Smart is only a construct of correspondence, between one's abilities, one's environment, and one's moment in history. I am smart in the right way, in the right time, on the right end of globalization. – Tressie McMillan Cottom (2019:27)

In a now-retracted 2020 piece for *Angewandte Chemie*, a leading general chemistry journal, the author remarked on both positive and negative changes in elite chemistry research, but negatively framed all efforts to diversify graduate training and adopt holistic hiring practices. Similarly, efforts to change hiring evaluations to address biases or create supportive programs for marginalized individuals, such as hosting "Power Hours" for women in science to come together or "Equity, Diversity and Inclusion" seminars and trainings, were framed as diminishing contributions for men, specifically, and other groups, broadly. In effect, the faculty member conceptualized these initiatives as incentivizing faculty to hire people in "terms of [equal,] absolute numbers of people in specific subgroups", and the fear was these efforts would weaken chemistry scholarship because "the most meritorious candidates" would presumably be discriminated against (Hudlicky 2020:4).

Despite scholarly evidence contradicting these claims –scholars noted the article's lack of empirical evidence to support the author's remarks – this faculty member's focus on *evaluation* as an identification process reveals that a contemporary rationale contributing to racialized and gendered exclusion in the professoriate operates as concerns for preserving expertise in the disciplinary field (Branch 2016; Hirshfield 2016; Turner, Wood, and González 2008). Evaluating faculty, then, is a commensuration process to identify to whom is given entrance to the professoriate and the material and status benefits of its recognition in the field (Espeland and Stevens 1998; Tierney and Bensimon 1996). This concern for preserving expertise has roots in the professoriate's segregated history and the faculty's changing roles at elite institutions, yet sociological scholarship on evaluation and faculty merit have limitedly incorporated this historical

dimension to studying academic power in evaluation processes (Lamont 2009). For instance, inequality scholarship on hiring as evaluation *processes* focuses on identifying contemporary mechanisms by which evaluators use racialized and gendered frames to make status-based distinctions for distributing recognition and resources (Ridgeway 2011; Rivera 2017). Yet, this scholarship does not incorporate the historic or cultural dimensions of value-making within the academy (Buchanan, Ruebottom, and Riaz 2018; Tierney and Bensimon 1996).

How have faculty at elite research institutions managed a system of faculty evaluation? I analyze how faculty evaluators create status distinctions through merit debates, and the racialized dimensions of this evaluation process since after the Civil War. Structural exclusions can occur based on how organizational power constructs racialized and gendered hierarchies within and across organizations in a field (Acker 2016; Ray 2018; Scott 2014; Wooten 2016). For instance, network scholars have identified racialized and gendered disparities in faculty hiring and productivity, linking these inequalities to institutional and faculty network status. Specifically, doctoral prestige better predicts professional placement than publicized institutional ranking systems, and once hired, faculty's research originating from a prestigious institution spreads more quickly and completely than faculty's work of similar quality arriving from a less prestigious institution (Clauset, Arbesman, and Larremore 2015; Morgan et al. 2018; Way et al. 2019). Similarly, faculty hiring processes operate by way of a *historic* cultural structure of academic power, unlike other sociological hiring processes in which evaluators may use their contemporary organizational cultures to inform their preferences (Cetina 1999; Haviland, Alleman, and Allen 2017; kehal, Garbes, and Kennedy 2019). Evaluations, then, are sites for faculty to legitimate their own role and status, and merit's role in managing the elite faculty's role (Downey 1996; Sewell 2005; Tierney and Bensimon 1996). Faculty evaluators, hence, hold power over the *evaluated*.

This study interrogates how academic authority and status have structured contemporary debates on faculty diversification and the supposed "leaky pipeline" to the professoriate (Hirshfield 2016). To do so, I conceptualize faculty evaluations as a specific type of cultural and organizational process. I develop a Du Boisian knowledge culture analysis approach to construct an archive of faculty evaluations at elite research institutions by incorporating organizational, cultural, and Du Boisian sociology. I systematically bring together institutional reports, findings of surveys to faculty, and federal, faculty, Black, and Indigenous histories of higher education policy to review how merit transformations among elite institutions were also debates on elite faculty's role and status within the field (1860-1950s, 1950-1980s, 1980-2020s). Next, I analyze the merit criteria faculty debated during periods of desegregating the professoriate (1930-1940s, 1960-1970s) (Gehrke and Kezar 2015; Teddlie and Freeman 2002). I argue that, when prompted to desegregate, faculty constructed *racialized merit* by using racism-based status distinctions. When debating institutional relations and competence, faculty constructed racialized merit by using *segregating rationales* to distribute recognition to scholarships produced by scholars from historically advantaged backgrounds and to resist changing the evaluation processes in ways that would challenge institutionalized notions of segregation.

The findings provide three contributions to cultural analysis of knowledge and research on institutional racism in higher education. First, I provide an approach for studying how contestations within cultural processes contribute to the persistence of institutional racism in the U.S. academy by combining Du Bois's theory of double consciousness with the cultural framework of commensuration. Second, I identify how processes of evaluation can operate as processes of identification by rationalizing racialization as part of the evaluation system, contributing to research on cultural processes and racialized organizations. Namely, faculty's use of rationales to

construct merit were grounded in historically exploitative double standards to recognize who can be faculty in the field of elite, higher education. Finally, I reveal how debates on merit are sites for faculty to determine how they could counteract institutional racism via redefining the faculty role by connecting contemporary scholarship on faculty merit with its historical antecedents.

