, as referenced previously with the quote from Freire (Behuniak, 2003). Silence can be rooted in the unknown, in fear, and strategy. Regardless of motivation behind silence it can quickly become complicit with the majority, or those in power or authority.

Embracing diverse perspectives begins with the acknowledgment that one has different experiences, and that difference can be strength. Personally, I feel the failure of my own leadership in advancing policy and action to promote a culture of equal-opportunity that centers on employee well-being and outcomes versus preferences of those making hiring decisions. It is not intended to minimize experience; but rather, to catapult the differences that make diversity and equal-opportunity a strength into a safe space that is free from fear for further advancement.

Sawhill and Reeves (2016) reflect on Amartya Sen's simple question surrounding equality; in what essence are we exploring equality in and of itself? While the notion of equality is embraced in the United States as a bipartisan right, its definition and measurements are as varied as the best practices used to implement the laws promoting equal-opportunity practices. Questions assessing, defining, and building upon practices of equal-opportunity can move a voice from complicit silence to aspirations of hope. It is my hope to build upon the body of knowledge previously explored and add narrative to the evolving discussion of equal-opportunity.

### **Summary**

This quantitative exploratory pilot survey study was designed to explore the relationship between interviewer gender identity and the evaluation of job applicants in the interview process. The outcomes of the study may be used to promote strategies that enhance diversity and equal-opportunity in higher education. The forthcoming literature review will explore the current body of knowledge surrounding equal-opportunity and diversity in the workplace.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter two explores the literature on why federal regulations on equal-opportunity are needed, what the equal-opportunity legislation provides, and how equal-opportunity practices (such as hiring practices) can vary between organizations. The literature is explored through the lens of organizational justice (perceived fairness) and the current challenges women, in particular, face because of gendered language, stereotyping, and oppressive norms that exist in the professional setting. The literature reveals how social constructs around gender contribute to the explicit and implicit barriers imposed upon women who enter, remain in, and advance in the labor force.

### **Why Federal Regulations on Equal-opportunity are Needed**

#### **Organizational Justice**

At a more granular level, equity in the workforce is influenced through organizational justice. Organizational justice seeks to understand and promote fairness rather than assessing right or wrong (Colquitt et al, 2005). Equity in the workplace is contextualized differently by employees through fairness in outcomes, procedures, decision-making explanation, and/or interpersonal treatment (Colquitt et al, 2005). Gender stereotypes influence perceived organizational justice as males have been perceived to place greater emphasis on outcomes and rewards, while females have been perceived to place greater emphasis on the procedural justice, explanation of decision-making (i.e., informational justice), and civility (i.e., interpersonal justice). This has led many to believe such areas of emphasis in perception have influenced the gender gap in compensation between men and women in the workforce (Belliveau, 2012). Clay-Warner, et al. (2013) argue that there are not different gender justice orientations for men

and women; but rather view the preference irregularities between genders as a function of status differences.

The importance of organizational justice in the selection process has been solidified as its effects go beyond the hiring decision to influence attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions in both positive and negative contexts (Fortin et al., 2016; Gilliland & Hale, 2005). Gilliland and Hale (2005) expound that perceptions of organizational justice may vary during stages of the selection process and measurements of these perceptions may be of advantageous for some people more than others during the selection process. Fortin et al. (2016) found that reaction to organizational justice is reflective of individual experiences and perceptions of fairness, as reactions may be immediate or build over time.

To promote equity and equal-opportunity in the workplace employers must be sensitive to the nuances of organizational justice and the perceptions that are derived from action or inaction of perceived fairness (Cojuharenco & Patient, 2013). The assessment of fairness in the workplace may be emphasized differently, in different dimensions, contexts, and reaction times, by different individuals in an organization. Unfortunately, this variability contributes to gender stereotyping (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly et al., 2012). Organizations must be sensitive to perceptions of organizational justice for all stakeholders, including potential future employees who may form perceptions of organizational justice through the employee selection and hiring process (Truxillo et al., 2004). One of the most important decisions organizations make is that of the people who carry forth the mission and strategic priorities (Alonso et al, 2017). These decisions are directly made through the practices employed in the interview process.

## Gendered Language

Language is used in society to facilitate communication between humans. Language skills are acquired through immersion and social learning (Smith, 2018). The culture surrounding the language learning environment influences language meaning and use (Sczesny et al., 2016; Smith, 2013). As cultural values influence perceived gender norms, they can be perpetuated using gender biased language (Alwang et al., 2017; Cuddy et al, 2015; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Fonseca et al., 2012;). For example, the description of *policeman* or *fireman* are masculine in nature (gender asymmetry) versus *police officer* or *firefighter*, which are gender neutral (Sczesny et al., 2016). The literature explores this phenomenon through the study of gender fair language (Sczesny et al., 2016), gender-neutral language (Sarrasin et al., 2012) gender-exclusive/inclusive language (Stout & Dasgupta, 2011), and non-sexist language (Douglas & Sutton, 2014). Hellinger and Bußmann (2003) investigated the linguistic representation of men and women across 30 different languages. Through the appropriate, or inappropriate, use of personal nouns, the authors explored how gender is negotiated in language. In the study of grammatical gender, noun classification is examined and categorized. Languages can be categorized into three different categories: grammatical gender languages, natural gender languages, and genderless languages (Sczesny et al., 2016).

In grammatical gender languages nouns are assigned gender meaning. The use of personal nouns is more gender-neutral in natural gender languages (Sczesny et al., 2016); however, McClintok-Ginet (2013) draws upon literature to argue that the English language is less of a natural gender language and more of a notional gender language due to the English third-person pronouns and its reliance on gender. Genderless languages

only express gender through specific words with gender attribution (Sczesny et al., 2016). The masculine form of words has often become a default across different societies, which in-turn form greater representation of masculinity (Gygax et al., 2019). Modern sexism is described as the denial of continued sexism or antagonism towards women's demands (Sarrasin et al., 2012). Studies have shown that students who hold more modern sexism, open form, or hostile sexism views demonstrate stronger negative attitudes toward gender neutral language (Sarrasin et al., 2012).

Gender exclusive language is subtle in nature and minimizes a gender through exclusion (Stout & Dasgupta, 2011). Stout and Dasgupta (2011) found that "exposure to gender-exclusive language compared to non-gendered language induced a lower sense of belonging, reduced motivation, and prompted disidentification in the professional context associated with the language" (p. 766). Kendall & Tannen (2015) illuminate how language, and culture expectations that inform gender behaviors, can be limiting not only to women, but also specific races and ethnicities. For example, an African-American woman's speech may be deemed more "anomalous with resultant negative stereotypes" (p. 647) due to conversational signifying, loud-talking, and/or marking characterized as manly in nature. These practices do not align with accounts of women's language that are based solely on the speech of middle-class white women, which are stereotypically deemed more appropriate (Kendall & Tannen, 2015). When language association is biased it can lead to descriptive and prescriptive gender stereotypes that result in people behaving negatively toward those who may not align to the perceived behavioral norms attributed to agentic or communal associations (Brescoll et al., 2018). Research suggests that dissonance occurs when females are perceived as overly agentic versus a perception

of being overly communal; thus, women who are in more masculine professional roles are forced to choose between the agentic qualities that may lead to professional success, or more communal attributes as not to create dissonance in individuals who cannot move beyond gender stereotypes (Hoover et al., 2018).

The literature builds upon research on social identity threat and ostracism, as it indicates that linguistic cues can inform women of group belongingness levels in different situations. Through the introduction of social dominance orientation and system justification, Douglas and Sutton (2014) examined gender differences in attitudes toward sexist language. While the authors acknowledge that the factors explored may not be the only mediators, exploring sexist language through the lens of social dominance orientation and system justification “may reflect more general ideologies about dominance and hierarchy in society” (p. 647).

Expectations are relayed implicitly through language (Smith 2013; Sczesny et al., 2016; Stout & Dasgupta, 2011). Human beings learn societal expectations through observation and education to inform decision-making. Behaviors and attitudes are reflective of implicit and explicit decisions (Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000) that are informed by implicit and explicit bias (Brady et al., 2020; Bates et al., 2019). Douglas and Sutton (2014) state, “research suggests that sexist language perpetuates male privilege, influences children’s gender schemas, limits the perception of vocational choices for women, influences perceptions of status and competence, and even makes women feel ostracized” (p. 668). Gender stereotypes and bias are formed from the experiences and expectations individuals have and perceive (Eagly et al., 2012; Eagly & Karau, 2002).

## **Stereotyping**

Vocabulary used to communicate sex and gender issues is often used interchangeably (Heise et al., 2019). It is important to distinguish that the sex of an individual refers to biological elements such as chromosomes, hormones and reproductive organs. Gender refers to culturally defined roles, attributes, and expectations through the categorization of binary or non-binary roles; often studied as male and female (Heise et al., 2019; Pelletier et al., 2016). Ridgeway and Correll (2004) advanced the exploration of gender studies through social relational contexts. By illuminating gender as being greater in complexity than biological attributes, they explored behaviors derived from cultural beliefs and expectations that create hierarchical dimensions and associate men and women with different attributes and abilities. These cultural beliefs influence and perpetuate inequality and inequity for women. In short, the hegemonic nature of gender stereotyping alone perpetuates inequality, even when societal advances or improvements may have occurred.

Stereotypes allow individuals to create generalizations of others based on perceived characteristics or attributes (Heilman, 2013; Strobach & Wozidlo, 2015). In its simplest form, stereotyping is the process in which individuals judge others in terms of their social category memberships (Bodenhausen, 2005). Stereotypes can exist in any area of perceived judgment or cognitive decision-making and emerge through socialization. Research has indicated that younger adults hold fewer stereotypes than older adults (McFarlane, 2014). The difference may be attributed to sharper cognitive skills at a younger age (Verhaeghen, 2011), or exposure to fewer experiences that shape

one's personal beliefs or perceived group beliefs. Older individuals rely more on intuition, emotions, and experiences in decision-making (Delaney et al., 2015).

Decision-making involves automatic or controlled processing to form judgements. Automatic processing occurs when one makes decisions that may be deemed intuitive once a sense is triggered. Controlled processing occurs when there is logic or inferential rules governing the decision being made (Ferreira et al., 2006). Decision-making evokes a process in which anticipated behavior becomes automatic to balance stimulations, while guided behavior must be flexible and responsive to the unexpected (Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000). Explicit decision-making describes cognitive procedures that are conscious and involve awareness-controlled processing. Implicit decision-making describes procedures that are unconscious in nature or outside of awareness – automatic processing (Kurzban, 2008). Stereotyping is a form of automatic processing. Depletion of self-control can negatively impact the decision-making process. Limited resources can, emotionally or physiologically, lead to greater reliance on automatic processing and/or reduce cognitive function (Alós-Ferrer et al., 2015).

The two components of stereotypes are an individual's personal beliefs and perceived beliefs of groups (Strobach & Wozidlo, 2015). The fundamental challenge with stereotyping is that one comes to judge (make decisions about) individuals solely on the categorical characteristics of the associated group, which negates individuation (Bodenhausen, 2005). McFarlane (2014) identifies stereotyping as a “social acclimatization or reactionary process” (p. 141) that is used to resist or adapt cultures, behaviors, or realities. Implicit bias is developed from early experiences and cultural biases. Implicit gender biases are automatic associations derived from traditions,

interactions, cultures and/or experiences. These automatic associations have shown that well-intended individuals who are opposed to the notion of sexism can reinforce gender inequity through bias (Bates et al., 2019; Brady et al., 2020).

When exploring the differences of decision-making between men and women in the workplace, Koch et al. (2015) found that when decision-makers felt accountable, believed their decisions had impactful consequences, or were reminded of equity norms biased decisions were reduced. This finding would align with a decision contributing to controlled processing versus decisions being based on bias indicative of automatic processing. How information and perceptions are processed when making a decision informs actions that may lead to bias or stereotype. Stereotypes are activated by situational cues and then used to form judgements (Blair & Manaji, 1996).

Negating individual characteristics, attributes, or actions can have unequitable consequences; however, there are instances in which stereotyping, categorizing, or profiling may be observed as beneficial. For example, Czopp et al. (2015) state, “Endorsing positive stereotypes of one’s group may be a way to establish valued and distinctive identities” (p. 453). The acknowledgement of benefits illuminates the potential detriments. For example, in a study of Asian American students, Ovserman and Sakamoto (1997) found that the positive stereotype of being an academic overachiever was embraced by many participants; however, the students wanted to avoid the potential negative stereotypes that could accompany the positive overachievement stereotype such as being categorized as a nerd, being a person who only associates with fellow Asians, or looking down upon others.

Gender stereotypes can be descriptive or prescriptive in nature (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2012). Descriptive gender stereotypes are categorized to describe the characteristics or attributes that are present in the observation of a man or woman, while prescriptive gender stereotypes focus on identifying the characteristics or attributes that a man or woman should possess (Heilman, 2012). Descriptive gender stereotypes have consistently characterized men with agentic attributes and women with communal attributes (Heilman, 2012).

As with the overarching challenge of stereotyping, descriptive gender stereotypes can negate individuation due to group association (Bodenhausen, 2005). People can be disadvantaged by their gender when descriptive gender stereotyping occurs (Heilman, 2012). In the workplace this may be advantageous or disadvantageous depending on what stereotypes are being enacted upon an individual. Prescriptive gender stereotypes establish expectations for what men or women's behaviors should, or should not, be. Such cognitions might impact how an applicant is evaluated in an interview process or how a current employee's performance is evaluated. Expectation overlap occurs between descriptive and prescriptive gender stereotypes. For example, descriptive gender stereotypes place emphasis on the characterization of women's attributes as communal.

Prescriptive gender stereotypes go beyond the descriptive nature of communal attributes to identifying the attribute as something women should have. As a result, women who are not perceived as communal may be evaluated less favorably than women who meet this gender norm (Heilman, 2012). In sum, gender stereotypes (both descriptive and prescriptive) pose challenges for individuals when dissonance occurs

between professional perceptions and expectations and the organizations, or groups, established gender norms (Heilman, 2012).

Recent research provides evidence of continued occurrences of gender stereotyping. In line with role congruity theory (Eagly et al, 2000; Eagly & Karau, 2002), Brady et al. (2020) found that participants were more likely to ascribe men as: fulfilling the “breadwinner” roles, working in higher-earning occupations, and managing household income than their women counterparts. Social role theory asserts that people’s beliefs about gender originate from observed role performances of men and women and reflects the division of labor and gender hierarchy in society (Eagly et al., 2012). Role congruity theory reaches beyond social role theory to explore gender roles and other roles within the construct of societal expectations (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Both social role theory and role congruity theory can result in beliefs of traditional gender roles and pose implications with gender hiring discrepancies (Rice & Barth, 2017). For instance, Rice and Barth (2017) found that individuals with less traditional gender role beliefs demonstrated less gender bias in the evaluation of applicants, while individuals with more traditional gender role beliefs favored men. Gender stereotypes have been linked to cultural values in which males are associated in a greater capacity to characteristics that are valued within the culture (Cuddy et al., 2015). Cultural values, or influences of perceived household roles, effects stereotypes assigned to both males and females without knowledge or experience validating that such role assignments are necessary for either gender or the collective household’s wellbeing (Alwang et al., 2017; Fonseca et al., 2012).

As females have entered the workforce in larger numbers, they have been positioned with expectations to demonstrate the societal definitions of feminism; while masculine attributes are often associated with leadership and success in the workplace (Eagly & Karau, 2002). An assumption that women should only display feminine traits may partially explain their underrepresentation in leadership positions. Moreover, gender stereotyping likely influences the extent to which women make a variety of decisions such as selection of a college major, occupational interest, and their confidence in seeking leadership positions. Previous research in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics reveals that this may be particularly true (Jouini et al., 2018).

