Evaluation and Decision Making in Higher Education

Toward Equitable Repertoires of Faculty Practice

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Contents

Evaluation and Decision Making in Higher Education: Creating Equitable Repertoires of Practice 2
Distinguishing and Relating Evaluation and Decision Making 4
  Equity 6
  Legitimacy 7
  Merit 9
Perspectives on Evaluation 10
  Functionalist Studies 11
  Critical and Power-Analytic Perspectives on Evaluation 11
  Performativity in Evaluation 12
  Constructivist Perspectives on Evaluation and Judgment 13
Frameworks for Making Decisions 14
  Rationality and Its Limits 16
  Cognitive and Social Biases 17
  Decision Making and Organizational Culture 18
A Framework for Equitable Decision-Making 19
Toward Equity-Minded Repertoires of Practice for Faculty 23
  Admitting Students 24
  Hiring Faculty 29
  Peer Review 32
  Curriculum and Instruction 37
Implications and Recommendations 42
  Admissions: Implications and Recommendations 43
  Hiring: Implications and Recommendations 43
  Peer Review: Implications and Recommendations 44

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Curriculum and Instruction: Implications and Recommendations . . . 46
Embracing Equitable Repertoires of Faculty Practice . . . 48
Attend to Your Multiple Contexts . . . 49
Employ Comprehensive, Contextualized, and Systematic Holistic Review . . . 49
Routinize Equity Checks at Each Point of the Process . . . 50
Address the Intersectional Positionalities of Those with Decision-Making Power . . . 51
Conclusion . . . 52
References . . . 52

Abstract

In this chapter, we propose evaluation and decision-making as activities which, properly reconstructed from conventional norms, can be leveraged to change who and what receives access, opportunities, recognition, and status in higher education. We critically review seminal perspectives on faculty evaluation and decision-making, advance a new framework for equitable evaluation and decision-making in higher education, and consider the relevance of this framework in four functional areas of faculty practice: admission of graduate students, hiring, peer review, and curriculum and instruction.

Keywords

Equity · Faculty · Evaluation · Decision making · Admissions · Hiring · Peer review · Curriculum

Evaluation and Decision Making in Higher Education: Creating Equitable Repertoires of Practice

Academia is, in many respects, a status economy organized less around the maximization of financial profit than the maximization of prestige (Hamann and Beljean 2017). In academic organizations, access, recognition, and legitimacy are among the most important currencies, making the activities of evaluating and then deciding who and what "merit" access, recognition, and legitimacy critical cultural processes. Cultural processes reflect, create, and maintain cultures, and in this case, evaluation and decision making tend to reproduce institutionalized inequities within academic organizations. Yet, like any form of work, they can also be leveraged for institutional change and equity. In this chapter, we propose evaluation and decision making as activities which, properly reconstructed, can be leveraged by faculty research, teaching, and service to create fundamental changes in who and what receives access, opportunities, recognition, and status.

Our goals are to critically review seminal perspectives on evaluation and decision making; advance a new framework for equitable evaluation and decision making in higher education; and consider the relevance of this framework in four functional areas of faculty practice: admissions of graduate students, faculty hiring, peer review, and curriculum and instruction. In so doing, we want to highlight three main points:

1. Faculty are gatekeepers and brokers of status within the academic opportunity structure.
2. Faculty evaluation and decision making are cultural processes that reproduce familiar academic structures, and, as such, can perpetuate inequality or foster equity.
3. Faculty evaluations lead to decisions with equity implications for knowledge production.

We acknowledge that faculty often work with administrators to make decisions, both in general and in these specific contexts, but we choose to focus on the contributions of faculty here due to the direct applicability of graduate admissions, hiring, peer review, and curriculum design to the core service, research, and teaching roles of faculty. In turn, drawing attention to faculty decision making in these domains highlights the wide-reaching opportunities that faculty have to shape a more equitable institution of higher education by building capacity for equity-minded knowledge production practices throughout academia.

We situate our analysis of faculty decision making and evaluation activities in Gutiérrez and Rogoff's (2003) conceptualization of "repertoires of practice," which urges researchers to refocus analyses of learning and development from traits of group membership to participation in the practices of cultural communities over time. Rogoff (2003) (as cited in Gutiérrez and Rogoff 2003) define a cultural community as "a coordinated group of people with some traditions and understandings in common, extending across several generations, with varied roles and practices and continual change among participants as well as transformation in the community's practice" (p. 21). Gutiérrez and Rogoff explain that by tethering static notions of identity and culture to learning (i.e., assertions that certain people learn or act in certain ways), one can lose appreciation for learning as a process of engagement with communities' cultural histories and practices over time. Implications of this static approach include a reductive approach to the study of learning and the propagation of deficit-based orientations about ethnically-minoritized students in the US schooling system. Practice in cultural communities, though greatly informed by history, evolves throughout its history. Thus, practitioners (both scholars and educators) need tools to appreciate practice as dynamic, and to rethink and reconstruct current repertoires of practice so that critical cultural engagement enables equity in all of what we do. "An important feature of focusing on repertoires is encouraging people to develop dexterity in determining which approach from their repertoire is appropriate under which circumstances" (Gutiérrez and Rogoff 2003, p. 22). This framework represents a powerful reconceptualization of how education researchers might hold space for complexity in the commonalities and variations in cultural practices observed within educational environments.

In our case, the cultural community under consideration is academe. However, our application of repertoires of practice should not be understood as conflating the experiences of faculty and racially- and/or ethnically-minoritized students. Instead, we utilize repertoires of practice to highlight processes of evaluation and decision making as cultural activities, which are central to faculty participation in academia's

knowledge production practices and which have serious implications for (in)equity. As scholars who are unequivocally invested in being stewards of equity in education, we leverage repertoires of practice as a way to emphasize opportunities for agency and transformation in the domains of admissions, hiring, peer review, and curriculum design – namely through their embedded practices of evaluation and decision making. Overall, we believe this perspective presents a novel opportunity to foreground equity and justice in the study of faculty work.

Distinguishing and Relating Evaluation and Decision Making

The root *val* is Latin for worth, health, and strength, and evaluation refers to the assignment, negotiation, and maintenance of value in social life (Beckert and Musselin 2013; Lamont 2012). Although *val* shows up in higher education discourse about values (e.g., Nash 2019) and validation theory (e.g., Rendón 1994), and there is a long history of research on decision making by higher education administrators, until recently evaluation itself has been left implicit in the research on decision making. One exception to this is theory and research on institutional logics, logics of action, and disciplinary logics which have accounted for the evaluative roots of decision making by governing boards, university publishers, and faculty committees in high-consensus disciplines (Bastedo 2009; Posselt 2015; Thornton 2004).

We contend that for the purposes of attending to equity in higher education, more explicit attention to evaluation is needed. Through both ad hoc judgments and formal systems of review, actors throughout higher education come to assessments of quality and worth that become the basis for decisions that allocate resources of various sorts. The often institutionalized criteria and processes employed in these activities – and their transparency – directly shape the equity of outcomes, making both phenomena of foundational concern for research, policy, and practice aimed at equity. We are beginning to see evidence, however, that criteria, preferences, processes, and biases are root causes of inequities in outcomes for students and faculty alike (Mitchell and Martin 2018; Posselt 2015). It may be precisely because these processes are so engrained that evaluation, in particular, has escaped scrutiny. Like many aspects of culture, our routines and grounds for judgments are embedded and rarely questioned (Lamont et al. 2014; Tierney 2008).

With respect to knowledge production, academic leaders shape organizational futures and boundaries by evaluating students and scholars directly, as well as through decisions that validate some forms of knowledge and methods of knowledge production over others (Lamont 2012). For example, student evaluations of faculty instruction are so institutionalized within many colleges' and universities' faculty reward structure that gender and racial bias in those evaluations became a tacit factor in unequal promotion rates. As we discuss below, the values reflected in practices of evaluation and validation historically have been informed by and have reinforced extant power asymmetries and master narratives developed by white men (e.g., Tate 1997; Aldridge 2006; Yosso 2006), which define criteria for what constitutes legitimate scholarship and who is entitled to create and teach it (Stanley 2007).

It is not only *what* the criteria and processes are that matter for equity in and through evaluation and decision making. Their transparency matter, too, especially as a microfoundation of stratification. Transparency determines how easily social and economic elites within an academic field[1] are able to manipulate their participation in evaluation and decision-making regimes to protect their privileged place – and thus indirectly uphold inequalities and power relations (Swartz 2016). It is common for elites to strive to stay abreast of the evaluation and decision-making apparatus for particular opportunities, in hopes of investing some of their capital – financial, human, cultural, or social – in increasing the odds that they will come out ahead (Bourdieu 1998; Khan 2012).

Evaluation and decision making are consequential, exciting phenomena to study: The stakes can be high (Sagaria 2002), they are multifaceted practices (Thornton 2004), and through them, otherwise tacit preferences and values are laid bare (Posselt 2016). Furthermore, they involve interactions between context and agency, making their outcomes unpredictable (Campbell and O'Meara 2014; Liera and Dowd 2018). From a stratification perspective, a close analysis of evaluation and decision making can draw out cultural foundations of inequities that may be otherwise difficult to see, much less to discuss. It is our contention that through greater attention to *both* the domains in which faculty have power to evaluate and make decisions and to the fundamental opportunities and threats for equity inherent in these practices, we can develop more equitable repertoires of practice for producing knowledge and training the next generation.

Broadly, we hope through this work to ignite higher education researchers' interest in empirical analyses of these critical cognitive and sociocultural processes as they relate to equity and through knowledge production practices in the professoriate. To that end, we advance a power-analytic framework through which scholars can locate, relate, and "map" common aspects of evaluation and decision making that pose threats and opportunities for equity. These include, as we will discuss in greater detail below, mindfully considering the equity implications of evaluation and decision-making criteria and processes; maintaining awareness of the interlocking threats and opportunities to equity posed by social, political, and cultural forces (within which their judgment is situated); and enacting agency individually and collectively. By routinizing activities such as these within the repertoires of practices used in domains of work where we allocate opportunities and resources, evaluation and decision making can contribute to more equitable work and outcomes.

The chapter is organized as follows: Following definitions of key concepts, we review established frameworks for evaluation and for decision making. Then, to inform the development of new scholarship in this area, we introduce a framework for equitable decision making that builds on prior approaches while centering power, attending to the multiple contexts in which judgments are made, and acknowledging

[1]Fields are "arenas of production, circulation, and appropriation and exchange of goods, services, knowledge, or status, and the competitive positions held by actors in their struggle to accumulate, exchange, and monopolize different kinds of power resources" (Oxford 2019).

inherent opportunities and threats to equity that accompany evaluation and decision making. We next illustrate the relevance of this framework and its core components (i.e., criteria, process, outcomes) through discussions of empirical research in four domains of faculty work in which evaluation is nested within decision making: admissions, hiring, peer review, and curriculum design. Corresponding roughly to service, research, and teaching components of faculty work, it is our hope with this chapter to demonstrate how pervasive evaluation and decision making are in scholarly life – and thus, to highlight the necessity of accounting for and investigating them as we develop research agendas about work in higher education's academic core. The chapter will close with recommendations for ongoing theoretical development as well as empirical opportunities we see. We begin by elaborating definitions for three key concepts that will recur throughout this chapter: equity, legitimacy, and merit.

Equity

We define equity as a social justice imperative that prioritizes institutional responsibility for transforming organizational practices, policies, and culture to support equality of educational outcomes, in particular by race, gender, and socioeconomic status (Bailyn 2003; Bauman et al. 2005; Bensimon 2005; Dowd and Bensimon 2015; Liera and Dowd 2018; Museus et al. 2015). As such, equity is not merely a possible outcome of decision making reached by achieving parity. Rather, equity may be embedded in evaluation and decision-making processes through mechanisms such as institutionalizing perspectives, lived experiences, and knowledge claims from racially minoritized and otherwise marginalized groups. Bensimon (2012) argues that in order to achieve racial equity in higher education, practitioners must develop equity-mindedness, which she identifies as positive race-consciousness, evidence-based awareness that race-neutral practices can disadvantage racially minoritized students and perpetuate institutional racism – regardless of practitioners' individual racial attitudes. Equity-mindedness demands a willingness to take responsibility for eliminating inequities. Thus, equity-mindedness more broadly suggests commitment to transformational changes that redress intersecting forms of systemic oppression and privilege in the institution of higher education in order to produce lasting, systemic equity.

Ameliorating inequity requires institutional change, which will necessarily entail more power-conscious evaluation and decision-making practices from faculty. The notions of equity and equity-mindedness described above inform our approach to reconsidering decision making in the core scholarly practices of research, teaching, and service (Bauman et al. 2005; Bensimon 2005; Dowd and Bensimon 2015). By examining the threats to equity in decisions and evaluations embedded in these core faculty functions, the use of specific criteria and processes can be thought of as checkpoints – that is, key opportunities for making decisions in the service of equity. As our framework for equity in decision making will explore, faculty have the opportunity to enact racial and gender equity through

admissions, hiring, curriculum and instruction, and peer review by systematically reframing options, contextualizing preferences and judgments, and attending to intersectional power dynamics.

Legitimacy

At the root of the decisions faculty make is legitimacy, defined by Tyler (2006) as:

> . . .a psychological property of an authority, institution, or social arrangement that leads those connected to it to believe that it is appropriate, proper, and just. Because of legitimacy, people feel that they ought to defer to decisions and rules, following them voluntarily out of obligation rather than out of fear of punishment or anticipation of reward (p. 375).

This definition highlights the social construction of legitimacy and the power it holds over those who defer to its rules. For such individuals and organizations, conceptions of legitimacy frame evaluation and decision making by shaping what options and decisions are deemed desirable. Legitimacy is also central to questions about the equity in and through decision making and evaluation, for the authority that comes with decision-making power often motivates deference to the status quo – potentially reifying inequitable practices or power structures (Tyler 2006). Empirical research on legitimacy in academia reveals it enacted as a cultural resource (Gonzales and Núñez 2014), which in turn shapes the preferences of people, institutions, and organizations who make decisions. For example, enacting specific conceptions of legitimacy shapes academia and its knowledge production functions by influencing what gets published and taught and who gets selected via admissions and hiring. Across the academy, legitimacy is a priceless currency.

Legitimacy shapes external behaviors of people and organizations through the internalization of norms into people's cognitive schemas.[2] These schemas matter deeply for behavior and decision making (Hoffman 1977; Tyler 2006). Those seeking legitimacy are likely to adhere closely to established norms – that is, they are likely to model their own behavior on the behavior of people whom they view as legitimate (Gonzales 2013). Considering the grounds for such judgments and behaviors among professors Gonzales and Terosky (2016), in referencing Deephouse and Suchman (2008), identified four legitimacy schemas:

1. *Cognitive:* Individual sensemaking about what is or is not acceptable
2. *Technical:* Official or legal approval from formal entities

[2]A related concept is legitimation, defined as the process of being accepted or deemed worthy according to existing norms and placed within a framework through which things are viewed as right (Tyler 2006). As a central and ongoing cultural activity, legitimation shapes both the cognitive and sociocultural functions of faculty, departments, and institutions (Gonzales 2013; Gonzales and Terosky 2016).

3. *Normative:* Legitimacy conferred based on morals, values, and taken-for-granted expectations
4. *Professional:* Endorsement from a professional community that behavior is relevant within professional boundaries

Among these, Gonzales and Terosky (2016) argued professors' notions of legitimacy reflect professional and normative schemas. Across institutional types, faculty conceptualize professional legitimacy in terms of their scholarship and in reference to institutional type/status, while work ethic is a form of normative legitimacy (Gonzales and Terosky 2016).