FRAMING CULTURAL PROCESSES OF STATUS AND INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

Though scholarship on status is often perceived at the individual level, organizational sociology highlights that an organization's status in a field's status hierarchy structures individual action within the organization. Due to impetuses of *societal* change, shifts in the social order present opportunities for individuals to alter how status distinctions are constituted and how the values constituting status are adjudicated (Sauder, Lynn, and Podolny 2012). When the structural logics of segregation are in flux, then, faculty evaluations are sites for debating status stratifications for the academy because faculty evaluations are the site of contestation for entrance into the professoriate. Entrance is governed by a cultural structure of power that prioritizes authority via expertise and knowledge, a valuation of consensus towards shared goals, and a desire to counteract managerial governance forms (Haviland, Alleman, and Allen 2017). This structure, also referred to as the collegium or academy, is a network of assumptions, traditions, and relations by which faculty establish interpersonal relations, and are legitimated and granted the authority and role to govern the university's academic functions (Downey 1996). As such, debates of status and quality distinctions are processes in which faculty *identify experts* for the distribution of recognition and resources, and the collegium structures and is structured by faculty's status beliefs of their place in the academy (kehal et al. 2019; Sewell 2005). Yet, even if entrance to the professoriate is structurally committed to identifying experts and maintaining their authority, no outcome is inevitable in this conceptualization. Instead, this organizational and historical approach enables

identifying *the structural means* by which these distinctions emerge and persist as part of constructing the evaluation process (Posselt et al. 2020; Ridgeway 2011; Sewell 2005).

This study's analysis of racism considers how faculty use symbols imbued with racialized meanings (e.g., criteria) to maintain segregated status norms in the professoriate. For any consensus-making process, such as faculty evaluations, to be the product of deliberation, rather than racism, the role of the color line must be centered in analyzing the social system (Itzigsohn and Brown 2015). The color line enters during the process of evaluation to structure what evaluators recognize. Without centralizing a structural element that incorporates power asymmetries, misrecognitions would be interpreted exclusively as *the evaluated* not understanding what was communicated. With attention to the color line *and* status order, the process of evaluation is a means by which evaluators' *misrecognition* of faculty merit is a type of racialized boundary maintenance because the evaluators are in the empowered position in a desegregating society.

Institutional racism in the U.S. academy, then, is a structure of social practice that uses rationales grounded in historically exploitative double standards to recognize who can be faculty in the field; faculty evaluation processes are one site for producing this practice (Fields and Fields 2012). For status to be sociologically meaningful though, it must be distinguished from quality. Quality constitutes the criteria faculty used for evaluating academic record (see Table 1); racism-based status distinctions, then, are identified by the social meaning imbued within criteria faculty use and how faculty respond to desegregation in relation to debates about merit criteria. Status distinctions made in evaluations exacerbate institutional racism along two structural dimensions. First, the degree to which faculty make merit distinctions that distribute recognition to scholarships produced by scholars from historically *advantaged* backgrounds. Second, the degree to which the

evaluation processes rely on *continuing* this distribution to persist. Next, I review how merit transformed among the elite, research institutions to present.

RECOVERING FACULTY MERIT AT ELITE RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS: 1860-2020s

The faculty role, since colonial settling, has progressed through periods of bundling and unbundling faculty work; after the Civil War, this process centered on the relationship between research, teaching, and commitments to the discipline and institution. Between 1860 and the 1950s, while faculty took on institutional governance, research, and service roles, faculty academic work was unbundled into specific disciplines and administrative duties shifted away from faculty to trustees and external funders (Barrow 1990; Gehrke and Kezar 2015; Geiger 1986; Thelin 2004). From 1950 to the 1980s, as faculty contributed research to national needs through a small group of elite institutions, teaching was unbundled from the faculty role at elite institutions, as teaching-focused institutions emerged across the nation in this period to meet the national demand (O'Mara 2005; Schuster and Finkelstein 2006). In the present period since 1980, the elite faculty's role is unbundled between research and teaching to such a degree that, while faculty at elite institutions produce nationally recognized research, faculty elsewhere "look most similar to the tutors of the early eighteenth century with contingent faculty appointments, lack of permanent career path, and limited expertise and specialized knowledge" (Gehrke and Kezar 2015:105).

Within this broad history, faculty retained the ability to choose their own faculty through evaluation processes and set the terms of the evaluating. To identify how faculty's roles at elite institutions changed within the prior history, I review how these faculty assessed merit criteria by making quality and status distinctions based on institutional relations and scholarly competence, relying on their elite networks to do so. I visualize this relationship between quality and status in faculty evaluations in Figure 1 and summarize criteria in Table 1.

Faculty Merit as Elite Journal Publications (1860-1950s)

From 1860 to the 1950s, faculty at elite institutions were increasingly engaged in research projects and were expected to produce research, but expectations to publish in specific journals was a modern shift at the time. For instance, in the late 1800s, while one could gain a permanent faculty position at prominent institutions by obtaining a doctorate, as early as 1892, a publication record became expected for aspiring faculty, such as at the University of Wisconsin (Thelin 2004; Veysey 1965). But without a stable source of funding, administrators relied on their network of associations – elite private universities, faculty networks, and private funders – to assess and document their faculty's research value and productivity as "prestigious" (Barrow 1990; Thelin 2004). Faculty and administrators looked to publications in journals and national reputations as criteria for this end and it connected with efforts to manage faculty expectations for quality. For example, faculty created professional disciplinary societies and affiliated journals based on their existing, elite academic affiliations to manage research quality in the early 1900s. The Presidents of Johns Hopkins University and Chicago, with fellow prestigious institutions' support, actively pushed to establish a sufficient number of journals alongside scholarly societies (Brubacher and Rudy 1968). With these disciplinary associations emerging, it became normative for faculty to have a publication record and for it to be in these associations' journals (Veysey 1965).

From the 1920s to the 1950s, these ongoing efforts to standardize research quality brought renewed focus to the purpose of the doctoral degree at elite institutions. With only 65 departments nationwide awarding doctoral degrees in 1924, the professoriate remained the province of the social and economic elite of this time and they considered teaching secondary to research (Brubacher and Rudy 1968). While faculty and administrators created scholarly societies and journals to assess "scholarship" across the field, scholarship applied to research of original inquiry

and *excluded* teaching at research institutions (Rice 1986). For an academic of this research milieu, teaching represented an institutional duty that could impede research production because obtaining a national reputation required faculty to increasingly place their academic work within their disciplines (research, publication, and professional life) (Gehrke and Kezar 2015; Rice 1986).

