The Institutionalization of Diversity at an HBCU and Its Implications for Racialized School Mission

BY

COURTNEY MYRTLE CARTER
B.A., Truman State University, 2004
M.A., University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, 2009

THESIS

Submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology in the Graduate College of the University of Illinois at Chicago, 2015

Chicago, Illinois

Defense Committee:

William Bielby, Chair and Advisor
Maria Krysan
Sharon Collins
Paul-Brian McInerney
Laura Beth Nielsen, Northwestern University
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee members- William Bielby, Maria Krysan, Sharon Collins, Paul-Brian McInerney, and Laura Beth Nielsen- for their assistance throughout this process. They have each helped me to see the potential in this topic and how it can be further developed. I would also like to thank Marybeth Gasman at the University of Pennsylvania for her mentoring and commitment to increasing public awareness about HBCUs.

To my intellectual community of peers at UIC I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation for your generous care. Together we have commiserated over setbacks and shared victories. Your friendship is what I will treasure most from graduate school. Thank you, Kiana Cox, Marco Roc, Patrick Washington, Lisa Berube, Pallavi Banerjee, Amy Brainer, Georgiann Davis, Rachel Allison, Danielle Gifford, Kelly Underman, and Allison Moss.

Lastly, there are no words that adequately capture what my family has meant to me throughout this process. Without their unwavering faith in my work and my ability to finish none of this would be possible.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Historically Black Colleges and Universities are schools founded for African Americans during the era of legal segregation in higher education (Gasman 2008; Jackson and Nunn 2003; Allen and Jewell 2002). While the earliest schools were established before the civil war, the most HBCUs were established between the 1890s and 1930s (Gasman 2008). There are currently 105 HBCUs, including public and private, 2-year and 4-year, single gender and co-educational institutions (White House Initiative on HBCUs 2015). They enroll 11% of black students but account for twenty-eight percent of black college graduates (Center for Minority Serving Institutions 2014; Gasman, Baez, Drezner, Sedgwick, Tudico, and Schmid 2007). The majority of HBCU students are first generation students and low-income students (Jackson and Nunn 2003; Mercer and Stedman 2008). For these students, black colleges and universities offer the option of upward mobility (Douglas 2012; Harris 2012; Jackson and Nunn 2003; Strayhorn and Hirt 2008). Compared to their black counterparts at Historically White Institutions (HWIs) black HBCU graduates have better post-undergraduate outcomes, including greater likelihood of attending graduate school (Wenglinsky 1996), greater access to networks that provide entrée to the black business elite (Boyd 2007), and higher lifetime earnings (Price, Swiggs and Swinton, 2011).

Despite their successes HBCUs are plagued by crises of institutional viability and institutional legitimacy. Regarding viability, many HBCUs have struggled to survive in the post-desegregation era, and have been labeled “endangered institutions” (June 2003). This is partly due to declining enrollment. Prior to the 1960s, nearly 90% of black college students attended HBCUs, but those numbers have dwindled quite consistently to the present, where HBCUs currently only enroll 11% of African American college students (Center for Minority Serving Institutions 2014). Economic concerns also contribute to the viability crisis. HBCUs continue to exist on far fewer financial resources than HWIs (Gasman, Baez and Turner 2008). Numerous sources have documented the systematic and intentional underfunding of public schools by as much as millions of dollars (Lee and Keys 2013; Gasman 2007; Thompson 1973). Furthermore, black colleges rely heavily on federally funded subsidized assistance to low-income students and veterans- financial sources that are especially dependent on the economic strength of the
state (Evans, Evans, and Evans, 2002). Many HBCUs have not only been disadvantaged from without, but also mismanaged from within (June 2003). Cases of financial mismanagement are widely publicized, most recently the troubles at South Carolina State University, a university the state legislature considered closing for a year after it was found to be more than $20 million dollars in debt (Koh and Santaella 2015).

The crisis of legitimacy concerns HBCUs’ status as valid institutions of higher education. Scholarly experts on HBCUs claim that most black schools are underappreciated institutions, considered inferior to HWIs (Gasman 2007; Brown and Freeman 2004; Thompson 1973). Some HBCU experts acknowledge that despite that the broader appreciation for schools that cater to particular groups, like women’s colleges, “students a contentious and inconsistent reputation for black colleges persists” (Brown 2013: 10).

One area in which they are challenged is educational outcomes. HBCUs are assigned lower scores on prominent ranking systems that compare 4-year graduation rates (Jones 2013; Kamara 2012). Detractors have accused HBCUs of operating as “diploma mills” that admit and graduate students despite their poor academic performance (Jencks and Riesman 1967). Fields and Murty (2012) call attention to the criticism that black schools devote “too much emphasis on African American cultural values and political education and not enough emphasis on educational skills and competency” (76). The six-year graduation rate is 30% (Gasman 2013), which while low, is comparable to the graduation rate of HWIs with substantial low-income and first generation populations (Kim and Conrad 2006).