Gatekeeping decisions such as admissions, hiring, tenure, and promotion manifest the power of professional schemas for legitimacy, and Posselt (2015) illustrated how professors within high-consensus (i.e., strong paradigm) fields like economics, philosophy, and physics used the shared values and language of their disciplines to rationalize PhD admissions decisions to one another – decisions that outsiders might have thought to be discriminatory. In relying on legitimated disciplinary logics, faculty viewed their admissions decisions as legitimate and fair, even when decisions resulted in gender and racial inequities. Additionally, promotion and tenure processes tend to reward faculty whose work fits established, legitimated norms about the number of publications, and the prestige of journals where work is published (Delgado Bernal and Villalpando 2002). Other scholars have demonstrated how narrowly defined ideas of scholarly legitimacy may discount research that is applied or interdisciplinary (Gonzales and Rincones 2012), and faculty from departments and institutions that are viewed as less prestigious (Bell and Chong 2010). Prevailing conceptions of legitimacy thus often drive faculty aspirations and everyday work, and they both arise from and are reinforced in socialization processes (Gonzales and Terosky 2016).

When systems, processes, or institutions are viewed as legitimate, people are more likely to interpret and act in ways that preserve those existing conditions and norms. While legitimacy can provide stability and offer examples to follow or model, it may also reinforce marginalization. Delgado Bernal and Villalpando (2002) detailed the ways knowledge and contributions from faculty of color were constructed as illegitimate in relation to Eurocentric epistemologies exemplified in research and teaching. Similarly, Gonzales and Núñez (2014) argue that the ranking regime of higher education, which is a system of interrelated organizations that set criteria for what is deemed valuable in higher education and knowledge production, creates a hierarchy of value based on narrow criteria deemed legitimate by people whom that same system have deemed legitimate. In addition to standardizing and commodifying faculty work, this narrow regime preserves a highly individualistic and homogenized professoriate that reproduces Western legacies and ideologies (Gonzales and Núñez 2014). Thus, the narrow terms for legitimacy in many academic processes systematically devalue racially minoritized educators' contributions.

Merit

An underlying logic facilitating determinations of legitimacy in higher education – especially in hiring, admissions, and other human resource decisions – is merit. In principle, merit refers to the notion that people deserve social rewards based on individual effort, talents, and achievements rather than other factors, especially ascriptive identities (Alon and Tienda 2007). Merit and the system that purports to rewards it, meritocracy, are prevalent tropes undergirding the United States' assumed identity as the "land of opportunity." Karabel (2006, p. 543) writes, "The legitimacy of the American social order depended in good part on the public's confidence that the pathways to success provided by the nation's leading universities were open to individuals from all walks of life."

In practice, perceptions of merit are manifested in the individual qualities and evaluation factors that are most intensely weighted, are most frequently employed, and/or that serve as the basis for a preference when comparing similar applicants. Implicit in an argument for meritocracy is an assumption of equal opportunity that everyone has a chance to prove their talent and effort in equitable ways and be rewarded accordingly. From this perspective, notions of merit are positioned as uncontested and measurable, and outcomes are understood to be fair and unbiased, even as people who did not have equal opportunities tend to be compared with each other.

In practice, however, merit for access to selective educational settings is socially constructed. Discussing the socially constructed scripts of merit that faculty use to make sense of prospective students, Posselt (2016, p. 7) writes, "Merit is always a conditional, not an absolute, assessment." Scholars have critically examined conceptions of merit with regard to the policies, processes, and outcomes of selective admissions (e.g., Contreras 2005; Guinier 2015; Liu 2011; Posselt 2016; Stevens 2007), selection for academic positions (e.g., Lamont 2009; Smith 2015), and participation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (e.g., Carter et al. 2019). While a system of meritocracy purports to privilege fairness and equality, it can ironically legitimize stratification (Alvarado 2010; Littler 2017). Liu (2011) writes,

> A troubling effect of an uncritical view of meritocracy is that by not acknowledging there are greater structural social inequalities at play, there may be a tendency to view students who do not reach higher levels of educational attainment as having failed on their own terms (p. 384).

Ideologies of merit cloak the inequities our system creates. The "myth of meritocracy" has thus been used to justify the negative evaluations and exclusion of people deemed not desirable enough to enter academe, furthering their marginalization. Therefore, it is vital that we do not understand merit as objective and fixed, but rather socially constructed and flexible to resistance.

Perspectives on Evaluation

To summarize key points made thus far, evaluation is a foundation of decision making that involves assignment of value through shared interpretive schemes and scripts about what should count as legitimate or meritorious. These schemas, in academia, enable an evaluator to sort people, scholarship, or academic organizations and arrange them into hierarchies of value which can be used to justify decisions that distribute scarce opportunities and resources. If we want to create more equitable outcomes in higher education, we need decision-making systems in which conceptions of legitimacy and merit do not reinforce extant power relations by applying criteria and processes that systematically privilege already advantaged actors, organizations, and knowledge.

With these foundations outlined, we move now to a closer review of how scholars have analyzed evaluation, and then we will do the same with decision making. Lamont et al. (2014) propose that evaluation, like other processes that reflect and create culture (e.g., rationalization, identification, classification, racialization, standardization), connects fundamental microcognitive processes with macro-level material, place-based, and symbolic inequalities that quantitative methods can measure. Evaluation inherently stratifies; therefore, “Ignoring [evaluation] blinds us to crucial pathways that contribute to the production and reproduction of inequality” (Lamont et al. p. 9). However, being contingent in part on human agency, “The outcomes of such processes are open-ended or uncertain, as opposed to always resulting in exploitation, exclusion, or isolation,” (p. 14) as is the case in the material, symbolic, and place-based dimensions of inequality.

Every day within our colleges and universities, actors are caught up in two general types of evaluation – ad hoc judgments and formal review systems – which individually and together shape how symbolic and material resources like access, respect, opportunities, and honors are distributed. Whereas we are constantly confronted with material that is subject to ad hoc judgment, formal systems of review are bureaucratic in nature – delegated, coordinated, and systematized evaluation – enabling batch review of many people or their work. Both types warrant attention and are interrelated, in that ad hoc judgments often precede – and thus constrain – how formal review is carried out. Whether an email from a prospective student warrants immediate action, the quality of writing in a conference proposal or journal manuscript, the appropriateness of a visiting scholar’s language and self-presentation, or the impressiveness of a new journal article relative to readings on a current syllabus – all of these and many more – are informal, ad hoc evaluations. Both official processes and impressions, however, are subject to learned instincts and inherited preferences that include implicit biases and networks that are often more closed than open.

Scholars have applied several analytic lenses to the study of academic evaluation (Hamann and Beljean 2017). Employed individually or in combination, their underlying assumptions attune the researcher’s attention to specific dimensions of evaluation, and they carry differing implications for what it means to improve systems of evaluation and/or put to work the power of evaluation toward more equitable

academic outcomes. Here, we briefly review functionalist, power-analytic/critical, performativity, and constructivist perspectives on evaluation (Hamann & Beljean 2017).

Functionalist Studies

Studies that approach evaluation with an implicitly or explicitly *functionalist* lens tend to focus on how evaluations and the criteria that inform fulfill specific purposes, such as fairness, validity, and reliability. For example, motivating decades of research into standardized test scores' predictive validity (e.g., Cureton et al. 1949; Kuncel et al. 2001; Lannholm 1968; Miller et al. 2019) is an assumption that when determining who should be admitted to selective colleges and graduate or professional degree programs, selection criteria that are more predictive of later educational outcomes are inherently preferable to those with weak validity. Functionalist studies have also examined the adequacy of syllabi in achieving specific learning outcomes (Stanny et al. 2015) and the fairness of evaluation criteria relative to the goals of various admissions systems (Zwick 2017).

Critical and Power-Analytic Perspectives on Evaluation

Studies of evaluation undertaken with a *critical/power analytic* perspective draw attention to the ways that engrained evaluation criteria or processes tends to reinforce power asymmetries generally, or unequal educational and professional outcomes specifically. There is a rich tradition of this type of research in higher education, highlighting how evaluation doubles as discrimination. Evaluators' judgments are rarely as socially pure as they think, and typically involve judgments directly or indirectly associated with ascriptive characteristics. Such discrimination occurs consciously and unconsciously, through personal biases, through practices that stratify, and through the application of more strict scrutiny to applicants from minoritized backgrounds. Eighty percent of research participants judging a Latinx candidate and 75% of those judging a White woman for positions in higher education administration cited their doctoral institution as very important, but only 55% of those evaluating a White man declared it very important (Haro 1995, p. 196). Similarly, Sagaria (2002) found equitable outcomes of selection across race and gender, but found that Black women applying for administrative positions in universities were subjected to "filters" (i.e., sets of criteria) that White men and women were not. We also know from work in this vein, for example, that the review criteria for tenure and promotion diminish the importance of service work, which women – and especially women of color – are disproportionately expected to fulfill (Tierney and Bensimon 1996). In both undergraduate and graduate admissions, conceptions of merit and criteria for operationalizing it in decision-making processes privilege applicants from groups who are already overrepresented (Karabel 2005; Posselt 2016; Posselt et al. 2012; Wechsler 2017). Faculty merit pay is often awarded on

the basis of teaching evaluations, although research consistently documents that students more harshly judge Latinx, African American, and women professors relative to those who are white and/or male (Anderson and Smith 2005; Boring 2017; MacNell et al. 2015; Storage et al. 2016). Evaluations of collegiality are similarly laced with racial and/or gender bias (June 2017). In our reviews below of research on admissions, hiring, peer review, and curriculum and instructional design, many more studies from a critical/power analytic perspective will be discussed.

Performativity in Evaluation

A *performativity* perspective highlights how evaluations trigger people and organizations to act in ways that will ensure a positive evaluation. Whether it is to save face, seek status, or uphold accountability standards, people and groups that want to be viewed positively will enact behaviors that align with known standards of performance. If a team of scholars knows the criteria that their proposal for a grant will be subjected to, they are more likely to craft a proposal that meets those criteria. If a chemistry department knows that accreditation by the American Chemical Society demands particular curriculum offerings or student learning outcomes, they will dedicate resources to promoting those outcomes. Organizational actors may not themselves think of such behavior as performance, but sociocultural analysts (such as those influenced by Goffman's dramaturgical tradition) are quick to observe the parallels.

The more that an evaluation triggers behaviors that a person or organization might not have otherwise adopted, the more it can be viewed from a performativity lens. Graduate students come to adopt a scholarly identity in part by learning to play the role of scholar, for example, picking up in their day-to-day lives the behaviors, work habits, language, and intellectual styles they perceive to be rewarded. Involuntary evaluation of organizations can "cause symbolic rather than substantive reactions, such as the implementation of superficial changes at the periphery of organizations, public pronouncements of ranking goals, or the formation of committees to create the appearance of taking action" (Sauder and Espeland 2009, p. 64). However, there are some situations in which what starts as performative behavior (motivated by an to be evaluated positively) becomes internalized over time as the shared standard for legitimate behavior Field-wide, isomorphic behaviors among scholars and higher education institutions that align with neoliberal notions of status, productivity, and efficiency offer one such case (Espeland and Sauder 2007). More specifically, it has been well documented that the rise of ranking systems has had a profound effect on institutional behavior across 4-year institutions, as well as for graduate and professional degree programs. Writing about the power of ranking systems to discipline law schools' behavior field-wide, Sauder and Espeland (2009) write,

> Rankings reflect what is happening not only at one's own school but also every other school in relation to one's own. Rankings are a zero-sum technology; a school's success comes at the expense of others and small differences matter (p. 73).

In this environment, the mere act of striving for status is legitimated as a worthy pursuit and compromises to equity are frequently overlooked or swept under the rug. For example, amid both declining state appropriations and a push to maintain status, public flagship institutions have come to prioritize enrollment of out-of-state students (who contribute more in tuition revenue and are more likely to have the high standardized test scores that ranking algorithms weigh) at the expense of in-state racially minoritized students (Jaquette et al. 2016). And in a striving Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), Gonzales (2013) found that faculty themselves had come to rely upon – and loathe – the evaluative criteria for Tier One status that state legislators crafted to compare universities and which administrators held up as their guide to make decisions. In sum, research from the performativity perspective highlights how awareness that a person is being evaluated disciplines both higher education institutions and actors within them to enacting valued behaviors.

Constructivist Perspectives on Evaluation and Judgment

A fourth framework that has been used to look at academic evaluation can be described as *constructivist*, and it emphasizes how evaluation reflects, creates, and maintains cultural values. We have already introduced how evaluations of academic merit are, in principle, the basis for access and advancement in academia, but that in practice, merit is socially constructed and an institutionalized compromise across a community's varied values. A rich set of book-length studies have captured these dynamics. Postdoctoral fellowship review follows "disciplinary styles" (Lamont 2009) and doctoral admissions in strong-paradigm fields like economics, philosophy, and physics is shaped by "disciplinary logics" (Posselt 2015, 2016). Editorial judgments in peer review depend upon the "intellectual milieu" in a community at a given point in time (Hirschauer 2010), while academic book publishing is increasingly driven not by intellectual contributions but rather by "market logics" (Powell 1985). These works and others portray the outcomes of evaluation as a result of culturally situated judgment processes rooted in contextual, sociocultural forces (Boltanski et al. 2006). Actors responsible for executing evaluations may or may not even be entirely aware of the criteria, because they are so rooted in established ways of knowing.

Viewing evaluation as culturally situated judgment highlights contexts and their cultures, and Boltanski and Thevenot (2000) used this perspective to challenge the Bourdieuian claim that a single or unitary hierarchy of cultural values drives judgment. Rather, they argued, constraints born of sociocultural contexts shape what counts as legitimate in the "pursuit of a justified agreement" (Boltanski and Thevenot 2000, p. 208). Decision makers perceive and may try to account for these constraints, but rarely do they actually render them explicit, deferring instead to "common higher principles that give meaning to their action" (Boltanski and Thevenot 2000, p. 211). As such, while individuals may perceive different interests or opinions according to one context (e.g., their individual identities), they can often still find compromise through shared interests related to another (e.g., professional

norms). This process, they claim, plays a central role in organizational life: "The pursuit of compromise that allows the tensions between several orders to be overcome is at the heart of the functioning of organizations" (p. 226). Collective evaluations of merit, from this angle, represent an organizational challenge and a compromise across the multiple evaluative contexts (e.g., discipline, department, and self) to which the decision maker is accountable, which each carry multiple interests. In the context of this complexity, judgments do not come about through application of a single hierarchy of values, preferences, and priorities, but rather a heterarchy, or multiple hierarchies.

In many cases, one can peel back the findings of evaluation research undertaken from a functionalist, power analytic, or performativity perspectives (Hamann and Beljean 2017) to reveal underlying cultural assumptions and values that motivate specific criteria or aspects of the decision-making process. For example, what manifested in a critically-oriented study of a faculty search committee as avoidance in acknowledging or confronting racialized interactions, for example, was ultimately traced back to the community's cultural priority to perform "niceness," and this standard was deeply rooted in the university's Protestant heritage and identity (Villarreal et al. 2019). The foundational role of culture means that if we want to make systems of evaluation more equitable, we need to attend both to the information and criteria in use as well as how actors make sense of it. A constructivist lens on academic evaluation thus provides a strong foundation that is consonant with the other perspectives. Constructivist studies recognize the contexts in which judgment is situated, and provide grounds for scholars to articulate embedded assumptions about what or who counts as legitimate, excellent, or otherwise meritorious. These assumptions inform the conduct and outcomes of judgments, which carry forward as normative fodder for decisions. With these perspectives in mind, we therefore turn now to reviewing established frameworks for decision making (Table 1).

