

Moving Beyond a Culture of Niceness in Faculty Hiring to Advance Racial Equity

Román Liera 

University of Southern California

This study applies cultural historical activity theory to examine the experiences of 17 professors at a religiously affiliated private university who participated in a 10-month, inquiry-based intervention to change their culture around faculty hiring. The findings illustrate that professors who use race-conscious language and tools to interrogate their campus culture's historical roots with racism rethought their hiring process. In doing so, faculty perceived racial equity work as an action-oriented, organizational effort to use equity-minded language and create a more equitable hiring structure. The study contributes to the literature on organizational change for racial equity by identifying faculty experiences with racism and critical knowledge about the organizational culture mediating faculty learning and agency.

KEYWORDS: CHAT, faculty, organizational culture, racial equity

Organizational theorists have called on researchers to conceptualize organizations as racialized entities imbued with nonexplicit, White racialized values, norms, and traditions (Ray, 2019; Wooten, 2019). Whiteness is a dominant organizational racial structure shaping U.S. higher education institutions, which served in the institutionalization of routines that benefit Whites, who are the racial majority (Cabrera, Franklin, & Watson, 2016; Gusa, 2010). A core component of Whiteness is colorblind racism, which is a racial ideology that provides people with the frame to interpret the root cause of race-related issues as anything but racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, 2015; Cabrera et al., 2016). An even more abstract element of Whiteness is a culture of niceness that further normalizes race-neutral approaches to race at White-serving institutions¹ (Alemán, 2009; Villarreal, Liera, & Malcom-Piqueux, 2019). “A culture of niceness” refers

ROMÁN LIERA is a postdoctoral research associate in the Pullias Center for Higher Education at the University of Southern California, 3470 Trousdale Parkway, Waite Phillips Hall 602E, Los Angeles, CA 90089; e-mail: rliera@usc.edu. His work uses critical, organizational, and sociocultural theories to study organizational efforts to advance racial equity in the professoriate and in student outcomes.

to the organizational norm that talking about race, White privilege, and equity is not nice because it makes people feel uncomfortable (Alemán, 2009; Villarreal et al., 2019). Racially minoritized faculty working at White-serving institutions, where Whiteness works through nice people (Castagno, 2014), often feel silenced because they are unable to call out racist perspectives, behaviors, and routines without fear of professional repercussions (Villarreal et al., 2019).

In this study, I examine how a culture of niceness is perpetuated and can be disrupted through the case of faculty hiring. Faculty hiring is a racialized structure because of racial meanings of who is worthy of being hired guide hiring routines (Lara, 2019; Liera, in press; Liera & Ching, 2019; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). Faculty maintain a culture of niceness when they use race-neutral language to explain the existence of racial inequity (Dowd & Bensimon, 2015) and to exonerate themselves from any responsibility to advance racial equity (Harper & Patton, 2007). Ray and Purifoy (2019) argued that colorblind routines are rooted in norms of interracial comfort, familiarity, and trust, which organizational actors repackage as race-neutral objective merit, professionalism, collegiality, and teamwork, which are reflective components of a culture of niceness (Alemán, 2009; Castagno, 2014; Roegman, Allen, & Hatch, 2017).

When faculty at 4-year colleges and universities do not question the ways a culture of niceness guides their colorblind routines, they are maintaining the status quo of their faculty-hiring racialized structure by perpetuating the overrepresentation of White faculty (78%) and the underrepresentation of Black (6%), Latinx (4%), and Native American (less than 1%) faculty (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). Colorblind hiring routines include coded language of fit to talk about race, the additive nature of equity interview questions, the acceptability of candidate ignorance of race and equity issues, and the token committee member (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). Who conducts the hiring process and the routines they use determine whether a racially minoritized faculty is hired at White-serving institutions (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017; Smith, Turner, Osei-Kofi, & Richards, 2004; Tuit, Danowitz Sagaria, & Turner, 2007).

To date, researchers have identified practices that can increase the odds of hiring a racially minoritized faculty member, including strategic placement of advertisements in targeted journals and list-serves (Gasman, Kim, & Nguyen, 2011; Phillips, 2004), creating unique hiring positions through post-doctoral fellowships and hiring the doctoral candidates (Kelly, Gayles, & Williams, 2017; Phillips, 2004; Smith et al., 2004), organizing racially minoritized faculty lecture series and using personal networks for recruitment purposes (Gasman et al., 2011), incorporating diversity descriptors in job announcements (Smith et al., 2004), and employing cluster hires (Kelly et al., 2017; Muñoz et al., 2017). In their review of the literature on racially minoritized faculty, Turner, González, and Wood (2008) recommended

that college and university leaders create diversity goals; advocate for faculty diversity; train staff, faculty, and administration on the specific issues racially minoritized faculty face in the workplace; and align their campus diversity efforts with disciplinary departmental diversity efforts. These strategies are first steps to increase outcomes in the number of racially minoritized faculty, but unless they prompt faculty to interrogate their campus culture, they may not change a culture of niceness that upholds racial inequity in hiring (Bensimon, 2007). Some scholars contend that diversifying the faculty requires the interruption of standard procedures and mind-sets that reproduce predominantly White faculty bodies (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017; Smith et al., 2004), the mechanisms that inform faculty judgment (Fraser & Hunt, 2011; Sheridan, Fine, Pribbenow, Handelsman, & Carnes, 2010; Tuitt et al., 2007), and the sociocultural norms and rules that guide search committee members' behaviors, cognitions, and emotions in decision making (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017; Villalpando & Delgado-Bernal, 2002; Ware, 2000).

This study contributes to this literature and features faculty who are responding to national calls to increase racial diversity and racial literacy among faculty (AERA, 2015; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017; Smith et al., 2004). Racial equity in faculty hiring is of significance because racially minoritized faculty play a critical role in academic excellence, mentorship, and overall climate since they bring diverse perspectives that enrich student learning and validate racially minoritized students (Turner et al., 2008). Specifically, this study addresses our limited understanding of how faculty, working at a local level, can change hiring routines and the racialized organizational culture in which they are embedded to produce better outcomes and more inclusive environments for racially minoritized professors. The faculty in this study were involved in a 10-month intervention and received administrative support to interrogate how their campus culture excluded racially minoritized candidates from the professoriate. The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do professors rethink their organizational culture to advance racial equity in their faculty hiring process?
2. How do professors overcome challenges to advance racial equity in faculty hiring?

Using a sociocultural lens, I illustrate how these faculty drew on their experiences and critical knowledge about the way their campus culture reproduces racial inequity and inhibits their efforts to advance racial equity through faculty hiring. Through this process, faculty substantially interrogated their racialized organizational culture, which helped them change colorblind routines and create race-conscious, equitable routines. In what follows, I first review the literature on campus racial culture and the culture

of niceness to highlight how Whiteness is embedded in the cultural fabric at White-serving institutions, followed by a description of inquiry-based interventions. I then outline cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) as the framework to study inquiry-based interventions designed to help faculty rethink their campus racial culture and construct a racially equitable faculty hiring structure. Ultimately, I argue that faculty can advance racial equity by interrogating their culture of niceness to rethink faculty hiring as a race-conscious routine that is critical of racial hierarchies. For faculty to develop the capacity to be race conscious, they need opportunities to engage in critical inquiry of their campus culture.

Racialized Organizational Culture in Higher Education

Higher education scholars have studied and written about organizational culture for decades (Bauer, 1998; Kezar, 2013; Kuh & Hall, 1993; Tierney, 1988). Across the various conceptualizations of organizational culture, scholars attend to organization historical context, rituals, and traditions, including observed and unobserved values that connect and shape the perspectives and behaviors of members (Schein, 1990, 1992). Museus, Ravello, and Vega (2012) coined the concept “campus racial culture” to capture discrepancies in the ways people experience and perceive the organizational culture because of race. It comprises

collective patterns of tacit values, beliefs, assumptions, and norms that evolve from an institution’s history and are manifest in its mission, traditions, language, interactions, artifacts, physical structures, and other symbols, which differently shape the experiences of various racial and ethnic groups and can function to oppress racial minority populations within a particular institution. (p. 32)

This definition is particularly valuable because it underscores the complexity of campus cultures and centralizes individual and group differences by race. At White-serving institutions, campus culture is disproportionately shaped over time by the racial majority. Given that White people established and have dominated higher education institutions in the United States, their interests are institutionalized in the foundation of the campus culture (Museus, Ledesma, & Parker, 2015; Wilder, 2013). The organizational culture at White-serving institutions thus reflects and validates the values of the White racial majority, while being less congruent, reflective, and validating of the cultural backgrounds of racially minoritized groups (Museus et al., 2012). Left unexamined, these historically situated White cultural ideologies maintain the language, cultural practices, traditions, and perceptions of knowledge that allow White-serving institutions to maintain racial disparities (Gusa, 2010). As such, faculty hiring at White-serving institutions does not have to be explicitly racist to exclude racially minoritized groups.

As an organizational structure, faculty hiring reflects a White-serving institution's campus racial culture (Scheurich & Young, 2002; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017; Villalpando & Delgado-Bernal, 2002). For example, the organizational culture at a White-serving institution values epistemologies (e.g., postpositivism) and methods (e.g., correlational or causal analysis) that reflect linearity and objectivity, and practices and knowledge informed by the work of White men (Delgado-Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Gonzales, 2018). Faculty search committee members exclude racially minoritized candidates by assigning racial meaning to the bodies, knowledge, practices, and experiences of Asian, Black, Latinx, and Indigenous people that do not fit into their unspoken expectations of being a good colleague or reflect their competency criteria to meet job requirements (Liera & Ching, 2019; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). As a racialized structure, faculty hiring can devalue, marginalize, and hinder the full participation and existence of racially minoritized groups at White-serving institutions (Gusa, 2010). For faculty working at White-serving institutions to move beyond their racialized organizational culture, they need to take account of how their campus racial culture impedes their racial equity efforts.

Culture of Niceness

The culture of niceness is a manifestation of Whiteness that creates organizational barriers for faculty who want to advance racial equity. To achieve racial equity at White-serving institutions, faculty must institutionalize a system where racially diverse perspectives are equally embedded in the educational practices, policies, and cultural fabric of the organization; only then will racially minoritized faculty be able to exist in an environment free from discrimination and bias (Liera & Dowd, 2019; Museus et al., 2015). However, niceness is an institutionalized organizational value that solidifies inequity and reinscribes Whiteness by fostering a culture in which organizational stakeholders do not challenge one another, do not make one another uncomfortable, and do not work outside the established system (Alemán, 2009; Castagno, 2014; Roegman et al., 2017). For example, niceness operates when faculty feel that they are unable to call out their search committee colleagues' use of coded language, such as lack of interest, eye movements, and facial expressions when evaluating who would be a good fit (Lara, 2019).

A culture of niceness encourages *indirect* questioning of inequitable practices, race-neutral solutions, and loose accountability for racially unequal actions, thus making it possible for educators to engage in equity work without explicitly talking about race and the structures that maintain racial disparities (Liera, in press; Roegman et al., 2017). For example, Roegman and colleagues (2017) show that superintendents and teachers who sought to help students with the greatest needs and achieve equitable outcomes within their districts engaged in race-neutral questioning of one

another's practices to maintain a sense of collegiality and niceness. In a study of Latinx educational leaders involved in efforts to close disparities for Latinx students, Alemán (2009) found that they preserved a culture of niceness by playing by the rules and minimizing radical approaches to change. In sum, when educators do not explicitly talk about race or hold themselves and their colleagues accountable for the existence of inequitable practices, and when they fail to engage in critical inquiry to change structures, they perpetuate racial inequity. In the next section, I discuss inquiry-based interventions as opportunities for faculty to interrogate their campus racial culture and to explicitly talk about racial equity.