In light of these factors HBCUs’ continued existence is openly debated, especially given national discourses of transcending race (Brown 2013; Harris 2012 citing Fleming 1984; Roebuck and Murty 1993; Miller 2010). African Americans are among the loudest voices challenging HBCUs to prove their worth. Black school leaders and advocates are being called on to establish a contemporary mission that is responsive to HBCUs’ current strengths and limitations. For instance, Christopher Brown, a prominent scholar on HBCUs, calls for a “mission metamorphosis” saying HBCUs must adapt in strategic ways that include reexamining black schools’ place in higher education (2013: 15). Likewise in 2010 The Wall Street Journal ran a widely circulated op-ed entitled “Black Colleges and Universities Need a New
Mission: Once an Essential Response to Racism, They Are Now Academically Inferior” (Riley 2010). Even President Obama has also been highly critical of HBCUs. Most recently, during a 2015 meeting with the Congressional Black Caucus, he is reported to have implied that HBCUs struggling with poor performance should be closed (Douglas-Gabriel 2015).

Racial diversity is another area where HBCUs face criticism. HBCUs often contend with the presumption that desegregated has rendered them useless and outdated (Jewell 2002). It is not only the mainstream that has decided that black schools are out of step regarding diversity. A growing conversation among HBCU insiders, including scholars, experts, advocates and administrators, concerns increasing diversity. Black school scholars Allen and Jewell (2002) call on HBCUs to be more mindful of the “complicated landscape of ‘difference’” by admitting students of different races, classes, sexual orientations and religions (2002: 255). Willie, Reddick and Brown (2006) argue that despite the existing diversity, black schools “have some distance to go to achieve an acceptable level of racial diversity in student enrollment” (2006: 34). Others encourage the use of race-based scholarships as incentives for non-black students, just as HWIs have used to attract African Americans (Willie et al., 2006; Roebuck and Murty 1993). In the press, calls to diversify from HBCU insiders assume greater intensity. Charles Nelms, a former HBCU president, writes in The Huffington Post that black schools “must embrace diversity if they want to remain relevant and responsive in a contemporary society. Diversity is a value and a virtue to be sure; but it is also a necessity” (2012). According to Anita Hall, a professor at Howard University, “the challenges and values of racial and ethnic diversity at an HBCU require due attention if these institutions are to thrive in a multicultural, multiracial and multiethnic world” (2009).

As this review of the conversation indicates, those advocating for diversity see it as a way for HBCUs to address the very same core challenges blacks schools face, the crises of viability and legitimacy. In response to accusations that HBCUs do not prioritize or value diversity, some black school experts point out that HBCUs were integrated long before HWIs relented to minority demands for access (Jewell 2002). The racial diversity among black school faculty continues to exceed that of HWIs (Jackson and Nunn 2003), and non-African American undergraduate enrollment is at an all time high at nearly 30%
(National Center for Education Statistics 2011), and at one-fourth of these schools non-black enrollment is 20% or higher (Gasman 2013).

The extensiveness of black colleges and universities’ efforts to diversify has not been fully documented, but there is evidence that these schools have taken steps to fully embrace diversity as a value and objective. Dozens of HBCUs have adopted various organizational-level initiatives to increase their racial diversity, including schools that are not located in states where there has been desegregation litigation. At the admissions level several public HBCUs use diversity scholarships to recruit non-black students. While some scholarships, like Alcorn State University’s “diversity grant” and Mississippi Valley’s “diversity scholarship” have been open to any non-black applicants, schools like Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University, Jackson State and Hinds Community College have used scholarships that only whites qualify to receive. Other schools use diversity centers and taskforces to promote multiculturalism on campus. Other elements of diversity structures, including multicultural affairs offices, diversity personnel, cultural month programming, and ethnic identity clubs, are becoming increasingly common (Mangan 2015; Philip 2015; Will 2015; Gasman 2013). Furthermore, Harris (2012) claims that over seventy percent of HBCUs reference diversity in their mission statements.

While diversity practices are becoming increasingly common, some HBCU scholars have expressed concerns that diversifying HBCUs jeopardizes their institutional integrity (Samuels 2004; Brown 2002; Jackson and Nunn 2003). Empirical research on the process of incorporating diversity is needed to address this issue, but at the present there is little such work on HBCUs and diversity. Much of the contemporary work on HBCUs and race continues to examine desegregation litigation, highlighting the unfair treatment of black schools in states’ integration efforts (Samuels 2004; Brown 2002, 1999; Taylor and Olswang 1999; Roebuck and Murty 1993). Research on non-black students’ at HBCUs is mostly focused on white students (Peterson and Hamrick 2009; Closson and Henry 2008; Roebuck and Murty 1993; Willie 1981). More recently some work has noted new demographic trends, such as the surge in Latino enrollment (Esmieu and Martinez 2014). There is literature identifying some of the ways schools are attempting to attract and retain non-blacks (Mbajekwe 2006). In a study of Lincoln
University, a predominately white HBCU in Missouri, Nazeri (2000) found that changes to the mission statement helped increase non-African American enrollment. Lastly, Bey’s (2004) study of two public schools stands out as the only assessment of multicultural curriculum at HBCUs, and she found that most of the classes were courses on race, specifically African Americans.

None of the research on HBCUs’ efforts to diversify applies an organizational lens that would highlight the interplay between environmental pressures and internal interests in determining how black schools approach diversity. Additionally, and also surprisingly, the empirical research on diversity at black colleges and universities does not apply a race theory lens to analyze the development of diversity work within spaces with established racial heritages. Because of this, the existing body of research on diversity efforts cannot shed light on how HBCUs’ experience is shaped by their pressures, constraints and challenges to assert their continued relevance, and also cannot sufficiently speak to the implications for their traditional priorities.