Managing Faculty Merit Through the Academic Departments (1950-1980s)

Despite elite faculty's movement towards recognizing research published in disciplinary associations' journals, the academic department was a critical site for faculty to manage quality and status from 1950 to 1980s. As the faculty ranks expanded to include faculty from non-elite and working class backgrounds and researchers who had done research in nonacademic settings, the academic discipline served as a core foundation for homogenizing and professionalizing faculty loyalties and commitments (Maher and Tetreault 2006; O'Mara 2005; Rice 1986; Schuster and Finkelstein 2006). The norms cultivated within disciplines engendered a cultural of familiarity in departments (Rice 1986). Through "the socialization experience of graduate school and later through the disciplinary associations", a researcher's academic "home" base narrowed "the definition of the proper scope and standards of academic work" (Schuster and Finkelstein 2006:34). The desire for familiarity was such that faculty continued using social background metrics to evaluate scholar's personality and interpersonal relations throughout the 1950s (Tsay et al. 2003).

Yet, as the field of higher education grew, faculty used their peer networks in other institutions' departments to maintain academic quality nationally. For instance, a scholar at the University of Pennsylvania conducted the first postwar study measuring and ranking the quality of 24 departments' graduate programs in 1957 when attempting to order research standards among major research universities through a comparative self-study (Fife 1980). Even as faculty

centralized the department as their base of authority, faculty were also linked by their disciplines across institutions and they stressed the concept of "quality" *across* research units in the 1960s and 1970s (Fife 1980). For example, faculty at elite institutions foremost valued peer judgements – from within *and* outside their institution (Centra 1977). Continuing to refine standards for publications by way of their own scholarly networks, faculty explicitly used a journal's status *and* peers in the field to assess what they termed quality. Common criteria included "the number of articles published in *quality* journals, the number of books of which the faculty member is the sole or senior author, and the *quality* of ones' research and publications as judged by peers at the institution" (Centra 1977:12, emphasis my own). Though a focus on quality is inevitable for any type of ranked-evaluation, quality recursively defined by way of peers' judgement from similar departments maintains scholarly insularity and rationalizes status stratifications within the field (Maher and Tetreault 2006; Schuster and Finkelstein 2006). Though the 1960s and 1970s heightened the importance of faculty being accomplished within peer networks, faculty maintained their standards of quality within their status-based networks across departments (Rice 1986).

Refining Faculty Merit In the Professions (1980-2020s)

Over the recent four decades, even as faculty named additional criteria to consider contributions to the department and institution, they did so by way of their academic profession. For example, the use of published materials' citation counts in evaluations declined relatively at the start of the 1980s, while faculty's valuing for publishing in profession-affiliated and quality journals, having a published book as the sole or senior author, and contributing to books or monographs increased (Seldin 1984). When it came to determining quality distinctions among these criteria, administrators *again* turned to scholars' professions and the existing faculty to establish quality distinctions. For example, administrators relied on department chairs' opinions,

honors or awards from professions, the administrator's peers at the institution, the institution's academic dean, a scholar's grants and funding, and a scholar's status as referee or editor of professional journal (Seldin 1984).

Though these criteria associated with further professional engagement proliferated, in the 1990s and 2000s, they also offered recognition to "non-traditional" disciplines. Under the valuing of productivity, scholars in historically marginalized disciplines could use productivity criteria based in their association and journals to legitimize their disciplines on campuses. For instance, scholarly productivity among gender studies scholars in the 1990s aided in institutionalizing the department across institutions through degree-generating graduate programs and faculty lines (Scott 2008). Similarly, faculty emphasized identifying various methods for assessment and documentation in order to fairly evaluate any new forms of scholarship, such as being oriented towards civic purposes (Fife 1980; Glassick, Huber, and Maeroff 1997). As a result, in the 1990s and 2000s, faculty framed research excellence and diversity constitutively when making distinctions in assessing a scholar's research expertise, such as scholarly methods, research feasibility, interpretative and crafting skills, clarity, originality, intellectual and social significance, differences in pure or applied, generalizability, and colleagues' reference letters (Lamont 2009; Posselt 2016). While these distinctions attempt to name the type of scholarship that a desired faculty expert would produce, faculty debate these distinctions relying on academic professional metrics (Lamont 2009; Liera 2020; Morgan et al. 2018; Posselt 2016). For instance, recent quality determinations for research across disciplines were bound in candidates communicating their productivity and impact in relation to disciplinary debates in professional journals (Harley et al. 2010).

Intersecting throughout this account of merit in faculty evaluations is a history of the professoriate's racialized segregation. Next, I chart out an approach to analyze the structural means by which faculty at elite institutions maintained existing segregated status norms by way of merit.

CONCEPTUAL APPROACH: METHODOLOGY AND DATA

In the context of higher education's institutional status hierarchies and their relation to faculty evaluation processes, racial *desegregation* is a structural analytic and impetus of societal change that presents opportunities for changes in status distinctions. I combine frameworks of commensuration with Du Bois's theory of double consciousnesses to define a knowledge cultural sociology approach, analyzing how faculty responded to evaluating candidates in relation to status considerations (Espeland and Stevens 1998; Itzigsohn and Brown 2015). A knowledge cultural analysis "works to understand how knowledges' symbols, schemas, institutions, and networks shape the terms of social reproduction and transformations" (kehal et al. 2019:1). In evaluation processes, evaluators commensurate desired and undesired qualities into quantities through a process that "reconstructs relations of authority, creates new political entities, and establishes new interpretive frameworks" (Espeland and Stevens 1998:317, 323).

The analysis incorporates the color line by considering the phases of segregation in U.S. higher education to partition and order the study into time periods for analysis: 1860-1950s and 1950-1980s. For instance, the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* and 1978 *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* decisions marked how the structural conditions for evaluating shifted: a structural shift in the logics from segregating by racialized background (1860-1950s) to desegregating by racialized background (1950-1980s). With this periodization, I focus the analysis on two moments of change in the structural logics of segregation: when white presidents were asked to consider Black scholars for full-time hiring (1930-1940s) and when numerical hiring

goals created debates among faculty (1960-1970s). The periods are referred to as "merit during segregation" and "merit during desegregation." After *Bakke*, in which the Court allowed evaluators to consider someone's racialized identity under narrow parameters, desegregation shifted toward diversification by many backgrounds under a banner of multicultural inclusion and belonging (1980s-2020s) (Jayakumar, Garces, and Park 2018).