Frameworks for Making Decisions

Decisions necessarily involve, but are more complex than, their embedded evaluations. Having distinguished among some common analytic perspectives on evaluation, we now broaden the frame out to decision making before proposing an equity-minded approach to combining evaluation and decision making. Ideas about how to draw from one's evaluations to make decisions are as old as our most ancient writings about politics and power. The idea of deliberative democracy, for example, came into being in Athens in the fifth century B.C. It proposes that decisions should be made by as many people as will be affected by the outcomes, through a process that requires voters to articulate reasons for their preferences. In so doing, they are forced to debate the merits and drawbacks of various options, which both results in better decisions and compels an acknowledgment of the value propositions that underlie possible actions (Gutmann and Thompson 2009). This political view of decision making has seen a resurgence in recent decades, including in education. However, other frameworks for analyzing and understanding decision making in

Table 1 Perspectives on academic evaluation

	Functionalist	Critical and power-analytic	Performativity	Constructivist
Main focus	Evaluation and the criteria that inform evaluation fulfill specific purposes, such as fairness, validity, and reliability	Evaluation criteria or processes tend to reinforce power asymmetries generally, or unequal educational and professional outcomes	Evaluations can trigger behaviors to preserve status or meet accountability standards. In such cases, evaluations prompt symbolic reactions rather than substantive change	Evaluation reflects, creates, and maintains cultural values and ways of knowing within a given community
Assumptions for practice	Assumes that evaluations should proceed with criteria that are associated with or directly predictive of success, that are reliably so across different populations, and that are fair	Assumes that evaluators' judgments are rarely as unbiased as they think, and therefore should ensure that criteria applied do not directly or indirectly undermine access, opportunities, or status for people and organizations from minoritized backgrounds	Assumes that people and organizations will change what they do to receive a positive evaluation, and therefore that evaluative regimes can be imposed to bring about specific behaviors or outcomes	Assumes that actors responsible for evaluations may not be aware of the criteria used, because they are rooted in taken for granted shared values and aversions
Implications for equity	Weak implications for equity, except insofar as the fairness, reliability, or validity of criteria are also assessed with an eye to the distribution of those criteria across groups with differing power	Strong implications for equity, in providing means of examining how judgment, criteria, processes, and outcomes alike may be subject to social and cognitive biases. Facially neutral views of merit, for example, may not be race neutral in impact	Indirect implications for equity, in that performative behaviors stemming from reaction to evaluation may contribute to an internalization and institutionalization of a logic of legitimate behavior focused on status over equity	Embedded assumptions found in cultural values about what or who counts as legitimate, excellent, or meritorious may impact evaluations at an unconscious level

higher education contexts have emerged from other academic disciplines. We review a sample of those frameworks in the following sections to highlight how the. Rational choice and bounded rationality originated in economics and organizational sociology, while psychology and behavioral economics have advanced the study of cognitive and social biases, and anthropologists have provided useful insights about cultural dimensions of making decisions.

Rationality and Its Limits

Sociologist Max Weber (1978) argued for the technical superiority of bureaucratic administration as a means of making decisions, for the usual collegiate model's compulsion to create compromises among competing interests slows down the process and threatens the reliability and precision of decision making. The appearance of rationality represented in procedural rules and standard operating practices deployed under a bureaucratic model, by contrast, ensure that personal interests are downplayed relative to the efficient, precision, rapid implementation of a process that, while possessing an element of the arbitrary, will ensure certain standards are consistently upheld (Weber 1978; Wilson 1989). In what is idealized as a "rational" process, the notion is that bureaucratic systems of review yield greater predictability and alignment with core organizational objectives. This perspective has been critiqued from a few angles. For one, we see a surprising lack of predictability or consistency – on a coin whose flip side is a surprising degree of idiosyncrasy – in observations of even the most bureaucratic higher education and other organizational contexts. Another critique, expressed by Jurgen Habermas, emphasizes that the interest in technical rationality operates as an ideological mask over the inherently value-based nature of decision making. Together, these critiques highlight that the inherent unpredictability and value basis of bureaucratic decision making challenge both the common sense view of bureaucratic superiority and the possibility of rationality.

Bounded rationality offered a corrective to the idealized view that decisions are made through a rational sequence of steps in which an actor articulates goals, decision criteria, and alternatives, then analyzes the situation and makes a decision that will maximize benefits and minimize costs. Through studies in mostly corporate environments, James March (1994) outlined two common decision-making logics, noting most people's decisions are not as rational as the prevailing view suggests. Under the *logic of consequences,* actors make decisions based on analyses of the consequences likely to follow specific alternatives. They think not only about the benefits and drawbacks of possible choices, but also the expected consequences that are likely to come with those choices. The trouble is, we can never know exactly what those consequences will be in reality; therefore, we are acting on imperfect information and the decision is never as rational as it may look. The *logic of appropriateness* offers an alternative framework. It asserts that individuals make decisions by assessing their identities, relevant rules or norms associated with their identities, and the appropriateness of various options given these identities and rules.

For example, when faced with the decision of whether or not to sanction a high-performing employee for persistent tardiness, a supervisor might think about their own social identities, the norms for timeliness that accompany their identities, and whether or not those norms imply tardiness constitutes a serious breach of performance. This view recognizes that real people with personal histories and cultures are involved in decision making, and that few people escape such considerations when making decisions.

Neither classic rational choice nor bounded rationality, however, offer direct ways of understanding how and why inequities so frequently arise from the decisions that individuals and organizations make. The failure of these theories to attend to power and privilege – both in the conduct and impact of decision making – may help explain why so many leaders trained in universities teaching these established models go on to make decisions that reproduce social inequities. Higher education administrators striving to enact equity in their decisions can do better than these perspectives by considering other frameworks.

Cognitive and Social Biases

Studying the forms and effects of bias, as well as strategies to mitigate it, has advanced the scholarship of decision making greatly. Human attention and memory are finite; therefore, humans seek out schemas that reduce complexity to forms that are easier to interpret (Massey 2007). With this reduction, however, emerges bias, defined most simply as systematic error. Scholars in behavioral economics (e.g., Kahneman 2011; Milkman et al. 2015), decision theory (e.g., March 1994), and social psychology (e.g., Correll et al. 2007) alike have identified and examined the impact of bias. Recent higher education scholarship has examined cognitive biases and social biases, too. For example, correspondence bias (that is, attributing decisions to an individual's personality rather than the situation in which they made the decision) has been studied with respect to both college admissions and grade assignment/inflation (Bastedo and Bowman 2017; Moore et al. 2010). A novel experiment by Bastedo and Bowman (2017) found that admissions decisions makers selected higher proportions of low SES students when provided with additional information about applicants' high school context. Findings showed that lower SES students are more likely to be admitted when admission officers take into account the resources available to students via their high schools.

Social biases can systematically advantage or disadvantage specific groups. Sometimes this takes place directly (i.e., via valuation associated with a status group itself), other times via qualities (e.g., warmth, competence, risk) that have come to be associated with specific social groups (Correll et al. 2007; Fiske et al. 2002; Milkman et al. 2015). The concepts of implicit and explicit social bias thus have important implications for improving decision making for equity. Both types are predicated on the concept of preferences. Explicit biases are conscious, intentional expressions of preference that communicate attitudes or stereotypes about groups or individuals. Implicit biases, on the other hand, are unconscious

preferences reflecting attitudes or stereotypes. The latter have received considerable attention in recent years by scholars looking at higher education, for we can see their effects everywhere. Higher education scholars have uncovered effects of implicit bias in faculty email responses (Milkman et al. 2015), evaluations of resumes (Moss-Racusin 2012), conference reviews (Roberts et al. 2016), online course evaluations (MacNell et al. 2015), and more. For example, Katherine Milkman and her colleagues sent out 6500 emails to faculty members in 89 universities that implied the sender was a prospective PhD student requesting a short conversation to discuss the possibility of research together in a PhD program. They kept the body of the message identical, varying only the name at the bottom of the email by gender and race. The results showed faculty responding more frequently and more promptly to messages whose senders' names suggested they were men and who were White, relative to messages whose senders' names implied they were women, Black, Chinese, and/or Indian. The results were most pronounced in private universities (Milkman et al. 2015)

Identifying the presence of such biases – which maintain their power largely through their invisibility – is the first step to checking and undermining them. Harvard University's Project Implicit has administered millions of implicit association tests on topics ranging from religion, to race, to body size, and many others. Evidence is quite mixed about the efficacy of trainings and workshops to mitigate the effects of implicit bias in decision making, but suggests a few patterns: First, there must be active interaction and/or discussion about bias in order to normalize it and reduce the defensiveness and stigma that often accompany it. Second, training cannot take place on a single day, but rather should be ongoing to reduce deeply ingrained, habitual bias. Finally, participants should discuss and redress not only personal judgments that may be biased, but the ways in which bias is institutionalized into decision-making processes through typical criteria and everyday practices. For example, letters of recommendation often reflect the gender biases of their authors, making it incumbent upon those who review them to become acquainted with typical manifestations of bias in such letters (Trix and Psenka 2003). Left unchecked, such social biases are pernicious, in that they can become embedded in the culture and therefore invisible to members. We turn to discussing the role of culture in decision making next.

Decision Making and Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is "the system of values, symbols, and shared meanings of a group including the embodiment of these values, symbols, and meaning into material objects and ritualized practices" (Corbally and Sergiovanni 1986, p. viii). As an ever-present facet of organizational life that shapes the interpretations – and thus actions – of its members, culture and subcultures shape decision making of all parties associated with higher education: students' choices of where to enroll, professors' syllabi and research design decisions, trustees' policy and budget votes, and more.

This view regards the organization at least as much an “interpretive undertaking than a rationalized structure with clear decision-making processes” (Tierney 2008).

Schein (1990) posits that organizational culture is defined by patterns of underlying assumptions that have developed over time and become embedded in the values and behaviors of members. Under this framework, these assumptions are regarded as truths about the world – regardless of their evidentiary basis – and inform everything from cultural values to members’ decision-making behavior. According to Schein (1990), culture is revealed and reproduced in members’ and leaders’ informal, tacit judgments and formal, observed decision-making behaviors. Schein (2010) argued that leaders have particular influence in transmitting and embedding culture through decisions that include role modeling; allocating resources; and selecting, recruiting, and retaining members. At the core of these primary mechanisms of transmitting and embedding culture, underlying assumptions and espoused values define what should be prioritized when making decisions.

Within higher education, shared assumptions and values are rooted in an institutionalized ranking regime that enforces a hierarchy of institutions on the premise of national rankings conflating merit and legitimacy with prestige (Gonzales and Núñez 2014). Additionally, of the six articulated cultures of academia defined by Berquist and Pawlak (2007), a collegial culture privileges being nice over voicing concerns, and a study of faculty hiring saw concerns about equity (Villarreal et al. 2019). At the organizational level, this ranking regime and culture of collegiality manifests in ways that value rankings and competition as outcomes above student learning. Using Schein’s interpretation of organizational culture, to prioritize rankings can itself be embedded and transmitted as a cultural value, for it is what university leaders pay attention to when allocating resources and selecting and rewarding members.

Although theorists of organizational culture have not always acknowledged it, through actors’ cultural interpretations, and subsequent actions and material consequences, people embed power and privilege in decision making and the organization. Some theories of organizational culture speak in only general ways about power, rather than highlighting how specific systems of oppression or domination influence and intersect when actors interpret their contexts and make decisions. Others acknowledge how cultural values, norms, and beliefs limit opportunity or resources to minoritized groups, but in taking a constructivist stance, do not critically interrogate research participants’ ways of knowing, ways of evaluating, or ways of making decisions. We propose the necessity of attending more explicitly to power in assessing how evaluation and decision making can contribute to equitable repertoires of faculty practice (Table 2).

A Framework for Equitable Decision-Making

From the evolution of rational choice and bounded rationality theories, we can appreciate that decisions are never purely “rational,” that values associated with content and process motivated them, and that individual decision makers’ conceptions of consequences and/or their identities compel norms that manifest as priorities

Table 2 Frameworks for decision making

	Rational choice and bounded rationality	Cognitive and social biases	Organizational culture
Disciplinary origins	Economics; sociology; organizational theory	Psychology; behavioral economics	Anthropology; organizational theory
What is it?	In what is idealized as a "rational" process, the notion that bureaucratic systems of review yield greater predictability and alignment with core organizational objectives. An actor articulates goals, decision criteria, and alternatives, then analyzes the situation and makes a decision that will maximize benefits and minimize costs	Cognitive biases are systematic errors made during decision-making processes when humans seek out schemas that reduce complexity to more easily interpret incoming information. Social biases systematically advantage and disadvantage specific groups either explicitly or implicitly	Organizational culture is a system of values, symbols, and shared meanings of a group and how they are embodied in tangible and symbolic ways and practices
Challenges to equity	Does not offer direct ways of understanding how and why inequities so frequently arise from the decisions that individuals and organizations make. Do not attend to power and privilege in the conduct and impact of decision making	Left unchecked, social biases can become embedded in the culture – invisible and institutionalized. Social biases based on stereotypes can then influence perceptions of individuals from minoritized groups, thus impacting the decisions made	Most work on decision making from an organizational culture perspective lacks sensitivity to issues of power within an organization, and the additional social contexts in which organizations are situated

and preferences. Cognitive and social biases – both implicit and explicit – are predictable types of deviation from pure rationality that have received considerable research and theorizing of their own; however, we observe that rarely has this scholarship accounted for the contexts of bias. Biases can be misconstrued as solely individual-level problems unless one recognizes that societal, policy, and organizational contexts in which one has been socialized propagate these biases. Indeed, without active attention, biased conceptions of merit and legitimacy can become engrained as normal and expected within social contexts – perpetuating unequal outcomes through the very processes of decision making that could also be used to interrupt those biases. To advance the study of evaluation and decision making in higher education so that these activities enable faculty toward more equitable repertoires of practice, we propose the following tenets:

1. Evaluation is the core of decision making. It is conceptually distinct from, but deeply embedded in, decision-making processes.

2. Decision-making contexts provide a heterarchy of priorities and preferences that drive the evaluative core of criteria, processes, and outcomes.
3. Evidence of bias – both individual and structural – is expected and endemic, given the systems of power into which decision makers are socialized and the conditions under which evaluation and decision making typically occur.
4. Racialized and gendered conceptions of merit and legitimacy are reinforced by the social contexts and organizational cultures within which evaluation and decision making occur.
5. Equity checkpoints throughout decision making can routinize attention to bias.
6. Evaluation and decision making are central processes in the ongoing creation of academia as a cultural community. Therefore, creating equitable repertoires of practice in these areas represents an opportunity to advance equity in higher education as an institution.