Inquiry-Based Interventions: Interrogating a Culture of Niceness

Inquiry is a knowledge production process where organizational practitioners use research tools to define the problem and develop the expertise to bring about change in organizational routines and cultures (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Reason, 1994). An inquiry-based intervention can be designed as an activity to equip faculty members with the language, knowledge, and skill set to advance racial equity in faculty hiring. Inquiry-based interventions designed to advance racial equity tend to focus on creating contradictions between espoused values for racial equity and existing discriminatory routines (Bensimon & Dowd, 2012; Bragg & Durham, 2012; Ching, 2018; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015; Dowd & Liera, 2018; Liera & Dowd, 2019). Inquiry-based interventions have the potential to make historically rooted norms explicit, which can prompt faculty to make changes. Ching (2018) studied how participation in an inquiry-based intervention workshop on assessing course syllabi for equity mindedness and cultural inclusivity fostered community college math faculty's learning about racial equity and how their teaching practices and classroom environments affect racially minoritized students. Dowd and Liera (2018) found that data and data use tools from inquiry-based interventions helped administrators and faculty identify the inequities rooted in their routines. This body of research has contended that sustaining organizational change efforts to advance racial equity is supported by changes in routines that perpetuate racial inequity.

What is missing from the literature on inquiry-based interventions and racial equity is an understanding of how higher education practitioners (e.g., administrators, faculty, and staff) *feel race* when interrogating a culture of niceness that privileges or marginalizes organizational actors by race (Bonilla-Silva, 2019). Since organizational actors fashion an emotional subjectivity that reflects their social positions in their organization's racial hierarchy, how faculty react to racial equity work reflects an emotional subjectivity that is associated with the power, resources, and agency they receive because of their race (Bonilla-Silva, 2019). For example, the racially dominant, often Whites, generally believe that existing racial structures, such as

faculty hiring, are fair since current routines do not discriminate against them because of their race. In contrast, the racially subordinate, often Asian, Black, Latinx, and Indigenous groups, experience the unfairness of the racial structure through the normative routines that discriminate them because of their race (Bonilla-Silva, 2019). Faculty efforts to change organizational routines to advance racial equity are interrelated with their emotional willingness to reconstruct their racial hierarchy in order to equitably distribute power, resources, and agency.

Interrogating the culture of niceness to advance racial equity creates contradictions that can either impede or set the stage for change (Yamagata-Lynch, 2007). Therefore, a critical examination of professors identifying and changing routines that historically exclude racially minoritized faculty highlights the organizational conditions that help faculty learn about racial equity in faculty hiring. CHAT is an appropriate framework to study inquiry-based interventions designed as activities that mediate how faculty learn about the racialized nature of faculty hiring and to develop the capacity to create racially equitable hiring routines. CHAT guides researchers to analyze how the learning of individuals can constitute organizational change on behalf of their organizations (Lee, 2011; Roth & Lee, 2007). In the next section, I outline CHAT and its application to studying inquiry-based interventions designed as activities to train faculty in racial equity.

Cultural Historical Activity Theory

As a sociocultural theory, CHAT assumes that opportunities for learning happen when organizational actors participate in activities where new information contradicts existing language, practices, emotions, identities, and relationships (Engeström, 2008; Lee, 2011; Roth & Lee, 2007). Organizational actors, like faculty, participate in multiple activities where they collectively negotiate meaning and develop, reify, and transform standard routines. Through these activities, organizational actors create meaning, and the creation of meaning is shaped by sociocultural values that become normalized to the point of invisibility (Ogawa, Crain, Loomis, & Ball, 2008). CHAT highlights the context of individuals collectively learning about their routines. In this study, faculty participated in an inquiry-based intervention to collectively learn about their hiring routines within the context of a culture of niceness.

Researchers use CHAT to make sense of complex systems of human interactions by revealing their nature, inherent contradictions, and opportunities for organizational change (Ogawa et al., 2008). CHAT focuses on multiple levels at which change can occur, including the intrapersonal (personal), interpersonal (social), and institutional (community; Rogoff, 1995; Rueda, 2012). CHAT researchers suggest bridging simulated situations (i.e., inquiry-based interventions) that require collective engagement with routines that follow the logic of an anticipated or desired future model of

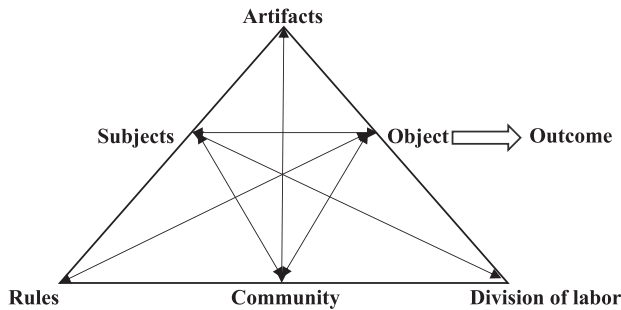


Figure 1. Activity triangle to illustrate activity system (Engeström, 1987).

activity (i.e., a racially equitable hiring structure; Guitiérrez, Engeström, & Sannino, 2016). I applied CHAT to understand an inquiry-based intervention as a historically situated sociocultural activity and to examine how the introduction of race-conscious and equity-focused routines creates inner contradictions about the campus racial culture and its relationship to faculty hiring.

Lev Vygotsky and his students, most notably Alexei Leont'ev, conceptualized learning and development as a mediated process between *subject* (the individual), *artifact* (any material or symbolic thing), and *object* (the individual's motives for participation) to define *activity*, which is CHAT's theoretical and methodological modus operandi (Lee, 2011; Roth & Lee, 2007). Contemporary versions of CHAT include other mediators such as *rules*, *community*, and *division of labor* to further analyze the development and learning happening from participating in an activity (Engeström, 2008; Lee, 2011). Engeström (1987) introduced a descriptive model of activity system—known as the activity triangle—as a heuristic to analyze the complex human interactions that take place in collective settings. As portrayed in Figure 1, the top of the triangle reflects Vygotsky's basic structure of mediated action, where the subjects, in this case faculty members, are participating in a search committee with the motive to hire a faculty candidate (object). Historically developed—and, I argue, racialized (see Liera, in press)—artifacts such as hiring criteria (e.g., teaching experience, research interests), evaluation rubrics (e.g., guidelines to assess cover letters, curricula vitae, interviews), and understandings of who is a good fit (e.g., social and professional backgrounds, leisure activities) can mediate faculty participation. Artifacts are symbolic (e.g., nonmaterial instruments such as language, knowledge, behaviors) and material (e.g., physical instruments such as cover letter, curriculum vitae, evaluation criteria) things that have been inherited from the past to connect people with others and their contexts (Ogawa et al., 2008).

The rules, community, and division of labor at the bottom of the triangle capture the sociocultural mediation of the collective setting (Engeström, 2008). The rules include formal and informal procedures that constrain or allow activities to occur, including the (un)spoken guidelines that interact with other people and artifacts (Engeström, 2008). For example, an unspoken norm at White-serving institutions is that faculty hiring is a race-neutral process (Lara, 2019; Liera, in press; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). The norm of race neutrality in faculty hiring mediates not only the creation of artifacts such as job announcements but also the use of such artifacts to make hiring decisions. As seen in Figure 1, “community” refers to the social group subjects belong to while participating in an activity (Engeström, 2008). In the case of faculty hiring, community refers to the faculty search committee members, whose division of labor consists of the shared and individual tasks of the participants (Engeström, 2008). As an example, the search chair is responsible for conducting the search, while individual committee members are tasked with evaluating each application and reporting their assessments of faculty candidates to the committee. Ultimately, participating in an activity will have results and consequences, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Two central CHAT principles are particularly relevant to this study. First, inner contradictions are opportunities for individuals to develop a sense of motivation, or even urgency, to change their routines (Yagamata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2009). When individuals learn about contradictions between their espoused values and their routines, they are likely to align their routines with their espoused values. When faculty learn that their hiring routines, which they believed were objective and fair, favored White faculty candidates, they are more likely to change their hiring routines to reflect their values for equity. Second, changes to any component of the activity system can produce changes elsewhere in the activity system (Rueda, 2012). If faculty learn that an unspoken norm about being race neutral organizes their hiring routines, then they are also likely to question the existing artifacts, division of labor, community, and motive to participate in faculty hiring.

Methodology

Research questions drive the choice of methodology, and, in this study I asked “how” questions to understand a complex, historically racialized sociocultural process. Case study research was suitable because it focuses on understanding a contemporary problem or phenomenon within its real-life context (Ellinger, Watkins, & Marsick, 2005; Yin, 2014). Moreover, case study researchers define and bound the unit of analysis to help determine the necessary data collection and analysis (Ellinger et al., 2005). In this study, I examine faculty who participated in an inquiry-based intervention focused on interrogating campus racial culture and creating equitable

hiring structures. In this section, I describe the inquiry-based intervention, participants, data collection, analysis design, and limitations of the study.

**Study Site: Valley Oaks University's Partnership
With the Center for Urban Education**

The qualitative data came from a study where I investigated the developments of a 10-month-long partnership intervention between a private, religiously affiliated 4-year university and the University of Southern California's Center for Urban Education (CUE). To maintain anonymity, the 4-year university has been assigned a pseudonym and is referred to as Valley Oaks University (VOU). All the individuals mentioned have been assigned a pseudonym. VOU is located in the western United States, with a total enrollment of about 5,000 undergraduate students. In 2016, VOU became a Hispanic-serving institution, a federal designation for accredited universities with an undergraduate population that is at least 25% Hispanic (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). At the time of the study, VOU's undergraduate students were 58% White, 27% Latinx, 4% Black, 6% Asian American, and 5% multiracial. Faculty demographics at VOU mirrored national trends: 82% White, 7% Asian American and Pacific Islander, 6% Latinx, and 3% Black (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016).

In 2015, VOU's accreditation agency noted how the lack of a formal and transparent faculty hiring process cultivated department and program faculty cultures that maintained "the status quo in the face of the very real effort required and resentment toward the administration's attempts to question faculty hiring decision[s]" (VOU's Accreditation Report, 2015, p. 7). In response, VOU's senior administration partnered with CUE to advance racial equity in their faculty hiring process. The partnership between VOU and CUE commenced in January 2016, when the provost invested resources in creating a team of 17 professors, known as an evidence team, who were responsible for collecting and using organizational data to develop the critical knowledge necessary for change. This group of faculty participated in seven, CUE-developed professional development workshops and called evidence team meetings throughout the 10 months (see Table 1). The CUE team included a senior facilitator, a senior researcher, and two doctoral students.² As seen in Table 1, each evidence team meeting included activities that helped the evidence team define the problem of racial inequity.