Through this approach, I intersect the narrative of faculty merit at elite institutions reviewed earlier with two moments of faculty desegregation to identify how faculty reacted to including Black scholars into the professoriate. To this end, the institutions in this study are higher education institutions, while the network of this study's focus is elite, research institutions. Thus, the faculty evaluation process is conceptualized as faculty evaluators charged to recognize research experts with some degree of institutional compatibility.

Analysis Plan and Data

To identify what is communicated as merit, I constructed an archive of federal and indigenous histories of federal higher education policy (settlement to present), histories of the professoriate (1700-present), and institutional reports (1900 to present). Consistent with a knowledge cultural sociology approach, these secondary data are supplemented through historical scholarship on histories of U.S. higher education, colonialism and slavery in U.S. higher education, and faculty evaluations at U.S. research institutions (Griffin 1995). To track changes in logics of racism, merit, and higher education, I identified significant moments of change for logics from 1611 – when French Jesuits first opened mission schools to educate Indigenous children – until 2016 – when the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of considering race in admissions (Grande 2015; Reyhner and Eder 2004). This generated an archive of about 500 significant moments; treating the racism, merit, and higher education as sensitized concepts for analysis, I

aggregated these moments into 266 moments that most directly addressed the nexus of racism, merit, and higher education in the United States (Bowen 2006). I coded these moments into seven broad themes for which they seemed most relevant: racism; merit; higher education; racism and merit; racism and higher education; merit and higher education; and racism, merit, and higher education.

Attending to the variation within these seven categories, I generated additional codes that identified changes in meanings within each category by describing how structural changes occurred across moments (Deterding and Waters 2018). For example, from the 15th to 19th century, observing work was the primary mode for identifying "merit"; these ideas of merit were in flux in the U.S. 19th century as merit moved from ideas of "wealth" and "self-made man" towards "merit as objective" (Daston and Lunbeck 2011). I aggregated all moments within each category into 43 decades and assigned these within-category-themes to a decade. With all subthemes placed in conversation between 1600-2020, I focused on transformations in ideas from when the modern research university emerged in the late 1800s until present.

I used various types of secondary data for this study's analysis. For period one, I analyzed histories of the profession and literature on letters between Fred G. Wale trying to desegregate the professoriate and 200 white presidents experiencing faculty shortages (AAUP 1970; Anderson 1993). For period two, I combined merit scholarship on elite graduate fellowship recommendation letters with American Council of Education surveys of academic deans and department chairs. Covering the period from the 1950s to the 1970s, I use these 208 letters from across the disciplines to capture how white male academics were evaluated during "merit during desegregation" (Tsay et al. 2003). Meanwhile, for evaluations in the 1960s and 1970s, I analyzed survey scholarship asking academics to identify the value faculty gave to different types of accomplishments. Surveys

from throughout the 1960s reached 453 departments across research institutions, doctoral-granting institutions, and comprehensive universities (Centra 1977), while those from the 1970s and 1980s reached 616 public and private liberal arts colleges (Seldin 1984).

Through this analysis, I identify a structure of evaluation cultivated within the field of elite institutions that is attuned to the history of institutional racism and faculty in higher education; I do not make claims of universal representativeness or intentionality. Furthermore, this knowledge cultural analysis used secondary data along with historical scholarship to theorize from an organizational level. Though these data sources draw on different institutional populations over time, they collectively constitute the field of elite, research institutions as it emerged. Similarly, though individual disciplinary logics can also structure decision-making in departments, a focus on analyzing trends across disciplines can provide insight into the common higher principles that structure the academy (Boltanski and Thevenot 2000).

DU BOISIAN KNOWLEDGE CULTURAL ANALYSIS: CONSTRUCTING RACIALIZED MERIT FROM SEGREGATING TO DESEGREGATING

I focus on two moments in which faculty debate distinctions for what could be recognized as research to identify faculty's rationales for maintaining their existing system of evaluation. Each instance is analyzed in relation to the ongoing trends in faculty merit for the period (Table 1, Figure 1) by considering how faculty responded to including Black scholars, specifically, into the professoriate. During "merit during segregation", I analyze how faculty used contemporary concerns for "institutional relations" to rationalize excluding Black scholars in relation to concerns of reverse discrimination. During "merit during desegregation", I analyze how faculty used contemporary concerns for "competence" to maintain the existing evaluation system in relation to debates on numerical hiring goals. Through this analysis across both periods, I show how faculty

used segregating rationale to distribute recognition to scholarships produced by scholars from historically advantaged backgrounds, and used that rationale to resist changing the evaluation processes in ways that would challenge institutionalized notions of segregation. In doing so, faculty constructed racialized merit within faculty evaluations by evaluating criteria through racism-based status distinctions. I summarize these rationales upholding the evaluation system in Table 2.

Institutional Relations and Merit During Segregation (1860-1950s)

Black academics were excluded from research institutions in this period as a matter of national norm regardless of their qualifications (Thelin 2004). But, the 1930s and 1940s were significant for higher education because systematized desegregation efforts in society and education took root. Civil rights activists used the legal rationale of separate but equal in the context of graduate schools, such as law schools, in order to legally compel institutions to desegregate if they could not provide an equal, but separate training at a different institution (Teddlie and Freeman 2002). At that time, it was a significant hurdle for institutions and faculty to identify alternative institutions, especially for graduate training, because elite institutions valued their distinctive status in the field while newer institutions mimicked elite institutions (Geiger 1986; Thelin 2004; Veysey 1965). If faculty and administrators wished to continue segregation at their institutions, they needed legally defensible rationales to explain the continued exclusion of Black, and any other racially marginalized, scholars, or provide an "equal" quality alternative.

These desegregation efforts, though not directly related, collided with ongoing debates in the 1930s regarding the failure to institutionalize an appropriate M.A**.** for college teachers. For the debates among the elite professoriate, the failure to de-link research and teaching was an issue of intellectual aristocracy and civilization, and allowing the doctorate to serve the double purpose of

teaching and research was a threat to the aristocracy (Brubacher and Rudy 1968). For example, in a speech to the American Association of Universities in 1932, University of Chicago professor Nitze asserted that a proper credential had not emerged

> because the few outstanding universities in this country never had the courage to resist public opinion and tell people the fact; namely, that education is necessarily a selection of the best, that it is an aristocratic (and not democratic) in effect, and that therefore nothing could have been more futile than to lay hold on a standard of excellence and lower to the point where it would meet a so-called 'practical demand' (Brubacher and Rudy 1968: 194).