Gender stereotyping creates dissonance between perceptions and societal roles due to descriptive and prescriptive gender stereotypes (Heilman, 2012). While Americans identify men as less collectivistic than women (Cuddy et al., 2015), females remain underrepresented in elected office positions (Bauer, 2015). Additional research reveals shifting standards when making attributions about the cause of emotional displays and reactions. For example, a woman's expression of anger may be associated with her "being emotional" (internal cause), while that same expression from a man is associated with having a bad day (external cause; Salerno et al., 2017).

Further complicating these tendencies, is that the extant literature reveals that displays of emotions reveal a complex set of implications for women with emotionality being perceived as disadvantageous to the decision-making process for women when they display more agentic characteristics associated as positive for male counterparts. Women are believed to be more communal and less agentic. When this perception is disrupted by females demonstrating more agentic attributes a negative backlash effect occurs (Brescoll

et al., 2018). Weller et al. (2018) found positive associations between emotionality and recognizing social norms for women; however, the same pattern was not found for men. Additionally, women with greater emotionality demonstrated greater decision-making competence; this association, however, was only found in women and not their male counterparts (Weller et al., 2018). Croson and Gneezy (2009) explored gender differences in risk, social, and competitive preferences. Women were found to be more risk adverse than men. Social preference exploration revealed that women were more situationally specific than men, and equitable in social orientation. Competitive preference exploration found that women were more averse to competition than men (Croson & Gneezy, 2009). Gender differences in decision-making may be a result of biological or social differences, or both (Weller et al., 2018).

Stereotype threat describes the psychological process that can lead to increased anxiety and underperformance when a member of a stereotyped group is fearful of not meeting a positive stereotype or fulfilling a negative stereotype that is associated to his or her identity (Roberson & Kulik, 2007). Behavioral cues that are relayed during an interview process through gender-exclusive language have shown to disengage individuals from the selection process (Stout & Dasgupta, 2011). What may seem to be simple language errors can illuminate implicit bias issues within an organization or with specific individuals of an organization. Employers and applicants explore the best fit for employment opportunities and dissonance can occur when stereotyping is implicitly activated due to the position being defined by skills that are more masculine or feminine in nature (Hess, 2013).

In a review of studies on stereotype activation, Roberson & Kulik (2007) found that activation of negative stereotypes led to the fulfillment of underperformance that informed the stereotype threat. For example, after women were reminded of prior research on gender differences in math ability the negative stereotype of women having a weak math ability was activated. This led to women performing more poorly on math exams than men. Similarly, when men were reminded of gender differences in the affective domain the negative stereotype of men being less capable than women when dealing with emotional information was activated. This led men making more errors on the associated task than women (Roberson & Kulik, 2007). Because stereotype activation is associated with prior experiences, it is more likely that interviewers with more experience interviewing applicants will be susceptible to making decisions through stereotyping, or exhibiting nonverbal discrimination inadvertently (Hess, 2013).

Gender composition in groups, has also demonstrated differentiation in decision-making dependent upon the composition of the individuals comprising the groups. In one study, groups of three with at least one female member were better calibrated (Keck & Teng, 2017), while in another study a group of three composed of only females demonstrated less aggressive strategy when making decisions (Apesteguia et al, 2012). Homogeneity is often preferred, as a group that is aligned in perspective can have a greater sense of focus and advocacy (Bear et al., 2010). For example, advocacy by women for women's rights, has been seen throughout American history. In 1948 seven organizations of American women constituents marched on Washington, D.C. in support of the Marshall Plan, a \$13 billion post-World War II European recovery program. Each of the seven organizations that marched in support of the Marshall Plan ranged from

20,000 to 8,000,000 diverse members (Goss, 2012). Heterogeneity, while it is believed to produce greater long-term results, can be challenging due to the diversity of perspective found within the group, and the perceived time to explore differentiating perspectives (Bear et al., 2010).

Decision-making is influenced by experiences that inform gender contextually (Weller, et al., 2018). Studies may demonstrate perceived strength and opportunity in decision-making through gender composition and situations, organizations must be sensitive to the perceptions that inform implicit and explicit decision-making, and how perceptions of fairness influence organizational behaviors and attitudes (Colquitt et al., 2005).

### **Oppressive Norms**

Social role theory describes how societal perceptions and expectations for women in the workforce are often in conflict due to associations individuals make between desirable behaviors and gender composition (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Females are expected to maintain social norms surrounding household life and child rearing in competition with demonstrating desirable behaviors in the workplace that have been previously associated to the male gender (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). Role congruity theory (Eagly et al., 2012) illuminates the prejudices that women face in the workplace through the creation of glass ceilings. Advances in equal-opportunity for women need to focus on practice shifts to support work-life conflict, although a common definition of such conflict is yet to be solidified (Alonso-Almeida, 2014; Beauregard & Henry, 2009). Bowen et al. (2000) found that men received higher job ratings when the evaluative measures were defined using terminology considered reflective of more masculine traits, and similarly, women

received higher job ratings when the evaluative measures were defined using terminology considered reflective of more feminine traits.

Research has been conducted on gender disparity in the academy of higher education with specific attention paid to levels of employment (Baker, 2016; Cundiff et al., 2018), publication and speaking opportunities (Sardelis & Drew, 2016), and leadership opportunities (Brower et al., 2019). Baker (2016) states,

“Despite major educational, social and institutional changes, men are still more likely than women to work in departments with a stronger research culture, receive informal mentoring early in their career, marry a supportive spouse who shoulders most of the household work, view themselves as experts, receive acknowledgement and recognition for their research, and postpone retirement” (p. 897).

Studies have contributed to the strategies used to mitigate gender disparities and promote more equal opportunities within the academe (Cundiff et al., 2018); however, a primary limitation of many studies in higher education surrounds the environment and sample of the study as student participants are often recruited and the environments are simulated (Brower et al., 2019; Cundiff et al., 2018). The study of gender identity transcends business sectors, industries, and academic disciplines because the perceptions of society form interpretations of gender norms (Heise et al., 2019; Pelletier et al., 2016). These norms cut across many professions as they are tied to societal expectations. Although position titles, advancement, and opportunities may differ in professions other than higher education, the biases that influence decision-making do not discriminate between industries.

The representation of women in the labor force has increased over the past decades; however, in many fields, females are underrepresented in senior ranks and recognition (Sardelis & Drew, 2016). For example, while the total number of female college graduates in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics programs has increased in the past two decades, in the field of science females are still underrepresented in senior ranks, publications, and comparatively in the numbers of opportunities to be featured at conferences and symposia (Adessi et al., 2012; Sardelis & Drew, 2016). In a study of surveyed female construction workers of the National Association of Women in Construction, King et al. (2010) suggest that when organizations are perceived to “condone or tolerate negative treatment based on gender” (p. 503), the potential to impair psychological well-being and/or interpersonal behaviors exists. Research on the advancement of women beyond entry into the labor force is inconclusive as some studies indicate the need for deeper sociological investigation and others attribute the perceived glass-ceiling to be indicative of female participation rates still falling short of their male counterparts (Rehfeldt, 2018).

Limitations in equal-opportunity can be influenced by organizational structure and perspective. Research has indicated that a variety of variables can influence the glass-ceiling, which are described as invisible barriers that limit upward mobility for women and people of color (Hoobler et al., 2011; Ng & Sears, 2017). Temkin (2016) asserts that while equal-opportunity is a societal and political intersection that many Americans agree upon, there are vast areas of implication in practice. Hoyt (2012) acknowledges societal advancements when analyzing individuals’ perspectives related to gender and leadership. Specifically, individuals with more traditional perspectives in leadership show greater

male favoring bias compared to individuals with more progressive perspectives who show greater female favoring bias. This study reinforced implications of social role expectations and role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

### **What Equal-opportunity Legislation Provides**

Equal-opportunity, through the prohibition of employment discrimination, was born out of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Alonso et al., 2017; Dobbins, 2009). The United States government declared that it would be unlawful for discrimination against a member of a protected class to occur in education, housing, public accommodations, and employment. The law, however, failed to provide prescriptive guidelines for the required change. The open interpretation left some organizations hoping legislation would be abolished or changed via courts or rulings (Dobbins, 2009).

Under the guidance of the Civil Rights Act, four theories have emerged in the classification of employment discrimination: disparate treatment, disparate impact, harassment, and retaliation (Society of Human Resource Management [SHRM], 2022). When an employer specifically takes an employee protected status into consideration while engaging in an adverse action toward the employee it is considered disparate treatment. Disparate impact occurs when an employer adopts a policy or practice that appears neutral but has a disproportionately negative effect on members of a protected class. Harassment is a form of intentional discrimination that can be based on protected characteristics. Retaliation occurs if an employer discriminates against an employee because the employee opposed a discriminatory practice (Society of Human Resource Management [SHRM], 2022).

As the 1980's emerged, larger corporations had redefined the role of human resource departments. This advancement created waves of equal-opportunity innovations that informed harassment grievance procedures, training programs, and performance management strategies that have now become commonplace in most organizations (Dobbins, 2009). Personnel departments defined how compliance with the federal law was practiced. The collective action taken to promote equal-opportunity took the shape of personnel experts teaching public officials what discrimination was through the lens of programming that was defined as best practices. Since 1990, the human resources field has become disproportionately female, which ushered in a corporate shift toward equal-gender opportunities (Dobbins, 2009).

The corporate theoretical shift in equal-gender opportunities has been observed in recent decades; however, organizational practices have not aligned fully with the theoretical shifts. One must question if the perceived shift toward equal-gender opportunities is a result of emphasis placed on the issues of gender limitation, bias, and stereotyping in the workplace, or a result of growing numbers of females in the workforce (Dobbins, 2009). According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), "Gender equality does not mean that men and women become the same; only that access to opportunities and life changes is neither dependent on, nor constrained by, their sex" (2005). In a 2019 survey involving 34 countries, the Pew Research Center found that while there is widespread support globally for equal rights between men and women, and optimism for the future of gender equality and equity; men were generally seen as having more opportunities than women for high paying jobs, and men have more opportunities than women to be community leaders (Menasce Horowitz & Fetterolf, 2020).

The growing numbers of females in the civilian labor force may be attributed to increases in female college graduates. Female enrollment in degree granting institutions of higher education increased seven percent from 2007 to 2017. Male enrollments experienced even larger increases during the same period with a 10% increase; however, females still accounted for most of the student enrollment population at 57% (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2020a). Six-year graduation rates followed similar trajectories, as the overall six-year graduation rate for females was 63% and 57% for males, as reported in 2017 (NCES, 2020b). However, as of 2016 females only comprised 46.8% of the labor force. Males in the civilian labor force has declined from 71.4% in 1945 to 53.2% in 2016 (United States Department of Labor [USDOL], 2020). Legislation, company policies, along with changing social norms may explain the changing composition of the workforce (Dobbins, 2009); however, the convergence of workforce and societal expectations limits opportunity beyond access of entry to the workforce (Alonso-Almeida, 2014).

### **Monitoring**

In the United States there are three federal agencies that provide assistance in the monitoring and enforcement of equal employment opportunities, they are (1) Civil Rights Center (CRC), (2) The Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, and (3) Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (United States Department of Labor [USDOL.], 2022a). The CRC and The Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs are within the U.S. Department of Labor. These agencies oversee equal employment opportunity in programs receiving federal financial assistance or holding federal contracts (USDOL, 2022a). With the disbursement of federal funding, requirements can be implemented to

assist the compliance efforts surrounding equal-opportunity at the state level. For example, the CRC requires Equal-opportunity Officers to report directly to the Governor of every participating state to be responsible for the coordination of compliance with equal-opportunity and non-discrimination requirements (USDOL, 2022b). The third agency that aids the federal monitoring and enforcement of equal employment opportunity is the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission [USEEOC], 2022a). The EEOC promotes equal-opportunity through education, technical assistance, and the administrative and judicial enforcement of civil rights laws (USDOL, 2022a).

For individuals within an organization to identify violations of equal-opportunity in practice, unequal treatment must be observed. Discrimination can be defined as treating a group or person unfairly in comparison to other groups or people (American Psychological Association [APA], 2019; Merriam-Webster, 2020). Title VII prohibits discrimination based on the race, color, religion, sex, or national origin as motivating factors for employment decisions or practices (Clarke, 2017). The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) defines protection against age discrimination or discrimination based on disability. The United States National Archives (USNA) defines protected class as, “The groups protected from employment discrimination by law. These groups include men and women on the basis of sex; any group which shares a common race, religion, color, or national origin; people over 40; and people with physical or mental handicaps” (2022).

Diversity creates challenges in monitoring the compliance or non-compliance with equal-opportunity, as employers should differentiate between individuals when

making employment decisions (Lundberg, 1991). Conducting climate surveys, in which an organizations can self-analyze workforce perceptions and behaviors, can prove beneficial in local monitoring of equal-opportunity employment practices. In addition, providing mechanisms for safe and/or anonymous reporting can help address workplace discrimination when it occurs (United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission [USEEEOC], 2022b).

### **Consequences**

The EEOC serves as the administrative and judicial enforcement branch of federal civil rights laws (USDO, 2022). If discrimination is found through the investigative and judicial processes of the EEOC, the goal of any remedy is to position the individual who experienced discrimination back into a situation as if the discrimination had never occurred (USEEEOC, 2022b). If it is determined that an individual has experienced employment discrimination remedies may include placement in the job, backpay and benefits that would have been received, and/or compensatory or punitive damages (USEEEOC, 2022b).

Beyond the consequences sustained to the individual discriminated against, consequences directly imposed by monitoring entities on employers and the organization where the behavior occurred are also considered. Plickert and Sterling (2017) state, “Research suggests that distressing workplaces have the ability to endanger and alter careers and employment schedules and thus, intensify inequalities among working professionals” (p.5). Perceptions of organizational justice are connected to perceived employment inequity and how not only individuals respond and are treated, but also how

organizations respond through the lens of disruptive, procedural, and interactional justice (Goldman et al., 2006).

Examples of consequences can be seen in legal action taken by the EEOC against organizations who are found to be out of compliance with legislation. In a 2020 ruling in *Bostock v. Clayton County, Georgia* the supreme court affirmed that firing individuals based on gender identity or sexual orientation was a violation of Title VII (USEEOC, 2022c). In 2021, the EEOC filed suit against an Applebee's Franchisee as the EEOC claimed, "the employee's workplace was permeated with racial and homophobic slurs" (USEEOC, 2021). Beyond the financial and reputational consequences organizations may encounter for violations of equal-opportunity legislation, current research has begun to demonstrate the consequences incurred by victims of discrimination. These consequences include health challenges (Lui et al., 2021), and both short and long-term economic impact that contributes to gender wage gap and women's earning potential (Hegewisch et al., 2021).

### **Challenges and Opportunities**

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was created to promote equal-opportunity and prohibit discrimination (Alonso et al., 2017; Dobbins, 2009). Nearly 58 years have passed since the inception of the legislation in the United States. Why is the promotion of equal-opportunity still an issue? Most of the progress realized in private sector equal-opportunity occurred before 1980 (Smith-Pryor, 2020; Stainback & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2013). Workplaces continue to become more diverse overall, with less white and less male representation; however, minority and female access to high skilled jobs and managerial positions has declined (Stainback & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2013).

Although legislation and legal requirements that promote or require equality do not discriminate against the majority, there are tensions that are created when the principles of non-discrimination are invoked (Peters & Suter, 2009). In order to address a problem, one must first recognize the problem. In a 2020 survey by *PayScale*, despite acknowledging that men and women do not have equal-opportunity in general those surveyed did not recognize gender inequality issues within their own workplace (Gruver, 2020). One of the biggest challenges in addressing equal-opportunity issues is in the number of white men who are more prevalent in upper levels of organizations, and who perceive equity levels in general and within their organizations at a much higher level than others (Gruver, 2020).