I have chosen to address the issue of the development of diversity efforts and their implications by examining the institutionalization of diversity at one HBCU. I focused on why and how the university introduced a diversity infrastructure which includes offices, personnel and campus programs. This investigation is guided by the following research questions: How is diversity institutionalized in an HBCU? How do organizational leaders treat diversity practices in light of existing organizational interests? Lastly, does the institutionalization of diversity impact the school’s approach to race?

**Research Design**

I conducted this study at Kenton State University (KSU) a pseudonym for a HBCU located in a metropolitan city in the South. KSU is a public university of approximately 8,000 undergraduate and 2,000 graduate students. African Americans make up nearly 70% of the total student population, though that percentage rises closer to ninety at the undergraduate level. Whites are the second largest group at over 25%, and are concentrated among the graduate students. Hispanic, Asian and international student enrollment has increased significantly over the last decade, but remains at less than five percent.
Approximately half of KSU students are eligible for Pell grants and are first generation college students, and nearly half of incoming freshmen take remedial courses.

Two considerations guided my choice of KSU an appropriate research site. First, KSU has one of the most well-developed and extensive diversity infrastructures among HBCUs. Diversity was incorporated into institutional planning, recruitment and retention practices. Second, because I wanted to examine the impact of multiple environmental pressures, i.e. government oversight and organizational field norms, a public HBCUs was more appropriate than a private institution. In this case, the presence of a state-imposed diversity mandate allowed me to examine if official authority, potentially coercive in nature, as well as the broader environment with its calls for diversity, shaped the course of diversity work at KSU.

I addressed my research questions by employing the techniques of organizational ethnography. For twelve months, January 2012 through January 2013, I gathered data from the school archives, interviews and field observations. Outside of the university I drew from texts from the Board of Regents, state legislation and legal proceedings, as well as local newspaper articles.

Because organizational members are responsible for translating external mandates into firm-level practices (Edelman, Fuller, and Mara-Drita 2001), I relied heavily on in-depth, semi-structured interviews to understand diversity. In total there were 63 interviewees, some of whom participated in follow-up interviews. The interviews, ranging from twenty minutes to three hours, were audio-recorded with participants’ consent and transcribed. I spoke with a variety of organizational members, from administrators to alumni, focusing on those individuals who were directly involved in efforts to institutionalize diversity, or would have knowledge about the university’s strategy. I interviewed the directors of the offices of Institutional Planning, Recruitment and Admissions, and Student Affairs. KSU’s Institutional Diversity Coordinator, the members of the diversity planning committee, along with the rest of the diversity staff sat for interviews with me. The faculty interviews included department chairs, full professors, and adjunct instructors, representing faculty who had been with the university for a few years all the way through thirty years. Among the alumni I interviewed were national alumni
association leaders, recent graduates and those who had attended KSU as far back as the 1960s. These interviewee categories were not mutually exclusive, as some alumni were also administrators, faculty and staff. The students I spoke with were members of diversity-themed organizations. For other students, I focused on those in leadership positions, like student government, because I thought they would have insight into university’s plan for diversity. Throughout my time in the field I relied on respondents’ recommendations of individuals to recruit for participation.

All interviewees were asked the same general questions. I asked them to share their thoughts on HBCUs’ contemporary role, to reflect on the significance of the HBCU identity for Kenton State University, and to evaluate the university’s diversity efforts, however they defined diversity. Additional questions were designed to elicit the expertise of different types of interviewees. For instance, I asked high level administrators to comment on how diversity fit into the university’s institutional plans, and I asked students how they felt diversity impacted their experience of attending an HBCU. Of equal importance to the interviews were the 200 hours of field observations. Becker (1996) explains that observations are a crucial element of qualitative research that shape the course of the study through the expansion of the scope of data (including what may initial seem mundane and unimportant) and identification of further channels of investigation. Observations also provide more details into the processes of interest than can be gleaned by simply relying on interviewees’ responses (Becker 1996). The period of field observation provided important information on the ongoing campus dialogue about school identity, mission and vision to which diversity was often tied. I made numerous trips to the school for field observations, some as short as two days and others as long as five weeks. I was present for many of the school’s scheduled diversity activities, including seminars, festivals, fashion shows, and the inaugural diversity recruitment program. I did not restrict my visits to diversity related programs, but instead arranged my campus visits so that I would be present for specific events that dealt with organizational identity and mission. I attended commencement ceremonies, and Homecoming activities, including football games, pep rallies, step shows, and picnics. I observed on-campus recruitment events,
student organizations meetings, and guest speaker presentations. The national alumni association convened a meeting during my data collection period that I obtained permission to attend.

Archival records, stored in the library, provided important background that helped me contextualize KSU’s diversity project. I used information from the archives to reconstruct school history, up to the desegregation era. The archives also housed many different kinds of school documents, including strategic plans, mission, vision, and history statements, and plans and formal diversity statements. To preserve the anonymity of the university I chose not to quote extensively from any of these documents.

As is common in qualitative research, data collection and analysis were simultaneous and mutually-informing processes (Miles and Huberman; Lofland, Snow, Anderson, and Lofland 2006). I began coding interviews almost immediately and used those early themes to identify further avenues of investigation. For instance, my earliest questions about the fit between diversity and the HBCU identity were based on the assumption that the HBCU label was not a matter of contention. But I found that many respondents felt the designation had outlived its usefulness and was hindering organizational growth and development. In response I adjusted my interview protocol to address questions of organizational identity.