Nitze reveals two elements for understanding the faculty role at elite institutions and status distinctions. Not only does Nitze relegate teaching the masses as a secondary, unimportant need for elite research institutions, Nitze also signals that higher education is meant to be a status distinction among the masses.

Though Nitze is of course one faculty member from an elite research institution, this was the elite, research faculty's milieu (Brubacher and Rudy 1968). The cohorts of faculty who had entered the professoriate throughout the early 1900s came from the wealthy social and economic classes and focused on questions of civilization. These faculty – predominantly if not exclusively white, male, settler, and Protestant – formulated a liberal education that did not deny scientific theories of evolution; instead, they believed that if evolution were true, then only a few animals had emerged into civilization (Thelin 2004; Veysey 1965). To these faculty, other elite institutions were best equipped to identify candidates for the professoriate because an institution's research acumen would produce a national, intellectual aristocracy (Veysey 1965).

Though faculty could continue in their insular, exclusionary worlds, desegregation efforts found partial successes in the professoriate. For example, in 1941, Dr. Allison Davis was hired as

faculty member at the University of Chicago, becoming the first African American scholar of record to serve with *full status* in a predominantly white university (Anderson 1993). As desegregation efforts intensified and universities faced faculty shortages in the 1940s, Fred G Wale identified an opportunity. Wale was the director of education for the Julius Rosenwald Fund and spearheaded a nationwide campaign in 1945 introducing 150 Black scholars with prestigious credentials to over 600 northern white universities presidents in the hopes of desegregating the professoriate, with 200 presidents replying (Anderson 1993). Yet, when Wale provided this list of Black scholars with prestigious institutional affiliations and publication records, white presidents responded by noting the importance of *additional* considerations, which represented the scholar's value for *institutional* use. These merit distinctions asked what value did explicitly considering Black scholars have for the institution in the 1940s. Specifically, white presidents'

> definitions of merit extended beyond strict academic achievement. They included 'institutional needs,' 'geography,' 'population,' and 'local community attitudes,' and other criteria that were used to justify the exclusion of African American scholars on 'merit' grounds. Thus, they could hold on to their faith in meritocracy while excluding African American scholars from faculty positions in their institutions (Anderson 1993:174).

These additional criteria defined a set of institutional relations that made merit distinctions for evaluations in surplus of what was communicated as merit (Table 1). Despite these Black scholars achieving success within the existing merit definitions for the 1940s, white presidents used *segregating rationales* to construct racialized merit to exclude qualified candidates who were Black and uphold the existing system. For instance, white presidents argued that any intentional efforts to give Black scholars attention could be unfair treatment to white scholars and students;

this is only possible because white faculty bound ideas of merit to assumptions about white people's reactions to Black researchers in the academy. But these distinctions used for excluding Black faculty were also racism-based status distinctions that tied Black faculty's inclusion in relation to the institution's needs, not faculty functional work. President Espy of State Teachers College in New York did not think his *institution's* needs warranted "making any special effort to employ Negro teachers or to discriminate against white applicants," which he insisted was reverse discrimination in 1945 (Anderson 1993:169). Espy reveals how segregating rationales – those that maintained the existing racialized segregation in the professoriate – were part of defining institutional relations because white presidents signaled valuing whether the scholar was appropriate for the *institution* in relation to *the candidate's* demographic background. Even qualified and prestigious Black researchers who fit the academic model could not find full time employment at elite institutions regardless of the institution's status in the field as a teaching or research institution.

Using these segregating rationales to resist desegregation and define racialized merit for evaluations, faculty imbued the idea of white victimhood as a site of protection *from* Black scholars, showing how *faculty's* relations with the racialized and marginalized class are part of defining merit in excess of 'quality' concerns. Thus, faculty at elite institutions structured evaluations around the denial of racism through segregating rationales; rather than recognizing that these rationales *were* a double standard against Black academics in that period, faculty considered merit distinctions based on institutional relations to manage their concerns about desegregating the intellectual aristocracy. These distinctions were not of quality though, but of status for who could and could not teach and research. For white presidents, their understanding of merit "became the fragile bridge across the intolerable contradictions between equality and

racism… Instead of viewing racial and ethnic exclusion as the antithesis of merit, the presidents found a way out of this uncomfortable confrontation by constructing a set of rationales that effectively defined African American scholars as the antithesis of merit" (Anderson 1993:174).

In using these segregating rationales to construct a version of merit that that enabled segregation to persist, administrators and faculty used merit debates as sites to not only manage segregation, but also identify faculty who do research in a way that is legible to faculty at the institution. Faculty evaluation processes, as a structure of evaluation, had no need to consider how the established processes further marginalized scholars because desegregation was conceptualized as a status concern within the field of elite institutions, and there was no benefit within the field to desegregating. Merit distinctions made through institutional relations, or racism-based status distinctions, could be defined ad hoc as part of evaluation processes in his period to consider how Black scholars would acclimate on campus while also rationalizing the exclusion of misrecognized scholars.

Competency and Merit During Desegregation (1950-1980s)

Though desegregation efforts persisted, gaining momentum in the 1950s and 1960s, desegregating *the elite professoriate* was a gradual process. As faculty increasingly valued their departments as entities to maintain between the 1950s and 1980s, amidst rapid changes in faculty's role, faculty by the end of this period were primarily concerned with recruiting and keeping faculty they had already recognized as competent in the 1960s (Centra 1977). For example, in relation to desegregation, few research institutions had Black faculty in the 1950s, such as the University of California, Berkeley, which hired its first Black professor in 1952 (Slater 1998). In fact, well after the 1961 affirmative action executive order, many elite institutions did not hire their first, full-time Black faculty members until *after* the 1964 passage of the Civil Rights Act (Slater 1998).