The measurements and goals of equal-opportunity also pose challenge for progress (Smith-Pryor, 2020; Stainback & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2013). Historically, progress for equal-opportunity was measured by comparing a group to its predecessors, versus having the measure of equality being group achievement; whereas, the opportunity is provided for equal proportions of people to succeed or fail within groups of our society (Smith-Pryor, 2020). Many organizations have also moved from promoting equal-opportunity to managing diversity. Stainback and Tomaskovic-Devey (2013) state, “diversity management alone does not promote racial and gender integration or equal employment-opportunity gains.” Organizations provide trainings and symbolic public commitments to equal-opportunity to manage diversity rather than benchmarking and monitoring progress toward equal-opportunity (Stainback & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2013).

## **How Equal-opportunity Practices Can Vary Between Organizations**

### **Hiring Policies and Practices**

The interview is one of the most used and most important techniques used by employers to select personnel to hire (Alonso et al., 2017). There are many areas of the interview process that if not done carefully can create discrimination. Employers filter through applicants to make judgements on qualifications and to anticipate who may or may not be successful in the position (Hess, 2013; Warhurst et al., 2009). Interviews can be characterized by the nature of inquiry. The interview serves as an opportunity for organizational representatives and job applicants to interact to assess congruent values and interests to determine if the fit between the person and the organization is optimal to achieve desired employer outcomes (Cable & Judge, 1997). Person-organization (p-o) fit is often deemed important to both the employer and the applicant; however, research on p-o fit lacks clarity on the determinants of interviewer's perceptions of fit beyond congruency of perceived values (Cable & Judge, 1997). Furthermore, the subjectivity surrounding the perceptions and evaluations of p-o fit by the interviewer or hiring manager may bias the selection process because evaluations made by the interviewer can be based on unconscious factors not related to job performance (Arthur et al., 2006).

Demographic similarity can occur in the interview setting and be of serious concern, as the potential exists for interviewers to evaluate interviewees with similar demographics higher than others (McCarthy et al., 2010). Inconsistent findings have resulted in the study of demographic similarity and its effects on the interview process due to a lack of standardization in interview development, administration, and/or scoring evaluations (McCarthy et al., 2010). The structure of the interview is reliant on the

organization to implement training on process to ensure equity throughout the interview and decision-making process.

A conventional interview includes questions about backgrounds, credentials, achievements, and technical skill. Structured behavioral interviews focus on behaviors elicited from past experiences to predict an applicants' potential for success for future experiences (Alonso et al., 2017). When an interview is structured appropriately, it can serve as a very good tool of predictability (McCarthy et al., 2010). Both highly structured interview processes and structured behavioral interviews have demonstrated decreased levels of gender bias in the interview process (Alonso, et al. 2017; McCarthy et al., 2010; Pogrebtsova et al., 2019).

Specific to higher education, academic recruitment has been observed as a less formal process historically that is driven by potential colleagues (faculty) who participate in the hiring or promotion process (Abramo et al., 2016). This informal process has led to a closed decision-making process in which few individuals can perpetuate practices in which gender bias is more likely to occur when the assessment of applicants is based on obscure criteria (van den Brink, 2010). While female graduates from institutions of higher education have continued to increase, their presence within the ranks of full-professors, researchers, and leadership roles in the academy is disparaging in comparison to male graduates (Abramo et al., 2016; Kearney & Lincoln, 2016; van den Brink, 2010).

The discriminatory practices within an interview process are legal when the employer is discriminating between qualifications of applicants; however, it is illegal when the employer is discriminating based on background or demographic information such as age, race, sex, or disability (Warhurst et al., 2009). Bernardin et al. (2012) state,

“Adverse (or disparate) impact is considered to be unintentional discrimination that involves the use of practices that are fair in form but discriminatory in operation” (p. 316). Identifying staffing methods that have little or no adverse impact is good management practice (Bernardin et al., 2012). Implicit bias and the inability to readily counter stereotypes contribute to inequitable practices in the interview process that may occur without awareness from the interviewer, or acknowledgement of the limitations such practices impose upon the interviewee (Benedick & Nunes, 2012). Implicit gender bias can contribute to expectations that seek matching personality traits that are more often associated to men or fields deemed more masculine than females or fields deemed more feminine in nature (Weichselabumer, 2004). Latu et al. (2015) found that gender stereotypes predicted future performance of female applicants when the interviewer was male. Male interviewer’s evaluations of female applicant’s competence were impacted because of implicit associations male interviews had about women. Benedict & Nunes (2012) state, “Social congruity theory predicts that members of a stereotyped group who behave or occupy social roles inconsistent with a stereotype experience stronger adverse reactions than if they conform” (p.240).

### **Workplace Policies and Practices**

Federal and state laws inform local policies and practices surrounding equal employment opportunities. But organizations must also have strategies for monitoring and promoting equal-opportunity which can take the form of positive cultural aspects of an organization. For example, policy and training that promote an inclusive culture in which employees are empowered and accountable to contribute can reduce discrimination based on race or ethnicity (USEEOC, 2022a). Practices that diversify pools of candidates

for employment opportunities, conduct self-analyses, and ensure objectivity in expectations and employment standards can promote a culture of equitable practices that focuses on the monitoring of practices, training and mentoring of the workforce (USEEOC, 2022a).

Equal-opportunity policies and practices vary across organizations. Some organizations may approach policy in a minimalistic manner to ensure legal pitfalls are avoided and claims of equal-opportunity are made (Stainback & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2013). An example of a minimalistic approach can be seen by the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (Das, 2022). This U.S. agency posts the equal employment opportunity and diversity policy in memorandum form on the website with a challenge for each employee to promote a positive culture. Other organizations may approach policy as a foundational element of equal-opportunity practice. For example, The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2022) has an Office of Equal Employment Opportunity that not only defines the organizations perspectives of equal employment opportunity, but also shares mission, vision, and policy statements; and, the organization complaint process and resource contract information for employees. Organizations that seek to deploy meaningful diversity and equity programs must determine how equal-opportunity will be measured, what diversity progress looks like, and what benchmarks are, or should be, in place to create equal-opportunity environments (Stainback & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2013).

### **Rewards, Incentives, and Advancement Policies and Practice**

In the United States, federal and state programs exist to incentivize organizations to hire individuals from populations that may lack representation in the workforce. For

example, federal tax incentives are provided to employers who hire individuals with disabilities or identified barriers to employment via the work opportunity tax credit, disabled access credit, and barrier removal tax deduction (USDOL, 2022c). Similar state-based tax incentive programs are also provided to employers who hire individuals with a disability (Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion [EARN], 2022). While these programs may encompass women or a diverse racial population as a subset of qualifications, they do not specifically incentivize employers for providing greater opportunity to women or racialized populations directly (USDOL, 2022c).

For women in the workforce, there are specific policies and practices that can encourage, or keep women engaged in the workforce. Compensation equity between women and men, improved benefits, and the promotion of career progression can improve career engagement for women. Despite greater numbers of women engaging in education and the labor market, gaps in compensation continue to persist as women earn approximately eighty-two cents for every dollar a male counterpart earns (Montanez, 2021). Improved benefits that increase accessibility to paid leave or a national paid leave program not only provide individual health incentives, but also enhance economic stability while reducing financial insecurity during stressful times (Montanez, 2021; Romig & Bryant, 2021). Supporting employee career progression through employee resource groups can contribute to employee retention, reduce burn-out, and provide a platform for greater organizational culture and goal alignment (Montanez, 2021).

### Summary

Women who seek employment or promotional opportunities within higher education face challenges and prejudices due to societal expectations and influences. Decision-making and stereotypes are connected through implicit and explicit action (Eagly et al., 2012; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000). This action is born from learned expectations and experiences, which challenge social constructs of the past to define opportunity and equity within the workforce. Organizational justice (perception of fairness) is critical to equity, as workers' perceptions of fairness will be manifested individually in different behaviors and attitudes (Colquitt et al., 2005). While males and females may show greater or lesser emphasis in areas of perceived fairness, an organization must strive to embrace workers as individuals whose characteristics contribute to the organization for lasting, equitable outcomes (Bear et al., 2010).

Automatic processing initiates implicit decision-making and potential bias (Ferreira et al., 2006). It is imperative that organizations acknowledge how traditional gender role perspectives, implicit bias or stereotypes, influence the opportunity for women's success and sustainability in the workforce. Equal-opportunity does not equate to the same experience or success; but rather, equitable access. Employability and career mobility are influenced from the evaluation of interviewers and the criteria the organization sets forth as priority in attracting and retaining talented employees. The interview structure, evaluation criteria, and the decision-making process of the interviewers is informed by, and contributes to, organizational culture and the stereotypes and norms that are restricted or promoted. Research on the implications of gender bias and decision-making for organizational stakeholders must continue to move equal rights from legislation to a

universal action (Albertson-Fineman, 2009). The forthcoming chapter will focus on the methodology used to study the relationship between interviewer gender identity and applicant evaluations.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

In chapter three I outline the methodology employed to investigate the relationship between interviewer gender identity and the evaluation of applicants in the interview process. This quantitative exploratory pilot study was conducted at a mid-sized, geographically distributed, non-profit institution of higher education. I will describe the research design, participants, measures, data collection, data analysis, methodological integrity, and ethical considerations for this study.

### **Research Question**

The following research question guided this quantitative study: What is the relationship between interviewer gender identity and the evaluation of applicant attributes and abilities during the interview process?

### **Method**

#### **Research Design Overview**

This quantitative, descriptive, cross-sectional exploratory pilot study explored the relationship between gender identity of interviewers and applicant evaluations at a mid-sized, geographically distributed, non-profit university. Specifically, the relationship between the independent variable of gender identity and dependent variables of attributes and abilities was explored.

The design is appropriate for the study as it examined how the gender identity of the interviewer might be related to the evaluation of job applicants. The quantitative design to the study is optimal as it assisted in removing subjectivity in this study of human behavior by focusing on the evaluative data and demographics individuals assigning evaluations. The cross-sectional design was chosen as the study observed the

population at a specific point in time, was suitable for descriptive analysis, and may be considered as a starting point for future research. I selected this design because it provides information on a relevant real-world problem, is based on the current practices at the participating institution and builds on prior research conducted in the field of gender studies (e.g., Warhurst et al., 2009; Stout & Dasgupta, 2011; Hess, 2013).

### **Participants**

Participants were individuals who are employees of the institution and participate in the interview process to provide feedback to hiring managers regarding the job applicants who are interviewed for position openings at the institution. The study population consists of approximately 1405 employees (77.37% female, 22.63% male) who work at approximately 10 campus locations throughout the United States, remotely, or at the institutions home office located in Wisconsin. The average age of employees is 46.1 years and ethnicity classification of employees are as follows: 69% White, 19% Black or African-American, 4% Hispanic or Latino, 3% two or more ethnicities, 3% Asian, 0.21% American Indian/Alaskan Native, 0.07% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander and 1.85% unspecified (Fuerte, E. personal communication, August 16, 2022). The study sample consisted of volunteers who agreed to participate in the study and completed the electronic feedback survey following interviews for employment vacancies.

### **Current Standard Interviewing Practices**

Current standard practices to provide feedback on applicants are inconsistent. Hiring managers may receive feedback from the employee interviewers verbally, via email, or specifically designed rubrics by the manger. These practices were not evaluated.

What is different for this research is this study explored the use of a new Applicant Evaluation Feedback Questionnaire. The Applicant Evaluation Feedback Questionnaire is a new form that will be used as standard practice moving forward at the participating institution.

The university currently employs interview practices that intentionally involve multiple stakeholders (employees of the university) to thoroughly vet applicants for employment at the university. The human resources department provides support to hiring managers through the posting of open positions electronically on the university website and external employment websites. Applicants apply for the positions using electronic links to the university's employment management system. Following the submission of application materials, hiring managers review the materials and schedule subsequent interviews via phone screening, zoom sessions, and in-person individual and/or group interviews depending on location of the applicant, location designation of position (remote or on-site), level and responsibility of the position, and scheduling availability. Based on the university's current practices, an applicant who is hired and completes all the interviews throughout the process could have anywhere from two to 15 individuals, or more, who provide input to the hiring manager for a single new hire.

Hiring managers collect feedback from interview participants through direct conversations, informal email feedback, and formal Microsoft word document rubrics sent via email that are designed by the hiring manager. The inconsistency in the collection of employee interviewer feedback negates any opportunity for the university to assess the numbers of applicants interviewed for open positions, potential training needs for employee interviewers, or practices for equal-opportunity employment practices. The

implementation of a standard electronic applicant feedback questionnaire provided employee interviewers a mechanism for anonymity in feedback responses, hiring managers with aggregated responses from employee interviewers for review, and a collection of data for institutional assessment of interviewing practices. The measure (as described below) created for this study provided a first attempt at creating and implementing a standard electronic applicant feedback questionnaire at the participating institution.

### **Sample**

The sample size did not meet expectations for the study. 91.67% participants reported a gender identity of female (N = 11), with the remaining participant identifying as male (N = 1). The anticipated sample size was adversely impacted by market conditions within the industry of higher education. Within a week of the study launch, the participating institution prescriptively informed hiring managers that replacement and new full-time employment opportunities would be limited due to student enrollment levels and financial forecasts. Comparatively, the participating institution had an average of 45 full-time position postings from January 2022 – March 2022; by August 17, 2022 the full-time position postings had declined 71.61% (N = 10). The sample population was neither representative of the current employee population, nor substantial enough to generalize across the population of the participating institution. (Babbie, 2017; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The notification of study and directions for the applicant evaluation feedback questionnaire (Appendix D) was sent via email to approximately 150 hiring managers of the participating institution on July 6, 2022. The survey remained open for the study until

September 6, 2022 and continues to be used by the institution post-study. The participating institutions Senior Recruiter provided the link to the hiring managers within the request-to-recruit response email (Appendix C). Approximately 14 request-to-recruit response emails were sent during the time of the study. Of the 14 positions that were sent the request-to-recruit response email, 28.57% of the positions (N = 4) had employee interviewers use the applicant evaluation feedback questionnaire.

Participation in the study was voluntary with a 52.17% participation rate (N = 12). 91.67% of participants in the study identified gender as female (N = 11), 8.33% of the participants in the student identified gender as male (N = 1). Of the 12 participants in the study, 91.67% (N = 11) identified race/ethnic identity as white; 8.33% (N = 1) identified race/ethnicity as black/African American. Participants indicated the interview structure in which they interviewed the applicants, with the options of individual interview, small group interview, or group interview. 66.67% (N = 8) of participants indicated they interviewed the applicant in a small group interview. 33.33% (N = 4) indicated they interviewed the applicant in a group interview. There were no respondents that indicated they interviewed an applicant in an individual interview. The perceived gender identity of applicants was reported as 75.00% female (N = 9) and 25.00% male (N = 3).

The voluntary response sample is always biased as it includes only participants who choose to volunteer (Babbie, 2017). While this study does not force participation through the policies of the participating university, participation was encouraged through partnership with the institution's human resource department as it intends to inform proposed strategic priorities for the 2021-2023 years. One of the strategic priorities established in the university's three-year strategic plan is to improve and support team

member engagement through the development of data surrounding recruiting, onboarding, and retaining talent. The conditions for the study were naturally observed. Response submissions for the survey were only accessible from the institution's database administrator via the university electronic survey platform.

### **Measures**

The purpose of the survey design was intended to meet the established needs of hiring managers to hire the best qualified candidates, provide a consistent mechanism for collecting feedback on job applicants from employee interview participants, and establish capabilities for the institution to assess interview practices to inform equal-opportunity practices. The survey design is specifically relevant to examine the relationship between employee interviewer gender identity and the evaluation of applicants in the interview process at a mid-sized, geographically distributed, non-profit institution of higher education. The survey method is preferred as it leverages existing practices of applicant evaluation at the institution in a scientifically based approach that allowed generalizations from the sample to the population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The nature of the survey design was cross-sectional as it was conducted at one point in time to understand the relationship between variables (Babbie, 2017). For this study, data collected from July 6, 2022 – September 6, 2022 was used to inform the primary research question.