**Review of Literatures**

To understand the way diversity projects is situated within an HBCU I constructed a theoretical and analytic framework, drawing from the literatures on diversity in organizations, institutional isomorphism, and racialized institutional space.

**Diversity Projects in Organizations**

The diversity project in organizations develops in response to changes in how organizations relate to race (Skrentny 2014; Berrey 2007). The history of U.S. organizations involves racial discrimination and exploitation of minority labor. After centuries of legally sanctioned discrimination, 20th century civil rights activism led to federal intervention banning racial discrimination in public sector institutions (Collins 1997; Herring and Collins 1995). Affirmative action became the central policy in the anti-
discrimination agenda and its use spread beyond public sector institutions as many, though not all, private organizations voluntarily adopted this approach to managing race in the workforce (Herring 2009).

Similar developments were underway in higher education, and schools engaged in various forms of race-targeted recruitment, including scholarships. As its use spread throughout the field, including elite private institutions, affirmative action effectively reshaped the demographic landscape, significantly increasing minority enrollment, as well as the representation of minority faculty and administrations (Chesler, Lewis and Crowfoot 2005).

Almost immediately affirmative action was a controversial policy in companies and schools (MacLean 2006). Beginning in the 1970s detractors used the courts to impose restrictions on affirmative action, (Beckman 2006) whittling away at the aggressive practices that resulted in the most drastic changes in opportunities for minorities (Collins 2011b). For instance, quotas were targeted as unconstitutional, a form of “reverse discrimination” that violated whites and men’s right to fair treatment (Stryker, Scarpellino and Holtzman 1999). Beyond discrimination, opponents argued that affirmative action was an institutional liability, introducing “unqualified minorities” who could not properly perform their jobs or successfully complete their studies (Clegg 2000; Carter 1991). Affirmative action was also implicated in intergroup tensions and diminished organizational productivity (Skerry 2002).

As the legal foundation and cultural acceptance began to erode, proponents responded with a purpose for affirmative action, one that moved the rationalization away from compensation and anti-discrimination, and toward institutional benefits (Collins 2011a). Instead of promoting civil rights, affirmative action was said to promote diversity. The idea behind diversity hinged on the argument that national and international competition made racial heterogeneity a necessity for successful outcomes (MacLean 2006). Far from a liability racial differences allowed organizations to harness various modes of thinking, approaches to problem-solving, inroads to different ethnic markets (Skrentny 2014), all leading to greater innovation (Page 2007). Across organizational contexts, diversity is understood to be tied to many forms of difference, race being only one. Additionally race is considered a matter of cultural identity. Furthermore, diversity benefits civil society because it increases acceptance and appreciation for
cultural difference. Lastly, diversity ultimately benefits the institution by ensuring schools can provide competitive education (Berrey 2011, 2008).

Critical evaluations of diversity practices in organizations consider the implications for social inequality. The concept of diversity has been described as vague, broad, and malleable, which allows organizations to create a diversity project that suits their existing needs or goals (Marvasti and McKinney 2011; Berrey 2008, 2005). The major criticism is that diversity projects are not intended to address inequality. Instead, detractors argue, diversity repackaged the goals of affirmative action, shifting the focus from social justice to organizational advantage (Moore and Bell 2011; Collins 2011). MacLean (2006) writes, “One thing was clear: what was being valued was not the righting of injustice against those long shut out; it was discovering how institutions might prosper by opening their gates” (MacLean 2006: 320). Institutions and formerly excluded groups have traded places as the formers are portrayed as in need and the latter in the position of providing useful aid in the form of diversity.

The civic benefits of diversity have also been reevaluated. Regarding the claim that diversity improves racial dynamics and interpersonal relationships, critical analyses suggests that diversity practices often reinforce organizational space as white space. University diversity practices often frame minorities, particularly blacks and Hispanics, as outsiders who are granted access to white organizations (Iverson 2008, 2007; Anderson 2005). Many approaches to diversity emphasize assimilating minorities into school culture, another indication of their outsider status (Marvasti and McKinney 2011; Shaio 2005). Furthermore, diversity agendas often assume a non-structural approach to race, concentrating on cultural difference without engaging organizational practices that create and maintain inequality among students (Chesler 2004; Chang 2002).

**Institutional Isomorphism**

Institutional isomorphism has not figured prominently in explanations of near ubiquitous status of diversity practices in higher education, but scholars like Lipson (2008) and Berrey (2008) attribute the spread of diversity practices to mimetic isomorphism. My work highlights the role of isomorphism in HBCUs’ response to diversity. The neo-institutional framework recognizes that organizations are shaped
by the larger environment. Its definitive instruction to “bring society back in” (Friedland and Alford 1991) is a call to reckon with environmental forces like cultural expectations and legal requirements (Oliver 1991). Seminal organizational studies like DiMaggio and Powell (1983) drew attention to dynamics of institutional fields whereby organizations draw meaning from their institutional environment. Organizational leaders are motivated to achieve legitimacy in order to maintain their good standing within the organizational field. Changes or disruptions within the field introduce ambiguity and the pressure to resolve uncertainties. Therefore organization responses to environmental changes are motivated by a need to secure legitimacy, even more than the need for efficiency, and one outcome is the adoption of similar structures across individual firms. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) identify three kinds of isomorphism that are the responses to different conditions. The term coercive isomorphism describes how institutions become more like others in their field as they comply with formal and legitimate pressure from the external environment. The pressure can come from other organizations, including government, but also from the expectations of the larger environment. When organizations respond to ambiguous expectations and directions by copying similarly situated organizations, the result is called mimetic isomorphism. Normative isomorphism is attributed to professionalization as employees are exposed to the same standards and spread them across organizational sites.