The structure of most of the meetings included a warm-up exercise that required evidence team members to describe the campus culture and reflect on taken-for-granted norms and routines. For example, faculty engaged in activities where they had to ask themselves whether their hiring artifacts, such as their job announcements, recruitment strategies, interview questions, and evaluation criteria, discriminated faculty candidates based on social (e.g., speech dialect, behavioral dispositions) or professional (e.g., graduate

Table 1
Evidence Team Meetings

Date	Purpose	Activities	Significant Events/Conversations
February 2016	Kick-off to build equity in faculty recruitment and hiring	Warm-up about unspoken rules; presentation of disaggregated data by race; mapping hiring process	Discussed about VOU's culture of niceness; created ground rules; team agreed to only share a timeline with nonteam members until progress has been made
March 2016	Outlining equity competencies to change faculty recruiting and hiring	Warm-up about the person who helped faculty transition to VOU; mapping who is responsible for equity and campus identity/culture	Emotional conversation about racially minoritized faculty holding the most burden for equity; stories about racism on campus; questions about the type of environment racially minoritized faculty were being brought into
April 2016	Analyzing culture and practices around faculty recruiting, hiring, and retention	Team inquiry: e-map orientation interviews; asset mapping for retention; thoughts on faculty search guidelines	Team agreed to de-emphasize the "why" of equity work and approach it as a mandate with consequences; raised issues about the extra work racially minoritized faculty do that goes unrewarded in tenure and promotion
May 2016	Building a diverse pool; job announcement	Defining equity advocate roles; warm-up on search committee stories; identified problematic areas in faculty search guidelines; review of team inquiry interviews; passive and active recruiting strategies; equity-minded job announcement exemplar	Search committee chairs were invited to participate in workshops (were not part of the emotional event and analysis of campus culture and racism)

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Date	Purpose	Activities	Significant Events/Conversations
September 2016	Selection of candidates and phone interviews (role of implicit bias)	Presentation on implicit bias; pair reflection on implicit bias in search committees; fishbowl activity on implicit bias	Team defined the role of equity advocates on search committees; created a checklist to ensure search committees are institutionalizing equity; team emphasized that equity does not mean that White candidates will no longer be hired; questions about standardizing evaluation rubrics
October 2016	Phone interviews and campus visit	Warm-up on how faculty candidates would respond to equity-minded interview questions; developing core questions and mapping them to equity mindedness; developing a plan to evaluate equitably; minimizing bias in a campus visit	Faculty search committee chairs had concerns about developing equity-minded rubrics; evidence team member offered to share her committee's rubrics as a template
November 2016	Selection of finalist; campus climate; faculty retention	Presentation of findings from data collected on VOU racially minoritized faculty; reviewing campus visit protocols; finalizing faculty search guidelines	Non-evidence team members questioned the validity of interview data; team agreed to (re)define the culture of niceness as the culture of being nonconfrontational; during warm-up, most White faculty shared that being on the evidence team was a learning process

school training, research expertise) characteristics. Then, CUE facilitators outlined the day's objectives and activities, followed by conversations about how to use the knowledge produced thus far to change the Faculty Search Guidelines. The Faculty Search Guidelines is a formal VOU document that describes the hiring routines. CUE researchers then presented information on critical concepts, such as equity mindedness, before the faculty participants broke off into small-group activities. After each group activity, the CUE facilitators guided the discussions and debriefed about the day's events.

As seen in Table 1, each evidence team meeting had significant events that shaped the goal setting of faculty. For example, in April 2016, the team agreed to use their faculty hiring policy to mediate their efforts after they discussed the resistance from non-team members to changing their hiring process. This decision influenced their action to invite search chairs to the workshops starting on May 2016, so the search chairs could be part of the activities to assess and redesign recruiting and hiring practices. As a result of these two events, the evidence team members appropriated the term *equity advocate*, which CUE introduced during the February 2016 kick-off meeting. The evidence team members defined the characteristics and responsibilities of an equity advocate to legitimize the equity advocate role on search committees.

Positionality

I came into this work as a cisgender Chicano, first-generation college student and working-class doctoral student from Los Angeles, California. My role as a CUE researcher and my experiences with racism attending White-serving institutions informed the research design of this study, including access to data and the analysis of data. As a CUE researcher, I had the opportunity to interact with and support the professors in this study as they interrogated their campus racial culture and used artifacts to advance racial equity. My role as a CUE researcher also allowed me to develop a rapport with the faculty participants throughout the seven workshops. I was aware of how my affiliation with CUE and my racial identity shaped how the faculty participants interacted with me. For example, most of the faculty participants would ask about my dissertation progress and career plans, and offer advice. However, my affiliation with CUE, when CUE was under contract with VOU's administration, might have also created challenges for some faculty to participate in the study. I often wondered and wrote about how some professors may have believed that VOU's administration would have access to the data I collected. I recognized the advantages and disadvantages of my positionality and took measures to be transparent with my participants.

Participants

As seen in Table 2, the evidence team consisted of 17 professors: 10 White, 4 Latinx, 2 Black, and 1 Asian. Nine faculty team members were

Table 2
Faculty Evidence Team Members

Pseudonym	Race	Gender	Tenure	Academic Discipline
Lauren Cortez ^a	Black	Woman	Yes	Humanities
Kevin Boyer ^a	White	Man	Yes	Humanities
Scott Jones ^a	White	Man	No	Sciences
Jenna Stevens	White	Woman	Yes	Sciences
Jason Wright	White	Man	No	Humanities
Leslie Hurtado	Latina	Woman	No	Applied fields
Donna Evans ^a	White	Woman	Yes	Social sciences
Rebecca Briggs	White	Woman	No	Applied fields
Federick Green	Asian	Man	Yes	Humanities
Paul Danielson	White	Man	Yes	Applied fields
James Ward ^a	White	Man	Yes	Applied fields
Taylor Bush ^a	White	Woman	Yes	Sciences
Adriana Patton ^a	White	Woman	No	Humanities
Eric Nuñez ^a	Latino	Man	Yes	Social sciences
Gloria Arce ^a	Latina	Woman	No	Applied fields
Susana Gomez ^a	Latina	Woman	No	Applied fields
Brian Cook ^a	Black	Man	Yes	Social sciences
Karen Creswell	White	Woman		Provost

^aFaculty who were interviewed.

women, and 8 were men with disciplinary representation from the sciences, humanities, and social sciences, and applied fields. Eleven of the faculty had tenure, 5 were junior faculty, and 1 was a senior lecturer. The provost, who was a White woman, also attended the seven, inquiry-based workshops.

Data Collection

I had two primary sources of data collection, observations and interviews, which I used to write the findings. I observed all seven evidence team meetings, from February to November 2016, for a total of 24 hours; interviewed 11 evidence team members from March to May 2017; and collected the relevant documents. Although my focus was on the faculty, the provost's involvement in the inquiry-based intervention played a role in faculty experiences. For example, I observed faculty expressing their initial reservations about the provost's presence during the workshops because of the historical tensions between senior administrators and faculty about issues of racism on campus. During the interviews, the faculty shared with me how the provost's active involvement in the workshops and public support for faculty efforts to advance racial equity provided them with a sense of confidence and reassurance that their efforts will be recognized.

The observation data served three purposes: They provided (1) a window into faculty collectively engaged in activities, (2) contextual information about the mediating factors of the inquiry-based intervention, and (3) triangulation of the interview data. Another doctoral student and I conducted the observations. The doctoral student primarily focused on collecting meeting notes including attendance, decisions made, and next steps, while I concentrated on faculty reactions (including behavioral, physical, verbal) to content on race, equity, and hiring, comments made by the other team members, and their interactions during activities.

Eleven of the 17 professors volunteered to be interviewed. Each interview lasted about 60 minutes, and except for one (there were problems with the recording device, so I took detailed notes of the interview), all the interviews were recorded and professionally transcribed. The interview protocol captured faculty experiences as team members, their individual and group's perspectives on equity, and the conflicts or challenges they encountered when making changes to the university's Faculty Search Guidelines. I also inquired about significant moments, such as an emotional conversation about racially minoritized faculty, and their experiences with racism on campus. Throughout my time at VOU, I collected documents such as VOU's accreditation report, the Faculty Search Guidelines, reflections by faculty on activities, evaluation rubrics, and e-mail exchanges.

Analytical Process

I used a constant comparison approach in NVivo 11 to analyze the observation field notes, interview transcripts, and reflection and analytic memos (Saldaña, 2013). I employed two cycles of coding to generate the bones of the analysis, before clustering together similar codes to theoretically make meaning of the data. My data analysis was iterative because I started to reflect on the data while collecting them. I wrote reflection memos after each observation and interview to keep track of my initial thoughts on the data. Once I had uploaded each observation field note, interview transcript, and reflection memo to NVivo 11, I applied process coding as the first cycle of coding to focus on human action, including observable activities and conceptual actions (Saldaña, 2013; e.g., perceptions and reflections of struggling, negotiating, learning). In addition to writing analytic memos after coding each source of data, I generated a code list from the first cycle, which included "vocally communicating," "using race-conscious language," "reflecting," "holding each other accountable," "sharing experiences with racism," "negotiating discomfort," and "naming racism."

Throughout the first coding cycle, I continued to compare my analyses within and across observation field notes and interview transcripts. In so doing, I gained new insights into the data, which prompted me to do a second cycle of coding. I reapplied the coding list developed from the first cycle

using axial coding, which helped me not only recode but also identify new codes, including “standardizing equity practices,” “systemic racism,” “racialized experiences,” and “accountability” (Saldaña, 2013). During the second cycle of coding, I was able to compare codes to further define the properties and dimensions of my coding scheme (Saldaña, 2013). Axial coding helps researchers think more in depth about the contexts, conditions, interactions, and consequences of a process, such as faculty engaged in the inquiry-based intervention to advance racial equity (Saldaña, 2013).

After the second cycle of coding, I used CHAT to categorize the codes into activities where the faculty reflected on, discussed, or expressed their experiences advancing racial equity. These codes included “action oriented,” “equity-minded language,” “interrogating the culture,” “organizational effort,” and “naming racism.” In the final stage, I used CHAT to develop analytic questions that would move my analysis beyond the description of activities to identifying the inner contradictions that shaped faculty learning and development. Analytic questions guide researchers to search directly for responses to research questions while being flexible to relevant content and contextual information (Neumann & Pallas, 2015)—for example, “How did the inner contradictions surface?” “How did the faculty respond to the inner contradictions?” “Are there differences by race in the type of inner contradictions faculty experience?” “What mediating factors did the faculty change to advance racial equity?” “How did the faculty change the mediating factors?” Through these steps, I produced three themes: Maintaining a Culture of Niceness, Disrupting a Culture of Niceness, and Moving Beyond a Culture of Niceness. My use of process coding and axial coding informed how I organized the findings, to reflect the phases of learning and action as they unraveled during the real-life context of the inquiry-based intervention that the faculty participated in this study (Saldaña, 2013).

Limitations

Although I was present in all seven inquiry-based intervention workshops and had support from another doctoral student in collecting observation data, the size of the group prevented me from capturing all of the dynamics. A limitation of my data was not being able to capture all the group dynamics happening throughout the seven workshops. Another limitation was not being able to interview all 17 evidence team members. The majority of the evidence team members who I did not interview did not respond to my e-mail invitations. I encountered challenges scheduling an interview with one of the evidence team members. Another limitation of the study was not studying the faculty participating in activities outside the inquiry-based intervention, which limits the findings about their learning within the boundaries of the inquiry-based intervention.

Findings

The inquiry-based intervention provided opportunities for the faculty to collectively interrogate the campus culture in order to identify why the university has had trouble recruiting and hiring racially minoritized professors. Focusing my analyses on the interpersonal plane allowed me to pay attention to the multiple mechanisms that reproduce racial inequity while also documenting the changes the faculty made during their engagement in activity. Thinking about the inquiry-based intervention as an activity system allowed me to identify the mediating factors that helped facilitate a personal and emotional activity where faculty interrogated the campus culture. It was through that process of interrogating the culture that legitimation for making specific changes to their hiring routines emerged. In short, the study participants were implementing a standard search and hire but doing so under an inquiry-based intervention, which enabled them to identify core barriers to equity within the organizational culture and to make changes to the very process they were carrying out.