We portray selected elements of this framework for equitable decision making (Fig. 1). In developing our framework for a higher education audience, **we place evaluation at the center, recognizing it as the core of decision making**. Next, across the varied perspectives on decision making, we determined that decisions are at their simplest, a procedure in which evaluation criteria are applied to deliberative

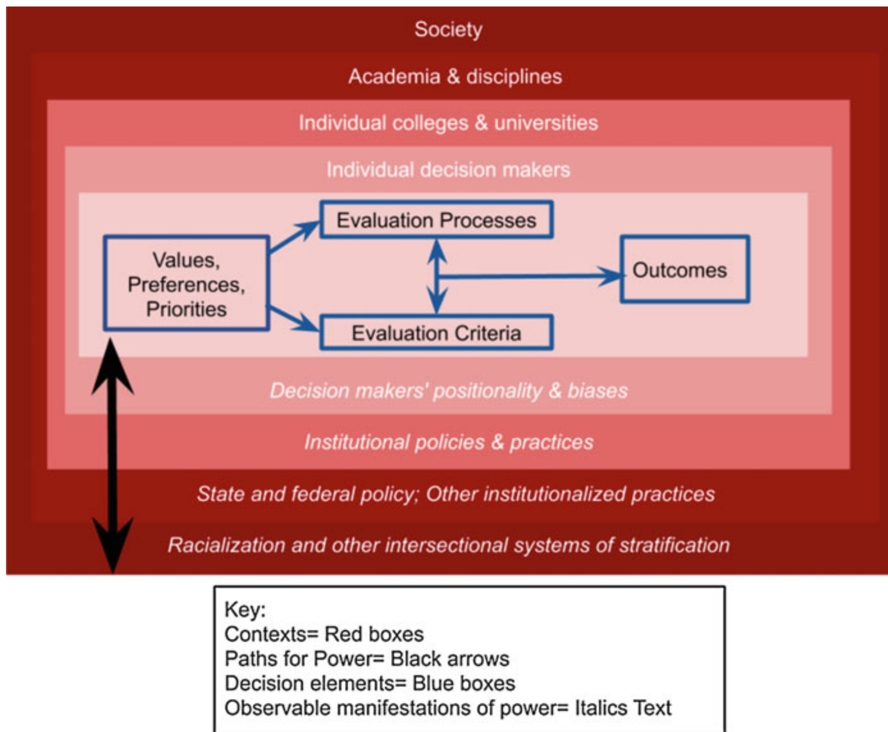

Fig. 1 Framework for equitable decision making

procedures to lead to a specified outcome. These are perhaps the core operational aspects of any specific evaluation or decision process. It suggests that **together, evaluative criteria, deliberative processes, and decision outcomes constitute three key equity checkpoints** at which decision stakeholders can bring equity-mindedness to check their evaluation and decision-making practice. Recognizing the endemic nature of cognitive and social biases, evaluation criteria and deliberative processes can each operate as levers for enhancing or reducing the overall equity of a given decision's outcome. Whether explicit or left implicit, the criteria and process provide the basis and practice for actions that ultimately contribute to broader patterns of inequality; therefore, mindfully treating one's criteria and processes as equity checkpoints ensures that biased default judgments do not drive outcomes.

Values, priorities and preferences reflect conceptions of merit and legitimacy, and moderate the relative importance of specific criteria and processes to particular outcomes. Holding fast to one preference – either for a particular type of criterion, a particular sort of decision-making process, or a particular outcome – means that other preferences may be downplayed in importance. Indeed, there are either-or situations in which a "yes" vote to elevate some criterion, process, or outcome appears to mean a "no" vote to something else. However, a more mindful, creative stance can help transform many apparent either-or decisions into both-and decisions. When revamping an organizational structure, for example, what may appear to be a forced choice between outcomes that prioritize representation or effective leadership may simply require time and creativity to identify an option that accommodates both priorities. Revisiting, then reframing, the details of the situation at hand can facilitate a more holistic and expansive reasonable decision pathways.

Indeed, decisions in higher education are almost always context-specific. As represented by the nested boxes in Fig. 1, micro-level decision-making situations are embedded within larger contexts (see the text in the upper side of the boxes) which have associated manifestations of power (see the italicized text in the lower side of the boxes). **These social contexts of decision making and associated manifestations of power shape values, preferences, priorities, and thus, the evaluative core.** The role of power in these contexts specifically merits attention: racialization and other intersecting systems of stratification; state and federal policies; organizational policies and standard practices; and decision makers' individual-level positionalities and biases. We portray them as nested, to draw attention to the relationships among these contexts.

How does the higher education literature suggest that context shapes decision making? Decisions are made by people, often nested in committees, which are nested within other socio-organizational contexts such as colleges, disciplines, and society. Consistent with the view of a heterarchy of priorities, each individual, committee, and broader context will hold multiple priorities and preferences, not to mention power dynamics and biases that are both implicit and explicit, which rarely overlap perfectly. The processes of individual and collective judgment are laden with the pulls from one's multiple identities, albeit with varying levels of saliency at different times, groups, and situations. Heuristics and routines enable

decision makers to navigate this complexity via mental shortcuts from their experiences; however, this approach to decision making, in reducing complexity, is also prone to errors (Tversky and Kahneman 1974). It eases cognitive load for the decider, but also comes with an increased propensity to cognitively and socially biased judgments (Tversky and Kahneman 1974; Bargh and Chartrand 1999). Building into decision-making routines some context-specific equity checkpoints offers one straightforward strategy for more equitable practice. Checkpoints may include whether known biases are revealed in the information/criteria being used for judgment, whether decision processes or rules are reinforcing or interrupting power asymmetries, and whether intermediate outcomes preceding the ultimate outcome reflect inequities or reduce them.

Relatedly, our framework names power as a force that affects equity in all decision making – one that practitioners and scholars alike should likewise acknowledge and explicitly address. One simple definition of power is the ability to influence social decision making, and we see power affecting decision making in two ways. It shapes decision making from the outside in, as societal influences like racialization and other intersecting systems of oppression manifest within academic environments. Power also operates from the inside out, as individual biases and political games accumulate over time and space to contribute to wider social conditions. Figure 1 depicts this through the bidirectional arrow going back and forth between micro to macro contexts.

Left unexamined, power has multiple channels through which it reproduces inequalities.

It plays out in societal and cultural norms, institutional and organizational policies and practices, and individual decision-making situations. With the exception of scholarship on implicit bias and research on race-conscious admissions, extant perspectives rarely make explicit the roles of racialization in decision making; however, in the USA, we cannot neglect the relevance of race and yet expect equitable outcomes. Decision makers also need to be aware of how power operates through multiple, interacting hierarchical systems that, in addition to race, include class, gender, and others. Attending to power will enable scholars to tell a fuller story about the distribution of resources in higher education than is typically made possible in research on judgment and decision making. Attending to power can also enable decision makers themselves working in colleges, universities, and other academic institutions to use the logics of consequence and identity to think more intentionally about the consequences of their decisions (i.e., will it reproduce inequities?) and/or what is appropriate for a person like them (e.g., how can I use my power/privilege as a decision maker to create a more just organization?).

Toward Equity-Minded Repertoires of Practice for Faculty

To move scholars and practitioners toward more equitable repertoires of practice, the sections that follow review extant literature about the ways that power dynamics are reflected in four domains of practice where faculty routinely make judgments and

decisions: admitting students and hiring faculty fall under the umbrella of institutional service, peer review governs the dissemination of research, and curriculum design involves evaluation and decision making about one's teaching responsibilities. Each of these areas carries implications for the core knowledge production function of academia and role of professors – either directly, such as the priorities that shape peer review and the development of syllabi, or indirectly in how we select students and faculty to join the knowledge production enterprise. In our view, scholars of evaluation and decision making are better able to see equity encouraged or threatened when we attune ourselves not only to its presence or absence in a decision's outcome generally, but in analytically important components of all decisions: criteria, processes, and outcomes. Our review will focus on these three components and the common causal relationship among them: greater equity in the criteria and processes of evaluation and decision making yields outcomes that are more equitable. By making plain how core components of the framework applies to the research, teaching, and service areas of faculty work, considerations relevant to other academic evaluative, and decision-making contexts may also become clearer.

Admitting Students

Unlike undergraduate and professional school admissions, which is usually a centralized decision-making process carried out by staff, graduate admissions decisions are made by faculty at the department level fulfilling obligations of service to one's institution. Despite these different processes of review, common equity threats and opportunities thread through the evaluation criteria and processes across admissions contexts. We conducted a review of research pertaining to admissions criteria, processes, and outcomes,[3] and here we discuss these issues with a focus on graduate admissions, where faculty have the most influence. Indeed, their decisions about whom to admit determine who has access to training in knowledge production.

Admissions Criteria

Perhaps the most prevalent theme in literature on admitting students concerned the application criteria used in admissions decisions and how well they predict different definitions of success, like grades, retention, or degree completion. The major

[3]We conducted a targeted search for literature on undergraduate and graduate/professional admissions within the Proquest ERIC database, limited to English language, peer-reviewed journal articles, and the following search terms: "undergraduate admissions," "college admissions," "graduate admissions," "doctoral admissions," "masters admissions," "professional school admissions," "law school admissions," "medical school admissions," and "business school admissions." These searches turned up 3387 overlapping results. Duplicates were removed. We reviewed titles and abstracts to ensure a focus on admissions in the USA, yielding 285 articles. The literature roughly fell into three areas, though not mutually exclusive: admissions criteria and efficacy for these items to predict academic performance, the ways admissions processes are carried out, and the impacts of enacting varying academic missions through criteria evaluation.

takeaway from this body of evidence for our purposes is this: No single criterion reliably produces the multiple desired outcomes of admissions, nor all forms of success equally well for all populations. Equitable admission judgments therefore need a comprehensive set of criteria, assessed systematically, and contextualized for individual applicants and the organizations they wish to enter.

Quantitative metrics in admissions. For the ongoing questions about both equity and predicting future success, no admissions criteria type has received as much attention as standardized tests. This literature, which implicitly reflects a functionalist approach to admissions evaluation, is highly varied on the question of what forms of future performance are predicted – and for whom.[4] However, it consistently finds that the longer the time elapsed between taking the test and the measure studied, the weaker the relationship is (Kuncel and Hezlett 2007; Mattern and Patterson 2013). While differentially predicting GPA, graduation rates, and other performance measures (Smith and Garrison 2005; White et al. 2009), we know that from elementary school achievement tests to graduate admissions entrance exams, standardized test scores also correlate with gender, race, and socioeconomic status (Bastedo and Jaquette 2011; Bielby et al. 2014; Posselt et al. 2012). On average, men, high income, White, and Asian students score higher on such exams than their demographic counterparts; therefore, admissions processes that over-rely on standardized test scores or use score cutoffs to make decisions disproportionately limit access to underrepresented groups (Bastedo and Jaquette 2011; Bielby et al. 2014; Miller and Stassun 2014; Posselt et al. 2012).

In most models, prior grade point average (GPA) emerges as the strongest single predictor of future academic performance. Yet, inconsistencies in its validity, too, have been found across institutional contexts, fields of study, and subpopulations.[5] It does not predict later performance as well for women, racially minoritized students, English learners (ELs), and students with low socioeconomic status (SES) as it does for students from more privileged backgrounds (Culpepper and Davenport 2009; Mattern et al. 2011). At the graduate level, too, undergraduate GPA is the strongest predictor of graduate GPA, although results are mixed with regard to prior disciplinary specific coursework (Christensen et al. 2012; Halberstam and Redstone

[4]In a study of medical students, MCAT predicted 1st year success in clerkships of White students but did not predict performance of racially minoritized students (White et al. 2009). In another professional school setting, the GMAT was found to be a good predictor of GPA in business and management programs, especially for non-US students, (Koys 2005; Sireci and Talento-Miller 2006). However, the test also differentially and negatively predicted success for women and racially minoritized students (Hedlund et al. 2006). These results combined show that while standardized tests offer some degree of correlation with academic success for some students, they may not add much and over reliance on them can have detrimental impact on access for marginalized groups of students (Smith and Garrison 2005).

[5]For studies of grades' differential validity in predicting future success, see Culpepper and Davenport (2009), Halberstam and Redstone (2005) Lanham et al. (2011), and White et al. (2009). It was the best predictor of graduation at HBCUs in one study (Lanham et al. 2011), but another study found that its predictive power decreases as average SAT and selectivity at an institution increases (Kobrin and Patterson 2011; Sawyer 2013).

2005; Miller et al. 2019). Together, the available evidence on validity makes clear that even the best single predictor cannot be relied upon alone.

What is more, faculty do not only use quantitative metrics to identify the students whom they think are most likely to succeed; constructivist research also finds they justify their use of these criteria based on personal associations of the scores with intelligence, which is important to them because they feel it contributed to their own success as scholars. If the goals of admissions (which should not be assumed) include making higher education access more equitable, we will require criteria that do not reproduce demographic inequities and are valid predictors of degree completion given a supportive, quality educational experience. Faculty and others making admissions decisions have the responsibility to question the legitimacy of criteria that uphold inequality while exploring the possibilities of more comprehensive and contextualized sets of criteria.

Qualitative portions of applications. Personal statements, writing samples, letters of recommendation, and interviews are common in many undergraduate, graduate, and professional admissions (Briihl and Wasieleski 2004; Littleford et al. 2018; Posselt 2016; Potvin et al. 2017). These elements enable judgment among academically qualified applicants, particularly at the graduate level (Stevens 2007; Posselt 2016), but, with a few exceptions, have received less scholarly attention than grades and test scores (Briihl and Wasieleski 2004; Littleford et al. 2018; Murphy et al. 2009). Meta-analysis on the research about personal statements (Murphy et al. 2009), for example, concluded that while they did not offer any incremental improvement in the prediction of grades above prior GPA and test scores, they may be useful in assessing program and advisor fit.

Although highly valued in graduate admissions, "fit" is ambiguous and rooted in subjective perceptions, which make it highly susceptible to implicit biases (Posselt 2018). This highlights an important point about selection and decision making: It often proceeds not only to identify people who are likely to be successful, as functionalist views of evaluation suggest, but also latent organizational functions like creating community, reinforcing organizational culture, or nudging it in a new direction – as is consistent with constructivist, performative, and organizational frameworks for evaluation. At least one study found that interviews and in-person exercises were more predictive of achievement in a doctoral program than undergraduate GPA and GRE scores (Mountford et al. 2007). As this last point shows, qualitative aspects of applications may be valued for their direct relationship to markers of future academic and professional success or because they are related to nonacademic qualities that people also believe to be indicators of success. With respect to the latter, scholars have also explored the predictive power of noncognitive competencies.

Noncognitive competencies in admissions. As a broad category of criteria, research on noncognitive and socioemotional competencies (defined broadly as self and relationship management skills used to navigate everyday life) remains inconclusive due, in part, to the inconsistent way these variables have been defined (Kyllonen et al. 2005; Sommerfeld 2011). William Sedlacek (2004) articulated one set – frequently found among racially minoritized students, specifically – that

includes positive self-concept, realistic self-appraisal, negotiating the system, long-range goals, strong support person, leadership, community service, and non-traditional knowledge. While some scholars determined that noncognitive competencies are not adequate predictors of college GPA or persistence based on a meta-analysis of research using a questionnaire based on Sedlacek's work (Thomas et al. 2007), others have found that they predict 1st-year GPA better than high school grades and standardized tests (Shivpuri et al. 2006; Sinha et al. 2011). What is more, these skills do not appear to present the gender and racial disparities so prevalent in other measures (Shivpuri et al. 2006). These patterns, of course, are likely to be affected by how faculty and higher education practitioners operationalize and measure noncognitive competencies. Improving our assessment of noncognitive competencies may provide an opportunity to improve equitable decision making in admissions.