The survey instrument was adapted from rubrics that have been used previously at the institution, and research conducted in the field of gender studies in the professional work environment (Hess, 2013; Stout & Dasgupta, 2011; Warhurst et al., 2009). In prior studies, demographic information has been obtained to assess non-verbal discrimination in a simulated job interview setting (Hess, 2013). Scales have been used to gather and

assess perceptions of participants in studies of discrimination and ostracism of women in the simulated professional interview setting (Hess, 2013; Stout & Dasgupta, 2011). The research referenced has contributed to the body of knowledge surrounding employment practices; however, the sample of students in simulated employment settings was found to be a limitation as findings could not be generalized across the entire population of actual interviewers or job seekers in the professional setting (Hess, 2013; Stout & Dasgupta, 2011). This study used an actual workplace sample.

Participants in the study were asked to complete an electronic questionnaire (Appendix E) which included multiple choice questions to gather demographic information about the participant demographics and perceived applicant demographics. The demographic questions asked the participant interviewers to share their gender identity, race/ethnicity, perceived applicant gender identity, interview structure, and perceived influence from others.

The questionnaire (Appendix B) also consists of two evaluative areas: 1) attributes (including person-organization fit) and 2) abilities (including prior work experience and ability to perform job requirements). The questionnaire was structured with multiple selection questions, single selection questions, and scales to inform the level of agreement with statements surrounding the job applicant in the areas of attributes and abilities related to performing the job requirements. For the attribute's variables, participants were asked to select all characteristics that apply to the job applicant from a list of characteristics that were pre-coded as agency positive, agency negative, communion positive, and communion negative, to describe the participant's perceptions of the job applicants' attributes. The list of characteristics was drawn from previous

research by Bruckmuller and Abele (2013), in which the density of communion and agency was tested. The list consists of 20 words to describe characteristics, five words are classified as agency positive, five words are classified as communion positive, five words are classified as agency negative, and five words are classified as communion negative (Bruckmuller and Abele, 2013). Additional questions related to attributes and to the specific job were also asked.

An average attribute score was calculated for each participant by adding the agreement-level scores indicated for the attribute evaluative statements together and dividing the sum by the total number of questions (three). That score was then multiplied by the total number of attributes identified from the list to create a total attribute score.

For the abilities variable, respondents were asked to indicate levels of agreement with seven evaluative statements to assess the applicants prior work experience and ability to perform job requirements. The overall ratings for applicants was derived from the agreement levels indicated by the respondents. The forced choice scale of agreement (rated 1 to 7) contained the following descriptive anchors: strongly disagree, disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, agree, and strongly agree . Reliability coefficients were measured using Cronbach's alpha. The agreement-level indicated for each question on the seven-point agreement scale was added together and divided by the total number of questions (seven) to create a total abilities score. An ANCOVA analysis was run to test the two null hypotheses.

### **Data Collection**

Prior to data collection IRB approval was obtained with Creighton University (Appendix G) and the participating institution (Appendix F). The data for this study was

collected through voluntary respondents. Participants were asked to provide informed consent (Appendix A) prior to the completion of the participant demographic questionnaire (Appendix E ). In instances when individuals declined to participate in the study yet chose to submit feedback to the hiring manager via the electronic form, the survey electronically routed the participant past the demographic questions to a submission confirmation. To preserve respondent anonymity and data summary integrity, only aggregated data summaries were provided to hiring managers when two or more feedback forms were submitted for an applicant.

### ***Data Collection Procedures***

The participating university's survey collection software was used to administer the electronic applicant feedback questionnaire (Appendix B). The software housed the data and provided the ability to export data into excel format, which was then uploaded into SPSS for analysis. The participating university requires that a request-to-recruit process be completed and approved for open positions to be posted internally and externally. When a request-to-recruit process was approved and completed, the human resource department responded to the requestor (hiring manager) with an approval and link to the electronic posting. To recruit participants for this study, the human resources department included the link to the electronic applicant feedback questionnaire in the request-to-recruit email with directions for how to use of the new electronic applicant feedback questionnaire (Appendix C). Participation in the study was encouraged in directions provided by the human resources department to hiring managers (Appendix D), but not required. The electronic applicant feedback questionnaire had an estimated completion time of 10 to 15 minutes.

After each interview, the questionnaire was accessed by the electronic link sent to employee interview participants by the hiring manager. All employee interview participants were asked to complete the questionnaire to provide the hiring manager with input on the applicants; however, only those participants who agreed to the informed consent were presented with demographic questions and included in the study. Employees who participated in the interview process were first provided applicant feedback questionnaire to provide input regarding the applicants perceived attributes and abilities.

Upon completion of the applicant feedback questionnaire employee interviewers were provided informed consent to choose participation in the study. The informed consent disclosure provided the opportunity for questions surrounding the study to be sent to the participating university's Internal Review Board (IRB) via email, to Creighton University's Internal Review Board (IRB), and/or directed to the researcher via email. All questions (informed consent, demographic, and job applicant evaluation feedback) were administered electronically via the university's web-based survey platform. Following the submission of the electronic feedback form, a confirmation screen appeared confirming the submission.

Applicant names were entered in the electronic feedback questionnaire by employee interview participants. The data was tabulated within the survey platform and the hiring manager was provided with aggregated data summaries from the electronic applicant feedback forms the employee interviewers submitted. After the data was sent to the hiring manager, the applicant names were removed to deidentify the responses. Weekly wave analysis was conducted to identify potential concerns for response bias

(Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Non-response bias occurs when the sample size is compromised by respondents; meaning, the respondents all have similar characteristics (Prins, 2019). The sample population did contain non-response bias as the sample did not generalize across the population participating institutions population.

Participation in the study averaged 1.5 submissions per week over the eight-week period. To obtain a sample population that could be generalized across the population, a confidence level of 95% with a degree of freedom of four, 128 applicant evaluation feedback questionnaires would need to be obtained. The obtainment of this sample at the rate of participation would have required the study to remain open for over 21 months at the current submission rate. This indicated that the recruitment process designed collaboratively with the participating institution would need revision; such revision would require the participating institution to examine policy and procedure surrounding the interview process (see chapter five), which could not be given priority at this time by the participating institution. Additionally, this study was conducted as part of the requirements for a dissertation in practice. Extending the study by the anticipated length referenced was not possible within the program of study. The survey database was secured with user login credentials and security permissions needed to access survey data. The survey database administrator was trained on the confidentiality, security protocols, and process of information transmission to preserve data integrity. To avoid conflict of interest, I declined participation in the study when involved in the hiring process at the participating university during the study timeframe.

**Data Analysis**

During each weekly wave analysis, I exported the data and saved it into a secondary Microsoft Excel file stored on my password protected computer hard drive. I analyzed the data for systematic, missing data, and response bias. Missing data was not identified in the sample.

Upon completion of data collection, the data was organized in the secondary Microsoft Excel file. Applicant names were removed from the data for deidentification purposes. I calculated the attribute and ability scores in Microsoft Excel. The attribute score for each interviewer was calculated for each participant by adding the agreement-level scores indicated for the attribute evaluative statements together and dividing the sum by the total number of questions (three). That score was then multiplied by the total number of attributes identified from the person-organization fit list to create a total attribute score. The abilities score for each interviewer was calculated by adding the agreement-levels indicated for each question on the seven-point agreement scale and divided by the total number of questions (seven). The data was then uploaded from the Excel file into IBM SPSS Statistics software to further analyze the data and test the following null hypotheses:

**Null Hypothesis 1:** All interviewers will identify the same number of agentic and communal attribute characteristics for all applicants regardless of perceived applicant gender identity.

**Null Hypothesis 2:** All interviewers will rate the abilities of all applicants the same regardless of perceived applicant gender identity.

The original plan for analysis was to test the two hypotheses through an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) controlling for the covariant of perceived applicant gender identity, with the independent variable of interviewer gender identity and dependent variable of attributes and abilities. Independence of observation was automatically assumed based on the design of the study. This means that the measurements for each interviewer was in no way influenced by or related to the measurements of other interviewers. SPSS was used to assess the remaining assumptions. A table of descriptive statistics was run to inspect frequencies, means, and standard deviations for all variables. A Levene's test was run for homogeneity of variance. The Levene's test was used to test the null hypothesis that the variances in different variables were equal (Field, 2013). The ANCOVAs were run, but the data was not sufficient to draw reliable conclusions from the statistical tests.

### ***Methodological Integrity***

Cronbach's alpha was used to test reliability of the forced choice evaluative ranking questions for the attribute score (three questions) and the ability score (seven questions). Both question sets demonstrated strong reliability with the attribute score question analysis being  $\alpha = .94$ , and the ability score question analysis being  $\alpha = .99$ .

The instrument being used has been adapted into an electronic version of prior job applicant evaluations used at the participating institution. The instrument represents appropriate degrees of face validity as it is a composition of previously explored information by hiring managers of the university (Middleton, 2019). Construct validity was established for the measurement instrument because the instrument uses items from prior research and methodology used to explore the field of gender studies and

employment hiring. For example, in prior studies, demographic information has been obtained to assess non-verbal discrimination in a simulated job interview setting (Hess, 2013). Scales have been used to gather and assess perceptions of participants in studies of discrimination and ostracism of women in the simulated professional interview setting (Hess, 2013; Stout & Dasgupta, 2011). The list of characteristics, used to inform the attribute score, are drawn from previous research by Bruckmuller and Abele (2013). Content validity was established because the items that make up the measurement instruments are known to have an effect on the evaluation of applicant attributes and abilities.

### **Ethical Considerations**

I paid attention to five main ethical principles that are relevant to this study. First, I provided informed consent to all participants prior to completing the participant demographic questions so participants knew they were participating voluntarily, and that participation would have no impact on their employment at the institution. Second, I ensured risk of harm to participants was minimized through anonymity of responses during data collection (no specific individual identification was collected, except for applicant names and those were removed for the purposes of the exploratory pilot study). Third, I protected the participating institution of study and participants through anonymity and confidentiality of the institution. Fourth, I did not use deceptive practices. Fifth, the participants had the right to not participate in the study. Furthermore, I am employed at the institution of study and part of my job responsibilities are interviewing job applicants, therefore, I was asked to provide feedback in the hiring process on

applicants for vacant positions during the study window. I declined participation in the study to avoid conflict of interest.

### **Summary**

This quantitative exploratory pilot correlation study explored the relationship between the gender identity of interviewers and the evaluation of applicant attributes and abilities at a mid-sized, geographically-dispersed, non-profit university. The design was appropriate for the study due to the rating evaluation survey design the institution uses in applicant evaluation, and to generalize findings from the sample to the population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). ANCOVA tests were conducted to explore the strength of relationship between variables tested in the research hypotheses. An additional independent t-test was performed to examine attribute score distribution for applicants who applied for a leadership position versus a non-leadership position. Due to the limitations of the sample size adjustments needed to be made as statistical analyses could not be used draw conclusions for the study; thus, the descriptive statistics were used to draw conclusions Ethical principles were observed throughout the entirety of the study to ensure informed consent, the minimization of risk of harm to participants, protections of confidentiality and anonymity, and the avoidance of deceptive practices. Chapter four will present the results and findings of the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Chapter four is organized to share the results of the analysis used to inform the investigation of each null hypothesis. The analysis for each null hypothesis is shared through summaries, statistical tables and figures, and additional supplemental analysis. The findings from the results are then discussed to make connections to existing literature.

**Results**

The following results are separated by each null hypothesis analysis.

***Null Hypothesis 1 Analysis:***

An analysis of covariance was used to assess if there is a statistically significant relationship between the interviewer gender identity on attribute score when controlling for perceived applicant gender identity. 91.67% of participants in the study identified as female (N = 11), 8.33% of the participants in the study identified as male (N = 1). Of the 12 participants in the study, 91.67% (N = 11) identified race/ethnic identity as white; 8.33% (N = 1) identified race/ethnicity as black/African American. The perceived gender identity of applicants was reported as 75.00% female (N = 9) and 25.00% male (N = 3). Female participants (N = 11) in the study indicated a perceived applicant gender identity of 18.18% male (N = 2) and 81.81% female (N = 9). The individual male participant indicated a perceived applicant identity of 100% male (N = 1), (Table 1).

**Table 1***Interviewer Gender Identity and Perceived Applicant Gender Identity*

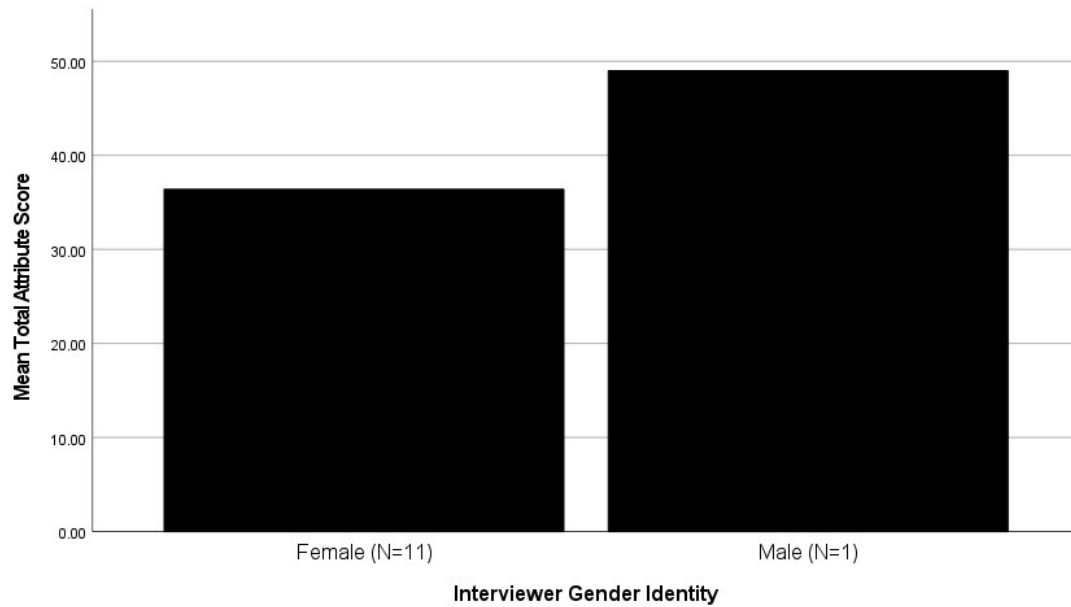
	<i>Interviewer Gender Identity</i>	<i>Perceived Applicant Gender Identity</i>
Interviewer 1	Female	Female
Interviewer 2	Female	Female
Interviewer 3	Female	Female
Interviewer 4	Female	Female
Interviewer 5	Female	Female
Interviewer 6	Female	Male
Interviewer 7	Female	Female
Interviewer 8	Female	Female
Interviewer 9	Female	Male
Interviewer 10	Female	Female
Interviewer 11	Female	Female
Interviewer 12	Male	Male

The analysis revealed that the neither the effect of interviewer gender identity,  $F(1,9) = .73, p = .42, \eta = .76$  (Table 2), nor the control for perceived applicant gender identity score,  $F(1,9) = .00, p = .98, \eta = .00$  (Table 2), was significant in relationship to the attribute score,  $r^2 = .076$ , adjusted  $r^2 = -1.29$ . Levene's test of equality of error variances was conducted to test the assumption of homogeneity. Levene's test was not significant and reveals that the assumptions of homogeneity have been met  $F(1,10) = 1.69, p = .22$ . The sample was predominately female ( $N = 11$ ), with a single male participant ( $N = 1$ ). The average attribute score was 37.44 ( $SD = 14.39$ ) with females reporting a mean score of 36.93 ( $SD = 14.60$ ), and the single male participant reporting a score of 49.00 (Figure 1, Table 3).