The neo-institutional explanation of institutional isomorphism has been criticized for assuming that various kinds of isomorphic pressures automatically override organizational agency (Hallett and Ventresca 2006; Thorton and Ocasio 2008). Other research indicates that certain factors shape organizations’ decision to comply, and the shape that compliance may take. Accountability to multiple stakeholders and constituents, the strength of the pressure to change, and the extent to which it is consistent with existing demands all shape reaction (Espeland 1998; Oliver 1991). Even if an organization complies, their actions may be largely superficial depending on the degree to which new structures are integrated into existing organizational processes (Basu, Dirsmith and Gupta 1999; Espeland 1998; Meyer 1983).
The institutional logic perspective also highlights organizational agency by including for consideration the role that established internal principles, belief and rules play in organizational response. This perspective holds that that intra-organizational dynamics are modeled after major social institutions, like the family and the market (Thorton and Ocasio 2008; Friedland and Alford 1991). Additionally, actions in organizations are also partially regulated and shaped by these logics, those “axial principles of organization and action based on cultural discourses and material practices prevalent in different institutional or societal sectors” (Thornton 2004:2). For instance, those organizations operating according to the family institutional logic stress accountability and obligation (Friedland and Alford 1991). The logic also gives a sense of the appropriate course of action (Thorton 2004). According to an institutional logics perspective, the process of responding to external pressures involves weighing possibilities in order to decide on a course of action that is most consistent with existing organizational values and priorities (Zhang and Lou 2013).

**Racialized Institutional Space**

Organizational processes like isomorphism occur inside organizations that are shaped by racial, gender and class dynamics. The call to understand the racial nature of organizational institutions goes back to Nkomo who urged organizational scholars to consider how race is embedded in “existing social and power relations in organizations” (1992: 496), and to therefore recognize that race is a driving force in organizations just as it is in other aspects of society. Two traditions of scholarship on race in organizations have developed. One tradition has organization and stratification scholars who focus on the reproduction of racial inequality, or promotion of equality, through processes and practices (Tomaskovic Devey and Stainback 2007, Kalev, Dobbin and Kelly 2006; Schwalbe, Holden, Schrock, Godwin, Thompson, and Wolkomir 2000). In the other tradition, race scholars approach racial inequality in organizations with attention to ideology, discourses, as well as practices (Embrick 2008, Collins 1997). Still, there is not much research that makes the racial nature of the organization itself the subject of analysis, outside of the impact on constituents (e.g. employees and students).
Recently race scholars have drawn from the research on gendered organizations (Acker 1990) to demonstrate the ways in which organizations can also be raced, mostly looking at the whiteness of organizational space (Moore 2008; Lipsitz 1998; Feagin 1996:). Barajas and Ronnkvist (2007) define space as

“physical space as well as the implicit and explicit dialogue, processes, and practices, that define relationships between structures and agents. Thus space includes not only physical space but also the meanings and ideologies that mediate the relationship between social structures and agents” (P. 1521 emphasis mine).

Through the process of racialization these components acquire “a racial dimension” and as a result “racial ideas are embedded in and define organizational spaces” (Barajas and Ronnkvist 2007:1521).

Whiteness has been a central focus of racialized space research because of its relation to power. Much of the significance of whiteness lies in the authority to draw distinctions between groups, mainly between whites and non-whites, and to distribute resources along those lines (Barajas and Ronnkvist 2007). Historically, that distinction has involved the power to control minority inclusion through such means as outright exclusion (Moore 2008) and exploitation (Wilder 2013). The power of whiteness also lies in white normativity, which refers to the “ways of thinking, knowing, and doing that naturalize whiteness and become embedded in social and institutional life” (Ward 2008). In organizations, white normativity appears in values and practices (Edwards 2008; Moore 2008; Lewis 2004) that end up reproducing privilege for white individuals. The normative nature of whiteness in organizational operation means that it is considered the natural and appropriate state. Additionally, white normativity means that white ways of operating can be present in the absent of a white majority or whites altogether (Ward 2008; Barajas and Ronnkvist 2007; Lewis 2004).

To argue that institutional space is racialized is not to reject or minimize the ways in which space can also be gendered and classed. Existing research illustrates the ways in which organizational norms and practices assume participants are men, middle-class, and heterosexual to the detriment of those not in the dominant groups (Duggan 2003; Warner 1999) In higher education institutions, each of these
intersects with race such that universities establish and reinforce white, wealthy hetero-masculinity (Moore 2008; Margolis 2001; DeFour 1996; Solomon 1985).

Studies reveals how schools, from primary through to post-secondary, promote racialization of the larger society by socializing students to racial identities, racial ideologies, and also recreating racial inequalities through school practices (Barajas and Ronnkvist 2007; Lewis 2004, 2001; Staiger 2004; Perry 2001; Tatum 2003; Allen 1992; Thomas 1981). But fewer studies are devoted to race as a fundamental property of the institution, separate from its work in (re)producing race for students.