In summary, an equitable repertoire of decision-making practices in admissions requires not only understanding how well different standards predict success, which also necessitates critical reflection and explicit definition, but also scrutinizing whether criteria predict these outcomes across marginalized and privileged groups. For too long, institutions have relied narrowly on quantitative metrics that privilege students from already overrepresented populations, enabling admissions to become a mechanism for the reproduction of inequalities in higher education – and thus the labor market. That reliance creates a threat to equity, not only based on the criteria and their distribution, but also how faculty and others with decision-making authority put the criteria to use. To examine this, we turn to other research on the practices and policies of admissions decision-making processes.

Admissions Processes

Consistent with constructivist and performative views of evaluation, faculty also profess using admissions to create communities of students who will represent the sort of community they want to be (Posselt 2016). In some cases, this idealized vision includes greater diversity or reduced inequalities, but critical and power-analytic studies of admissions are needed to examine how well these efforts actually achieve equity aims and/or center counter-narratives about merit, equity, and diversity, which faculty of color are more likely to hold (e.g., Squire 2019). The backgrounds, training – or more pointedly, lack thereof, and work of faculty and others tasked with admissions decisions each impact evaluation and selection processes and, by extension, the outcome (Hodum and James 2010; Bowman and Bastedo 2018; Posselt 2015). Posselt's (2016) study of PhD admissions found that faculty from lower SES backgrounds thought of themselves as more qualified to judge applicants from low SES backgrounds, and that they sought opportunities to "pay forward" with admission the opportunities they knew someone at some point had extended to them. In addition, practitioners who work together for a long time in a common domain or have undergone similar training may likely develop shared sensibilities in how they evaluate potential for success in a particular field (Christensen et al. 2018; Posselt 2015). Together, these studies highlight that the judgment and social identities of decision makers are intertwined; therefore, who is

at the decision making table matters for how information is processed and – ultimately – who is likely to be admitted.

Another dimension of admission decision-making processes that has equity implications is the evaluative work of holistic review, defined as the consideration of a wide variety of applicant characteristics, including noncognitive or socio-emotional skills and environmental and historical contexts. To date, the lion's share of research on holistic review has been conducted in undergraduate contexts. For example, Bastedo and colleagues (2018) identified three types of holistic review used among undergraduate admissions officers: *whole file,* which considers all aspects of the application; *whole person,* which considers many facets of the applicant's background and potential; and *whole context*, which looks at what an applicant has done in light of the opportunities they have had (Bastedo et al. 2018). In addition, an ethnography of a liberal arts college's admissions office by Mitchell Stevens (2007) described admissions decision making as a process of evaluative storytelling, in which applicants come to be taken seriously or disregarded through the stories that admissions officers weave for one another from the details in student applications. Socioeconomic inequalities are reproduced through evaluative storytelling, Stevens argued. Applicants with privileged backgrounds are more likely to have had an upbringing and admissions coaching so that their record includes tone, details, and experiences through which admissions officers can craft a compelling narrative about why the student should be admitted. For graduate admissions, potential threats to equity can arise from staged, holistic review processes that ignore racialized and gendered disparities inherent in facially neutral criteria (Posselt 2016; Posselt et al. in press). For all the attention that evaluation criteria and processes deserve, these facets of decision making must be judged in part by the outcomes of such efforts, as the next section suggests.

Outcomes of Admissions Decisions: Access and Exclusion

Criteria, people, and processes intertwine to determine how equitable (or not) the outcomes of admissions are for the educational access of historically minoritized groups (Bastedo and Jaquette 2011; Park and Liu 2014; Redding 2013; Smith 2008; Sorey and Duggan 2008).[6] There are real equity threats and opportunities for gatekeeping professionals in higher education who strive to balance limited resources and slots with the ideal of transparent evaluations of student potential that broaden access. In many places, these practical challenges of equitable admissions decisions are framed by the overarching policy context – such as that which surrounds race-conscious admissions and affirmative action. Such policy indirectly affects the outcomes by affecting decision-making criteria, as well as comfort with discourse about race itself (Caldwell et al. 2007; Garces 2014; Moses and Chang 2006; Posselt 2014). New developments in holistic review and contextualized admissions at both the undergraduate and graduate levels appear to offer

[6]Researchers have paid less attention to other marginalized populations such as undocumented, LGBTQ, and Muslim students (Gildersleeve 2010; Marine 2017; Stegmeir 2017).

opportunities for managing these tensions, though research is needed about their efficacy in shifting outcomes.

Hiring Faculty

Hiring faculty is a second form of service to one's institution that involves evaluation and decision making, and which holds direct implications for equity. The process is generally decentralized, with decision-making authority vested either at the departmental level or with a school/college dean. A search committee typically holds the power to make or at least recommend hiring decisions, which allows for a small group of individuals to have significant influence in shaping who progresses through the hiring process's several rounds of review. There is also variation in how hiring decisions are made based on institution type (Lee and Chun 2014) – both with respect to the policies that order the process and the expectations for prospective scholars. To illustrate the relevance of our framework in this context, we discuss how the literature on faculty hiring[7] highlights equity threats and opportunities with respect to criteria, processes, and outcomes.

Hiring Criteria

Selection and evaluation of faculty candidates often comes down to debate among search committee members about the definition of merit, and how candidates embody the visions of merit and legitimacy that hold sway in a particular department or discipline. Such debates may begin even before deliberations take place, emerging when crafting the job announcement. Language in the posting represents the consensus view of the skills and competencies needed for the position (Smith 2009); therefore, insofar as there are divergent views about the role of a professor, the relevance or legitimacy of different types of work, the intellectual focus that a position should fill, the job announcement becomes the place for defining criteria of who will be judged qualified.

Job announcements vary in scope and depth, and some specifically outline desired characteristics and qualifications while others reflect boilerplate language about the institution and the title of the role being filled. In a study that evaluated nearly 700 job descriptions, Smith and colleagues (Smith et al. 2004; Smith 2009) found that many job descriptions were seemingly decades out of date except for a

[7]We conducted a targeted search of the literature on faculty hiring through the ProQuest ERIC database with the search terms "faculty hiring." The parameters were limited to a single search term given the dearth of literature on the topic. Limiting the results to peer -reviewed journal articles yielded 58 results. Forty-four articles adequately represented our conditions; that is, they consisted of empirical evaluations of the faculty hiring process, and represented various theoretical or conceptual approaches to diversifying faculty hiring. Though limited in number, these articles provided various access points to the study of faculty hiring decision processes from search committees, to organizational structures, to institutionalized values, to various cultures of the academy.

certain few that incorporated global or technological priorities. To diversify the faculty, Smith et al. (2004) suggest that drafting the job description must be one of the central elements of the hiring process in which the job description is linked to institutional priorities such as diversity or equity.

Similar to the admissions process, faculty hiring criteria typically include a few standard eligibility criteria, with some variation in expectations by hiring for junior, mid-career, and senior positions: a *curriculum vitae* should list publications, experience teaching and designing courses, and service work to the profession and institutional community. Evaluation of service is one area in which implicit social biases are revealed: qualifications of applicants from minoritized groups are often over-scrutinized and undervalued. For example, the contributions made by racially minoritized faculty to institutional diversity initiatives are often assumed to occur at the expense of scholarly excellence (Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017), while the same lines on a CV of a white male applicant are highly sought after signs of engagement across diversity (Smith et al. 1996).

Research also indicates that academic elitism plays a role in the hiring of faculty members. Judgments of talent and brilliance, for example, tend to inform how faculty think when looking for new colleagues, but are part of the tacit criteria of fit and merit, rather than listed among the formal criteria of review or disclosed in the job description (Lamont 2009). Committees use the prestige of candidates' institutional affiliations as a signal of the person's excellence, a phenomenon known as the halo effect. This practice disadvantages candidates from backgrounds that are underrepresented in the professoriate, who have been less likely to have access to elite higher education at both the undergraduate and graduate levels (Bastedo and Jaquette 2011; Bielby et al. 2014; Posselt et al. 2012; Smith 2009). In summary, as in admissions, traditional evaluation criteria threaten the racial, gender, and socioeconomic equity of hiring outcomes. Campuses can remedy these issues by (1) focusing their efforts on aligning the job description with diversity and inclusion initiatives, (2) defining in advance, and holding fast to, criteria that do not systematically disadvantage already minoritized groups, and (3) being explicit about prioritizing candidates with the capacity and desire to improve equity.

Processes in Faculty Hiring

How do typical faculty hiring processes contribute to the equity of outcomes? One important answer concerns the immediate social context of the decision – that of the search committee. The decentralized nature of the entire process and the autonomy of most search committees allows them to define the qualities, skills, or competencies deemed ideal for the position; however, decentralization and search committee autonomy also create opacity in the process. Few topics in higher education have been more difficult to study through ethnographic or observational data collection than hiring faculty and upper administrators, because deliberations take place behind a veil of secrecy (for recent exceptions to this, see Liera (2018) and Rivera (2017)). Beyond the job description and criteria for candidates, decisions typically come down to committee deliberations – after application periods have closed, following interviews, and for the purposes of confirming recommendations. At each stage, who

is at the table and what the power dynamics are among them contributes greatly to the nature of deliberations and their outcomes. Thus, committee composition merits consideration as one equity checkpoint for hiring, particularly given the evidence of homophily (i.e., preference for people like oneself) in elite academic hiring (Rivera 2017). Despite the democratic process enabled by decision by committee, those committees will continue to reproduce the same outcomes search after search unless they explicitly, mindfully act to disrupt outdated notions of excellence predicated on unequal educational systems (Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017).

Further, although the search committee is influential (Kayes 2006; Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017; Turner 2002), the process and power to make decisions may reside in the hands of other stakeholders, not just those of committee members. Relevant to the institutional policy context that our framework represents, there is considerable variation in the power attributed to administrators such as deans (Kezar and Gehrke 2016) and trustees (Ehrenberg et al. 2012) in carrying out the institutionalized processes (Blankenship-Knox et al. 2017; Freeman and DiRamio 2016; Kezar and Gehrke 2016; Twombly 2005; Uzuner-Smith and Englander 2015) that result in faculty hiring. Varying institutional types have differing governing processes, and this is represented in faculty hiring.

Biases in the search process. Search committee deliberations are not immune from the institutional, cultural, and discipline-specific biases that tacitly govern faculty ways of thinking. Empirical research on the search committee process highlights specific biases and threats to equity across both racialized and gendered lines. Freeman and DiRamio (2016) uncovered that Ph.D. programs were most attracted to candidates who were graduates of other elite Ph.D. programs because of structural similarities across programs. Candidates that came from institutions with similar organizational cultures were sought after because expectations in networking, publishing, and mentoring students were believed to be the same. Their own socialization within the institution that top-ranked programs were the best places to recruit incoming faculty informed their decision-making process even though it came at the expense of excluding candidates that went to less prestigious institutions but may have had better qualifications or potential.

The literature also shows that biases are present in committee deliberations in the form of gendered expectations of personal heterosexual relationships (Rivera 2017) and notions of "fit" (Twombly 2005). Committee members in one study excluded women applicants from moving on to the next round, assuming that their partners were in high-status, geographically fixed positions. In another study, community college faculty search committees made decisions based on personal and institutional values, placing emphasis on teaching experience and perceived notions of how candidates would "fit" with the campus culture (Twombly 2005).

To reduce the impact of biases and assumptions held by search committee members, some scholars argue that champions of equity are needed in search committees to serve as watchdogs and advocates for hiring diverse applicants (Smith 2009; Smith et al. 1996). Others, however, question the wisdom of this approach, either because it appears to absolve the entire committee of attending to

equity implications or because the power dynamics are more complicated than what a single advocate could handle. At one campus that was intentional about training advocates of equity to serve on search committees, the intersectional relations of power associated with race, gender, tenure, and discipline together shaped how these advocates were able to negotiate and resist biases in hiring (Liera 2018). Conversations about hiring decisions were often dominated by what Liera (2018) referred to as a "bro code" that protected the *status quo*. Though the composition of the committee was made intentionally with regards to including trained advocates of racial equity, because the advocates were women, some women of color, their perspectives were often dismissed when shared.

Amid ambiguity of both processes and criteria, divergent faculty cultures valued within the academy collide with the biases and expectations committee members hold around presupposed notions of merit (Kayes 2006), fit (Twombly 2005), and gender and relationship status (Rivera 2017). This ambiguity makes it challenging for hiring committee chairs to articulate their expectations, much less enact equitable processes for evaluating candidates (Blankenship-Knox et al. 2017; Cipriano and Buller 2012) and checking colleagues on misperceptions and biases. There are opportunities to work toward equity, however, through such methods as such as training for *all* committee members to be advocates for equity and diversity. Indeed, professional development for faculty is becoming increasingly common as an expectation of serving on faculty search committees.

Outcomes of Hiring Decisions

As indicated in the previous two sections, the combination of opaque hiring criteria along with imbalanced committee composition and bias in their deliberations create conditions that threaten the equity of outcomes. Regardless of institution type, there are many contextual factors at play when hiring decisions are ultimately made. Influences from organizational culture, prestige of graduate training, power dynamics with regards to gender, race, tenure, and department have the power to shape where and when key decisions are made. The challenges to equity may be kept in check with mindfulness and intentionality at each step of the process: actively shifting job announcements to define diversity and equity as desired qualities, ensuring that search committees represent a diverse set of voices and are adequately trained to advocate for equity, seeking both potential and achievements to date, and working to identify and disrupt biases and assumptions about minoritized candidates (Smith 2009; Smith et al. 2004; Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017; Kayes 2006).

Peer Review

Peer review functions as perhaps the most important system within academia for evaluating and legitimating new knowledge. Faculty members both engage in and rely on peer review processes to assess manuscripts, funding applications, and to determine hiring, promotion, and tenure. In this chapter, we focus on the role of peer

review in evaluating and legitimating published scholarship.[8] We demonstrate that the peer review process, as it currently exists, threatens equity by systematically favoring white male scholars from elite institutions who publish relatively apolitical work (Carlin et al. 2013; Hojat et al. 2003; Rowland 2002; Salinas 2018); but we argue that by naming and addressing inherent biases and power asymmetries that serve the status quo, peer review can also function as an important site for creating equity.

While there is general consensus around the criteria for evaluating and recognizing excellent scholarship, it is evaluators' disparate perceptions of legitimacy and legitimate scholarship within the peer review process that result in disparities in the works accepted for review and publication, influencing how social capital, recognition, and legitimacy are distributed in higher education. Power and legitimacy manifest in the peer review process in several ways: (1) in the ways referees evaluate what knowledge is credible, original, and valid; (2) in the selection of what work is published; and (3) the peer review process itself confers and reinforces status for individuals, departments, and groups. Conceptions of legitimacy are shaped by institutional and authorial reputation as well as by disciplinary norms, methods, and epistemologies; these conceptions influence the extent to which new knowledge claims are embraced or rejected. Throughout, we demonstrate how unacknowledged and unchecked subjectivities currently function as threats to equity because of the ways they inequitably confer power and legitimacy.

Put simply, peer review refers to the process of screening work. Within the academy, work that has not undergone peer review may be believed to be of lesser quality than peer reviewed work (Roberts and Shambrook 2012). The history of peer review is long, but its current form arose during the Cold War alongside increased government funding for scientific research (Baldwin 2018; Rowland 2002). Peer review was normalized for two reasons: (1) scientists did not want nonexperts determining what was scientifically valid (Baldwin 2018) and (2) the process provided a quality control mechanism for published works (Rowland 2002).