My findings outline the activities that surfaced inner contradictions at three levels—intrapersonal, interpersonal, and institutional—which helped the faculty rethink their campus racial culture and use race-conscious routines to create a racially equitable hiring structure. In “Maintaining a Culture of Niceness,” I explain how naming the invisible components of their campus racial culture helped the evidence team set ground rules to have honest and direct conversations about race and equity. The finding “Disrupting a Culture of Niceness” builds on the previous findings by focusing on the role of racially minoritized professors’ ways of knowing and being to decentralize Whiteness. In the concluding finding, “Moving Beyond a Culture of Niceness,” I discuss the activities that helped the evidence team rethink their campus racial culture to create a race-conscious and racially equitable hiring structure.

Maintaining a Culture of Niceness

In the kick-off meeting, the CUE facilitators introduced two artifacts that helped the evidence team set the conditions to interrogate their campus racial culture. The evidence team defined what racial equity and inquiry meant to them as a group, and they established ground rules to hold one another accountable for engaging in honest conversations, to not share confidential information with non-team members, and to not be afraid of acknowledging their agenda for racial equity. In this first finding, I focus on the faculty interrogating the ways VOU’s colorblind routines maintained a culture of niceness.

The Invisible Yet Visible Policing of Niceness

At the first evidence team meeting in February, after the university president's welcoming remarks, the CUE researchers reviewed the agenda for the 5-hour meeting before moving to an icebreaker. The CUE researchers then projected a warm-up question on a PowerPoint slide, making the faculty participants chuckle when they read the question. The question asked the faculty to identify "an unspoken rule you would share with a new faculty member that would provide a newcomer with critical cultural knowledge of [VOU]." The CUE facilitators designed this icebreaker so the evidence team could start thinking about the ingrained organizational culture and the barriers it might present to racial equity. Although the first few comments were about technical support to navigate VOU, Dr. Brian Cook, who was a long-time and highly respected Black male tenured professor, surfaced an institutional-level inner contradiction when he said that the university's "culture of niceness was the reason it was hard to be frank about racism." The room remained silent for a few moments before the majority of the faculty started to nod their heads in agreement, engaged in side conversations, or vocally agreed with Dr. Cook's remarks. Indeed, the discourse among the VOU faculty that I observed was consistent with that of modeling a culture of being nice, because the faculty initially used race-neutral language to describe inequitable routines and indirect comments that failed to hold colleagues accountable for their discriminatory behaviors.

According to the faculty participants, the culture of niceness at VOU stems from its religious affiliation to a mainline Protestant denomination. The denominational tradition at VOU meant that being nice went beyond the polite and collegial atmosphere of the professoriate; it suggested that anyone who was not nice was confrontational, problematic, and potentially out of step with the community's religious dogma. Although the faculty defined VOU's culture of niceness as a reflection of the university's religious identity, niceness was a colorblind organizational value that maintained Whiteness because racially minoritized faculty expressed being unable to call out overt and subtle forms of racism. VOU's culture of niceness allows racially minoritized professors to regularly experience discrimination from their colleagues with minimal administrative oversight and no official channels to file grievances (for an in-depth analysis of the culture of niceness, see Villarreal et al., 2019).

The warm-up on unspoken norms prompted professors to think about their experiences navigating the culture of niceness as pretenure, female, or racially minoritized faculty. Faculty described the culture of niceness as something that is mostly invisible yet becomes tangible through interactions with senior White male professors and the informal rules they enforced. Dr. Kevin Boyer, a White male tenured professor, commented that the "culture of niceness operated below the surface." Senior White male professors

“notice who keeps their doors open and closed,” “who attends and does not attend faculty meetings,” and “who volunteers,” according to Drs. Scott James, Jenna Stevens, and Donna Evans, respectively. In addition to the policing behaviors of senior White scholars, Dr. Leslie Hurtado, a Latina pre-tenure professor, who initially hesitated to share her perspective, further emphasized the significance of “avoiding conflict” and “maintaining collegiality” for senior White male professors “to like you.” Prompted by Dr. Cook’s comments, evidence team members named and acknowledged the existence of VOU’s racial hierarchy. In so doing, they surfaced an institutional-level inner contradiction between VOU’s mission to encourage varying opinions and to question, probe, and seek the truth, on the one hand, and to advance a culture of niceness that privileges the voices of senior White male faculty, on the other. In the following subsection, I describe an exchange where the evidence team was tasked to confront VOU’s contradiction of niceness and racial equity further.

The Racial Feeling of Niceness

In talking about the culture of niceness, the evidence team identified and questioned the historically accumulated social and cultural mechanisms of VOU’s racial hierarchy. The evidence team’s engagement in interrogating taken-for-granted norms helped them learn about the racism on campus collectively and to develop the knowledge needed to make changes to hiring routines. This interrogation continued in March, when members had to identify a “person that helped you when you first arrived at [VOU]?” In this discussion, an interpersonal-level inner contradiction surfaced when faculty questioned the additional burden of racially minoritized professors “to be public figures,” “to be the voices of their culture,” and “to mentor students of color.” Four faculty participants, three White professors and one Black professor, identified Dr. Green as someone who helped them navigate racial discourses. When Dr. Boyer, the fourth professor who acknowledged Dr. Green, concluded his remarks, Professor Green was looking down toward the floor with his left hand covering his face. Sitting next to Dr. Boyer and the last person to share, Dr. Green found it “interesting that my colleagues view me as a source of support but no one knows or supports me to address the challenges I continue to face.” He ended his comments by saying that he “didn’t know how much more [he] can take,” as he put his head down and used his hands to keep tears from running down his face.

A consequence of the culture of niceness, racially minoritized faculty at VOU like Dr. Green were expected to minimize and hide their emotional reactions to racism. The activity of identifying key players in faculty navigating VOU revealed the burden racially minoritized faculty experienced from masking their real emotions and behaviors. When I interviewed Dr. Boyer, he described learning about the division of labor of racially minoritized

faculty only when Dr. Green shared the contradiction of being praised as a mentor but not being supported.

To have someone speak so honestly and so emotionally about their experience on campus and especially from someone who integrated so well on the surface, like this is a person who made a lot of effort to fit and I think very few people would have known that what was behind that was actually a lot of painful experiences.

Dr. Boyer's quote reflects the ways the culture of niceness produces and maintains racial inequity by creating an image that all faculty have professionally and socially become members of the university. On the surface, racially minoritized faculty like Dr. Green appeared to integrate on campus easily, but a more in-depth look revealed that their agency was interrelated with VOU's culture of niceness, which restricts the expression of their thoughts, behaviors, and emotions. This culture of niceness maintains a racial structure that disproportionately distributes resources by racial identity—in this case, the inability to interrogate organizational routines that systematically discriminate racially minoritized faculty. Although emotional, inquiry into how the culture of niceness produced and assigned the gamut of cognitions, emotions, and behaviors by race helped the evidence team disrupt Whiteness by centralizing racially minoritized faculty in racial equity work.

Disrupting a Culture of Niceness

This finding focuses on the evidence team's efforts to disrupt the embedded Whiteness of niceness and to legitimize racially minoritized professors' ways of knowing and being in creating a racially equitable hiring structure.

Centralizing the Experiences of Racially Minoritized Faculty

The rules of the inquiry-based intervention to interrogate the campus culture helped the faculty identify an interpersonal-level inner contradiction in the fragmented racialized experiences of VOU faculty. In doing so, racially minoritized faculty were able to centralize their experiences and deconstruct the Whiteness embedded within the culture of niceness, which the faculty described during the interviews. For example, Dr. Lauren Cortez, a Black female tenured professor, shared that she saw a White male professor leave "hate mail in my department mailbox." She further elaborated how she felt awkward having to go to work knowing who had left the letter in her mailbox and not feeling comfortable about raising the issue. Relatedly, Dr. Hurtado shared an experience where White male students referred to her as "the Latina with the fat ass." In the interviews, racially minoritized faculty shared that they were not aware of the extent to which their racially minoritized colleagues experienced racism. Upon learning of their colleagues' experiences with racism during the evidence team meetings, the racially

minoritized faculty became frustrated and disappointed. Dr. Cortez recollected that hearing about Dr. Cook's experience made her feel frustrated and disappointed that he has endured such mistreatment.

To think of [Brian] putting up with shit is what really hit me. Like I know what it's felt like for me, but you can't do that to [Brian]. . . . So when [Brian] tells you "here's what your friends have said to me. Here's what that person that you think are the nicest people you would ever know and would trust your kids with. Here's what they have done to shape my professional life here." That's what really got me.

Sharing experiences with racism at VOU revealed the collective racial consciousness of the pain and frustration of being in a White-serving institution. In an interview, Dr. Cook shared that the facilitation of conversations about racism on campus by the CUE staff maximized the experience and knowledge of racially minoritized faculty to advance racial equity. He said that "everything really comes down to the discussion because we were guided through our facilitation process. I think [the CUE facilitation] maximized the insights, the wisdom, and the experiences that many of us already had at that point." Dr. Cook further elaborated that "those of us who told our stories helped the people who were not from stigmatized groups understand a little better." Although Dr. Cook acknowledged that sharing their stories was a personal learning experience for his White faculty colleagues to "understand their own privilege," he was clear that racially minoritized faculty were "not here to make everybody a better person"; instead, "we are trying to look at [racial equity] from a systemic standpoint." Ultimately, Dr. Cook felt racially minoritized faculty "were encouraged [and that] there was the emotional bonding. There was a facilitation that helped all of us" even though the "pain does rise to the surface again." Similarly, Dr. Susana Gomez said,

When things got real, that's when [racially minoritized faculty] really started talking about the racism, discrimination, marginalization that was happening with them. And I think that was an eye-opening experience for a lot of the people in the room and legitimized why we were doing this project. So that was really a positive way to move forward, even though it stemmed from hurtful experiences.

At an individual level, sharing experiences of racism centralized the voices of racially minoritized faculty and validated their knowledge to interrogate racism as an artifact that mediated learning. The majority of racially minoritized faculty understood that their agency for racial equity was personal and emotional, yet their efforts were focused on changing the organizational culture instead of individual professors. In the next subsection, I outline the ways the activity of sharing stories of racism shaped the agency of White faculty for racial equity.

Confronting the Whiteness of Niceness

Activities to interrogate the organizational culture also created an intra-personal-level inner contradiction for White faculty during the inquiry-based intervention. Racially minoritized faculty sharing their stories created a space where “White faculty had to deal with the feelings of faculty of color in a way that they had not had before in a professional setting,” according to Dr. Cortez. The activity of listening to the experiences of racially minoritized faculty triggered emotions from White faculty because they had to examine the embedded Whiteness within the culture of niceness that created and maintained racial inequality. In describing how centering the experiences of racially minoritized faculty impacted White faculty, Dr. Cortez said, “Because you can’t go anywhere with that, you can’t handbook your way out of that, that is not how the system works, that did not happen. No, we are talking about how I felt.” Dr. Boyer also believed that the stories racially minoritized faculty shared during the inquiry-based intervention held White faculty accountable to change VOU’s racist culture.

I think that was a realization [that] we can’t keep doing this the same way. It is not even just a question of fairness. It is an acknowledgment of systemic cultural racism, sexism . . . now it’s out, now we know that if we’re not going to do anything, we’re choosing not to do anything with knowledge of what happens.

The ground rules to maintain confidentiality and be accountable put White faculty in a situation where they had to intellectually and emotionally deal with the consequences of racism. The activity to interrogate the culture of niceness, along with committed faculty, created the conditions for White faculty to think about their Whiteness concerning racial equity.