Historically White Institutions (HWIs) make up the majority of the schools in the field of higher education (Brunsma, Brown and Plaicer 2012). Moore (2008) devised an analytical framework for understanding the white institutional space of elite white law schools, and the framework is being used to describe HWIs in general (Chou, Lee and Ho 2015). White institutional space consists of three major mutually reinforcing components: control of access, white racial frame and organizational logic, and racialized norms and values. Control of access is significant because it is the basis for the other components, and the key to the foundation and reproduction of HWIs as white institutional space (Moore 2008). For most of its history, control of access in white schools has been used to exclude racial minorities. Looking at the proliferation of higher education institutions, particularly public schools, in the late 19th through the mid 20th centuries, the exclusion of racial minorities is the most prominent feature (Chesler, Lewis and Crowfoot 2005). Universities and government cooperated to uphold segregation. For public schools, states either made segregation a prerequisite for funding or allowed segregation to develop by creating separate schools for whites and non-whites (Wilson 1994). Control of access continues to be relevant. Since the period of desegregation began there has been an ongoing struggle to determine the extent to which racial minorities are to be included in HWIs. The contentious debates over affirmative action stem from this issue, and bring to light the perception that higher education is white space in which minority inclusion is to be managed (Moore and Bell 2011; Moore 2008; Iverson 2007).

A white racial frame and organizational logic orient white institutional spaces, spelling out interests and giving meaning to organizational norms and practices. The term white racial frame refers to
the “organized set of racialized ideas, emotions and inclinations, as well as recurring or habitual discriminatory actions” that make up U.S. institutions (Feagin 2006: 23). Upon this frame whites built the logic for how higher education would operate, a logic of white superiority. At times this logic has explicitly promoted white supremacy through racial exclusion, but also through cultivating and promoting scientific racism as scholarship (Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva 2008; Kailin 2002; Takaki 1990; Davidson 1973). Currently, these spaces often use a more subtle approach through purportedly race neutral practices that in fact privilege middle-class white over others (Barajas and Ronnkvist: 2007). The organizational logic guides the educational content, with the principles and ideals of white elites that are biased against working class and minority students. Thus Chesler et al. 2005 write,

The prevailing of ideologies of utilitarianism, and of individual merit and mobility through competition, effectively link the university culture to the dominant cultural assumptions of the broader society and the needs of the political and economic system as perceived and promulgated by the prevailing elites (P. 56).

These values translate into racialized norms and practices that reinforce whiteness as standard, and shape the center-margin dynamics characteristic of white and non-white student relations (Brunsma et al. 2012). For instance, admissions process favors white middle-class students as does the increasingly prohibitive cost of attendance and dwindling financial aid (Calhoun 1999). Furthermore, an explicitly Western curriculum that is disguised as “a neutral and impartial body of doctrine unconnected to power relations” naturalizes the white intellectual traditions in HWIs (Moore 2008: 27).

Moore’s analytical framework illustrates how the components of white institutional space are connected and mutually reinforcing. Control over access provided the isolation for the development of a white frame and logic, and those components in turn give meaning to the organizational norms and practices. This framework advances our understanding of racialized institutional space, and it can be used, with certain modifications, to explain the racialized structure of HBCUs.

**HBCUs’ Background and Racialized Institutional Structure**

Though Moore’s analytic model is specific to white spaces the basic framework can be applied elsewhere. I modify Moore’s model of the creation and reproduction of a white institutional space to
describe a model of black institutional space. HBCUs are under-researched institutions (Brown 2013; Gasman, Baez and Turner 2008). The existing body of scholarship is not extensive, and is limited to two main areas: HBCUs historical development, and student outcomes. The latter includes racial identity and attitudes as well as overall satisfaction with their educational experience (Outcalt and Skewes-Cox 2002). The student outcomes work tends to be comparative in nature, examining blacks at HBCUs and HWIs (Terenzini, Yaeger, Pascarella, and Amaury 1997). Brown characterizes the remaining work as “heavily colloquial and anecdotal” (2013: 4). However, I was able to draw from this body of scholarship to construct a model of black institutional space that would apply to HBCUs. I begin with a historical overview of HBCUs that highlights the racial power dynamics of white institutional regulation and black resistance. I then proceed to describe the contemporary racialized structure of HBCUs.

The development of higher education institutions for blacks represents the convergence of four agendas: African Americans’ desire for full citizenship, white missionaries commitment to racial uplift, and together the interests of white industrial philanthropists and the government in national stability, recovery and progress. The postbellum period was an era of social disintegration, and rebuilding the nation was a foremost priority. One of the most pressing questions of the time was how and where blacks would fit in the social, economic and political spheres of the recovering nation. Formal education was approached as one means for integrating the nation’s newly emancipated citizens (Watkins 2001).

African Americans envisioned education as a vehicle for upward mobility and so they were among the founders of the earliest black colleges (Allen and Jewell 2002; Williams 2002). However, African Americans lacked the resources to assume full financial responsibility for these schools (Jewell 2002), and so many closed. Loss of independent black schools meant that nearly black all postsecondary education came under white institutional control. White missionary societies, including Quakers, Methodists, Congregationalists, and Lutherans established religious institutions for African Americans (Decker 2014a; Gasman 2008). Between 1860 and 1915 these missionary societies founded more than 30 private schools and enrolled 60% of the black college population (Watkins 2001). Many of the contemporary prominent HBCUs were founded during time, including Morehouse College, Spelman
College, and Fisk University (Anderson 1988). However, missionary support began declining in the early 20th century as part of the northern retreat from the South (Decker 2014a; Anderson 1988).