When a piece is submitted to a journal, the submission is reviewed by the editor for general fit within the journal's goals; if the piece is a fit, then the editor assigns the piece to be reviewed by two or more "experts" (Rowland 2002). However, areas of knowledge are increasingly specialized, so "true experts" are likely few and far between (Roberts and Shambrook 2012). Generally, journals employ single blind review to anonymize the author's identity (Tomkins et al. 2017). However, preserving anonymity is challenging when authors' contributions, methodologies, or datasets are unique (Tomkins et al. 2017). After reviewing the manuscript, referees send the piece back to the editor with the recommendation to accept, reject, or

[8]We conducted a search of literature through the ProQuest ERIC database with the terms "peer review," "peer review process," "peer review bias," "peer review + legitimate," and "peer review + equity". In limiting results to peer reviewed journal articles, the majority of the published scholarship centered peer review in the context of published scholarship. A smaller body of work discussed peer review in funding applications, thus our chapter centers peer review in the context of published scholarship.

resubmit with revisions; but, final decision making is left to the editor(s). Both editors and referees serve as important gatekeepers and evaluators in the peer review process.

Functionally, peer review is intended to help the knowledge of a field grow, evolve, and innovate, but the process often reifies or protects existing knowledge claims (Bedeian 2004). In some fields, existing knowledge is protected because knowledge is positioned as cumulative, thus scholarship rests on the reification of prior knowledge as valid (Hyland 1999; Schwartzman 1997). However, disciplines that advance knowledge by refining or rejecting existing theories rely on different assumptions about the value and validity of existing research (Becher 1987, 1981). While not all disciplines construct and reify existing knowledge in the same ways (Becher 1981; Hyland 1999), the peer review process, as a whole, protects existing knowledge in ways that perpetuate inequity.

Despite the process' general bias towards existing knowledge and authorial prestige, the peer review process is heralded as one of the most fair, equitable, and essential elements to academic quality, largely because of its quality control and gatekeeping functions (Hamann and Beljean 2017; Raelin 2008; Roberts and Shambrook 2012). Peer review carries and conveys status, which as was discussed in the introduction, is important because academia functions as a status economy (Hamann and Beljean 2017). Yet, the process reproduces inequity in fulfilling its intended functions: dissemination of new knowledge, archival of canonical knowledge, quality control, and assigning credit to authors (Cole1983; Rowland 2002). Peer review criteria are explored in order to better understand the varied physical and symbolic outcomes.

Peer Review Criteria: Validity, Credibility, and Novelty

Outside of the general fit for the journal's goals, several criteria tend to guide the peer review process: validity, credibility, and novelty (Bedeian 2004; Siler and Strang 2017). Yet, criteria may vary across disciplines. Physics views knowledge accumulation as contributing to a larger corpus of work, with clearly defined boundaries, while sociology views knowledge as an individual's contribution to a less well-defined body of work (Becher 1987). While conceptions of legitimate knowledge may differ across disciplines, it is still important to examine the function of peer review criteria in the evaluation and legitimation of scholarship.

Bedeian (2004), drawing primarily on management literature, conceptualized validity and credibility as being closely intertwined, representing work that is free of error and contributes to the knowledge base. Yet, Bedeian (2004) recognized that concepts and enactments of validity and credibility rest on socially constructed and legitimated ideas of knowledge. Siler and Strang (2017), drawing on existing literature from 43 fields, positioned novelty as a concept to evaluate the originality of claims, methods, topics, theories, and approaches, but recognized that there is no single, straightforward view of originality.

Cole (1983) connected the functions of peer review to the criteria by explaining how the publication process is meant to produce the research frontier (new knowledge claims) while continuing to evaluate existing knowledge with the intent of

producing a universally accepted set of core ideas within a field. Frontier knowledge claims are not likely to be universally accepted, as a substantial level of disagreement and difficulty exists in determining which claims will turn out to be significant (Cole 1983). Referees are tasked with evaluating work based on its credibility, novelty, and validity in order to shape the research frontier and continuously evaluate – and potentially challenge or institutionalize – existing knowledge claims. Yet, the ways that individual referees perceive, understand, and employ these criteria differ by field, training, epistemology, status, and experiences (Apple 1999; Roberts and Shambrook 2012). These differences directly shape the process and outcomes associated with peer review and ultimately reproduce stratification in the academy.

Peer Review Process: Unchecked Evaluation Biases

Ideally, the peer review process evaluates the soundness of research and its potential contributions to the field (Roberts and Shambrook 2012). However, this evaluation process is socially constructed and situated, meaning it is less objective than many would hope for it to be (Bedeian 2004; Hojat et al. 2003). The lack of objectivity is not a problem in and of itself, insofar as socially constructed preferences will always drive what is valued; rather, it is the process' unchecked biases that inequitably distribute power. Despite the importance of peer review as a process to evaluate and disseminate new and original research, work that diverges from the mainstream – work that is novel – is hard to evaluate and often is rejected or heavily revised in the peer review process (Siler and Strang 2017). The process creates a tension between the goals of authors and referees (Bedeian 2004). Authors seek to make original claims, while referees strive to place the work within the existing knowledge base (Becher and Trowler 2001; Bedeian 2004). The tension between originality and inclusion in the knowledge base is exacerbated by the fact that some forms of originality are more valued than others (Becher and Trowler 2001; Siler and Strang 2017). Work that challenged existing theoretical perspectives faced higher levels of criticism than pieces that extended or combined established perspectives (Siler and Strang 2017). Siler and Strang (2017) argued that reviewers desire originality in the abstract but are more conservative in practice because of their socialization. Thus, not all forms of knowledge are evaluated equally or equitably.

Further, studies have uncovered multiple sources of bias in the peer review process arising from referee's schemas, or existing conceptions, of knowledge and merit (Raelin 2008). Peer review generally favors work that confirms what is believed to be true (Hojat et al. 2003). Conversely, referees and editors may block knowledge that disproves their own work or demonstrates negative results (Hojat et al. 2003; Roberts and Shambrook 2012; Siler and Strang 2017). Peer review often disadvantages non-male authors (Carlin et al. 2013; Hojat et al. 2003; Rowland 2002), authors from less prestigious or minority institutions (Rowland 2002), and work that is political in nature (i.e., work about race) (Hojat et al. 2003; Salinas 2018). The process favors authors who are seen as famous or who come from elite departments or institutions. Due to the same halo effect that elevates judgement of faculty candidates from elite universities (Paxton and Bollen 2003), their work is assumed to be of high quality, regardless of the actual quality of the piece (Becher

and Trowler 2001; Hojat et al. 2003; Tomkins et al. 2017). Collectively, these findings indicate that peer review favors those who already have status in the academy, reproducing existing social and professional disparities.

In short, there is no universal standard of merit by which submissions are judged because referees and editors construct and conceptualize merit differently in the peer review process (Bedeian 2004; Cole and Simon 1981). Dissensus is common because the criteria for peer review are culturally situated (Becher and Trowler 2001; Cole and Simon 1981; Miller 2006). The social nature of evaluation in peer review is influenced by epistemology, past experiences, disciplinary norms, and more – thus, the process and outcomes of peer review are anything but straightforward, objective, or rational (Becher and Trowler 2001; Cole and Simon 1981; Hamann and Beljean 2017). Peer review's lack of objectivity is not the problem, rather peer review exists as a threat to equity because of the ways that it is heralded as objective, despite evidence that it is anything but.

Peer Review Outcomes: Social Reproduction of Authority and Legitimacy

Given the disparate perceptions and enactments of evaluation in peer review, the peer review process perpetuates inequities in both the work and authors that are published and legitimized. Further, the peer review process does not always recognize or reward the most novel or highest quality scholarship, a process Becher and Trowler (2001) refer to as "fail[ing] to predict the winners" (p. 87). This claim speaks to the idiosyncratic, subjective nature of manuscript acceptance (Becher and Trowler 2001). Given lack of consensus about what work is deserving, novel, and credible, a manuscript's success may largely depend on its reviewers (Bedeian 2004; Cole and Simon 1981). Further, the peer review process is largely one of homogenization (Bedeian 2004; Siler and Strang 2017). Siler and Strang (2017) demonstrated that few pieces that challenged dominant theoretical perspectives were published, indicating they were either not accepted or were not submitted – novel concepts were more widely accepted than challenges. This homogenization and exclusion may reproduce (1) a lack of research on critical social issues (e.g., race, gender, etc.), (2) acceptance only of work that does not disrupt status quo, and/or (3) marginalization of non-dominant paradigms and epistemologies, and by extension, the Faculty of Color who are more likely to express these perspectives (Delgado Bernal and Villalpando 2002; Salinas 2018). The peer review process has the potential to increase and address threats to equity by acknowledging and grappling with these realities.

Publication is a demonstration of legitimated knowledge and is a form of currency or capital (Apple 1999; Bedeian 2004). Further, publications in top tier journals garner more citations and therefore greater legitimacy, authority, and recognition (Bedeian 2004). As a source of legitimacy, the accumulation of publications and citations provides an important form of recognition and authority in academia (Tyler 2006). Individuals, departments, and universities seek to accumulate this type of capital and power – creating pressure to publish more and in elite journals (Apple 1999). Those whose work is published acquire authority and legitimacy, specifically

the rights to shape, dictate, and direct the peer review process in the future. Thus, the peer review process creates an uneven cycle of evaluation and legitimation, perpetuating a cycle of homogenization and stratification of knowledge and capital.

Impact factors and publishing records continue to be prized as indicators of quality, but these measures disproportionately favor a small number of people and institutions (Bell and Chong 2010). Bell and Chong (2010) even suggested the peer review stratification process creates a "caste and class system" (p. 80) due to the tangible effects on individual's pay, recruitment, promotion, tenure outcomes, and more. The stakes of peer review are disproportionately placed on pre-tenured scholars whose legitimacy depends on the system (Raelin 2008). Yet, there is a strong desire to maintain the peer review system, even though existing process and metrics hold institutions, journals, scholars, and the production of knowledge hostage to narrow definitions of acceptable scholarship (Brand 2013; Rowland 2002).

In summary, peer review evaluation and legitimation practices must grapple with the reality that all knowledge claims and evaluations of knowledge claims are socially constructed (Bedeian 2004). As it currently functions, peer review threatens the possibility of deep equity within the academy by largely favoring white male scholars (and by extension, their epistemologies) from prestigious programs. These researchers are disproportionately favored in the peer review process, leading to their legitimation as scholars, and allowing them to eventually occupy gatekeeping positions as editors and referees that replicate the same processes. However, when faculty name and address power disparities inherent in current system for evaluating and legitimating knowledge, peer review has the opportunity to promote equity; following the discussion of curriculum and instruction – our final area of faculty practice – we discuss specific strategies for doing so. Without critical examination of the individual and collective criteria and processes used to construct merit in peer review – and in so doing, construct quality – its outcomes will continue to favor those who control and benefit from the canon of knowledge and research methods. Developed and controlled historically by cisgender white men, these preferences will deny diverse and important forms of knowledge and knowing within the academy (Roberts and Shambrook 2012) to researchers and students – present and future.

Curriculum and Instruction

Disciplinary canons legitimated through peer review matter not only for conversations among researchers, but for that which the next generation of students will come to regard as the subject matter. What leads professors to construct and deliver curriculum to students involves a host of evaluations and decisions which we now turn to describe. While co-curricular experiences (those outside of traditional classroom learning environments) provide important opportunities for college students' cognitive and social-psychological development (Pascarella 1985; Pascarella and Terenzini 1991), a primary goal of postsecondary education is to provide students with opportunities for deep learning about specific subject matter. Yet research

shows that this goal is often not fulfilled. Postsecondary education produces very modest changes in student learning (Arum and Roska 2011; Pascarella et al. 2011). Higher education scholars have looked to the role of curriculum and instruction to interrogate this phenomenon. To advance the practice of teaching and learning in higher education, it is essential for higher education researchers to consider how faculty evaluate and make decisions about their own curriculum and instruction.

Curriculum and instruction are distinct, yet interrelated concepts, and so too are the decisions faculty make about each. Curriculum refers to content knowledge (i.e., the *what* of education: Which sets of concepts should be taught? In what order? Using which tools and artifacts?), while instruction refers to pedagogical knowledge (i.e., the *how* of education: Which pedagogical strategies should be employed to maximize student learning around a particular set of concepts?). Promoting the mastery of content knowledge in isolation of pedagogical knowledge (or vice versa) does not lead to student learning. Instead, Shulman (1986) introduced pedagogical content knowledge, or what he calls "subject matter *for teaching*" (Shulman 1986, p. 9, emphasis in original text). It is the intersection of those two contexts that supports instructors' knowledge of how to promote deep conceptual change and development for students in particular disciplinary contexts.

How educators evaluate, select, and then enact pedagogical practices that make learning a particular discipline more accessible involves pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) (Shulman 1986). PCK is an intentionally integrative concept that merges theory about teaching with knowledge gained from the practice of teaching; it relies on knowledge gained from instructors' teaching experience within particular disciplinary settings. It is a highly context-dependent (with regards to discipline) framework that is influenced by individual teachers' prior lived experience and teaching contexts. To be clear, pedagogical content knowledge is a primary contextual factor that drives educator decision making about what to teach and how to teach it.

While literature on pedagogical content knowledge initiated in K–12 education, researchers have shown an increased interest in studying practices of teaching and learning in higher education (Lattuca 2005; Neumann 2014). Research shows that curriculum and instruction have an important impact on student learning (Bok 2009). Here, we apply the criteria, process, outcomes framework to the study of decision making around curriculum and instruction in higher education.

Criteria: Curriculum and Instruction as Co-constituted in Syllabi

In many ways, decisions about teaching take place on a microanalytic scale. Because instructors literally make minute-to-minute decisions in an effort to continuously meet the needs of their students, teaching is often seen as an improvisational endeavor. However, teaching is much more than the aggregate of many small decisions. While it is true that good instructors are often adaptable, optimal design involves transparent learning objectives and a robust plan to ensure those objectives will be met. This is usually actualized through decisions about curriculum.

A syllabus can be understood as a contract between students and instructors that sets important expectations based on the instructor's judgment about what merits

learning (Sulik and Keys 2014, p. 152). It formalizes what Lattuca and Stark (2011) define as an academic plan. They argue for an operational definition of curriculum as an academic plan, asserting that a focus on broad curriculum can lead to ambiguity that prevents tangible change. They write, “our goal in conceptualizing curriculum as an academic plan is to identify the critical decision points that, if effectively addressed, will enhance the academic experience of students” (Lattuca and Stark 2011, p. 4). Nelson Laird et al. (2008, p. 469) posit that “. . .learning is a shared responsibility between students and faculty,” and syllabi can organize expectations and reveal taken-for-granted assumptions about students (Felix et al. 2015) and about how faculty define the subject matter.

Hora and Ferrare citing Stark (2013) argue that “faculty beliefs and assumptions about education drove decisions about the structure and content of a course and that these beliefs were in turn influenced by characteristics and goals, external influences, departmental goals, and facilities and resources” (p. 216). In a study of math and science disciplines at three research universities, Hora and Ferrare (2013) found that 73% of faculty consider the syllabus to be an important mediator of instructional practice. Yet faculty do not always have control over the design of syllabi for classes they teach. Fifty-four percent of respondents reported the existence of a curriculum planning committee that developed learning goals, scope and sequence for introductory courses, with some committees even choosing textbooks (Hora and Ferrare (2013). An additional 18% reported inheriting syllabi from more senior faculty who previously taught the course (Hora and Ferrare (2013). In both of these instances, decision making was constrained by academic plans.