As one example, Dr. Donna Evans, a White female tenured professor, described the inquiry-based intervention as a place where “people were willing to share personal narratives, and other faculty were very supportive of faculty sharing those personal narratives.” She elaborated that if evidence team members “did not feel like it was a safe space and trusting place to share, then it wouldn’t have happened.” For Dr. Evans, listening to the experiences of racially minoritized faculty with racism transformed her thinking about her agency for racial equity while helping her deconstruct her White privilege. Initially, Dr. Evans was thinking about racial equity as a logical activity.

Here’s the data, here’s what we need to do, what are the strategies, how are we going to recruit; and I wasn’t thinking about the emotional experiences that my colleagues were having. So that meeting made me think not just cognitively like here’s the data, here’s what we need to do, but this is really having an impact on real people.

For Dr. Evans, “just hearing people’s experiences was really powerful. One thing that stood out [to me was] acknowledging that I have benefited from privilege. I have benefited from being White, right.” White faculty who engaged in the activity to interrogate the racial structure that rewarded them because of their racial identities were vocal about racial equity needing to be action oriented and an organizational effort.

Although the majority of White faculty visibly and vocally expressed feeling sad about what their racially minoritized faculty colleagues experienced, some White faculty projected their feelings of guilt or discomfort onto racially minoritized faculty. In an interview, Dr. Taylor Bush described her feelings when racially minoritized professors shared the different ways her White colleagues treated them:

I was very sad. I went home, and I actually cried a bit, and it still pisses me off that students do that. And other faculty do that to colleagues and friends, and I wanna save them all; when is the point when the administration is going to say enough is enough?

Dr. Bush’s quote is an illustration of a racialized division of labor where racially minoritized faculty continue to bear the responsibility to transform a racist culture, while it was problematic when White faculty who were unable to take the journey to deconstruct their Whiteness projected their emotions and disregarded their role in maintaining the racist culture. Dr. Bush’s feelings of needing to save her racially minoritized faculty colleagues, instead of changing the organizational culture that restricted the agency of racially minoritized faculty, perpetuated the racist culture the evidence team aspired to transform. Dr. Bush reinforced VOU’s racial hierarchy by not only feeling Whiteness but exerting Whiteness through a White savior complex. Instead of further confronting the Whiteness embedded in the culture of niceness, she rationalized her racialized emotions by asserting that White administrators are the only ones who can alleviate racial inequity.

At VOU, the culture of niceness has historically required faculty to make racial equity work palatable for White faculty colleagues. Interrogating the culture of niceness made some White faculty feel uncomfortable and attacked because their racial identities, which have historically been deemed normal, neutral, and good, were decentralized. In an interview, Dr. Adriana Patton, a White female pretenured faculty, shared her concerns about the design of the inquiry-based intervention not helping White faculty feel comfortable to share their experiences and perspectives on racial equity. Dr. Patton’s comment reflects how niceness shapes faculty discourse about not disrupting racialized systems of power when engaging in racial equity work.

I thought we have to have some decorum in addressing questions. We want people to feel free to speak about things so that we can address things as opposed to them perpetuating. Like people don’t

get their questions answered, and they are reluctant to talk about difficult topics because they feel like they're going to be judged for it.

Dr. Patton's quote brought to the surface the emotional landmines of White fragility in racial equity work. When racial equity work centralizes racially minoritized faculty as the knowledge producers for change, the artifacts, rules, community, and division of labor should be in place to provide White faculty opportunities to interpret their racial identities as racial equity advocates. Of the 11 evidence team members I interviewed, Dr. Patton was the only faculty who expressed that the inquiry-based intervention lacked the artifacts and rules to move the emotional conversation into an action-oriented effort. However, the evidence team's focus on inquiry allowed them to collectively identify the racial structure as the cause of their emotional state.

In the interview with Dr. Gloria Arce, a Latina pretenured professor, she recalled the experience as "breaking down some people to empathize with faculty as human beings." In this case, faculty who shared their stories of racism helped the collective sustain their efforts, which created the context for participants to identify the cause of their feelings. For example, most of the White faculty realized how their racial privilege protected them from being discriminated against, while racially minoritized faculty relived traumatic events. Dr. Jones's reflection captures the ways the activity to interrogate the culture of niceness mediated the evidence team's learning and development:

We needed that kind of primer to set the tone for how higher priority equity should be on campus, and then after we kind of laid the groundwork for everyone being on the same page emotionally with that, then it was about what can we do mechanically to help fix that?

As I further describe in the next section, most of the professors believed that CUE's "facilitation process maximized the insights, the wisdom, and the experiences that many [faculty] already had at that point," according to Dr. Cook. Inquiry focusing on interrogating the campus racial culture helped faculty identify various inner contradictions in multiple levels of activity, which guided them to focus on making changes to their faculty hiring racial structure.

Moving Beyond a Culture of Niceness

In this section, I use CHAT to explain how the evidence team rethought their organizational racial culture and routines to help them advance a racially conscious and racially equitable hiring structure. The evidence team participated in activities that helped them rethink their organizational culture to advance racial equity in faculty hiring as an activity that (1) requires equity-minded language, (2) is an organizational effort, and (3) is action oriented.

Equity-Minded Language

The evidence team's critical knowledge about the culture of niceness informed their efforts to use equity-minded language to communicate their racial equity goals and articulate their plan to implement changes. The evidence team engaged in various activities where they focused on using equity-minded language to redesign the university's general templates for job announcements, interview questions, and evaluation criteria. For example, in the fourth meeting in May, faculty wrote about their experiences on faculty search committees on an index card, which helped them identify the prevalence of implicit bias in faculty searches. In an anonymous response, a faculty participant shared that during a phone interview the search committee discussed whether a candidate they identified as "being urban and African American (based on voice alone) . . . would be happy at [VOU]." Another anonymous faculty shared a story about a search committee chair deciding not to advance an "Asian American, Pacific Islander faculty candidate who had a strong accent" because "administrators in the schools [partnerships] and the community would not respect his communication style."

In the activity to name implicit bias, the evidence team focused on creating routines that require faculty serving on search committees to think about the role of implicit bias in their decision making. The evidence team believed that requiring faculty search committees to take an implicit bias training would help faculty search committee members develop a race-conscious lens when using hiring criteria (e.g., job applications, cover letters) to evaluate the ways faculty candidates can advance the university's goals and the added value they can bring to the department. Dr. Jones noted that the implicit bias training helped him name the invisible when thinking "how you frame the job posting, how it's advertised, how you ask questions in a phone interview, how you tour the campus with the individual." Dr. Jones developed the knowledge and terminology to rethink the various aspects of the hiring process from a racial lens.

At an intrapersonal level, the implicit bias training helped evidence team members develop equity-minded language, which mediated their actions at the interpersonal and institutional planes. For example, Dr. Patton said that standardizing implicit bias training would result in faculty search committees taking holistic approaches to evaluate job applications because such training will "make a broader definition for what it is that we're looking to achieve and how to go about achieving it." As evident in Dr. Patton's quote, standardizing implicit bias training will not only change the templates search committees use to evaluate faculty candidates but also impact VOU's broader definition of who and what is valued. Dr. Boyer said that in the past, "diversity was kind of nebulous; it was very broad." After participating in the inquiry-based intervention, he developed the language to "be race conscious and specific to say we need to hire more Latino faculty; we need to

hire more African American faculty.” Dr. Boyer’s comments are critical of previous efforts to hire racially minoritized faculty without the language to be specific about hiring racially minoritized faculty.

The evidence team created templates to help search chairs implement the equity-minded language in their hiring materials. Dr. Ward shared how the activity where the evidence team used equity-minded language to redesign job announcements was an effective strategy to communicate VOU’s equity goals to potential faculty job applicants.

One of the best moments for me was when you redrafted that job announcement because I just remembered reading that going, wow! I’m having such a different response to this than I ever have reading any other job announcement because it was so clear that we were not just using the language of the day, but it was like the language was clear, strong, and really specific.

From that point, even if search chairs did not develop the capacity to be equity minded, the templates would facilitate their conversations with search committee members about using equity-minded language to redesign their hiring materials. Dr. Cortez said that “having [evidence team members] on the search committee that can draft, or take a look at those [interview] questions and say you know what we still don’t have anything about mentoring first-gen students” would help search chairs see the templates and view evidence team members as “resources and appreciate them as resources.” Equity-minded language provided the evidence team with artifacts to be specific when redesigning hiring templates, while creating rules for search committees to engage in equity-minded conversations throughout the hiring process.

Organizational Effort

During the inquiry-based intervention, the faculty called on senior administrators to be part of the community so racial equity becomes an organizational effort. The faculty were vocal that if senior administrators were not supportive, then faculty colleagues who were not on board would ignore the evidence team’s equity efforts. Dr. Bush was direct during the interview that if the evidence team did not “have strong leadership, . . . [the evidence team] can go ahead all we like and implement as much as we can but at the end of the day is the provost who makes the decision to go forward or not.” Dr. Bush was alluding that in the past, faculty, both on and off the evidence team, had engaged in efforts to bring attention to racial inequity in faculty hiring and faculty retention but were ignored by administrators. In an interview, Dr. Cook said that faculty “feel that we are not being used and being listened to in the best possible way by the administration.” He continued to emphasize that for racial equity to be institutionalized, the administration,

including the president and the provost, need to be part of the community. “We need to do something about [administrators],” he said, “because to the extent that the administration feels that they can do what they want to do, then that is going to undermine a lot of the stuff we are talking about.”

The faculty were aware, however, that without a formal structure to hold search committees accountable, the administration’s support would not be sufficient to make racial equity in faculty hiring a university priority. In the May meeting, the faculty participated in an activity to analyze the Faculty Search Guidelines. The Faculty Search Guidelines had three main sections: rules about the search process, the interview process, and the selection process. The objective of the activity was for faculty to identify routines that were not clear, ineffective, or too difficult to implement. The faculty broke into three groups, and each group analyzed one section of the Faculty Search Guidelines. Through their participation in this activity, the faculty decided that (1) all search committee members are required to take mandatory implicit bias training, (2) each search committee should include two professors trained in racial equity, and (3) the dean and the provost reserve the right to cancel searches that do not include a racially minoritized semi-finalist and finalist.

In addition to proposing changes to the use of language, including verbs (e.g., from *should* to *must*) and terms (e.g., *Hispanic-serving institution*), the evidence team redesigned the Faculty Search Guidelines to help them implement their racial equity efforts by adding “a layer of formality to a process that” Dr. Nuñez thought “might have been too informal.” Dr. Boyer believed that the Faculty Search Guidelines would also give “the administration some basis on which to say look you didn’t adhere to the guidelines, so; therefore, we are going to stop [the search] or start over or reconstitute the search committee with different people.” The evidence team determined that each faculty search committee had to document every step of their decision making and prove to the provost, who makes the job offer to faculty candidates, that the committee took every measure to hire a Black, Latinx, or Native American professor. For example, search chairs would be required to prove to the provost that they (1) were actively recruiting racially minoritized faculty, (2) used language in job announcements to indicate VOU’s racial equity efforts, (3) developed interview questions to assess faculty candidates’ capacity for equity mindedness; and (4) created hiring criteria that valued faculty candidates who can advance VOU’s racial equity efforts.