During this time of social change (1950-1980s), competence was a specifically debated topic in the academy, particularly when pertaining to including and evaluating scholars who had been historically excluded. The underlying context for these faculty debates were efforts to change the logics that had guided faculty evaluations from those focused on assessing cultural background to logics focused on competence (Brubacher and Rudy 1968; Thelin 2004). In other words, the legal context was one in which individuals and institutions should adopt desegregating rationales to change the evaluative process and outcome. For example, in the prestigious Woodrow Wilson Fellowship Program competition, faculty recommenders for white, male candidates revealed that they constructed racialized merit by invoking merit distinctions via "intellectual" criteria to communicate a particular type of competent scholar (Tsay et al. 2003).

While faculty use of intellect-based criteria to make merit distinctions suggests a potential shift away from de facto racialized segregation in the professoriate, these criteria reflected that an ideal candidate was a researcher who was a product of scholarly research networks and disciplines (Schuster and Finkelstein 2006; Tsay et al. 2003). For instance, though moral and social background criteria were *decreasingly* used in the 1970s relative to their usage at in the 1950s, these distinctions included descriptions of a scholar's personality, interpersonal relations, psychological well-being, work ethic, and valuing of culture and intellectual cultivation (Tsay et al. 2003). In contradistinction, faculty recommenders used a candidate's academic record, performance, grade point average/class rank, Phi Beta Kappa or Rhodes information as representations of "universal" intellect (Tsay et al. 2003:40-42). Though academic performance assesses a scholar's demonstrated quality, faculty couched these merit distinctions within the field's status norms. Both Phi Beta Kappa and Rhodes Fellowship were ostensibly open to Black students, but, students could obtain Phi Beta Kappa inductions only if they attended an elite

institution with such a chapter; since the first Black scholar was inducted in 1877, only 210 Black students had been inducted into Phi Beta Kappa by the 1950s, (Titcomb 2001). Furthermore, the Rhodes Fellowship only admitted two Black Americans by the 1970s – once in 1907 and again in 1963 (AAREG 2009). Even if faculty evaluators considered Black scholars fairly under these merit distinctions with no racist animus, these distinctions are based in a double standard inhering in these criteria for competence. As academia reckoned with structural shifts to adopt desegregating rationales, faculty at elite research institutions contextualized their concerns of competence within a framework distributing recognition to scholars from historically advantaged backgrounds.

While concerns of competence were evident in how faculty communicated value for white scholars within elite national networks, faculty debates within departments at elite institutions in the 1970s increasingly engaged national debates of desegregation. For administrators and faculty at those institutions, though they were open to civil rights demands, they also wished to pragmatically maintain their status in the field and avoid student uprisings in the 1970s (Johnson 2020; Okechukwu 2019; Stulberg and Chen 2014). Pragmatic solutions came in the form of institutions adopting top-down policy solutions, such as affirmative action, or other outcome-based goals, such as numerical hiring goals to desegregate the professoriate. For example, though affirmative action nationally remained an unpopular policy throughout the 1970s, three thousand faculty across the nation signed a New York Times petition in 1975 to push universities to endorse numerical hiring goals for hiring "qualified women and minority persons" (Cherrier 2019). Yet, faculty at elite institutions were concerned these efforts could remove the purpose of merit distinctions for the evaluations because they would compromise quality and status. Harvard economist Abba Lerner and sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset were against such efforts. Interpreting desegregating efforts through *segregating* rationales, they considered numerical goals

equivalent to quotas and necessarily reverse discrimination to some applicants, *even if* such discrimination was justified in light of historical justice. In particular, Lerner objected to enacting numerical goals because they threatened competency in practice:

> "I know that I do not have to argue the case with you that the standards of competitive excellence which form part of the essence of intellectual life are antithetical to a view of academic positions as one for which minimum competency qualifies. One problem, of course, with this argument is that in practice it only applied to part of American academe, that which is seriously concerned with intellectual creativity as a major portion of its role." (Cherrier 2019).

Lerner, like Nitze before him, made explicit how concerns of competency tied together faculty's desires to maintain the academe's status and faculty's moral desires to pursue justice. In this time of scholarly quality management though, Lerner did not conceptualize hiring goals as a way to enhance quality definitions or the intellectual aristocracy. Instead, hiring goals in the name of justice, to Lerner, Lipset, and others of this milieu, undermined the faculty's role as experts because such goals (presumably) would result in hiring scholars who these faculty perceived as below the basic qualifications needed to be a faculty at their institution.

In contrast, health scientist, sociologist, and co-sponsor of the petition, Rose Coser interpreted the desegregation efforts through *desegregating* rationales. Coser denounced such framings of equivalence as "red herrings" that were "for propagandistic purposes" because "quotas are meant to keep people out on one extraneous criterion, whether or not they otherwise qualify for the main requirements for entrance; numerical goals, in contrast, are meant to get people in who do qualify for the main requirements for entrance, and who would be kept out otherwise for reasons that are not pertinent to the performance that is sought" (Cherrier 2019). In this distinction

between quotas and numerical goals, Coser clarifies a difference between desegregation for redistribution and desegregation for retribution, as she conceptualized efforts of racialized and gendered inclusion as threats to *neither* quality nor status. Lerner responded to these efforts as threats to *both*. In linking efforts towards pursuing justice as threats to merit and status, those of Lerner's milieu used segregating rationales to maintain the existing evaluation system in spite of the presence of desegregating rationales. Echoing the presidents during merit during segregation, these 1970s faculty reacted to desegregation efforts based on the *perceived* end result, and identified the process and perceived end result as either threats to their (and their department's) status in the discipline and field or not.

DISCUSSION

In the prior knowledge cultural analysis, I intersected the narrative of faculty merit with two moments of faculty desegregation. In relation to the changing faculty role and desegregation efforts, I argue that faculty effectively created *racialized merit* by their use of segregating rationales between 1860 and the 1980s. When prompted with opportunities to redefine merit distinctions to desegregate the professoriate, faculty at elite institutions made distinctions by using institutional, disciplinary, and academic criteria to recognize who can be faculty in the field. Yet, they accomplished this by using segregating rationales grounded in historically exploitative double standards to rationalize and then maintain a system of evaluation (Table 2). Under this analyzed history, racialized merit transformed between the two periods: from being understood as what white and male faculty did at elite institutions to conforming to how faculty defined research via their departments and disciplines. Through racialized merit, any topic of research is welcomed, but not all can be recognized; next, I discuss how faculty's production of racialized merit contributed to institutional racism in the U.S. academy.