**Table 2**

*ANCOVA Test for Attribute Score as a Function of Interviewer Gender Identity, Using Perceived Applicant Gender Identity as a Covariate*

	<i>Df</i>	<i>Ms</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>eta</i> <sup>2</sup>
Interviewer Gender Identity	1	170.67	.73	.70	.76
Perceived Applicant Gender Identity	1	.05	.00	.99	.00
Error	9	233.66			

**Figure 1***Histogram: Mean of Attribute Score by Interviewer Gender Identity***Table 3***ANCOVA Descriptive Statistics: Attribute Score Adjusted and Unadjusted Means and Variability Using Perceived Applicant Gender Identity as Covariate*

Perceived Applicant Gender Identity	N	Unadjusted		Adjusted	
		M	SD	M	SE
Female	9	36.39	14.60	36.11	4.68
Male	3	49.00		46.11	11.06
Total	12	37.44	14.39		

**Supplemental Analysis.** Attribute characteristic classification, as identified by the interviewer was analyzed to assess distribution of attributes across the agency and communal classifications of agentic positive, agentic negative, communal positive, and communal negative. Agentic positive ( $M = 2.33$ ,  $SD = 1.30$ ) and communal positive ( $M = 3.50$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ) characteristics associated to the higher numbers of applicant characteristics identified. Agentic negative ( $M = .17$ ,  $SD = .38$ ) and communal negative ( $M = .00$ ,  $SD = .00$ ) were minimally or not identified in applicants (Table 4). The interviewer participants in the study were primarily female (91.67%). The perceived gender identity of applicants was reported as 75.00% female ( $N = 9$ ) and 25.00% male ( $N = 3$ ). Both sample populations were predominately represented by those who identified or perceived gender identity as female (Table 1).

**Table 4**

*Attribute Classification Descriptive Statistics: Agentic Positive, Agentic Negative, Communal Positive, Communal Negative*

Attribute Classification	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Agentic Positive	12	2.33	1.30
Agentic Negative	12	.17	.38
Communal Positive	12	3.50	1.09
Communal Negative	12	.00	.00

An independent *t*-test was performed to examine attribute score distribution for applicants who applied for a leadership position versus a non-leadership position. On average applicants who interviewed for leadership positions ( $N = 8$ ) scored lower in total attribute score ( $M = 32.54$ ,  $SE = 5.29$ ) than those who interviewed for a non-leadership position ( $N = 4$ ) in total attribute score ( $M = 47.25$ ,  $SE = 3.35$ ). Significance was not indicated as  $t(10) = -1.84$ ,  $p = 1.00$  (Table 5) ; and, the effect size was negative as  $d = -1.12$ .

**Table 5**

*t-Test Results Comparing Applicants Interviewed for Leadership and Non-Leadership Roles by Attribute Score*

Role Type	n	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Leadership	8	32.54	14.95	-1.84	10	1.00
Non-Leadership	4	47.25	6.70			

***Null Hypothesis 2 Analysis:***

An ANCOVA was used to assess if there is a statistically significant relationship between the interviewer gender identity on ability score when controlling for perceived applicant gender identity. 91.67% of participants in the study identified gender as female (N = 11), 8.33% of the participants in the student identified gender as male (N = 1). Of the 12 participants in the study, 91.67% (N = 11) identified race/ethnic identity as white; 8.33% (N = 1) identified race/ethnicity as black/African American. The perceived gender identity of applicants was reported as 75.00% female (N = 9) and 25.00% male (N = 3).

The analysis revealed that the neither the effect of interviewer gender identity,  $F(1,9) = .01, p = .93, \eta = .00$  (Table 6), nor the control for perceived applicant gender identity score,  $F(1,9) = .20, p = .66, \eta = .02$  (Table 6), were significant in relationship to the attribute score,  $r^2 = .037$ , adjusted  $r^2 = -.178$ . Levene's test of equality of error variances was conducted to test the assumption of homogeneity. Levene's test was not significant and reveals that the assumptions of homogeneity have been met  $F(1,10) = 4.02, p = .07$ . The sample was predominately female (N = 11), with a single male participant (N = 1). The average ability score was 5.26 ( $SD = 1.90$ ) with females reporting a mean score of 5.19 ( $SD = 1.97$ ), and the single male participant reporting a score of 6.00 (Figure 2, Table 7).

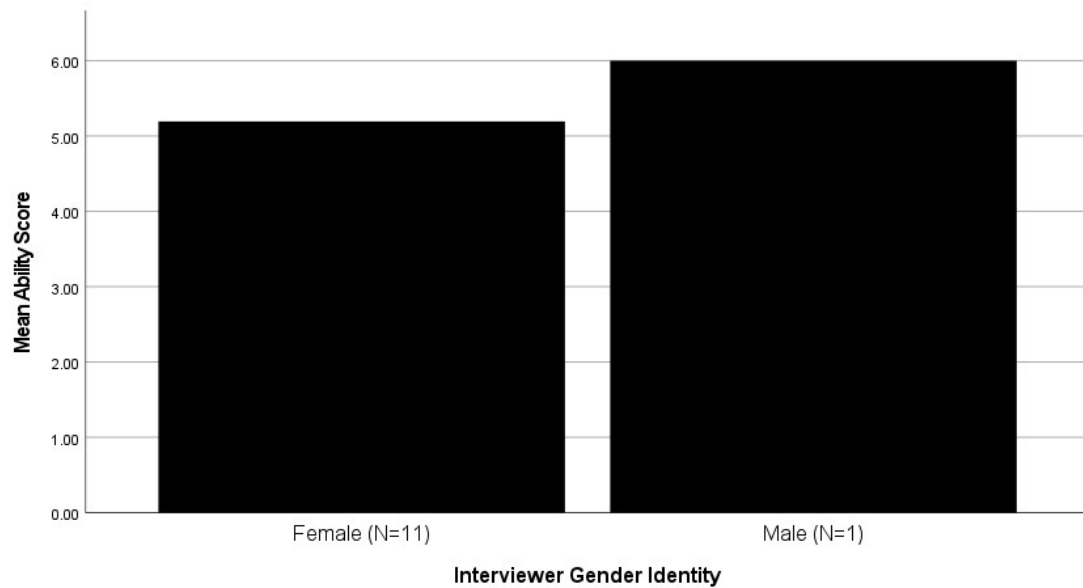
**Table 6**

*ANCOVA Test for Ability Score as a Function of Interviewer Gender Identity, Using Perceived Applicant Gender Identity as a Covariate*

	<i>Df</i>	<i>Ms</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>eta</i> <sup>2</sup>
Interviewer Gender Identity	1	.03	.007	.93	.00
Perceived Applicant Gender Identity	1	.85	.201	.66	.02
Error	9	4.24			

**Figure 2**

*Histogram: Mean of Ability Score by Interviewer Gender Identity*



**Table 7**

*ANCOVA Descriptive Statistics: Ability Score Adjusted and Unadjusted Means and Variability Using Perceived Applicant Gender Identity as Covariate*

Perceived Applicant Gender Identity	<i>N</i>	<i>Unadjusted</i>		<i>Adjusted</i>	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>
Female	9	5.19	1.98	5.24	.631
Male	3	6.00		5.45	2.38
Total	12	5.26	1.89		

The results of the study indicate that statistically the two null hypotheses are rejected. Null hypothesis one did not show significance for the effect of interviewer gender identity ( $p = .42$ ) or the covariant control of perceived applicant gender identity ( $p = .98$ ) on attribute evaluation. Null hypothesis two did not show significance for the effect of interviewer gender identity ( $p = .93$ ) or the covariant control of perceived applicant gender identity ( $p = .66$ ). The findings will describe the analysis from the study that led to the conclusion of null hypothesis rejection through the context of the extant literature.

The sample size and demographic distribution did not meet expectations for the study. 91.67% participants reported a gender identity of female ( $N = 11$ ), with the remaining participant identifying as male ( $N = 1$ ). The perceived gender identity of applicants was reported as 75.00% female ( $N = 9$ ) and 25.00% male ( $N = 3$ ). Due to the limitations imposed on the study by the sample size and response bias only the descriptive statistics should be considered when drawing conclusions about this study.

## Findings

### *Null Hypothesis 1:*

The study indicated that interviewers did not identify the same number of agentic and communal attributes for all applicants regardless of perceived applicant gender identity, nor did interviewers identify identical attributes for the same candidate when interviewed in a small group or group setting. The unadjusted standard error indicates that sample mean for interviewers who identified as female and male may not be as likely across the entire population. Adjusted  $r^2$  negative results indicate that the results may be improved with an increase in sample size and sample diversity. The perceived applicant gender identity was reported at 75.00% female and 25.00% male. This data is very similar to the current demographic breakdown of the participating institution (77.37% female, 22.63% male) and may indicate opportunity in recruitment or interview practices to obtain a more diverse applicant pool of candidates.

### *Supplemental Analyses:*

The additional analyses conducted were designed to explore elements of the data set further. The first supplemental analysis focused on the descriptive statistics surrounding the attribute characteristic classification of applicants as identified by the interviewer. The twenty-item list of characteristics attributes contained five items associated to agentic positive attributes, five items associated to agentic negative attributes, five items associated to communal positive attributes, and five items associated to communal negative attributes. Of the twelve participant surveys submitted, 72 total attributes were identified across the applicant pool. Of the 72 attributes identified only 2.78% ( $N = 2$ ) held an agentic or communal negative association. Zero applicants were

identified with an associated communal negative attribute. The agentic positive and communal positive associations comprised 97.22% (N = 70) of identified characteristics.

The second supplemental analysis focused on attribute score distribution assigned to applicants who applied for leadership roles (N = 8) versus non-leadership roles (N = 4). The roles classified as leadership roles included the positions of administrative assistant supervisor and associate vice president. There was no significant effect,  $t(10) = -1.84$ ,  $p = 1.00$  (Table 5), on attribute score for applicants who applied for leadership versus non-leadership roles; despite applicants applying for non-leadership roles attaining higher scores (M = 47.25) than applicants interviewing for leadership roles (M = 32.54). While there was not statistical significance demonstrated in the testing, the difference in mean scores for those who applied for leadership roles vs. non-leadership should be investigated further through the lens of equity in the hiring process. It is unclear if the difference in score is due to expectations for roles, lack of calibration by interviewers assessing applicants, or potential bias that could limit the assessment of applicants to the participating institution.

***Null Hypothesis 2:***

Null hypothesis two stated that all interviewers will rate the abilities of all applicants the same regardless of perceived applicant gender identity. The study indicated that interviewers did not rate the abilities of all applicants the same regardless of perceived gender identity. The unadjusted standard error indicates that sample mean for interviewers who identified as female and male may not be as likely across the entire population. Adjusted  $r^2$  negative results ( $r^2 = -.178$ ) indicate that the results may be improved with an increase in sample size and sample diversity. The perceived applicant

gender identity was reported at 75.00% female and 25.00% male. This data is very similar to the current demographic breakdown of the participating institution (77.37% female, 22.63% male) and may indicate opportunity in recruitment or interview practices to obtain a more diverse applicant pool of candidates.

### **Discussion**

Both null-hypothesis were rejected with the note that severe limitations surrounding the sample size made it difficult to identify reliable results from this data. The supplemental analyses were conducted to explore the phenomena further. Both analyses were informed by the literature on inequitable perspectives and practices placed on females through societal expectations that women are ascribed to both in and out of the workplace (Eagly et al., 2012; Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Of 72 attribute characteristics identified there were only two categorized as agentic or communal negative. Communal positive attribute characteristics had the highest identified frequencies (N = 42), with agentic positive associations representing the seconding highest frequency (N = 28). This could be associated to similarity-attraction that has been noted to bias the interview process (Millet, 2017), or may have been due to the assessment of congruency of values and interests that is associated with person-organization fit (Cable & Judge, 1997). The three questions used to contribute to the attribute score asked the interviewer to assess their perceptions of the applicant's value alignment, positive collaboration, and if they would be deemed a positive addition to the institution. Increased positive agentic and communal frequencies may also be the result of secondary interviewing after some applicants have been screened out of the process. The practice at the participating institution, generally, has individual interviews

prior to small group or group interviews. All the participants indicated participation in a small group or group interviewing setting, which may infer that the only interviews in the sample were secondary and occurring after screening in individual interviews had occurred.

The second supplemental analysis was completed to assess the effect of role type (leadership vs. non-leadership) on attribute score. This analysis was also informed by prior literature on role congruity theory and limitations women have experienced in obtaining leadership roles in comparison to male counterparts. There was no significant effect on attribute score for applicants who applied for leadership versus non-leadership roles, despite applicants applying for non-leadership roles attaining higher scores ( $M = 47.25$ ) than applicants interviewing for leadership roles ( $M = 32.54$ ). This finding does not suggest that the prior literature on inequity is unfounded; but rather, greater investigation with an adequate sample size and sample diversity would likely produce different results.

As was noted in chapter three, the inconsistent practices of obtaining interview feedback at the participating institution was not evaluated in this study; however, it may be associated with small sample size. The participating institution provided the newly designed applicant evaluation feedback questionnaire to hiring managers without policy or procedure to require its use. The sample size was voluntary and had a 51.27% participation rate. Greater use of the standard feedback survey may have increased participation, or at the very least, provided opportunity for employees to participate.

### Summary

The results, findings, and discussion in chapter four are presented in relation to two null-hypotheses exploring interviewer gender identity and the effects on applicant evaluation when controlling for perceived applicant gender identity. Null-hypothesis one assessed the evaluation of applicant attributes while controlling for perceived gender identity. Null hypothesis one did not show significance for the effect of interviewer gender identity ( $p = .42$ ) or the covariant control of perceived applicant gender identity ( $p = .98$ ) on attribute evaluation. Null hypothesis two assessed the evaluation of applicant abilities while controlling for perceived gender identity. Null hypothesis two did not show significance for the effect of interviewer gender identity ( $p = .93$ ) or the covariant control of perceived applicant gender identity ( $p = .66$ ).

Supplemental analyses were performed in which descriptive statistics were analyzed for agentic and communal attribute association. It was revealed that agentic and communal attributes categorized with positive association accounted for 97.22% of all identified attributes. An independent t-test was performed to examine attribute score distribution for applicants who applied for a leadership position versus a non-leadership position. There was no significant effect on attribute score for applicants who applied for leadership roles versus non-leadership roles, despite applicants applying for non-leadership roles attaining higher scores ( $M = 47.25$ ) than applicants interviewing for leadership roles ( $M = 32.54$ ). The rejection of null hypotheses, review of descriptive statistics and frequencies, and the limitations of the study can inform strategies to promote diversity and equal-opportunity in the hiring process. Chapter five will address the study's aim by recommending a proposed solution, describing

procedures for implementation and discussing practical, research-related, and leadership-related implications.

## CHAPTER FIVE: PROPOSED SOLUTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The intent of this study is to contribute to the body of knowledge surrounding workplace equity through the exploration of interviewer gender identity and the corresponding perceptions and decision-making deployed when evaluating applicants for employment opportunities at an institution of higher education. Due to limitations from the sample size, conclusions could not be drawn from the statistical analyses performed. Descriptive statistics were used to draw conclusions and form the proposed solutions outlined in chapter five.

**Proposed Solutions**

The study was limited by the size of the sample population. Statistical generalizations could not be made across the population of the participating institution. Descriptive analysis revealed dissonance between the interviewer self-identified demographic data and the overall employee demographic data of the participating institution. 91.67% of participants identified as female (N = 11), and 8.33% identified as male (N=1). The participating institutions overall population has a larger proportion of females 77.37% (N = 1087), but not to the degree of the sample. Likewise, the participation of male interviewers in the sample at 8.33% is not reflective of the participating institutions male employee population at 22.63% (N = 318). The perceived applicant gender identity, as perceived by the interviewer participants in the study, was reported at 75.00% female and 25.00% male. This descriptive statistic aligns more closely with the participating institutions overall employee demographics.