At the same time an emerging class of northern industrialists and philanthropists took an interest in black education (Gasman 2008). These new corporate leaders became visionaries of social engineering, concerning themselves with race, politics and education (Decker 2014a). Corporate philanthropists believed that stable race relations was the bedrock of the nation’s post-war economic structure, in both the North and South, and so they sought ways to integrate the nation’s poor, disillusioned white Southerners, new European immigrants, and African Americans into a cohesive workforce. They saw in the formal education of African Americans one way to accomplish this goal, and designed black education in ways that lasted until the mid-twentieth century (Watkins 2001).

Lastly, the government played a role in directing the course of black schools. The federal government’s involvement in black education began with the Freedmen’s Bureau (Gasman 2008) that provided primary education, and it was not until the end of the nineteenth century that the state became involved in postsecondary schools. With the Morrill Act of 1862 the federal government gave states funding to establish public colleges, many of them in the South (Library of Congress). Founded as land grant institutions, these schools provided training in agricultural sciences. Land-grant institutions were a significant investment in public education, and they were also racially exclusive, open only to whites (Jackson and Nunn 2003). The Second Morrill Act of 1890 addressed racial segregation in these schools. As a provision of receiving federal aid, states unwilling to accommodate black applicants were required to create separate institutions for them, resulting in the dual-system of postsecondary education, one for set of school for whites and the other for blacks (Jackson and Nun 2003).

By the dawn of the twentieth century, white philanthropists, industrial capitalists, and the state and federal government had all contributed, and were in control of, the education of African Americans who, not fifty years prior, had mostly been prohibited by law from learning to read. Why had formal education for African Americans become so important? What did these various interests groups want education to accomplish? What functions did they believe college-educated blacks could serve in the
post-slavery era? The answers to these questions are based in the ideology of white supremacy that was becoming concretized by the 1900s.

The racist ideology of white supremacy developed internationally to justify domination over non-European peoples (Feagin 2000; Winant 2001), and was based in race science, much of which came out of white universities (Chesler et al 2005; Watkins 2001). Across the natural sciences scholars advanced theories of biological determinism, explaining social differences as products of biology (Takaki 1990). That races had distinctive innate and inert physical and physiological traits meant that blacks’ limited intellectual capacity, high libido, and childlike disposition made them unsuitable for full citizenship (Decker 2014a). These scientific assertions married well with an economic system in the South based largely on a racially segmented labor market that required a social system of black subservience (Feagin 2000). This was the premise and rationale for a distinctive educational program known as industrial education. In it, blacks were afforded a curriculum that accommodated their perceived limitations and prepared them for their place in the racial social order.

Industrial education provided occupational training and racial socialization. Both public and private schools, accept for a few private liberal arts institutions, were trade schools for work as domestics and agrarians. The curriculum was not intellectually taxing by design, and there was also an emphasis on character development through which blacks were taught to adopt values like industriousness (Brazzell 1992; Anderson 1988). That industrial education came to be known as race education speaks to its political significance (Watkins 2001). These schools taught blacks that the keys to full citizenship lay in self-improvement rather than equal rights. The early HBCUs were therefore institutions of racial accommodation (Gasman 2008). Education scholar William Watkins (2001) explains the role of industrial education in maintaining a system of racial domination, saying,

It was felt that the naturally inferior Black must always occupy a socially subservient position. Industrial education, therefore, was right for Blacks, and they for it. More significant, industrial education was presented as progressive reform. After all, wasn’t it a step up from slavery? It could be marketed as democracy and a way to increase Black participation in the society and economic community” (P. 40).
Though widespread, industrial education was always contested by a faction of black leaders, foremost among them W.E.B DuBois. However, liberal arts education for blacks never acquired the same of support from influential and wealthy parties, and was restricted to only a few private institutions (Anderson 1988). The state of liberal arts education further indicates that the purpose of black education was to prepare African Americans for the bottom rung of the occupational ladder to secure their labor and also maintain the delicate imbalance of racial power.

The organizational norms, both curricular and extra-curricular, on black college campuses show the influence of white cultural standards and mirrored blacks’ marginal position in society. In addition to craft skills, industrial schools taught racial etiquette, specifically how blacks should interact with whites (Watkins 2011). Liberal arts education at the time, well before the introduction of multiculturalism, was based on a Eurocentric curriculum, and educators taught mastery of a Eurocentric canon (Anderson 1988). Beyond the formal curriculum, internalized inferiority flourished on many school campuses. For instance, colorism, a system of skin tone stratification among minorities, became enmeshed in campus culture, and affected school admissions and participation in school activities, such as the black fraternity and sorority system (Taylor 2008). Student behavior was monitored to ensure they abandoned rural black cultural practices that were considered unrefined (Anderson 1988).

During this era, black schools were intended to support the economic and social reproduction of southern society. Regarding higher education, in this early period of HBCU history, black schools were valued for their tacit role in the maintenance of white schools as white institutional space. With the dismantling of formal segregation, whites’ needs regarding race and education changed, and HBCUs lost their significance for maintaining white racial domination. Therefore, white institutional power operated differently in relation to black schools, and critical scholars argue that this new relation was to render HBCUs obsolete (Jackson and Nunn 2003).