Academic plans vis-à-vis syllabi “[become] part of the tacit fabric of a department’s approach to curriculum and instruction” (Hora and Ferrare 2013, p. 246). Academic plans can be thought of as cultural artifacts of learning environments that mediate instructional practice, and potentially transformative pedagogical change, in the academy. This demonstrates how academic plans can encourage or impede various forms of instructional practice and faculty agency.

Process: Sociocultural Dynamics Affecting Curriculum and Instruction Decisions

While individual factors about faculty, such as their motivation, self-efficacy, and the desire for autonomy, inform decision making around curriculum and instruction in higher education, the broader organizational and institutional contexts also matter for understanding the criteria, processes, and outcomes of evaluation and decision making in higher education (Stupnisky et al. 2018). The enacted mission and values of the larger organization frames what faculty value and replicate in practice (Neumann 2009). Therefore, the study of process cannot be divorced from context. Specifically, curriculum and instructional practices operate in “distinct cultural and organizational contexts at the institutional, departmental, and classroom levels” (Hora and Ferrare 2013, p. 214).

If individual decision-making processes around curriculum and instruction are informed by meso-level cultural beliefs, norms, and practices, then accounting for disciplinary norms and values, departmental culture, and normative assumptions

about academic rigor is critical (Hora and Ferrare 2013; Lattuca 2005). Lattuca (2005) asserts that each academic discipline utilizes a set of tools that operates to guide their collective practice. Faculty are socialized to ". . . learn what is appropriate, expected, and accepted in terms of their behavior in the field, including how to teach and how to learn" (Nelson Laird et al. 2008, p. 472). Furthermore, Neumann (2009, p. 7) positions the goal of the professoriate to "[construct], [share] and [apply] disciplinary and preferred subject matter knowledge." From these perspectives, legitimate knowledge is vetted and affirmed through the disciplines and expected to be reinforced in curriculum and instruction practices. These disciplinary logics of consequences and appropriateness create and propagate systems of legitimation that simultaneously engenders and constrains action (Posselt 2014, 2015). Individual processes of decision making are mediated by established norms of the respective governing field.

Using Becher's (1989) typology, Neumann et al. (2002) sought to uncover the ways various disciplines, as evidenced by the knowledge field they privilege, compare, and contrast with regard to curriculum and instruction practices. They considered the practices of four knowledge fields: hard pure (e.g., physics and chemistry), soft pure (e.g., history and anthropology), hard applied (e.g., engineering), and soft applied (e.g., education and management studies). They found that the disciplinary norms of the knowledge fields were highly coupled with corresponding curriculum and instruction choices. For example, a hard pure knowledge field, like physics, values the acquisition of an objective set of "established facts and demonstrable theories" (Neumann et al. 2002, p. 407) whereas professors in a soft pure knowledge field, such as anthropology, privilege the application and integration of knowledge. This difference in goals cause faculty members in these distinct knowledge fields to design and evaluate learning in different ways. Whereas the soft pure fields would likely design classroom environments that privilege the role of dialogue and individualized meaning making, hard pure fields would likely take on a lecture and lab format to systematically scaffold towards mastery.

As our framework highlights about decision making in general, processes of decision making around curriculum and instruction are complex due to the many competing priorities faculty must balance across the multiple domains in which their practice is situated. As Wertsch (1991) reminds us, no activity occurs in complete autonomy from broader ecological systems. Therefore, a discussion of curriculum and instruction in higher education demands that we take seriously the multiple cognitive, cultural, and contextual factors that influence these practices (Hora and Ferrare 2013; Hora and Holden 2012).

Outcomes: Racialized and Gendered Learning Experiences

Despite their recent diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, US colleges and universities continue to be racialized and gendered spaces that produce disparate outcomes for students along these lines (Solórzano et al. 2000). From studies of racial campus climate (Harper 2012; Harper et al. 2018; Harper and Hurtado 2007; Hurtado 1992), student engagement (Mann 2001; Quaye and Harper 2014; Patton et al. 2015), and

classroom learning (Gay 1990; Pascarella and Terenzini 2005; Sandler 1996), research in higher education shows the racialized reality of postsecondary learning. People of Color of all genders and white women report experiences of isolation and discrimination in college classrooms across the USA, especially in STEM disciplines, describing that professors" instructional choices often create a "chilly climate" that negatively affects student motivation, learning, and persistence (see, for example, Pittman 2010). Especially in the humanities and social sciences, the propagation of Eurocentric epistemologies in curriculum can increase marginalized students' feelings of isolation in the classroom (Morrison 2010). Quaye and Harper (2007, p. 36) argue, "When students are exposed only to white, dominant perspectives, they come to believe that viewpoints from other racial and ethnic groups are trivial and lack value, intellectual worth, and scholarly credibility."

Furthermore, it can contribute to the epistemic suppression and intellectual *othering* of racially minoritized students who do not assimilate into the mainstream ways of knowing prized by academe. Gay (1990) discusses "curriculum segregation," wherein facultys' beliefs and assumptions about students inform their use of differentiated pedagogical approaches. For example, when teaching middle-class white men, she notes that faculty likely employ rigorous academic material and use strategies that encourage self-actualization and affirmation in the learning process. In contrary, faculty are likely to use strategies that encourage dependence and assimilation with racially minoritized students of all/no genders,[9] white women, and students from economically disenfranchised backgrounds. This creates what Gay (1990, p. 57) calls "a dual system of access to knowledge and accountability" that systematically disadvantages minoritized students.

Too often, deficit-based narratives about racially minoritized student performance distract from the need for faculty accountability and the possibilities of re-envisioning postsecondary learning as a "practice of freedom" (Hooks 1994, p. 30). Rather than deeply interrogating the academy's history of exclusion, institutions and their leaders often scapegoat racially minoritized students as a problem to be solved. Scholars like Bensimon and Malcom (2012) call for a paradigm shift in the culture of postsecondary institutions to expect more from leaders and institutional agents. Stanton-Salazar (2011, p. 1067) defines an institutional agent as "an individual who occupies one or more hierarchical positions of relatively high-status and authority." Bensimon and Malcom (2012) encourage powerful institutional agents to become "equity agents," people who are responsible for shepherding the institution towards more equitable practices in favor of minoritized students. Making a commitment to study learning outcomes as a reflection of the beliefs and practices that institutional actors (who may or may not be acting as equity agents) and postsecondary institutions constitutes an important move toward accountability for institutions (Bensimon 2005; Bensimon et al. 2007). Faculty are well positioned to act as equity agents for marginalized students in postsecondary institutions.

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[9]We choose this language in order to include people who are agender.

Implications and Recommendations

Although we have covered them as separate areas of practice involving evaluation and decision making, admissions, hiring, peer review, and curriculum and instruction constitute a system affecting student experiences and learning. The learning experiences that faculty create are a function not only of their curriculum and instructional choices, but also the outcomes of peer review that legitimates some knowledge as more important to cover than others. Student experiences are also shaped by instructors' own backgrounds (and thus, the faculty hiring process), as well as the demographics of their fellow students (resulting from admissions). Collectively, what and whom we value will affect whether and how our changing population of students sees itself in higher education. Equity therefore demands that we work mindfully toward rethinking *status quo* evaluation and decision making to both shift the opportunity structure for knowledge production and ensure all students can appreciate that they belong and can thrive in higher education.

Based on the preceding discussion of how criteria, processes, and outcomes pose threats and opportunities for equitable decision making, we offer the following recommendations for empirical scholarship and theoretical development that might enhance equitable repertoires of practice in admissions, hiring, peer review, and curriculum design and instruction. We will then follow this with global recommendations for evaluation and decision making. Even as this chapter focuses on the decisions professors often make, we recognize they rarely have sole control over the decision-making. Thus, we urge all parties involved in admissions, hiring, peer review, and curriculum and instruction to consider the following recommendations. Further, the recommendations below vary in terms of feasibility. Given the power of legitimated processes and behaviors, some recommendations will require long-term investment, commitment, and culture change. We do not seek to offer quick fixes; rather we hope to prompt reflection and reinvention of existing decision making and evaluation processes in order to instantiate more equitable repertoires of practice. While we have focused on the role faculty play in making key decisions that impact academic repertoires of practice, addressing these implications and adopting/adapting the recommendations will require collaborative partnerships among faculty, administrators, and other higher education stakeholders.

Recall that Gutierrez and Rogoff (2003) described repertoires of practice as.

> ways of engaging in activities stemming from observing and otherwise participating in cultural practices. . . To understand both individual and community learning it is necessary to examine the nature and forms of cultural artifacts and tools used; the social relations, rules, and division of labor; and the historical development of individuals and communities (p. 22).

From this perspective, the multiple contexts in which faculty judgment is situated are not merely backdrops. Instead, they represent components of the way people have been socialized to internalize and perform what they have learned. If our goal is to provide equitable access to rigorous intellectual development and knowledge

production in higher education, we must manage equity threats and provide tools for faculty members to develop repertoires of practice grounded in equity.

Admissions: Implications and Recommendations

Additional empirical scholarship would be useful for understanding the current and emerging landscape of admissions evaluation and decision making. As traditional markers of merit, such as standardized tests, fall under increasing scrutiny, faculty and administrators rely on other traditional elements of applications to a greater extent or turn to under-studied criteria. While non-cognitive competencies, for example, seem promising, we still do not know enough about if or how faculty might evaluate students of different racial/ethnic or gender identities based on these criteria. If faculty were to consider the same examples of a non-cognitive criterion like self-confidence as a positive sign when expressed by a man and a negative sign when expressed by a woman, using these criteria could lead to unintended consequences that perpetuate inequities.

In addition, as affirmative action is imperiled in the courts, holistic review more generally may come under greater scrutiny. Some versions of holistic review look at diversity broadly, while others consider race as one sub-factor within a broader factor of diversity – a more specific operationalization that is nonetheless in compliance with Supreme Court precedent on race-conscious admissions. Regardless, more research is needed about the design and implementation of holistic review. While admissions research is sensitive, well designed studies would help practitioners better understand what and how to conduct holistic review in admissions to yield more equitable outcomes and avoid unintended consequences like intra-racial discrimination.

Next, we suggest ideas for conceptual and theoretical development in order to inspire future research and innovations in practice. Simple questions about the purposes of admissions and of higher education expose area for theoretical exploration: How do practitioners think of the purposes of admissions and of higher education more broadly? If the purpose of admissions is only to select the students who are most likely to succeed, what is the role of academia beyond credentialing the elite classes it reproduces? If the purpose of higher education is to foster and grow potential, then how do we as a society determine the distribution of this investment? Moreover, if the purpose of academia is to support a learned democracy and the well-being of its citizenry, how might admissions be equitably conceived? We hope the exploration of empirical and conceptual issues in admissions decision making that we raised here will promote transformations for equity in higher education.

Hiring: Implications and Recommendations

Empirical research is needed into the efforts of the growing number of campuses that are investing efforts to diversify their faculty membership. Understanding that

decision making in hiring is an opaque procedure, the literature makes clear that inequities are cloaked and discussion of candidate identities is coded through practitioners' vague conversations assertions of merit, fit, and excellence. To move the process from opacity to transparency, we recommend that faculty commit to unpack their social biases around these traditional conceptions of worth. In doing so, we also implore scholars to question the very traditions upon which faculty hiring processes stand. A critical examination on behalf of scholars and practitioners of current hiring decision making processes from a lens of equity and social justice frames can begin to interrogate the very measures that the professoriate has long deemed objective.

In our review of the literature on faculty hiring, a majority of the publications that claimed to provide strategies or support for building a diverse faculty front loaded the work to the recruitment phase of hiring with little regard to how these strategies continued to hire the same type of candidate. Further research aimed at providing strategies for practice should expand beyond the traditional frameworks used to study organizations or education and shift toward using lenses that allow for a more critical discourse in the academy. Scholars must question merit and fit from perspectives of critical Whiteness, institutionalized racism, intersectionality, and other frameworks or theories that explicitly provoke conversations around racial equity. Additionally, we recommend that practitioners and scholars continue to engage in participatory and critical action research that documents how campuses are (and are not) shifting their hiring practices and outcomes. A more comprehensive library of case studies of this nature is needed. Liera (2018), for example, conducted a case study of how one campus went through with what seemed like an overhaul of their hiring practices with respect to racial equity and call for more research of the same. He documented how the university gathered a team of equity-minded individuals to pare through their hiring guidelines, foregrounding racial equity, and legitimized the work of this team by providing training for working as an equity advocate on hiring committees. Scholars of faculty diversity, equity, and hiring should continue work in this vein, documenting how universities navigate the opacity and ambiguity of the search process to build a more equitable repertoire of hiring practice.

Peer Review: Implications and Recommendations

In providing implications and recommendations regarding the ways peer review can embrace a more equitable repertoire of practice, we urge further examination into at least three key questions: How are the actors involved in the peer review process working to change what counts as legitimate knowledge? How do assessments of legitimacy play out with regards to research, content, and methods? How do editors, referees, and authors legitimate new forms of knowledge through engaging in resistance to the status quo in the peer review process? These questions have yet to be explored in the literature but would open opportunities for more equitable repertoires of practice in peer review. We need further examination of the ways socially constructed ideas of merit and legitimacy shape evaluation and decision

making that reify inequities in the peer review process. Thus, we offer three recommendations related to positionality statements, reflexivity of editors and referees, and citation practices in the peer review process.

Positionality. Positionality provides one avenue for authors to interrogate and situate their knowledge and orientation to their work (Gordon 2005; Rose 1997). Regardless of how they are integrated in the peer review process, author positionality statements provide additional insight into authors' epistemologies and conceptions of their work. We also call for research that examines the effects of and resistance to increased expectations around author positionality statements in peer review processes and outcomes, as we believe positionality statements have the potential to contribute to a more equitable repertoire of practice. While positionality statements are a common feature of qualitative work (Gordon 2005), their normalization across methodologies and fields (at least in the social sciences) can contribute to a more honest appraisal of the origins of our scholarly knowledge. With further insight into authors' positionality, editors and referees can more holistically evaluate submitted work.

However, positionality statements without ongoing reflexivity work by editors and referees may only reify the existing inequities. There is a need to examine the effects of integrating these practices in peer review on equity. Synergizing positionality and reflexivity efforts has the potential to surface previously invisible assumptions and norms about the nature of legitimated knowledge and the processes of knowledge legitimation. Surfacing, and then interrogating, these assumptions may lead to validation of multiple forms of knowledge and further equity. Positionality statements can provide opportunities to both resist and change norms related to peer review. Collectively, reflexivity and positionality have important implications for peer review's adoption of a more equitable repertoire of practice.

Reflexivity. Reflexivity is on-going and critical reflection that challenges one to explore and interrogate "the diversity and complexity of one's social location" (Hesse-Biber 2017, p. 45). Reflexivity stems from practices to ensure validity and trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry (Hesse-Biber 2017). This form of critical reflection may illuminate previously taken for granted assumptions about norms, values, and knowledge – a practice essential for qualitative researchers' to attempt to understand and account for their influence on the research and analysis process. Further, we argue that reflexivity has value in multiple settings, including peer review. Given editors' and referees' gatekeeping roles in the peer review process, reflexivity is an essential first step in embracing a more equitable repertoire of practice. Editors and referees employ socially constructed views of legitimate knowledge in their evaluation of works submitted for peer review and these views are shaped by their identities, socialization, discipline, life experiences, and more. In the current process, these unacknowledged biases that contribute to inequity.