Status and Institutional Racism in the Elite U.S. Professoriate

During merit during segregation, faculty conceptualized counteracting racism as a question of status within the field of research institutions. At that time, given the state-sponsored logics of "separate but equal," there was no benefit to faculty, disciplines, or institutions within the field to counteracting racism or segregation (Anderson 1993; Thelin 2004). When prompted or provided the opportunity to extend access or remove barriers for entry into the professoriate, faculty developed rationales, such as institutional relations, that defined merit as academic conformity with consideration of white victimization. This was enabled by the ongoing concerns around graduate training, as faculty at elite institutions were distinguishing their institutions as research institutions and their research as prestigious (Geiger 1986; Thelin 2004). Faculty and administrators' rationales contributed to institutional racism in the academy though by trying to limit perceived and potential individual-level reverse discrimination towards white candidates: this rationale precluded the inclusion of criteria or methods that would consider how the established processes further marginalized scholars. For faculty evaluations processes, the existence of qualified Black scholars and civil rights activists demanding desegregation were not enough for faculty at elite institutions to break from the cultural mode of evaluation. Doing so would necessarily be a loss in institutional status between 1860 and the 1950s (Anderson 1993; Geiger 1986; Karabel 2005).

Unlike "merit during segregation", between 1950 and 1980s, faculty's status concerns were managed through the academic disciplines (Jencks and Riesman 2001). Despite immense demographic changes into the undergraduate student bodies across the *field* of higher education, there were more moderate changes among the professoriate at elite research institutions (Maher and Tetreault 2006; Schuster and Finkelstein 2006). For these faculty at elite research institutions,

the discipline was the site for managing concerns for how changes in society could fundamentally alter their scholarly ways of being. As the debate on using numerical hiring goals indicated though, even if faculty wished to be inclusive, they maintained concerns for quality and status loss. Faculty could have, in part, used the extended set of evaluative criteria developed during "merit during desegregation" to recognize new types of scholarship, especially given the use of criteria embedded within disciplinary networks. But, at the same, the wider net could do the legally compliant evaluative work of identifying competent researchers aligned with academic and status priorities. For instance, faculty and academic deans by the end of the 1970s and entering the 1980s indicated a decline in using some criteria, such as personal attributes, because deans could use the wider net to "build more comprehensive cases that [would be] less likely to be challenged in court" (Seldin 1984:40). With these responses, faculty approached evaluation processes to end intentional exclusion (segregation) and not necessarily replace it with intentional inclusion (desegregation and integration).

Underlying how faculty maintained this system, which results in racialized and gendered disparities in hiring and promotion, were discursive rationales. Though these rationales are consistent with contemporary scholarship on how white individuals create rationales to evade the reality of structural racism, this straightforward comparison would erase the structural and historic context (Mueller 2020). When these rationales are placed in their context – moving from a segregated to desegregating society – these rationales are evident as historically segregating rationales. Furthermore, given these rationales persistence as part of the evaluation system – as the knowledge cultural analysis makes evident – faculty evaluation processes have incorporated a racialization process by the way faculty use segregating rationales to limit desegregation.

Returning to the opening example and contextualizing it within this analysis, Hudlicky's rationales echo the rationales of the segregated and desegregating professoriate, but outside a structural context. Specifically, in the name of diversification (instead of segregation or desegregation), men and other groups' contributions to the academy (instead of white men or existing faculty) would be diminished because such efforts would result in quotas, diluting academic knowledge production and discriminating against the "most meritorious" candidates (Hudlicky 2020). Neither institutional relations nor competence are not explicitly invoked; instead, an abstract candidate represents the archetypical wronged faculty candidate. Yet, an analysis of a near-complete population of 1.2 million U.S. doctoral recipients from 1977 to 2015 and their careers into publishing and faculty positions revealed that demographically underrepresented scholars innovated at *higher* rates than majority-identity scholars in their field, but their contributions were *discounted* and *less likely* to result in an academic hiring (Hofstra et al. 2020). Empirically, the "wronged" candidates over the past four decades were those same scholars who could have been recognized had efforts of change – faculty desegregation – not been resisted. Instead, what Hudlicky and those of this contemporary research milieu produce are contemporary segregating rationales that maintain the existing evaluation system and segregated professoriate.

CONCLUSION

Many of the merit criteria identified at the turn of the twentieth century remain present in contemporary evaluations. Though there are more journals and associations in total today than a century ago, disciplinary and journalistic norms remain the primary sites of recognizing research, for instance. Unlike a century ago, faculty candidates may come from any background, though their path to the professoriate remains structured by their demographic background (Turner et al. 2008). While elite institutions have stated a commitment to having demographically diverse

campuses, many evaluative systems at elite institutions distribute recognition to scholarships produced by scholars from historically *advantaged* backgrounds (Clauset et al. 2015; Hofstra et al. 2020; Morgan et al. 2018; Way et al. 2019). This study's findings suggest, rather than adding new criteria for merit-distinctions, a path towards desegregation and equity requires removing criteria primarily reflecting and engendering status-based distinctions.

Future research should extend these findings to develop additional methods and methodologies for studying systemic racism's structuring influence on the U.S. academy. I highlight how evaluation processes can racialize by using rationales devoid of structural or historic context by combining cultural tools with Du Boisian sociology, contributing to research on cultural processes and racialized organizations. Furthermore, I provide an conceptualization for institutional racism within the U.S. academy that is attuned to the historic processes that construct racialized merit (Espeland and Sauder 2016; Moore 2008). Finally, this analysis identifies the importance of the changing faculty role (Kezar and Maxey 2016). Future research should also consider how the faculty's changing role structures faculty's notions of merit. For example, research institutions outside the elite tiers, such as Worcester Polytechnic Institute, recognized that the faculty role excluded scholars from marginalized racialized and gendered backgrounds when bound to a historic definition of "scholarship." In response, faculty redefined scholarship in tenure guidelines to categorize scholarship broadly with purpose-based distinctions – of discovery, integration, application and practice, teaching and learning, and engagement (Quinn-Szcesuil 2019).