This study, while severely limited, suggests opportunity may exist in the recruitment of a more diverse population or the limitation of bias in the interview process

to ensure diverse applicants are provided equitable opportunity when interviewing for vacancies at the participating institution. Does the process, or decisions being made when interviewing applicants, contain or lead to similarity attraction that negates efforts to broaden the diversity of employees at the institution? To improve workplace equity, solutions should focus on (1) the recruitment of diverse populations, (2) facilitating non-bias interview processes, and (3) creating workplace cultures that are appealing to all populations through equitable practices. These three solutions will be explained in more detail next.

### ***Recruitment***

A baccalaureate degree granting institution in the United States, generally, employs individuals with higher degree obtainment. From 2016 to 2021 the number of individuals in the United States with master's degrees or higher increased 18.38% (Census Bureau, 2022). Females comprised 54.01% of that population, with males representing 45.99%. Conversely, the number of females with master's degree or higher in the educational or health services sector only represented 32.04% of the industry, while males represented 67.96%. The female population obtaining degrees has increased overall, but the rate of increase in the education industry is still lagging. This presents a competitive challenge in attracting a more diverse employee population due to the lower levels of supply; in the number of females with degrees at the appropriate level for the field of higher education.

Since 2010 the United States has experienced consistent growth rates in population, while becoming more diverse. This pattern is anticipated to continue until 2030 when the growth rate will slow and continue to become more diversified. The

population is projected to grow more from international migration than from natural increase. Furthermore, it is forecasted that 32% of the American population will be a race other than White by 2060 (Vespa et al., 2020). Recruiting for a diverse population requires an organization to be less homogenous by sourcing applicants more intentionally (Qualtrics.com, 2021). An organization committed to equity development must assess current practices that positively and negatively impact the talent acquisition process such as the identification of talent, interview process and protocols, talent acquisition timelines, and training needed to appropriately identify and retain a diverse workforce (Gruver, 2020; Jobvite, 2021; Levashina et al., 2014; Millet, 2017).

Acquiring talented and diverse employees is the most important source of strategic advantage in higher education (Evans & Chun, 2007). From 2017 to 2021 changes in talent acquisition priorities have shifted. In 2021, human resource professionals were surveyed for the annual Recruiter Nation Report (Jobvite, 2021). Respondents identified increases in priorities such as automating process and improving efficiency, managing downsizing and layoffs, improving diversity, and updating recruiting technology. Priorities such as growing the talent pipeline, growing employer brand, improving time-to-hire, improving candidate experience, and nurturing passive talent experienced declines. Furthermore, the use of outside recruitment firms increased from seven-percent to 27% from 2017 to 2021 (Jobvite, 2021). The focus on automation and efficiency while improving diversity emphasizes the need for consistent strategy in the talent acquisition process. Increased reliance on external recruitment firms can be viewed counter-intuitively to gaining financial efficiency due to the costs that are occurred from outsourcing.

The way a position description is written may influence perceptions of applicants regarding the work environment or culture of the institution (Knight, 2018). Gaucher et al. (2011) found that women's anticipated belongingness and job interest was negatively affected by masculine wording in job advertisements. Furthermore, the researchers found that "the mere presence of words such as challenge, lead, boast, and active in advertisements made jobs appear less gender diverse and less appealing to women" (Gaucher et al., 2011, p. 120).

A desire to counter homogeneous tendencies in employee recruitment requires individuals at the organization to go outside of personal networks. If an organization, or talent acquisition team, is lacking diversity there is a high likelihood that diverse candidates are ruled out of contention through natural or unconscious bias. Partnering with search firms that are diverse and diversifying where jobs are posted can increase the diversity of an applicant pool (Mauer, 2020). Diversity is essential for an organization to remain, or become, competitive in the market place. Research has shown how diversity leads to greater innovation, productivity and favorable outcomes (Corrington et al., 2020). In addition to the competitive advantages, a diversified workforce is essential for an organization's future sustainability. The population shifts forecasted within the United States indicate that a more diverse population of consumers is increasing. In order to serve the future populations an organization must understand those populations.

Increasing the number of diverse applicants who apply for employment vacancies can be done through a strategic approach that focuses on elements that counteract organizational homogeneity. Before employment vacancies are advertised, the institution should review position descriptions and postings to ensure that the language used in

postings is gender neutral. Position descriptions may contain language that is more agentic (masculine) or communal (feminine) in nature; and thus, limit the population of applicants for vacant roles.

To increase diverse talent in the applicant pool, the institution must clearly understand which groups are underrepresented and where diversity is needed in the organization's workforce. Once a clear understanding is developed of where the workforce diversity is lacking a multifaceted approach should be used to attract talent. The institution should target online job boards, trade publications, social media groups, state or government agencies and schools that are associated with or serve communities of the identified underrepresented workforce populations.

### ***Interview Process***

Bias mitigation in the interview process is essential to build a heterogeneous and diverse employee base (Bohnet et al., 2016; Levashina et al., 2014; Millet, 2017). This begins in the applicant screening process and carries through the interview stages until employee acquisition. Blind evaluation procedures focus more on actual performance versus societal influences or individual perceptions (Bohnet et al., 2016). Bias can be invoked by names of applicants or locations of addresses. An organization can identify the most relevant applicants for a position through blind resume review while controlling for such bias (Knight, 2018).

This can be achieved by removing names and personal identifiers from resumes submitted to hiring managers in the pre-screening phase of the process, moving questions that are typically asked in an informal pre-screening interview with the hiring manager to written response questions in the application process, or having applicants complete work

sample tests. If a pre-screening interview is needed it should be conducted by a neutral party with specified questions and ratings that can serve as a baseline for evaluating initial applicants. The institution should ensure, prior to interviews being conducted, that the pool of applicants is deep enough to present a diverse applicant pool to the employee interviewers.

Structured interviews reduce bias and allow interviewers the opportunity to focus on the impact of personal perceptions while assessing cognitive abilities, skill, and data (Levashina et al., 2014; Millet, 2017). Applicants in unstructured interviews receive higher ratings for perceived effectiveness; yet offer far less predictability than ability, aptitude, or personality tests when looking at actual job performance (Bohnet, 2016). Furthermore, unstructured interviews rely more heavily on the interviewer's abilities to identify information while attempting to control for bias (Bohnet et al., 2016). Ensuring diversity amongst the interviewing panel in the structured interview process can also promote equitable perceptions (Mauer, 2020).

Lack of structure in an interview process provides greater individuality in the employment screening process; however, the individuality precipitates ease for unconscious bias to occur in the interview process (Millet, 2017). Additionally, structure centered factors have shown to have strong influence over female professionals' perception of the glass ceiling perceptions (Cohen et.al, 2018). To ensure process is equitable, minimizes bias, and identifies talent needs that promote diversity, an organization must assess current gaps (Gruver, 2020), identify a consistent process (Millett, 2017), and drive accountability through policy and process for employee outcomes (Baum 2021; Stavrou & Ierodiakonou, 2018).

Implementing a structured interview process can reduce bias; however, the training of interviewers to understand bias holistically is essential to building a diverse workforce. Awareness training can assist interviewers in developing an understanding of unconscious bias (Knight, 2018). Bias training goes beyond gender and racial bias and should include training on any bias that can impact an interviewer's abilities; such as, affinity, regency, halo effect, horn effect, gender, attribution, race, and confirmation biases (Qualtrics.com, 2021). The institution should also consider annual awareness training for all employees as an organization requirement. The federal government requires institutions to practice preventative measures for Title IX, and many institutions do this, in part, through required training for employees (Melnick, 2020). Title IX training that ensures policies and procedures are in place to prevent sexual misconduct and provide accurate processing of complaints. The institution could structure awareness training in a similar fashion to ensure a systematic approach.

Structure can be added to the group interviews by prescribing the number of employee interviewers, defining roles of each employee interviewer, and using a consistent evaluation tool that can be informed by assigned questions that are ascribed to each employee interviewer prior to the actual interview. Interviewers should evaluate applicants immediately following the interview to mitigating interviewers forgetting poignant answers or favoring applicants whose styles reflect more story telling. The primary goal of the interview should be to identify talent for the institution's vacancies, not create buy-in amongst current employees or key organizational stake holders.

Implementation of a standard interview process, regardless of department area, should be considered to mitigate bias in the interview process. The evaluation tool

developed collaboratively with this study is a positive start to building consistency; however, policy and procedure must accompany the use of any tool or resource to assess true effect of bias mitigation. Informal approaches in the use of tools or lack of prescription in process increase the likelihood of bias influencing decisions. A standard interview process can consist of blind resume review and prescreening .

### ***Workplace Culture***

Diversity and equity challenge homogeneity. Employee sentiment and outcomes must inform the strategy that leads to common goal obtainment (Stavrou & Ierodiakonou, 2018). Employee sentiment is informed by bias, motivational factors, and individual perspective that are essential to understand how to promote a positive workplace culture that is, inclusive of, and, attractive to a diverse employee or applicant population (Bowman Williams & Cox, 2020). Although legislation and legal requirements that promote or require equality do not discriminate against the majority, there are tensions that are created when the principles of non-discrimination are invoked (Peters & Suter, 2009). In order to address a problem, one must first recognize the problem. In a 2020 survey by PayScale, despite acknowledging that men and women do not have equal-opportunity, in general, those surveyed did not recognize gender inequality or equity issues within their own workplace (Gruver, 2020). One of the biggest challenges in addressing equal-opportunity issues is in the number of white men who are more prevalent in upper levels of organizations, and who perceive equity levels in general and within their organizations, at a much higher level than others (Gruver, 2020).

The measurements and goals of equal-opportunity also pose challenge for progress (Smith-Pryor, 2020; Stainback & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2013). Historically,

progress for equal-opportunity was measured by comparing a group to its predecessors, versus having the measure of equality being group achievement; whereas, the opportunity is provided for equal proportions of people to succeed or fail within groups of our society (Smith-Pryor, 2020). Many organizations have also moved from promoting equal-opportunity to managing diversity. Stainback and Tomaskovic-Devey (2013) state, “diversity management alone does not promote racial and gender integration or equal employment-opportunity gains” (para. 8). Organizations provide trainings and symbolic public commitments to equal-opportunity to manage diversity rather than benchmarking and monitoring progress toward equal-opportunity (Stainback & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2013).

An internal assessment of gaps in process, perspective, or representative population can be challenging when looking through the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Baum (2021) states, “facing the harsh truths of racism and sexism requires a deep dive into the root causes of such behaviors” (p. 17). Organizational behaviors are connected and influenced by human individuals. It is important to understand that perspectives of individuals are different based on a variety of factors. For example, Diers-Lawson and Collins (2022) studied the influence of crisis on employee relationship management. The researchers found higher education employees, “both in the private sector and earning higher incomes were significantly less likely to believe their organization was in crisis compared to colleagues at lower levels of income and in the public sector” (p. 13). To accurately assess organization gaps, a thorough perspective from individuals at multiple levels of the organization must be obtained and understood. If employee perception and feedback is used as an assessment mechanism, it is critical

that the organization present definitions for diversity and inclusion in order to connect findings to action (Romansky et.al, 2021).

To understand employee or applicant perspective an organization must account for gaps between principles and practice. Bowman-Williams and Cox (2020) found that while individuals of an organization recognize the importance of diversity in the workplace, the rationale, or motivations, of such beliefs (e.g. improving outcomes, addressing inequity, or shifting demographics) can impact change management, and further maintain the status quo through inaction. The assessment of current organization characteristics, and the process for on-going review of those characteristics, can illuminate gaps in specific population representation or practices that are less inclusive (Stavrou & Ierodiakonou, 2018). An organization committed to equity development must assess current practices that impact employees such as compensation audits that may reveal gender wage disparities, policies intended to promote equity that are not effective, or preventative measures that impact overall organizational health (Baum, 2021).

### **Evidence that Challenges the Solution**

Arguments against the promotion of diversity and inclusion in the workplace stem less from the recognition that diversity and inclusion is important and more so to questioning the mechanisms organizations use for promotion (Coaston, 2021). While the majority of White Americans express support for the principal of equality many oppose policies surrounding diversity programs intended to build equity (Bowman-Williams & Cox, 2020). Programing can leave the workforce majority with sentiments that minority employees, or the addition of minority populations are viewed as prized by an

organization. Additionally, notions of individualism (inferiority or superiority) by the majority can undermine diversity efforts (Bowman-Williams & Cox, 2020).

The concept of reverse discrimination is often cited by antagonists of diversity and inclusion. This construct hinges on the premise that members of the majority are being discriminated against by an organization implementing diversity and equity practices. While reverse discrimination can occur, it is important to note that discrimination alone is not exclusive only to specific demographics of individuals and can occur in the work place when instances of promotion, firing, demotion, or adverse decision making are based on race or gender (Devadoss, 2016). Proponents of this construct propose an individualist perspective that does not align with current realities of the workplace. According to Johnson et al. (2016),

“...evidence simply does not support concerns surrounding the myth of reverse racism. It is difficult to find studies that show subtle preferences for women over men, and for minorities over whites. But the data does support one idea: When it is apparent that an individual is female or nonwhite, they are rated worse than when their sex or race is obscured” (para. 17).

Improving workplace diversity can create challenges that organizations must prepare for to maximize the benefits of a diverse workforce. The incorporation of a diverse workforce, and repercussions of not managing such a workforce can reduce individual and organizational performance (Patrick & Kumar, 2012). A truly diverse and inclusive environment values the contributions of all employees to raise the performance bar. This must be obtained through a collaborative effort of all employees that range from leadership roles to the front lines (Clifton Strengths, 2019). Furthermore, diversity

training and programming to increase outcomes, or boost demographic population numbers will not equate to sustainable equitable shifts. An organization must recognize the injustice of inequity for sentiments to transform into meaningful action (Bowman-Williams & Cox, 2020).

Organizations must confront fear that may accompany the implementation of meaningful diversity and inclusion practices. Fear may be informed by concerns of losing employees, losing customers, or saying and doing the incorrect thing (Hill & Harris, 2021). Fear can paralyze leaders with inaction. Leaders fears can be rooted by concerns of misstep when speaking to equity issues or when directly communicating with minority team members regarding inequitable experiences (Auger-Dominquez, 2019). Threats to majority status can be invoked by conversations of demographic shifts or desired diverse populations. The perceived threats can manifest to negatively impact equity efforts due to the majority status striving for more exclusion (Dean, 2022).

Lastly, economic market shifts can impede future promotion of organizational diversity and equity. Market shifts, reflected in the need for employees, must be considered when developing strategy surrounding the recruitment and interviewing practices. For this study specifically, the participating institution experienced negative market shifts that impacted traditional recruitment and interview rates. The participating institution had 48 full-time employee job postings from January 2022 – March 2022. The number of full-time postings declined by 79.17% (N = 10) as of August 17, 2022. An institution of higher education's employee need is based on student population. If student population grows, declines, or plateaus employee need levels correspond. This study was

conducted at a participating institution that experienced market shifts that influenced less recruitment of potential employees.

### **Implementation of the Proposed Solution(s)**

#### **Factors and Stakeholders Related to the Implementation of the Solution**

Kezar and Lester (2011) found that grassroots efforts may be independent of top-down efforts, when exploring leadership in higher education. For an organization to make significant strides in equitable practices there must be alignment between leaders at the highest level of the organization and those driving change within the organization. Improving the diversity of an organization's workforce has both tactical and strategic elements. Many of the proposed solutions are strategic, as they were informed by this study and the extant literature; yet, they carry very tactical implications. To advance strategic or tactical initiatives, an organization must develop an organizational learning strategy.

The key to developing a successful organizational learning strategy is to recognize the power of emotion in overcoming cultural barriers to diversity. Human resource and diversity leaders need to appeal to the emotional side by illustrating problems and issues in dramatic, concrete terms (Heath & Heath, 2010). As a result, systemic professional development initiatives cannot simply take diversity constructs and present them in a didactic manner. Persuasion needs to begin by dealing with the emotional elephant, the underlying assumptions, presuppositions, and behaviors related to intergroup relations and acceptance of difference.