We urge editors and referees to engage in both individual and collective reflexivity in order to identify the epistemologies, values, and norms that implicitly shape their evaluation and decision making. The recommendations provided in relation to positionality statements provide one example for editors and referees to interrogate and situate their epistemologies, values, and beliefs in the peer review process.

Further, we call for research that examines the development, implementation, and effects of this practice on equity. This reflective practice will help editors and referees lay bare their taken for granted or invisible biases (Milner 2007) that shape the peer review process. While simply naming and acknowledging biases and preferences will not immediately result in more equitable practice, it is an important first step in changing peer review norms. Reflexivity can help editors and referees identify their hidden preferences – in terms of content, method, epistemology, prestige, and more – in order to examine where these biases manifest in the peer review process. Research that closely examines the influence of reflexivity practices on equity in peer review processes and outcomes can provide deep insights into equitable repertoires of practice.

Citation practices. While norms of citation practice differ across disciplines (Hyland 1999), citation practice is one important way that work is positioned and legitimated. Harris and Patton (2018), referencing Delgado (1984), argued "who scholars cite is a political act and creates a genealogy of ideas that dis/empower the originators of such ideas" (p. 7). However, citation practices themselves often protect and cement legitimated scholarship. This process often benefits the work of older, white men from elite institutions (Delgado 1984). Editors and referees, given their purported content expertise, may expect to see certain authors, theories, and methods cited and employed in pieces they review. These expectations may translate into unfavorable reviews for pieces that do not match their expectations, furthering inequities. Thus, authors have to navigate the need to connect their work to existing and legitimated bodies of work, with potential assertions of originality or critique (Bedeian 2004).

Citation practices play a central role in both conferring and claiming legitimacy – who and what is cited appeals to legitimacy and what is cited confers status (Apple 1999; Rowland 2002). Thus, citation practices are inherently political. Authors can resist current and inequitable practices by intentionally citing authors who are not as widely represented in the current canon – including authors from less elite institutions, and those with marginalized racial and gender identities. This practice is one way to engage in resistance to current inequitable citation and peer review practices. Thus, we urge editors and referees to unpack their assumptions about who and what should be cited, as unchecked biases continue to reify inequities throughout the peer review process. Finally, we call for further research into the complexities and outcomes of equity-oriented citation practice as a form of resistance and effort to embrace a more equitable repertoire of practice in peer review.

Curriculum and Instruction: Implications and Recommendations

When considering change processes relating to faculty practice in the university, we need to consider the communities of practice that faculty can draw upon to improve their practice and the role of critical reflection as a tool for professional development. We make the following recommendations for bringing about change in curriculum and instruction in higher education.

(Re)constructing communities of practice. Academic freedom is a prized possession in the academy. Research shows that faculty members value the autonomy in research and teaching that academic freedom provides (Tierney 1993; Tierney and Corwin 2007). Despite expressing an interest in learning to improve their pedagogy, faculty often report a dearth of professional development opportunities around teaching effectiveness in postsecondary institutions (Brownell and Tanner 2012; Seldin 1995). Curriculum and instruction changes in higher education often happen through the enactment and reproduction of communities of practice.

Communities of practice is a theory developed by Lave and Wenger (1991) that defines learning as shifts in identity. Wenger (2010) posits that communities of practice represent a "dual process of meaning making" that leverages both personal participation in social life and the reification of various norms, beliefs, and understandings that are embodied in communal practice. From this perspective, learning happens as individuals move from being novice, peripheral participants to legitimated full participants in particular cultural communities, taking up a shared set of practices deemed legitimate by existing members. According to this theory, learning is not purely an individual cognitive endeavor; it shapes how we make sense of both the complex social world and our place within it. In short, communities of practice balance the uniqueness of personal experience with the reification of various norms, beliefs, and understandings that are embodied in communal practice. This leads us to consider in what ways should we reconstruct communities of practice to meet the needs of a growing subset of faculty rethinking curriculum and instruction practices toward equity for minoritized students?

The overall community of practice is a reflection of its members; communities of practice change if the values, beliefs, and mindsets of its members change. However, communities of practice can often resist change, as their practices and beliefs are often institutionalized over time. Because disciplinary norms and institutional culture play an important role in supporting or impeding change in decision making and evaluation, we suggest creating opportunities for the development of emergent communities of practice. These developing communities of practice can then act as counterspaces that are amenable to evolution in ways that the established communities of practices are not. Barab et al. (2002, p. 493) write,

> By adopting a community of practice perspective on teacher development, it shifts attention away from the traditional analysis of the cognitive attributes and instructional practices of individual teachers and, instead, toward the collaborative interactions that occur among teachers as they attempt to develop and improve their practice.

We argue that Lave and Wenger's (1991) construct of communities of practice provides a useful way to conceptualize how we might support faculty in adopting more equitable pedagogical practice. Their macro-level approach is an important contribution to thinking about decision making and evaluation in higher education.

Adopting ecological research approaches. We assert the need to take an ecological approach to understanding curriculum and instruction decision making processes in higher education. We believe that focusing solely on the beliefs,

mindsets, and practices of faculty is too narrow to understand change. We should also study activity systems (Engeström 1987), or the ways in which interactions among actors, environments, and mediating tools and instruments (both apparent and tacit) facilitate or impede change. The tenure and promotion process is an excellent example of the ways institutional level forces impact individual practice. Seldin comments, "Until recent years, the widespread institutional bias toward research and scholarship outside the classroom discouraged and rendered pointless efforts to improve teaching" (Seldin 1995, p. 9). This might lead us to ask: How do tacit norms of the tenure and promotion processes inform curriculum and instruction practices in academia? How might changing criteria for tenure and promotion process affect the redesign of curriculum and instruction practices? Research that adopts an ecological approach will allow for deeper analysis and potentially more expansive solutions that situate problems in systems rather than people.

Leveraging critical reflection in professional development. While professional development is recognized as an important tool to change pedagogical practice in K–12 schools (Borko 2004), research indicates that there are multiple barriers to the effectiveness of professional development in postsecondary institutions (Caffarella and Zinn 1999). In addition to a general scarcity of professional development opportunities available to university faculty around teaching and curricular development (Brownwell and Tanner 2012; Seldin 1995), a major critique of professional development programming is the absence of the opportunity for critical reflection (Brownwell and Tanner 2012; Brookfield 2017). "Critical reflection is, quite simply, the sustained and intentional process of identifying and checking the accuracy and validity of our teaching assumptions" (Brookfield 2017, p.3). Reflection is considered an important part of the learning process in faculty professional development; it helps faculty to more intentionally adopt student-centered approaches to teaching that can have lasting positive impacts on student learning and achievement (McKenna et al. 2009). However, opportunities for reflection around pedagogy are rare or occur in superficial ways (Brownwell and Tanner 2012; Brookfield 2017). Building practices of critical reflection into professional development programming can provide a way for faculty to improve their teaching.

Embracing Equitable Repertoires of Faculty Practice

In advancing a framework for equitable decision making, we highlighted the significance of evaluation criteria and processes as well as the outcomes and contexts of decision making for fostering equity in higher education. We then applied our framework to reviews of the admissions, hiring, peer review, and curriculum and instruction literatures, and considered their implications and associated recommendations for research and practice. Working across these four, core areas of faculty practice has strengthened our conviction of the vital need in higher education to value and validate the minoritized and marginalized within our community, as well as those who have been excluded from it. Broadening what we decide to define as merit and legitimate is a necessary first step in that expansion.

To move academia closer to equity goals, we have proposed the value of taking a critical stance on merit and legitimacy and integrating this perspective into key themes in the extant research on evaluation and decision making. From this, we created the framework for equitable decision making, and applied the evaluative core concepts to empirical literature about four areas of faculty practice relevant to research, teaching, and service. Based on all of these, and the implications for future scholarship that follows from them, we are able to make four concluding and overarching recommendations that can instantiate equitable repertoires of practice – regardless of the evaluation or decision-making context. While not intended for alignment with every type of decision, these are general guideposts that can support decision making for equity.

Attend to Your Multiple Contexts

One way to logically facilitate a broader vision of merit and legitimacy is to shift from the notion of a single hierarchy of preferences for each evaluation or decision to a framework of multiple hierarchies (i.e., heterarchy) that are associated with the multiple contexts in which judgments and evaluations are situated. In both individual and collective types of decision making, it is important to know your organizations' (e.g., department/unit, school/college, university, discipline) histories and missions, which can shape the evaluation criteria as well as how stakeholders judge the process and outcome of a given decision. Yet, as Fig. 1 demonstrated, institutional context is just one of the multiple contexts that matter. Equity opportunities and threats are present for individuals, committees, organizations, and institutions, alike. We must be mindful of the systemic nature of inequities, accounting for interactions across contexts. When leading a decision-making process or making everyday decisions, recognizing how alternatives are likely to affect specific individuals involved, specific units, and/or the institution in general can clarify how our thoughts and actions are working for or against equity.

The norms and values of a given decision-making context matter much for the potential to compromise or encourage equity. Cultural perspectives on evaluation reveal this most clearly, whereas individual-level perspectives seek commonalities across contexts. As we become more mindful of the contexts in which we are making decisions – their political, cultural, and interpersonal dynamics as well as the formal organizational context that structures the work to be done – we can begin to imagine ways to work with the context's dynamics and priorities to achieve more just decisions and, thus, institutions.

Employ Comprehensive, Contextualized, and Systematic Holistic Review

It should be clear by now that decision making is bound up with evaluation. One cannot make decisions without rendering judgments based on specific criteria

(whether they are consciously chosen or left implicit); and, therefore, both processes deserve administrators' attention as they relate to the outcomes of decisions. The judgment involved in organizational decisions typically results from the application of criteria to an evaluation situation. Rather than trying to eliminate subjectivity in evaluations, research shows the greater need is for practitioners to pay greater attention to the ways that equity is impacted by both the criteria in use and how criteria are interpreted and applied to come to decisions. Holistic review of the options at hand offers one such strategy.

As introduced in the discussion of admissions above, holistic review has been advanced as a means of better evaluating and selecting prospective students. However, it can also be used in a wide range of personnel decisions, including hiring, promotions, committee appointments, awards, determinations of merit pay, and more. To improve on current approaches so that they better reflect and serve equity aims, Posselt and Miller (2018) have proposed a model of holistic review with three elements. Broadly, review should be *comprehensive* in the qualities of options and applicants that it takes into account and the types of information (e.g., parts of an application like metrics, letters of recommendation, writing samples) that it uses to infer those qualities. Decision makers looking at people should be mindful not only of an individual's achievements to date (which can reflect unequal opportunities), but also their potential for future contributions. To assess potential, they should take into account a wide range of characteristics, including socio-emotional or non-cognitive skills (e.g., creativity, leadership, persistence, preference for long-term goals). Holistic review should also *contextualize* the available information. Admissions criteria should be judged in light of a college or program mission, and achievements (or lack thereof) should be contextualized according to student opportunities, which differ markedly by race/ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status, among other identities. Further, when considering metrics (e.g., impact factor and teaching evaluation scores when looking at faculty performance or test scores and grades when looking at student performance), decision makers should recognize every metric is a statistic, that every statistic contains error, and therefore that no statistic is suitable as a sole criterion for evaluation or selection. Rather, in a holistic process, reviewers should contextualize metrics according to their statistical error, limits in predicting future success, and differential distributions in the population by race, gender, class, and the like. Finally, holistic review must be *systematic* to increase efficiency, mitigate bias, and improve consistency, transparency, and accountability. To this end, the development and use of evaluation protocols or rubrics is recommended to guide decision makers in defining shared criteria on which everyone will be assessed (and that collectively will reflect a commitment to obtaining equitable outcomes), and then providing training and practice with the rubric before setting individuals to work reviewing files.

Routinize Equity Checks at Each Point of the Process

Attention to equity and justice – through mindfulness and formal equity and bias checks – is needed at all stages of the decision making process. In enrollment

management and human relations decisions such as those emphasized in this chapter, we need to take into account the ways that outreach activities shape the pool of who is available for evaluation and selection, and how the quality of our recruitment efforts enable us to attract the candidates who are selected. In these ways, one can think about outreach and admissions as shoulders of a decision-making process that includes both evaluation and selection. Equity checks at each stage of the process will render more just decisions by putting data in the hands of decision makers. In extended and committee-based decision-making processes, such as searches, another type of equity check may focus on the qualities of interactions among those participating in the process. More robust, honest climate is created when leaders create occasional opportunities for individuals to share whether they feel free to express their opinion and whether the climate of the group is hospitable to discussion and respectful disagreement. This point is closely related to our next, and final, recommendation.

Address the Intersectional Positionalities of Those with Decision-Making Power

Recognizing how different decisions privilege individuals and groups is an important step for improving the practice of making decisions. Positionality, defined as one's formal position in a social system, as informed by all identities they have available to enact their agency (Battilana 2006), shapes how individuals engage in decision making. For example, when a student serves on a committee composed of faculty and administrators, the committee chair should take steps to ensure that student has means of expressing his/her opinion. Both leaders and members of groups making decisions can act in ways to protect the voice of those who are participating in the process.

Decision makers, too, have identities that affect the equity of outcomes. We are all likely to have subtle, implicit biases for individuals or decision alternatives, and depending upon our positionality, we may be more or less able to advocate for equity in group decision-making contexts. In situations where decisions are being made by individuals or by groups, mindfulness about one's own positionality and individual preferences is an important precursor to making decisions with wisdom – that is, with attentiveness to collective interests and multiple factors. For individuals tasked with making or facilitating decisions, it is important to check in with people from diverse backgrounds as you construct the process and weigh alternatives. In higher education, we must have the vision to see how each person's multiple identities position them in distinctive ways with respect to power, agency, and voice. And in response, we ought to create opportunities to ensure that decision making power and decision-making bodies are equitably distributed across race and ethnicity.

Conclusion

We have proposed that scholars conceptualize varied forms of decision making from an equity-minded perspective, given its formative role in the allocation of opportunities and resources of various sorts. We proposed a framework that situates decision making in multiple higher education contexts, and which proceeds through an evaluative core consisting of criteria, processes, and outcomes that are all shaped by decision makers' values, priorities, and preferences. Our hope is that a critical understanding of dominant frameworks and their application to empirical research in our field can inform evolution in the repertoires of practice that shape everyday work and student learning (Gutierrez and Rogoff 2003). There is much to learn from existing literature, theory, and experience to improve this important facet of academic work – to mindfully use decision making as the powerful lever it is in making our organizations more just and equitable.

We hope to have shown in this chapter that improving faculty work and its outcomes to become more equitable will mean attending to repertoires of practice for research, teaching, and service alike. Within each of these areas, faculty can cultivate (1) critical consciousness about the evaluative criteria that socially construct legitimacy and merit, and (2) equity-mindedness at regular points in the decision-making process, including an eye to collective interests and more equitable outcomes. As scholars, we have a great opportunity to advance theory and research on these topics by attending more explicitly to the implicit rules that govern priorities and decision making in specific contexts, associated social forces such as negotiation and contestation, and the multifaceted role of power. Indeed, the quality of our scholarship can shape the availability of equitable repertoires of practice for the next generation of higher education leaders.

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