Although Dr. Ward was concerned about administration intervening in faculty governance, most of the faculty emphasized that professors were leading the equity efforts with support from the provost. Dr. Nuñez argued that the provost had the authority to tell “people their searches are not going to go forward if they don’t show the provost that they tried, that they did everything possible to try to diversify their pool.” Dr. Cortez also believed that “structurally, the involvement of the provost is what really solidified

the seriousness of the work.” The Faculty Search Guidelines mediated the evidence team’s learning by providing them multiple avenues to ensure that search committees are thinking about racial equity when recruiting and hiring faculty. As Dr. Boyer put it, the Faculty Search Guidelines “gives some basis by which to evaluate the success of the search on equity grounds [that] we just didn’t have before.”

Given the power of the Faculty Search Guidelines to implement racial equity, faculty like Dr. Bush understood that the provost “has to be strong enough that if the guidelines were not being met, she has to pull the search.” She felt that the message was clear to faculty that “[administrators] were serious. This is not just a little passive phase to check off strategic goals, but this is an important cultural change.” When Dr. Bush shared her perspectives on the role of the provost, she was referring to the administration’s division of labor in racial equity work. Her words about the provost needing to step in when search committees fail to meet their responsibilities for racial equity communicated that the evidence team was serious about changing VOU’s colorblind routines. The impact of changing the Faculty Search Guidelines granted the evidence team access to the provost’s administrative power and reinforced their knowledge on using equity-minded language.

Dr. Nuñez’s comments capture the outcome that racial equity work is an organizational effort: “I think faculty have observed the message that you better take this seriously; otherwise you may get your search pulled because . . . faculty know that there are going to be consequences for not building a pool that includes equity.” As a collective, the evidence team was able to interrogate the historical tensions between administrators and faculty. They capitalized on the activity to analyze the Faculty Search Guidelines to identify places where the provost can play an active role to make racial equity an organizational effort. The Faculty Search Guidelines, therefore, served as an artifact to mediate learning, such as faculty identifying where in the hiring process changes and action were required, to be confident and vocal about how to advance racial equity.

Action Oriented

Through their engagement in various inquiry activities, the faculty learned techniques to move away from philosophical disagreements with faculty colleagues about the significance of racial equity to action-oriented strategies to focus on specific ways to use equity-minded templates. Dr. Ward recalled how the team “[moved] more instrumentally, we started moving more towards procedures and practices and specific guidelines.” Dr. Nuñez said that the evidence team should “de-emphasize the why” and “approach it as a mandate with consequences for not completing.” In an interview, Dr. Nuñez elaborated on his stance that he was “not willing to

educate faculty about why diversity matters. . . . There are some things that you don't even have to explain; it's just time to do it."

During the sixth meeting in October, the faculty were discussing how to implement equity-minded questions in their phone and campus visit interviews. They engaged in an activity where they had to develop an evaluation rubric for equity-focused questions. In this meeting, the CUE facilitators informed faculty that they could use interview questions to assess faculty candidates' skills to mentor racially minoritized students. The activity required faculty to generate at least one interview question related to issues of equity and inclusion. After the activity, faculty (primarily search chairs who were not on the evidence team) shared their concerns about their inability to integrate the university's equity goals with departmental goals. A White male tenured search chair wondered "how someone, without the expertise on equity, can develop such goals." Moreover, he asked if "someone can develop the equity questions for him." Since a community of faculty who had interrogated VOU's campus racial culture had developed the rules to engage in racial equity work, the addition of faculty search chairs created tension during the activity.

After the evidence team had engaged in open and honest conversations about racism on their campus, they collectively agreed on the rules to use race-conscious language when talking about equity and to use equity-minded language to create hiring routines. Unlike the evidence team members, the White faculty search chair had not developed the capacity to take on the burden of the emotional and taxing aspects of racial equity work. In an attempt to not let the White faculty search chair's comments circumvent the evidence team's progress, Drs. Cortez and Boyer both asserted that "faculty chairs have never been intentional about connecting questions to equity goals." So, to help search chairs redesign their hiring procedures to reflect the university's racial equity efforts, Dr. Patton proposed that the evidence team "develop and provide structured questions and goals for every search committee to use." In response to Dr. Patton's suggestion, Dr. Cortez clarified that "implementing equity goals doesn't only fall on equity advocates." Dr. Cortez recognized that non-evidence team members were not familiar with the reasons why her team made changes to the Faculty Search Guidelines. Her comments that equity advocates were not the only ones responsible for racial equity was a call to include search chairs as part of the community and share the emotional and intellectual work to advance racial equity.

Ultimately, the evidence team proposed to create a shared drive with "a set of questions that was universally applicable" and "a template everyone can use," according to Drs. Patton and Nuñez, respectively. The evidence team focused on creating artifacts to help search chairs be part of the organizational effort to think about and use equity-minded language to redesign faculty hiring routines. In an interview, Dr. Nuñez shared that he appreciated

learning “a lot of really good facilitation tricks or techniques that helped me hear and understand why my colleagues were not conducting searches [equitably].” He believed that the action-oriented aspect of the inquiry-based intervention “was a really useful structure for how to do [racial equity work] and why you want to do it.” Dr. Nuñez concluded that providing non-evidence team members with action steps will be practical “going forward because you bog faculty down with esoteric, arcane conversations with the *why* question.” Since faculty like to “debate the *why*,” Dr. Nuñez proposed that the team anticipate such behaviors and “jump ahead and be like how” to create race-conscious and racially equitable hiring routines. Dr. Nuñez was direct about what faculty search chairs should do to think in equity-minded ways:

You got to be proactive of pool building, people aren't just going to come to you, they're not just going to fall out of the sky; you gotta go build your network of relationships and call on your mentors and call on your friends at other colleges and then go out and get people for your pool.

The tension (described above) from the October meeting resurfaced in the November meeting when White faculty search chairs continued to question the validity of the knowledge developed from the experiences of racially minoritized faculty. Even though the evidence team proposed to create a shared drive with equity-minded questions and templates for search chairs to use, faculty search chairs raised similar concerns in the November meeting. As a CUE researcher, in this meeting, I presented data that I had collected from the interviews with racially minoritized professors working at VOU. The purpose of the presentation was to share how racially minoritized faculty experienced the hiring process, tenure and promotion, and interactions with students, faculty, and administrators. A White male tenured professor who was serving as a search chair had concerns about my interpretation of the experiences of racially minoritized faculty with negative teaching evaluations. He contended that White faculty also received negative teaching evaluations when they academically challenged students. In response to her White colleague, Dr. Jenna Stevens, a White female tenured professor, acknowledged that “students do give [White faculty] negative feedback if you criticize them but who gets latitude to confront them and who doesn't” was based on race. Dr. Cortez elaborated on Dr. Stevens's comments “that the margin of error is smaller for faculty of color.” In particular, faculty who did not engage in the activity to develop the racial lens to rethink the culture of niceness were disrupting the activity's rule for faculty to do the necessary hard work required to advance racial equity.

Initially, the provost, with the support of the CUE researchers, identified faculty who expressed interest in and commitment to racial equity. Although relying on the evidence team to create the foundation to advance racial

equity was significant, the emotional taxation and physical burden extended the community to include search chairs. The participation of faculty search committee chairs who did not attend the first two meetings created challenges for the faculty participants. As shown above, White faculty search chairs focusing on *why* they should invest in racial equity instead of *how* to implement racial equity proved to be an organizational barrier. The evidence team's critical knowledge of the culture of niceness informed their decision to focus on action-oriented strategies to move racial equity into an organizational effort when the search chairs presented obstacles.

Discussion

Faculty hiring is not a race-neutral structure. Instead, faculty hiring at White-serving institutions is a structure that is embedded in Whiteness, which shapes the foundation of hiring routines, including recruitment strategies, evaluation criteria, and understandings of merit and fit that faculty members use to make hiring decisions. The campus racial culture, in this case the culture of niceness, made exclusionary and discriminatory routines invisible by normalizing uncritical and race-neutral approaches to faculty hiring. The inquiry-based intervention allowed the faculty to make visible the invisible organizational barriers reproduced through faculty hiring routines. The faculty participants described how their campus culture of niceness was an organizational barrier to engaging in critical inquiry because of the expectation for them to have general and indirect conversations about racial equity. The culture of niceness was an organizational barrier to talking about racism on campus, to holding one another accountable for using inequitable practices, to actively recruiting racially minoritized faculty, to establishing race-conscious and equitable hiring criteria, and to demanding transparent hiring decision processes.

Similar to other research on organizational change and racial equity, this study's findings show the power of collecting and using institutional-level data to inform practice (Bensimon & Dowd, 2012; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015; Dowd & Liera, 2018). As shown in the findings, the inquiry-based intervention helped faculty create a space where they used race-conscious language to interrogate their campus racial culture along with faculty colleagues who were committed to advance racial equity. In so doing, the faculty created ground rules to guide their participation in inquiry activities that facilitated their learning about racial equity through direct conversations about racism on campus and its impact on racially minoritized faculty throughout the hiring process. As a team, the faculty used the critical knowledge they developed from interrogating their campus racial culture to introduce new mediating factors into their faculty hiring racial structure. For example, the faculty learned terminology during their participation in the activity on implicit bias to name and challenge biases, which informed their

decision to recruit racially minoritized faculty actively. Conceptualizing the inquiry-based intervention as a CHAT activity system allowed me to identify the conditions that mediated faculty learning to implement racial equity in faculty hiring.

I used the activity system triangle (see Figure 2) to answer the first research question: How do professors rethink their organizational culture to advance racial equity in their faculty hiring process? I focused on multiple levels of activity (e.g., intrapersonal, interpersonal, and institutional), using data through a facilitated intervention whose goal was to train faculty to rethink their organizational culture in order to advance racial equity in faculty hiring. In this study, faculty used the data and insights developed from their inquiry to rethink their organizational culture as an environment where racial equity work is an action-oriented, organizational effort that uses equity-minded language to interrogate racist hiring routines and create race-conscious and equitable hiring routines. The faculty changed hiring routines that on the surface seem race neutral but have been used to devalue and discredit the perspectives, expertise, experiences, and bodies of racially minoritized faculty.

As the findings illustrate (see Figure 2), artifacts including the terminology to name racism, activities focusing on cultural and structural racism, and race-specific language mediated the participation of faculty who were not only committed to racial equity but also active in questioning Whiteness and the racial structure of faculty hiring. As the findings show, racial equity work requires the participation of senior administrators and faculty across campus. In this study, faculty members asked the provost to support their efforts publicly and to attend every meeting of the inquiry-based intervention. They also created rules to participate in the inquiry-based intervention with the intention to shape racial equity work on faculty search committees. For example, the organizational expectation for faculty to participate in racial equity work requires them to hold one another accountable, be honest about racism, and focus on how to advance racial equity. Given the collective effort necessary to advance racial equity, those involved must be willing to take on the intellectual and emotional labor associated with challenging and changing a racist culture. In this case, senior administrators supported racial equity work, faculty colleagues used equity-minded recruiting and hiring templates, and White faculty took on the burden of racial equity work. These conditions led the faculty to learn that in addition to being an organizational effort, racial equity work is an action-oriented activity to advance equity-minded language. I want to emphasize that the changes that were under way occurred because faculty participants engaged in a substantial interrogation of their culture of niceness, which was not a linear or straightforward activity.