This study's findings also prompt ongoing diversity discourses to reconsider diversity and merit's relationship in the professoriate. Future research should assess how merit is changing in this period in relation to faculty's reactions to diversification efforts, as faculty reacted to

desegregation efforts in the past and as diversity and inclusion efforts work to diversify campuses. Doing so, research on merit, culture, and diversity in higher education can better address existing inequalities structured within organizations, as this study implicates how faculty's usage of segregating rationales to constitute the field's status order is tied to maintaining institutional racism. Faculty, then, must consider how they can redefine the faculty role at elite institutions to counteract the pursuit of status as one potential method for counteracting institutional racism in the elite U.S. professoriate.

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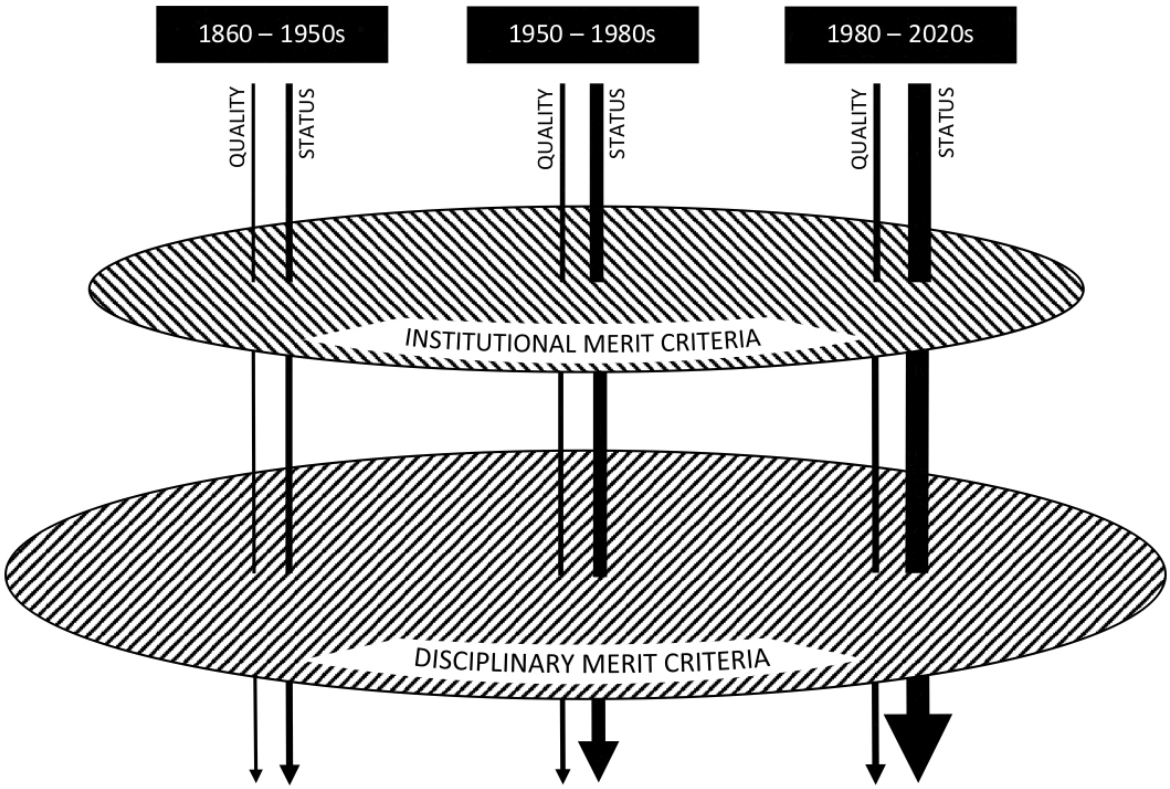

Figure 1. Visualizing the Relationship Between Merit Criteria and Faculty's Distinctions in Quality and Status in Faculty Evaluations at Elite Institutions, 1860-2020s.

Time Period	Years	Communicated Faculty Merit
Merit During Segregation	1860-1950s	• Candidate quality criteria: Research publications; teaching ability; institutional pedigree and a PhD • Bases for distinctions: reputation; productive; department and institutional needs, geography, population, and local community attitudes
Merit During Desegregation	1950-1980s	• Candidate quality criteria: Number of publications in journals, existence of journal service, professional awards, grants received, student teacher evaluations, colleague's letters, institutional pedigree, and a PhD • Bases for distinctions: quality via peers judgement at one's own and other institutions opinions; academic, analytical, interpretative ability; academic communication; and intellectual and creative desire
Merit During Diversification	1980-2020s	• Candidate quality criteria: Publications in journals; articles, books, works of art, grants, independent production; professional society and institutional activities; public service; colleague's letters; teaching ability; and a PhD • Bases for distinctions: Quality via peers judgement at one's own and other institutions opinions; impact factors and citation indexes; methods, feasibility, interpretative skills, crafting skill; clarity, originality, intellectual and social significance, pure or applied, generalizability; building national/global reputation; institutional diversity, field-specific and topic-specific diversity; and demographic diversity

Table 1. Summary of the Communicated Faculty Merit and Bases for distinctions for Permanent Faculty Positions, 1860-2020s.

Time Period	Years	Segregating Rationales Based on Double Standards
Merit During Segregation	1860-1950s	• Merit, with respect to racism, is academic conformity, but with consideration of white victimization • Faculty evaluation processes, as a site of contestation, have no explicit need to consider how the established faculty evaluation *further* marginalizes scholars
Merit During Desegregation	1950-1980s	• Merit, with respect to racism, is ending intentional exclusion but not replacing it with intentional inclusion • Faculty evaluation processes, as a site of contestation, should use culturally-informed criteria of merit, and it is presumed these criteria assess quality through peer judgements

Table 2. The Segregating Rationales Based on Double Standard In Faculty Evaluation Processes, 1860-1980s. The table displays the rationales faculty conceptualized in response to calls for desegregation. With attention to both evaluators and the evaluation process, the table indicates what evaluators understood merit to be and how faculty evaluation processes could counteract institutional racism in the academy.