Evans and Chun (2007) state, "as organizations operationalize plans to create inclusive talent practices, they must begin with the brutal facts of turnover of diverse

employees, inequitable working conditions, compensation disparities, and microclimates of fear and even repression” (p. 121). To operationalize standard organizational expectations that promote diversity, equity and inclusion there must be a unified effort between leaders of diversity initiatives and the human resource department (Chun & Evans, 2007). The strategic priorities must have executive level support that can be operationally implemented by key stakeholders (Morley, 2018).

A collaborative strategic plan can be created to prioritize on-going assessment initiatives and climate surveys, define scope of initiatives and timelines, and identify target audiences for impact (Chun & Evans, 2007). Training and assimilation of understanding for key stakeholders is essential prior to launching initiatives. Initiatives may have reciprocal effect amongst different audiences. For example, many organizations profess a commitment to equity and diversity, yet, position descriptions do not contain responsibilities surrounding this commitment (Chun & Evans, 2007) nor are they refreshed regularly to align with a changing talent pool (Fuller et al., 2021). Conducting compensation audits to ensure equitable compensation across employee populations regardless of gender, ethnic, or other personal identifications benefits both current employees and prospective employees (Baum, 2021).

To operationalize standard process and expectations, the process must be consistent from start to finish, beyond approvals to start recruitment or hire employees, the organization should define who is involved in the interview process, what is the role of individuals in the interview process, what are the steps in the interview process, and how the inputs obtained from the process are consistently analyzed to reduce bias and

similarity attraction toward and between applicants and interviewers (Baum, 2021; Levashina et al., 2014; Millet, 2017).

***Timeline for Implementation of the Solution(s)***

The implementation of the proposed solution(s) is designed to focus on quarterly phases of implementation over the period of one-year. The proposed solutions are broken down into the categories of recruitment, interviewing practices, and workplace culture. The first quarter focuses on the review and assessment of current needs. The second quarter shifts tactically to build a foundation on the findings from the organizational assessments through specific development and communication of initiatives. The third quarter phases into the development of plan initiating by conducting employee trainings and establishing organizational goals for program success. The fourth, and final yearly quarter, is a period of tactical initiation and review (Table 8).

**Table 8**

*Quarterly Implementation Schedule of Proposed Solutions*

	<b>Quarter 1</b>	<b>Quarter 2</b>	<b>Quarter 3</b>	<b>Quarter 4</b>
Recruitment	<p>Assessment of Population Diverse Needs</p> <p>Review of Position Description Language</p> <p>Review of Job Advertisement Practices</p> <p>Review Job Posting Language</p>	<p>Identification of Diverse Job Advertisement Avenues</p> <p>Modify Job Postings for Gender Neutrality</p> <p>Create Monthly Assessment for Employee Applicant Demographic Review</p>	<p>Update Position Descriptions and Obtain Employee Acknowledgements</p> <p>Define Assessment of Outcomes for Desired Changes</p>	<p>Initiate Updated Job Posting and Advertisement Practices</p> <p>Conduct Monthly Review of Assessment Progress</p>
Interviewing	<p>Review of Interview Practices by Dept.</p>	<p>Development of Standard Interview Process and Participants with QA Guardrails</p> <p>Identify Bias Awareness Training Provider</p>	<p>Conduct Bias Awareness Training for Interviewers</p> <p>Define Assessment of Outcomes for Desired Changes</p>	<p>Begin new Interview Process</p> <p>End-of-Quarter Interviewer Climate Survey</p>
Workplace Culture	<p>Equity Climate Survey of Current Employees</p> <p>Conduct Compensation Equity Assessment</p> <p>Conduct Executive Principle-Practice (PP) Gap Analysis</p>	<p>Provide Summary of Survey Results and Priority Items to Employees</p> <p>Determine Equitable Compensation Model</p> <p>Develop Recommendations on Policy Shift from PP Gap Analysis</p>	<p>Implement Annual Bias Awareness Training for Employees</p> <p>Develop Strategy for Equity Compensation Model Updates</p> <p>Define Assessment of Outcomes for Desired Changes</p> <p>Define Cadence for On-going Climate Surveying</p>	<p>Implement Policy Shifts</p> <p>Communicate Changes/Commitments Broadly</p> <p>Conduct Monthly Review of Assessment Progress</p> <p>Initiate Cadence for Climate Surveying</p>

### **Evaluating the Outcome of Implementing the Solution(s)**

Each of the three focus areas contains components of assessment. The components of assessment include priority in defining the assessment outcomes; meaning, how will the organization view success in the established area, and how will the organization be able to know if the intent of the initiative is being achieved in the short-term, through leading indicators, to meet the long-term desired outcome? Romansky et al. (2021) found that, “organizations that confidently measure DEI, create accountability, and embed inclusion into talent decisions and processes report up to 20% more organizational inclusion compared to their peers without those approaches” (p. 6).

As the organization is defining success for each area, attention must be given to measurable data points that can be woven into the institutions strategic plan for short-term and long-term assessment intervals. The assessment plan can be built to align with the institution’s key milestones each calendar year. Key milestones are defined as times when the institution assess key performance indicators. At a high level, tracking mechanisms for the number of interviews completed, perceived demographics of applicants, and identifying who in the organization is involved in the interviews can provide high-level leaders with visibility to see if desired changes are occurring.

The hiring managers, human resource department, and diversity leaders should monitor initiative assessment data more frequently. If the institution continues to use the standard form that was collaboratively designed for this study, data can be analyzed to inform additional training that may be needed or identify homogenous behaviors that may lead to bias in the interview process. A multifaceted assessment approach is needed to not only evaluate the achievement of strategic priorities, but to also identify obstacles that

may occur more frequently in the processes. Taking too much time to develop an action plan and neglecting to share actions taken as a result of learnings are common pitfalls for many organizations seeking to build more inclusive environments (Romansky et al., 2021).

To effectively track inclusion, organizations must measure employee sentiment with a consistent definition of inclusion, ensuring the organization can act fast on the results (Romansky et.al, 2021). The institution should consider a bi-annual employee climate survey to assess employee sentiment. Statistical analysis can be performed to see if the recruiting strategies are increasing the number of diverse applicants for open positions at the institution. If this is conducted regularly, the institution may be able to adapt to positive or negative learnings to meet the desired outcomes. Additionally, measuring the attitudes and sentiments of hiring managers and those involved in the interview process is essential to create a process that promotes bias mitigation. It is recommended that this measurement include pre and post surveying based on the timelines of training and implementation of practices. Lastly, as learned from the literature, inclusiveness and a diverse workforce will continue to be a vital component for an organization's success. The assessment of the recommended solutions should align and roll-up into the institutions strategic plan to assess overall institutional effectiveness.

## **Implications**

### **Practical Implications**

Race and ethnicity forecasts for the United States project the non-Hispanic White population to decline over the coming decades. The population of two or more races is expected to lead growing ethnic groups over the next several decades, followed by Asians

and Hispanics (Vespa, et.al, 2020). It is essential for organizations to grow more diverse in their employee base to meet the needs of the anticipated shift in population (Corrington et.al, 2020; Evans & Chun, 2007). The practical implications of this DIP are difficult if a positive change is desired surrounding equity. The realities of bias can be harsh (Baum, 2021) and the management of diversity initiatives does not equate to promoting equality or equity (Stainback & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2013). For initiatives to have meaningful impact they must start with philosophical alignment amongst leaders. The alignment must be driven by an acknowledgement that is far greater than pleasantries; one in which leaders identify more can be done in a transparent manner that is reflected by employee sentiment.

Once philosophical alignment amongst leaders is achieved and transparently communicated, the planning and operational work to improve equity can begin. The actionable items must focus on areas of opportunity in order to move from managing diversity to promoting equity. Awareness training can facilitate an environment for existing bias to be acknowledged, while the addition of consistent structure in the hiring process can mitigate bias (Knight, 2018). Identifying bias does not automatically reduce bias. The organization must be prepared to have existing hiring managers or employees opt out of the organization due to malalignment with equitable practices and strategic plans. This can also serve as an opportunity for the organization to capitalize on realignment by ensuring new talent brought into the organization is not only aligned but advocates for equitable practices.

Research suggests that there are tradeoffs for ethnic minorities and women in the workforce when advocating for equitable practices. Hekman et al. (2017) found that,

“diversity-valuing behavior tends to be somewhat acceptable behavior for White men, yet an illegitimate behavior for ethnic minorities and women, the latter may be able to advance their own career to the extent they reinforce the glass ceiling by engaging in a low level of diversity-valuing behavior” (p. 791).

Expectations of advocacy cannot be implied or expected solely from the minority.

Organizations should explore ways to reward, or promote, demographic unselfishness.

There is a greater opportunity to positively impact the glass ceiling by shifting the focus of diversity valuing behavior to demographic unselfishness behavior (Hekman et al., 2017). An organization must define why they are implementing initiatives and how the initiatives will be measured for success. Struggles surround hiring leaders of diversity and inclusion initiatives, in large part, due to organizations not really knowing what the purpose of the role is (Mauer, 2020). Defining an actionable plan to address analyzed gaps is critical for an organization seeking to build a diverse and equitable workforce.

### **Implications for Future Research**

The implications for future research are vast. Due to the small sample size, statistical analysis could not be completed. Future research should design more robust studies that are able to recruit a large enough and diverse enough sample size to evaluate attributes and abilities. The work-place design of the study was intentional but lacked foresight to anticipate the challenges in obtaining an adequate sample in an environment of inconsistent interview practices. Future research could apply the principles of this study in a more stable environment to glean greater understandings.

The study was informed by hallmark literature such as social role theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) and role congruity theory (Eagly et al., 2012) with practical implications

being weighed for gender languages (Hellinger and Bußmann, 2003) and workplace bias (Bohnet, 2016). Descriptive statistic analysis observed similarities between applicant attribution assignment and the current demographic population of the university.

Additional research could be conducted to see if greater levels of communal or agentic attributes align with the gender demography of an organization. If realized, it could contribute to further exploration on obstacles surrounding the achievement of a diverse workforce; meaning, how does an organization change if it is perpetuating similarity attraction through its interviewing practices? Lastly, the participating institution can capitalize on this research and continue to assess the effects of applicant gender identity on the evaluation of attributes and abilities in a longitudinal manner by continuing and promoting the use of the standardized applicant evaluation feedback form and corresponding demographic questionnaire.

### **Implications for Leadership Theory and Practice**

Fostering of an equitable workplace culture requires leaders to be agile. The measurement of employee sentiment must be followed quickly with action (Romansky et.al, 2021). Leaders must lead from the front, the back, and from within; with an outward and inward gaze (Lowney, 2022). An equitable workplace culture leverages the diversity of each employee to contribute to the greater good through the individual differences. Essentially, the challenges and rewards of establishing an equitable culture are found in the human variable.

Transformational leadership is a theory of leadership that is modeled by the encouragement and care of others in a reciprocal manner from leader to follower and from follower to leader. Transformational leadership focuses on uplifting morale,

motivations, and morals; while transactional leadership focuses on immediate self-interests (Bass, 1999). Practical solutions to mitigating inequality can be seen by the majority as "...reasonable, and even moral, through principled objection" (Bowman-Williams & Cox, 2020, p. 10). Individually, the realities of bias and inequitable behaviors can be harsh (Baum, 2021). These realities can evoke fears amongst employees that are deeply rooted and in need of exploration and transformational support.

Organizational fear is overcome through authenticity and measurable outcomes that provide quick wins and long-term solutions for all employees (Harris & Hill, 2021). Authenticity can be found through genuine inquiry in which leaders seek to understand employees and their perspectives to promote a trusting relationship. For a truly authentic experience the leader cannot only focus on genuine inquiry but must also focus on listening to what employees are sharing while acknowledging lack of understanding or mistakes (Auger-Dominquez, 2019).

Organizational change can be difficult. People are often recipients of change throughout life, and leader must acknowledge that "...change can require people to modify their personal or professional identities, skill sets, and other deeply held beliefs and expectations" (Cawsey et al., 2012, pg.213). People seek to understand change and its impact through questioning. If individuals can see the benefits outweigh the costs, change is likely to occur (Cawsey et al., 2012). The starting point to improve workplace equity is not to focus on culture; but rather, identify the issue(s) the organization faces (Fullan & Scott, 2009). For example, this study recognizes opportunity to improve workplace equity, and perceptions of equitable practices, by focusing on the recruitment of a diverse applicant pool, and the mitigation of bias in the interview process. Solutions

proposed are themed in the areas of structure and consistency in process that is grounded in diversity and inclusion research. Leaders across the organization must first align on the vision of equitable practices to recognize the issues surrounding equitable practices. Once agreement is formed on the issues that need to be addressed, the institutional priorities can be realigned and the strengths of the existing culture can be leveraged to meet the intended outcomes (Fullan & Scott, 2009).

To build sustainability an organization must address ways to meet a changing population in the United States. The foundation to sustainability must be a commitment to change, and that is very difficult. The commitment needed to positively impact workplace equity is one that acknowledges there is still great opportunity to position minorities and women for leadership roles within organizations (Cohen et.al, 2018; Johnson et al., 2016), implement systematic practices for pay equity (Gurver, 2020), and most importantly, commit to building awareness amongst employees through self-examination and hiring practices that ensure the best talent is hired, developed, and retained by the organization (Knight 2018).

The challenges for leaders in practice are vast. Strategic priority and structured tactical initiatives are needed to successfully change culture. Change is difficult and asking people to change when perceptions may exist that current practices are working can be arduous. Legislation and regulations are set forth at the national and state levels. Practitioners develop programming and strategy for compliance. Leaders create strategy for change. Grassroots leadership and executive leadership must converge for true organizational change to occur (Kezar & Lester, 2011). To lead through challenging realities a leader must engage in an approach to nurture sensitivities with truth; thus,

transformational leadership is essential to successfully promote meaningful diversity and equity initiatives (Bass, 1999, Baum 2021).

### **Summary of the Dissertation in Practice**

The aim of this DIP was to inform strategies that promote diversity and equal-opportunity in the hiring process by exploring the relationship between gender identity and interviewer evaluations of applicants. The study's findings can be used to inform recommended changes to (1) recruitment, (2) the interview process, and (3) the workplace culture to promote diversity and equal-opportunity. The recommendations developed from the combined literature review and findings of this DIP study may provide guidance for non-profit and educational leaders to help them make decisions surrounding policies and procedures that may provide opportunities for improved equal-opportunity practices.

The design of the study would have been appropriate if a large enough sample could have been recruited. However, due to the limitations of the sample size statistical analyses could not be used draw conclusions for the study; thus, the descriptive statistics were used to draw conclusions. Ethical principles were observed throughout the entirety of the study to ensure informed consent, the minimization of risk of harm to participants, protections of confidentiality and anonymity, and the avoidance of deceptive practices.

The results, findings, and discussion were presented in relation to two null-hypotheses exploring interviewer gender identity and the effects on applicant evaluation when controlling for perceived applicant gender identity. Null-hypothesis one assessed the evaluation of applicant attributes while controlling for perceived gender identity. Null hypothesis one did not show significance for the effect of interviewer gender identity ( $p =$

.42) or the covariant control of perceived applicant gender identity ( $p = .98$ ) on attribute evaluation. Null hypothesis two assessed the evaluation of applicant abilities while controlling for perceived gender identity. Null hypothesis two did not show significance for the effect of interviewer gender identity ( $p = .93$ ) or the covariant control of perceived applicant gender identity ( $p = .66$ ).

Supplemental analyses were performed in which descriptive statistics were analyzed for agentic and communal attribute association. It was revealed that agentic and communal attributes categorized with positive association accounted for 97.22% of all identified attributes. An independent t-test was performed to examine attribute score distribution for applicants who applied for a leadership position versus a non-leadership position. There was no significant effect on attribute score for applicants who applied for leadership roles versus non-leadership roles, despite applicants applying for non-leadership roles attaining higher scores ( $M = 47.25$ ) than applicants interviewing for leadership roles ( $M = 32.54$ ).