I answered the second research question—How do professors overcome challenges to advancing racial equity in faculty hiring?—by focusing on faculty participating in activities and identifying inner contradictions that facilitated their learning and actions. In so doing, the faculty in this study

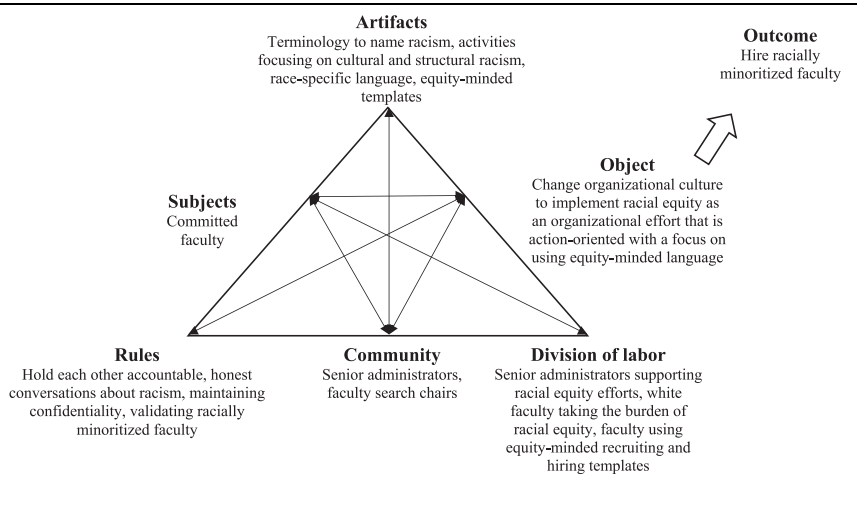


Figure 2. Activity system illustrating an inquiry-based intervention to implement racial equity in faculty hiring.

surfaced inner contradictions between their espoused values for racial equity and the reality of existing in a racialized campus culture. For example, racially minoritized faculty shed light on the ways the organizational expectations of being nice and polite inhibited and devalued their efforts to advance racial equity. Interrogating the inner contradiction of being expected to do racial equity work within a culture that marginalizes faculty by race prompted the evidence team to take action. However, the developmental process of faculty learning was not linear. In the interviews, most of the faculty discussed the intrapersonal (i.e., individual level) inner contradictions they experienced, when the evidence team continued to identify interpersonal (i.e., group level) inner contradictions.

From a CHAT perspective, the interrogation of the organizational culture exposed two interacting activities initiated by different subjects (Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2009). One was initiated by White faculty and the other by racially minoritized professors. White faculty were tasked to deal with the reality of racism and to acknowledge their racial identities. Many White faculty learned about the various ways their racial group has historically benefited from the culture of niceness. Some White faculty, like Dr. Evans, took on the responsibility to deconstruct their Whiteness with the intention to shoulder some of the burden of racial equity work, while other White faculty, like Dr. Patton, were less willing to take on the journey of self-reflection and accountability necessary to create an equitable culture. DiAngelo (2015) argues that White people develop emotionally laden

opinions about race, but without racial literacy and humility, they may become defensive and withdrawn when engaging in meaningful conversations about racism. Racial equity work requires faculty to acknowledge that Whites have built and dominated nearly all significant institutions, including higher education. This power, which is a product of history and of current routines, centralizes and rewards Whites' ways of knowing and being (Scheurich & Young, 1997). Matias (2013) proposes that White educators need to learn how to feel again and be emotionally invested in changing racist structures. The findings from this study support Matias's suggestion and extend it to White faculty who are engaged in racial equity work. As the faculty participants learned, racial equity work is emotionally driven because of the racial identity work that is required for White people to develop the capacity to change racist structures, like the culture of niceness.

Although the contradiction between the two interacting activity systems presented an opportunity for the evidence team members to rethink racial equity work as an action-oriented activity that requires an organizational effort to implement equity-minded language, racially minoritized professors were managing traumatic emotions and sustaining the learning environment for their White colleagues. The findings contribute to a growing body of literature on racialized emotions (see Bonilla-Silva, 2019) and extend research on organizational change and racial equity (see Dowd & Bensimon, 2015) by highlighting the role of inner contradictions in surfacing faculty members' racial positions on campus and the associated emotions that inhibit or facilitate change. An activity system such as the one illustrated in Figure 2 can be a starting point for senior administrators and faculty to validate and legitimize racially minoritized faculty, while developing the capacity of White faculty to collectively move beyond the culture of niceness and implement action-oriented and equity-minded change.

Research Contributions

The findings add to the current literature on racial equity by highlighting how using an equity-minded inquiry intervention that elicited stories of racism facilitated policy changes, precisely policy to minimize discriminatory practices in faculty hiring. Given that the inquiry-based intervention was not designed for faculty to share stories about racism, the activities to interrogate the campus racial structure proved effective to surface racism. Although the sharing of stories about racism was taxing for the racially minoritized faculty, their value for learning and change was instructive for the White faculty (Matias, 2014). With support from the CUE facilitators, the learning of this group of faculty involved recognizing their situated positions within a structure and culture that discriminated against racially minoritized professors. In doing so, the space for race talk was not centralized around defensive moves; instead, the team confronted racism and acted to

change the Faculty Search Guidelines. The findings contribute to this body of research by highlighting the critical role of the knowledge of racially minoritized faculty in racial equity work, including the identification of inequitable routines and the creation of racially conscious and equitable routines.

The findings also empirically contribute to the literature on CHAT about emotions and identity being the missing links in the dialectic relationship between social context and learning toward organizational change (Lee, 2011). More specifically, the findings contribute to the literature on the potential of inquiry-based interventions to advance racial equity (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012; Bragg & Durham, 2012; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015). Traditionally, action research studies on racial equity have focused on the mediating role of artifacts in faculty learning, without considering the role of personal and professional experiences with racism (Peña, 2012). The combination of CHAT and campus racial culture helped underscore the significance of professors interrogating the campus culture, which has not been examined in the literature on faculty diversity (Gasman et al., 2011; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017; Smith et al., 2004). The faculty in this study participated in a 10-month, inquiry-based intervention to interrogate the culture of niceness that historically constrained them from advancing racial equity. Through their participation in the inquiry-based intervention, racial equity work revolved around who had the power to speak, based on social (e.g., race, gender) and professional (e.g., professional rank) identities. The intentional effort to examine the university's culture and to name routines that contribute to racial inequity allowed the team to develop promising strategies to hire Black, Latinx, and Native American professors. Consistent with research on CHAT (Engeström, 2008; Lee, 2011; Roth & Lee, 2007), faculty learning for racial equity consisted of critical knowledge to question and create new rules (e.g., focusing on how to implement racial equity, holding one another accountable), community (e.g., the provost, search committee chairs), and division of labor (e.g., faculty colleagues using equity-minded recruiting and hiring templates, White faculty taking on the emotional and intellectual burden of racial equity work) in order to move beyond a racist culture of niceness and toward a more racially equitable culture.

Implications

The data from this study make a timely contribution to research on racial equity in faculty hiring. While higher education institutions continue to experience growth in the racial diversity of student demographics, this research turns attention on the enduring challenge of higher education leaders changing organizational culture and rethinking the implementation of a racially equitable culture. The findings illustrate the significance of investing time and resources to create an organizational culture where faculty can have meaningful conversations about racism and change policies and

structures, such as faculty hiring, that perpetuate racial inequity. In so doing, racially minoritized faculty will enter an organizational environment that validates their experiences and expertise to advance the university's racial equity efforts in student life and outcomes. Policies and structures that implement racial equity will benefit racially minoritized groups across campus and different areas of campus life. In the following, I identify and outline practices and policies that can help higher education leadership advance racial equity in faculty hiring.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study demonstrate the significance of inquiry-based interventions that involve the participation of committed faculty who take on the burden of racial equity work. Senior administrators and faculty members who are considering investing resources and time to advance racial equity in faculty hiring should review the following conditions in designing an inquiry-based intervention. Racial equity work requires faculty to develop the capacity to be equity minded (Bensimon, 2007; Bensimon & Malcom, 2012; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015). This includes faculty learning about their university's history with racism, developing the language to name racism, and creating artifacts to change the culture. As the findings show, establishing ground rules to have honest conversations about racism, to hold one another accountable to interrogate racism, and to keep the conversations confidential created a space where faculty trusted one another and focused on taking action toward change. These artifacts mediated White faculty learning that racially equity work involves emotional commitment, while validating the experiences of racially minoritized faculty. In addition to emotional investment, racial equity work is an organizational effort that requires senior administrators to invest time, resources, and labor to show their support for a faculty-led inquiry activity.


A component of the inquiry-based intervention that was not centralized in this study was the role of the CUE facilitators and researchers. In addition to the mediating factors described in this study, the faculty participants benefited from the resources, support, and facilitation of the CUE team. For example, as a CUE researcher, I used an equity-minded lens to redraft a VOU job announcement to facilitate an activity where faculty identified ways to create job announcements that communicate to potential faculty applicants their interest in hiring equity-minded faculty and racially minoritized faculty. There were numerous times when faculty expressed their appreciation of having an external entity with expertise in racial equity and equity mindedness. Senior administrators and faculty interested in implementing racial equity in faculty hiring should consider partnering with external entities in a long-term, inquiry-based intervention. As the findings show, faculty developing the agency to implement racial equity requires time.

Implications for Research

This study used case study research to examine faculty who participated in an inquiry-based intervention. Although the research design allowed me to understand racial equity from the perspectives of those invested in a structural space, future research should consider including those not involved in an inquiry-based intervention. A future study should include faculty across campus, senior administrators, staff, and students to capture their understanding of the organizational culture and their meaning making of the racial equity efforts of a selected group of faculty. As the study illustrated, racial equity work is emotional and requires focused investments of time and labor. The advancement of racial equity can create challenges that the evidence team did not anticipate or this study was unable to capture. Future research should explore the emotional labor exerted by higher education practitioners (e.g., faculty, staff, and administrators) involved in racial equity work.

Numerous universities and colleges have publicly announced their commitment to hiring racially minoritized faculty. As this study showed, creating a racially equitable hiring process requires the investment of senior administrators and faculty to spend time and have honest conversations about the ways their practices and organizational culture impede racial equity efforts. In doing so, those invested in the work can develop the necessary knowledge to create new rules, a more in-depth community, and a more equitable division of labor, which together can help higher education leaders address the specific cultural barriers against having a racially equitable hiring process.

ORCID iD

Román Liera  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3080-2891>

Notes

I am grateful for the support from Drs. Alicia Dowd, Estela Bensimon, and Julie Posselt in the early stages of designing the study, including feedback on multiple drafts. Thanks are due to Dr. Estela Bensimon for helping me get access to the study site. This article would not have been possible without the willingness of the faculty invested in advancing racial equity to participate in this study. I also want to thank Dr. Michael Lanford, Dr. Cheryl Ching, Dr. Edwin Hernandez, Dr. Jenna Sablan, Dr. Julie Posselt, Adrian Trinidad, and the reviewers and editors from the *American Educational Research Journal* for their constructive, critical feedback, which strengthened the significance and contribution of this study.

¹I initially learned about White-serving institutions from my colleague, Aireale Rodgers, who referred me to the work of Prisca Dorcas Mojica Rodriguez, who coined the term *White-serving institutions* to centralize the power structures that exist in U.S. colleges and universities. I chose to use “White-serving institutions” instead of “predominantly White institutions” to emphasize that routines were created to serve White students, faculty, and administrators even though the number of racially minoritized groups continues to grow across college and university campuses.

²At the time of data collection, I was one of the doctoral students in the project.