This study, while severely limited, suggests opportunity may exist in the recruitment of a more diverse population, or the limitation of bias in the interview process to ensure diverse applicants are provided equitable opportunity when interviewing for vacancies at the participating institution. To improve workplace equity solutions were designed to focus on the recruitment of diverse populations, facilitating non-bias interview processes, and creating workplace cultures that are appealing to all populations of individuals through equitable practices. The recommended phased approach to the solutions focused on aspects of planning, execution, and continuous assessment. With the allocation of resources, both financial and human capital

commitment, implementation is estimated to be realized over the course of a year. The evaluation of the plan will rely on statistical analysis of applicant demographic populations, pre and post survey analysis from trainings, and bi-annual climate surveys that measure employee sentiment.

The reflections of the scholar-practitioner section of this DIP summarized my personal feelings of obligation in being deliberate, with true reflection that encompasses the environment and atmosphere of ethical deliberation (Byron, 2008). For far too long, equal-opportunity has been limited by inaction that is justified by meeting compliance with federal or state laws. While the intent of legislation may be well-meaning, the organizational culture within many institutions in the United States has evolved to one of complicit silence when supporting equal-opportunity, while minimizing the victims of inequity through social career deterrents (Hekman et al., 2017).

Action precipitates change. An organization can move from complicit silence to advocacy by implementing strategy and structure that creates a workplace for diversity to thrive. The change is difficult and lengthy; it requires organizational truths to be questioned and fearful realities confronted. It requires expectations of demographic unselfishness, not to simply fulfill a quota or meet a number; but rather, to facilitate sustainable change to meet the needs of the changing populations in the United States.

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## Appendix A

### Example of Electronic Informed Consent

#### Question 19

*Required*

#### INFORMED CONSENT

You are invited to take part in a research study for a dissertation in practice entitled *Relationship Between Interviewer Gender Identity and Evaluation of Job Applicant Attributes and Abilities in Higher Education*. The study is designed as a quantitative cross-sectional study to explore the relationship between gender identity of interviewers and applicant evaluations from employee interviewers. If you choose to participate in the study your participation will remain confidential and data will be aggregated with other respondents for the study. If you choose not to participate, your evaluation data will remain confidential and will be passed on to the hiring manager for the position through a feedback summary that aggregates data and comments from all employee interviewer participants. There is no risk in participating in the study. Participation in the study is voluntary. Employee participation will have no impact on employment status, benefits, or relationship with the hiring manager, researcher, or the university. If employees believe there has been adverse action based on participation in the study, they may contact the Human Resource Department at [hr-support@creighton.edu](mailto:hr-support@creighton.edu). If you have questions regarding the study you may email the questions to the researcher at [lawrencedoty@creighton.edu](mailto:lawrencedoty@creighton.edu) or the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at [irb@creighton.edu](mailto:irb@creighton.edu) or the Creighton University Institutional Review Board (IRB) at [irb@creighton.edu](mailto:irb@creighton.edu).

Please identify if you are willing to have your responses included in the study.

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

**Appendix B**

**Applicant Evaluation Feedback Questionnaire**

**Applicant Evaluation Questions**

(Provided to all employee interviewers who are providing feedback to hiring manager)

**Question 1**

Applicant Name

**Question 2**

What is the campus/location where this role is located?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13

**Question 3**

Date of Interview (mm/dd/yy)

**Question 4**

Title of Position Being Filled

**Question 5**

Is the applicant being interviewed for a position that manages or leads a department or other people?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

**Person-Organization Fit**

*Please rate the following evaluative statements based on your level of agreement.  
1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree*

**Question 6**

The applicant demonstrates attributes that align with institutional values.

(Sliding Scale for Data Input options of 1,2,3,4,5,6,7)

**Question 7**

The applicant demonstrates attributes that would suggest they could have positive collaboration with constituents within the institution.

(Sliding Scale for Data Input options of 1,2,3,4,5,6,7)

**Question 8**

The applicant demonstrates attributes that would be deemed a positive addition to the institution.

(Sliding Scale for Data Input options of 1,2,3,4,5,6,7)

**Question 9**

Please select any attributes below that describe your perceptions of the applicant:

- 1Ambitious
- 2Assertive
- 3Capable
- 4Caring
- 5Competent
- 6Cynical
- 7Dependent
- 8Detached
- 9Friendly
- 10Honest
- 11Hypocritical
- 12Inconsiderate
- 13Insecure
- 14Lacking Self-Discipline
- 15Passive
- 16Polite
- 17Strong-minded
- 18Unapproachable
- 19Unorganized
- 20Warm-hearted

**Prior Work Experience**

*Please rate the following evaluative statements based on your level of agreement.  
1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree*

**Question 10**

The applicant has prior work experience in a similar position or a position with skill-sets that align with the position for which the applicant has applied.

(Sliding Scale for Data Input options of 1,2,3,4,5,6,7)

**Question 11**

The applicant has demonstrated success in prior work experience.

(Sliding Scale for Data Input options of 1,2,3,4,5,6,7)

**Question 12**

The applicant demonstrates the ability to identify examples from prior work experience that suggest a fit between the resume/curriculum vitae and the position for which the applicant has applied.

(Sliding Scale for Data Input options of 1,2,3,4,5,6,7)

**Ability to Perform Job Requirements**

*Please rate the following evaluative statements based on your level of agreement.  
1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree*

**Question 13**

The applicant demonstrates the ability to adapt to change in order to meet the performance expectations of this role.

(Sliding Scale for Data Input options of 1,2,3,4,5,6,7)

**Question 14**

The applicant demonstrates the ability to meet performance expectations for this role.

(Sliding Scale for Data Input options of 1,2,3,4,5,6,7)

**Question 15**

The applicant demonstrates the ability to learn and grow in this role.

(Sliding Scale for Data Input options of 1,2,3,4,5,6,7)

**Question 16**

The applicant demonstrates the ability to communicate well and have positive interactions with institutional constituents.

(Sliding Scale for Data Input options of 1,2,3,4,5,6,7)

**Question 17**

Would you recommend hiring this applicant for the role in which the person interviewed?

- 1Yes
- 2No

**Question 18**

Please write any additional information you would like the hiring manager to consider in the evaluation of this applicant.

(Open Text Field for Comments)

## Appendix C

### Request-to-Recruit Response Email

Hello [INSERT HIRING MANAGER NAME]:

Per your request, the posting for your open role has been published on the website. You may access the job posting by using the following link: [INSERT LINK].

In an effort to improve the hiring process, a digital form has been created to facilitate the consistent collection of feedback on candidates. Feedback provided by employees who participate in the interview process will be anonymous and aggregated into a summary for the hiring manager review. Data collected will inform the University's efforts to improve the hiring process.

A template email has been provided below for you to distribute to employees who will participate in your interview process, along with a link to the digital form.

Hello [INSERT EMPLOYEE INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT NAME]:

Thank you for your valued participation in the interview process for the [INSERT POSITION]. In partnership with an individual conducting doctoral research, we will be utilizing a digital form to collect feedback from employees who participate in the interview process.

Currently, the process for providing feedback on applicants is not consistent. Interviewers may provide feedback on candidates verbally, via email, or using rubrics that have been uniquely designed by the manager. The research study being conducted will explore the use of a standard Applicant Evaluation Feedback Questionnaire.

In accordance with university policy and procedure, the university's institutional review board (IRB) has approved this research study. The study is being conducted as a dissertation in practice entitled *Relationship Between Interviewer Gender Identity and Evaluation of Applicant Attributes and Abilities*. The study is designed to explore the relationship between the interviewer's gender identity and the evaluations of applicants.

After completing the standard applicant feedback form, employee interviewers will be provided the opportunity to participate in the study. Employees who agree to participate in the study will be asked to anonymously complete a brief demographic survey. Data will be aggregated. The feedback survey should not take more than 10 minutes to complete.

**There is no risk in participating in the study. Participation in the study is voluntary.** Employee participation will have no impact on employment status, benefits, or relationship with the hiring manager, researcher, or the university. If employees believe there has been adverse action based on participation in the

study, they may contact the Human Resource Department at hr-support@[REDACTED]  
.edu.

The study is intended to provide the university with meaningful data to assess interviewing practices. Those who interview the job applicant will provide feedback via the provided link electronically. The responses will be anonymous, aggregated, and provided in a summary to the hiring manager. Compensation will not be provided for participation in the study. Questions regarding the study may be sent to the researcher at [lawrencedoty@creighton.edu](mailto:lawrencedoty@creighton.edu).

A copy of the Bill of Rights for Research Participants can be accessed [here](#).

Upon completion of each interview, please utilize the standard applicant feedback form accessible at [INSERT LINK] to provide feedback on the candidate. Feedback will be anonymous; however, I will receive a summary of data collected from all interviewers.

Thank you,

[INSERT HIRING MANAGER NAME]

Please let me know if you have any questions or need any additional support!

Thank you,

[INSERT NAME]  
Human Resource Recruiter

## Appendix D

### Email of Notification of Study and Directions to Hiring Managers

Hello:

This email is being sent to all hiring managers.

We are excited to announce a change in our process to provide feedback to hiring managers for employment interviews. In partnership with an individual conducting doctoral research, we will be utilizing a digital form to collect feedback from employees who participate in the interview process.

Currently, the process for providing feedback on applicants is not consistent. Interviewers may provide feedback on candidates verbally, via email, or using rubrics that have been uniquely designed by the manager. The research study being conducted will explore the use of a standard Applicant Evaluation Feedback Questionnaire.

In accordance with university policy and procedure, the university's institutional review board (IRB) has approved this research study. The study is being conducted as a dissertation in practice entitled *Relationship Between Interviewer Gender Identity and Evaluation of Applicant Attributes and Abilities*. The study is designed to explore the relationship between the interviewer's gender identity and the evaluations of applicants.

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**There is no risk in participating in the study. Participation in the study is voluntary.** Employee participation will have no impact on employment status, benefits, or relationship with the hiring manager, researcher, or the university. If employees believe there has been adverse action based on participation in the study, they may contact the Human Resource Department at [hr-support@██████.edu](mailto:hr-support@██████.edu).

The study is intended to provide the university with meaningful data to assess interviewing practices. Those who interview the job applicant will provide feedback via the provided link electronically. The responses will be anonymous, aggregated, and provided in a summary to the hiring manager. Compensation will not be provided for participation in the study. Questions regarding the study may be sent to the researcher at [lawrencedoty@creighton.edu](mailto:lawrencedoty@creighton.edu).

A copy of the Bill of Rights for Research Participants can be accessed [here](#).

Please let us know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

[INSERT NAME]  
Human Resource Recruiter

## Appendix E

### Participant Demographic Questionnaire

#### Demographic Questions

(Directed to those who elect to participate in the study in question 19)

#### Question 20

What would best describe your gender identity?

- 1Female
- 2Male
- 3Transgender
- 4None of these

#### Question 21

Although the categories listed below may not represent your full identity or use the language you prefer, for the purpose of this survey, please indicate which group below most accurately describes your racial/ethnic identification. **(If you are of a multiracial/multiethnic/multicultural identity, mark all that apply.)**

- African (If you wish, please specify.)
- Alaska Native (If you wish, please specify your enrolled or principal corporation.)
- Native American/Indigenous (If you wish, please specify your enrolled or principal tribe.)
- Asian (If you wish, please specify.)
- Black/African American (If you wish, please specify.)
- Hispanic/Latinx/Chicanx (If you wish, please specify.)
- Middle Eastern (If you wish, please specify.)
- Native Hawaiian (If you wish, please specify.)
- Pacific Islander (If you wish, please specify.)
- South Asian (If you wish, please specify.)
- Southeast Asian (If you wish, please specify.)
- White (If you wish, please specify.)
- A racial/ethnic identity not listed here (If you wish, please specify.)

**Question 22**

What would best describe what you perceive the applicant's gender identity to be?

- 1Female
- 2Male
- 3Transgender
- 4None of these

**Question 23**

What was the structure of the interview you conducted?

- 1Individual Interview (You and the Job Applicant)
- 2Small Group Interview (You, one other University member, and the Job Applicant)
- 3Group Interview (More than two University members and the Job Applicant)

**Question 24**

Do you feel influence from others regarding how you evaluated this job applicant?

- 1Yes
- 2No

## Appendix F

### Participating Institution Awareness

March 12, 2022

To the [REDACTED] Institutional Review Board:

Please allow this letter to serve as evidence of my approval of Larry Doty's proposal to conduct a research study to satisfy the requirements of his doctorate program.

Larry's study will focus upon the relationship between interviewer gender identity and evaluation of job applicant attributes and abilities in higher education

Participation in Larry's study will be voluntary. His proposal describes the steps that will be taken to protect the identify of both the applicants and the interviewers. Given the fact that Larry often participates in the interview process, he has indicated that he will not participate in the study as an interviewer.

Larry has confirmed that all informed consent documents will be kept for a period of three years following the completion date of the project. He has further acknowledged that any data collected from [REDACTED] faculty, staff, applicants, and/or other constituents for purposes of this study is proprietary. Any publication of findings will not identify or implicate [REDACTED]. Any external report produced on findings generated by this study, including any presentation or publication, will not identify, reference, or implicate [REDACTED] in any way.

Upon completion of the study, a copy of the final deliverable will be submitted to Herzing University. Additionally, any additional publications or presentations produced based upon this study will be submitted to [REDACTED]

I am in support of Larry Doty's proposal to conduct the proposed research study.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Provost

[REDACTED]

**Appendix G****Creighton University IRB Approval**

Office of the Provost  
Research Compliance

DETERMINATION DATE:	24-May-2022
TO:	Lawrence Doty
FROM:	Social / Behavioral IRB
PROJECT TITLE:	Relationship between interviewer gender identity and evaluation of job applicant attributes and abilities in higher education
REVIEW CATEGORY:	Exempt
RISK LEVEL:	Minimal Risk
SUBMISSION #:	2003016-01
SUBMISSION TYPE:	Initial Application
REVIEW METHOD:	Exempt Review
DETERMINATION:	<b>APPROVED</b>

Thank you for your Initial Application submission materials for this project. The following items were reviewed with this submission:

- Creighton University HS eForm
- Dissertation Letter 3-12-22.jpg
- Doty Applicant Evaluation Feedback Questionnaire\_5-6-2022.docx
- Doty Email of Notification of Study and Directions to Hiring Manager\_5-13-2022.docx
- Doty Email of Notification of Study and Directions to Hiring Manager\_5-6-2022.docx
- Doty Informed Consent\_5-13-2022 (1).docx
- Doty Informed Consent\_5-6-2022.docx

- Doty Request to Recruit Response Email\_5-13-2022.docx
- Doty Request to Recruit Response Email\_5-6-2022.docx
- Doty\_Participant Demographic Questionnaire\_5-6-2022.docx
- EdD DIP\_Doty\_5-13-2022.docx
- EdD DIP\_Doty\_5-6-2022.docx

This project has been determined to be exempt from Federal Policy for Protection of Human Subjects as per 45CFR46.101 (b) 2 and is approved under exempt Category 2(ii).

All protocol amendments and changes are to be submitted to the IRB and may not be implemented until approved by the IRB. Please use the modification form when submitting changes.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office at 402-280-3074 or [irb@creighton.edu](mailto:irb@creighton.edu). Please include your project title and number in all correspondence with this Board.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained in Creighton University's IRB records.

**Institutional Review Board**

☎ 402.280.2126 | ☎ 402.280.3200  
Dr. C. C. and Mabel L. Criss Health Sciences Complex I  
2500 California Plaza Omaha, NE 68178

[creighton.edu](http://creighton.edu)  
[creighton.edu/researchservices/researchethics/irb](http://creighton.edu/researchservices/researchethics/irb)