References

- Alemán, E. (2009). Through the prism of critical race theory: *Niceness* and Latina/o leadership in the politics of education. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 8, 290–311.
- American Educational Research Association. (2015, June 30). *Re: AERA Statement on the Charleston Shootings and Racism in America* [Electronic mailing list message]. Retrieved from <https://www.aera.net/Newsroom/News-Releases-and-Statements/AERA-Statement-on-the-Charleston-Shootings-and-Racism-in-America>
- Bauer, K. (1998). *Campus climate: Understanding the critical components of today's colleges and universities* (New Directions for Institutional Research, No. 98). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Bensimon, E. M. (2007). The underestimated significance of practitioner knowledge in the scholarship on student success. *Review of Higher Education*, 30, 441–469.
- Bensimon, E. M., & Dowd, A. C. (2012). *Developing the capacity of faculty to become institutional agents for Latinos in STEM*. Los Angeles: University of Southern California.
- Bensimon, E. M., & Malcom, L. (2012). *Confronting equity issues on campus: Implementing the equity scorecard in theory and practice*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2014). *Race without racism: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in America*. London, England: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2015). The structure of racism in color-blind, “post-racial” America. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 59, 1358–1376.
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2019). Feeling race: Theorizing the racial economy of emotions. *American Sociological Review*, 84, 1–25.
- Bragg, D. D., & Durham, B. (2012). Perspectives on access and equity in the era of (community) college completion. *Community College Review*, 40, 106–125.
- Cabrera, N. L., Franklin, J. D., & Watson, J. S. (2016). *Whiteness in higher education: The invisible missing link in diversity and racial analyses* (J-B ASHE Higher Education Series, Vol. 42). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass
- Castagno, A. E. (2014). *Educated in Whiteness: Good intentions and diversity in schools*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Ching, C. D. (2018). Confronting the equity “learning problem” through practitioner inquiry. *Review of Higher Education*, 41, 387–421.
- Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. L. (2009). *Inquiry as stance: Practitioner research for the next generation*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Delgado-Bernal, D., & Villalpando, O. (2002). An apartheid of knowledge in academia: The struggle over the “legitimate” knowledge of faculty of color. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 35, 169–180.
- DiAngelo, R. (2015). *White fragility: Why it's so hard to talk to White people about racism*. Retrieved from <https://goodmenproject.com/featured-content/white-fragility-why-its-so-hard-to-talk-to-white-people-about-racism-twlm/>
- Dowd, A. C., & Bensimon, E. M. (2015). *Engaging the “race question”: Accountability and equity in U.S. higher education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Dowd, A. C., & Liera, R. (2018). Sustaining change for racial equity through cycles of inquiry. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 26(65), 1–46.
- Ellinger, A. D., Watkins, K. E., & Marsick, V. J. (2005). Case study research methods. In R. A. Swanson & E. F. Holton III (Eds.), *Research in organizations: Foundations and methods of inquiry* (pp. 327–350). San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

- Engeström, Y. (1987). *Learning by expanding: An activity-theoretical approach to developmental research*. Helsinki, Finland: Orienta-Konsultit.
- Engeström, Y. (2008). *From teams to knots: Activity-theoretical studies of collaboration and learning at work*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Fraser, G., & Hunt, D. E. (2011). Faculty diversity and search committee training: Learning from a critical incident. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 4*, 185–198.
- Gasman, M., Kim, J., & Nguyen, T.-H. (2011). Effectively recruiting faculty of color at highly selective institutions: A school of education case study. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 4*, 212–222.
- Gonzales, L. D. (2018). Subverting and minding boundaries: The intellectual work of women. *Journal of Higher Education, 89*, 677–701.
- Gutiérrez, K. D., Engeström, Y., & Sannino, A. (2016). Expanding educational research and interventionist methodologies. *Cognition and Instruction, 34*, 275–284.
- Gusa, D. L. (2010). White institutional presence: The impact of Whiteness on campus climate. *Harvard Educational Review, 80*, 464–489.
- Harper, S. R., & Patton, L. (2007). Editors' notes. In S. Harper & L. Patton (Eds.), *Responding to the realities of race on campus* (pp. 1–5; New Directions for Student Services, No. 120). San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Kelly, B. T., Gayles, J. G., & Williams, C. D. (2017). Recruitment without retention: A critical case of Black faculty unrest. *Journal of Negro Education, 86*, 305–317.
- Kezar, A. (2013). *How colleges change: Understanding, leading, and enacting change*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Kuh, G. D., & Hall, J. E. (1993). Using cultural perspectives in student affairs. In G. D. Kuh (Ed.), *Cultural perspectives in student affairs work* (pp. 1–20). Lanham, MD: American College Personnel Association.
- Lara, L. J. (2019). Faculty of color unmask color-blind ideology in the community college faculty search process. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 43*, 702–717.
- Liera, R. (in press). Equity advocates using equity-mindedness to interrupt faculty hiring's racial structure. *Teachers College Record*.
- Liera, R., & Ching, C. (2019). Reconceptualizing “merit” and “fit”: An equity-minded approach to hiring. In A. Kezar & J. Posselt (Eds.), *Administration for social justice and equity in higher education: Critical perspectives for leadership and decision-making*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Liera, R., & Dowd, A. C. (2019). Faculty learning at boundaries to broker racial equity. *Journal of Higher Education, 90*, 462–485.
- Lee, Y.-J. (2011). More than just story-telling: Cultural-historical activity theory as an under-utilized methodology for educational change research. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 43*, 403–424.
- Matias, C. E. (2013). On the “flip” side: A teacher educator of color unveiling the dangerous minds of White teacher candidates. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 40*, 53–73.
- Matias, C. E. (2014). “And our feelings just don't feel it anymore”: Re-feeling Whiteness, resistance, and emotionality. *Understanding & Dismantling Privilege, 4*, 134–153.
- Muñoz, S. M., Basile, V., Gonzalez, J., Birmingham, D., Aragon, A., Jennings, L., & Gloeckner, G. (2017). (Counter)narratives and complexities: Critical perspectives from a university cluster hire focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion. *Journal of Critical Thought and Praxis, 6*(2), 1–21.

- Museus, S. D., Ledesma, M., & Parker, T. (2015). *Racism and racial equity in higher education* (J-B ASHE Higher Education Report Series, Vol. 42). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Museus, S. D., Ravello, J. N., & Vega, B. E. (2012). The campus racial culture: A critical race counterstory. In S. D. Museus & U. M. Jayakumar (Eds.), *Creating campus cultures: Fostering success among racially diverse student populations* (pp. 28–45). New York, NY: Routledge.
- National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education. (2016). Postsecondary education: Characteristics of postsecondary faculty. In *The condition of education 2016* (pp. 222–225; NCES 2016-144). Washington, DC: Author.
- Neumann, A., & Pallas, A. (2015). Critical policy analysis, the craft of qualitative research, and analysis of data on the Texas top 10% law. In A. M. Martinez-Aleman, B. Pusser, & E. M. Bensimon (Eds.), *Critical approaches to the study of higher education: A practical introduction* (pp. 153–173). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Ogawa, R. T., Crain, R., Loomis, M., & Ball, T. (2008). CHAT-IT: Toward conceptualizing learning in the context of formal organizations. *Educational Researcher*, 37, 83–95.
- Peña, E. V. (2012). Inquiry methods for critical consciousness and self-change in faculty. *Review of Higher Education*, 36, 69–92.
- Phillips, R. (2004). Recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty. *Planning in Higher Education*, 30, 32–39.
- Ray, V. (2019). A theory of racialized organizations. *American Sociological Review*, 84, 26–53.
- Ray, V., & Purifoy, D. (2019). The colorblind organization. In M. E. Wooten (Ed.), *Race, organizations, and the organizing process* (pp. 131–150). Bingley, England: Emerald Group.
- Reason, P. (1994). Three approaches to participative inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 324–339). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Roegman, R., Allen, D., & Hatch, T. (2017). The elusiveness of equity: Evolution of instructional rounds in a superintendents networks. *American Journal of Education*, 124, 127–159.
- Rogoff, B. (1995). Observing sociocultural activity on three planes: Participatory appropriation, guided participation, and apprenticeship. In J. V. Wertsch, P. del Rio, & A. Alvarez (Eds.), *Sociocultural studies of mind* (pp. 139–164). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Roth, W. M., & Lee, Y. J. (2007). “Vygotsky’s neglected legacy”: Cultural-historical activity theory. *Review of Educational Research*, 77, 186–232.
- Rueda, R. (2012). An activity-based approach to promoting equity in community college settings: Considering process and outcomes. In E. M. Bensimon & L. Malcom (Eds.), *Confronting equity issues on campus: Implementing the equity scorecard in theory and practice* (pp. 159–190). Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Schein, E. H. (1990). Organizational culture. *American Psychologist*, 45, 109–119.
- Schein, E. H. (1992). *Organizational culture and leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Scheurich, J. J., & Young, M. D. (1997). Coloring epistemologies: Are our research epistemologies racially biased? *Educational Researcher*, 26(4), 4–16.
- Scheurich, J. J., & Young, M. D. (2002). White racism among White faculty: From critical understanding to antiracist activism. In W. A. Smith, P. G. Altbach, &

- K. Lomotey (Eds.), *The racial crisis in American higher education* (pp. 221–242). New York: State University of New York.
- Sensoy, Ö, & DiAngelo, R. (2017). “We are all for diversity, but . . .”: How faculty hiring committees reproduce Whiteness and practical suggestions for how they can change. *Harvard Educational Review*, 87, 557–581.
- Sheridan, J. T., Fine, E., Pribbenow, C. M., Handelsman, J., & Carnes, M. (2010). Searching for excellence and diversity: Increasing the hiring of women faculty at one academic medical center. *Academic Medicine*, 85(6), 999–1007.
- Smith, D. G., Turner, C. S. V., Osei-Kofi, N., & Richards, S. (2004). Interrupting the unusual: Successful strategies for hiring diverse faculty. *Journal of Higher Education*, 75, 133–160.
- Tierney, W. G. (1988). Organizational culture in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education*, 59, 2–21.
- Tuitt, F. A., Danowitz Sagaria, M. A., & Turner, C. S. V. (2007). Signals and strategies in hiring faculty of color. In J. C. Smart (Ed.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (Vol. 22, pp. 497–535). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.
- Turner, C. S., González, J. C., & Wood, J. L. (2008). Faculty of color in academe: What 20 years of literature tell us. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 1(3), 139–168.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2016). *Developing Hispanic-serving institution program: Title V*. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/idueshsi/index.html>
- Villalpando, V., & Delgado-Bernal, D. (2002). A critical race theory analysis of barriers that impede the success of faculty of color. In W. A. Smith, P. G. Altbach, & K. Lomotey (Eds.), *The racial crisis in American higher education* (pp. 243–269). New York: State University of New York.
- Villarreal, C. D., Liera, R., & Malcom-Piqueux, L. (2019). The role of niceness in silencing racially minoritized faculty. In A. E. Castagno (Ed.), *The price of nice: How good intentions maintain educational inequity* (pp. 127–144). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Ware, L. (2000). People of color in the academy: Patterns of discrimination in faculty hiring and retention. *Boston College Third World Journal*, 20(1), 55–76. Retrieved from <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/ef73/172d85780fe5bce1ac57b2b82809af90c0ff.pdf>
- Wilder, C. (2013). *Race, slavery, and the troubled history of America's universities*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury.
- Wooten, M. E. (2019). *Race, organizations, and the organizing process*. Bingley, England: Emerald Group.
- Yamagata-Lynch, L. C. (2007). Confronting analytical dilemmas for understanding complex human interactions in design-based research from a cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) framework. *Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 16, 451–484.
- Yamagata-Lynch, L. C., & Haudenschild, M. T. (2009). Using activity systems analysis to identify inner contradictions in teacher professional development. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25, 507–517.
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Manuscript received September 5, 2018

Final revision received September 10, 2019

Accepted October 23, 2019