Through this review of black school history I demonstrate that white institutional power, represented as the power to regulate black schools, is at the foundation of contemporary black school structure. It remains just as important in the modern era. At times white institutional power is overtly
coercive, i.e. as the closure of black schools or mandate desegregation. Sometimes it manifests as discriminatory funding practices (Lee and Keys 2013; Safier 2008). No matter the form, white institutional power functions to control black schools and place them at a disadvantage to HWIs.

Besides white institutional power, the components of black institutional space inside HBCUs are the black racial frame and organizational logic, and racialized norms and practices. As in white institutional space, the racial frame constitutes racial assumptions and beliefs. The organizational logic extends those racial beliefs to institutional arrangements, including the model of relations among organizational members. Lastly, racialized norms and practices are the more easily observable manifestations of black institutional space as the frame and logic are expressed in school policies and campus culture.

The contemporary era for HBCUs covers the time from the civil rights movement to the present. This dynamic six-decade period in higher education is witness to progressive anti-racism activism, the dismantling of legalized segregation, the triumph and challenge of desegregation, and the rise of colorblindness and diversity as justifying rationales for admissions. For black colleges this era marks a new relationship with white institutional power (Gasman 2008). The Higher Education Act of 1965 indicated a new phase in the relationship between the federal government and black schools. Black schools were officially defined as “any…college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principle mission was, and is, the education of black Americans” (Jackson and Nunn 2003). The Act also introduced the federal designation Historically Black College/University. Title III was established as part of the act to allocate funds to HBCUs in light of historical underfunding (U.S. Department of Education). President Carter signed Executive Order 12232 to further address historical discrimination. In 1980 President Carter established the White House Initiative on HBCUs, a committee that liaises between the federal government and black schools (Gasman 2008).

Despite gains made with the federal government, the contemporary era has been challenging for HBCUs. Ironically, one of the greatest obstacles is also one of the most significant civil rights triumphs, desegregation. Wooten (2006) describes desegregation as a “disruptive force” because the removal of
official and overt barriers to blacks’ access to white schools jeopardized black schools’ status. Though both public and private schools faced declining enrollment, the case of desegregation is where these two institutional types diverge as the path toward desegregation for public HBCUs proceeds along a route of litigation from which private institutions were exempt. For that reason, the rest of the discussion of desegregation will focus on public black colleges and universities.

The desegregation of public universities is part of a tradition of state and federal intervention into HBCUs (Jackson and Nunn 2003). The landmark Brown case did not apply to postsecondary education and so desegregation did not become a legal issue in higher education until the 1964 Civil Rights Act (Brown, Ricard and Donahoo 2004). Because white universities resisted integration, African Americans attempted to use the courts to force compliance. However, in each case of a lawsuit against a state public school system, the public HBCUs became codefendants. The fate of black colleges was prominent in each case as debates waged over how best to achieve desegregation. Educational pluralism was one strategy used during the 1970s to achieve integration while preserving black institutions (Roebuck and Murty 1993). With this approach there was an emphasis on improving black schools in order make them more attractive to white students. In recognition of the history of underfunding HBCUs were awarded funds by state and federal governments to improve campus grounds, expand curriculum, and provide competitive financial aid packages. However, by the late 1970s and early 1980s southern states began enforcing desegregation through school closers mergers. In most cases, the black schools were closed or made satellite campuses of PWIs (Brown 1999). For this reason, critical race education scholars have argued that the burden of desegregation fell disproportionately on HBCUs (Jackson and Nunn 2003).

African Americans’ response to desegregation also had a devastating impact on black colleges. In the immediate period following Brown most black students continued to attend black colleges and universities. However, in the 1970s, with the institutionalization of affirmative action policies, African American students increasingly took advantage of the opportunity to attend HWIs. In total, HBCUs underwent drastic enrollment changes, from 80% African American college students in the 1970s to less than 15% in the present (Center for Minority Serving Institutions 2014). Though there was a resurgence
of black enrollment in the 1990s (Benavides 1996), the majority of black college students continue to attend PWIs.

The literature on contemporary racial frames, ideologies, and attitudes in black organizations like HBCUs does not match the extensiveness of that on white organizations. In general there is much less research on the racial lens shaping African Americans’ understanding of society (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Hanchard and Dawson 2006), though research on racial attitudes notes that African Americans see racial prejudices and discrimination as more pervasive problems than do whites (Krysan 2011; Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, and Krysan 1997). Still there is much less to draw on, and little that explicitly examines the contemporary way racial beliefs shape organizational action at black schools. To do so I draw from black political ideology literature as well as the HBCU research on organizational mission and values.

There are several features of black racial ideology. First, African Americans have not developed a completely counter ideology to white supremacy. The nature of social domination is such that ideology of the dominant groups has to be shared in common to some extent with subordinate groups (Bonilla-Silva 2006). Instead, what African Americans have developed is an ideological perspective that is “bicultural” (Feagin 2010), sharing with whites some of the same elements of colorblind ideology, but with distinctive points of departure (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Dawson 2001). The influence of the dominant ideology is evident in the internalization of stereotypes about behavior, specifically those dealing with urban youth culture (Dawson 2001; Feagin 2010). Bonilla-Silva (2006) also found evidence that some African Americans’ apply the same focus on personal choice and opportunities as do whites. Still, what distinguishes black racial and political ideologies from those of the white mainstream are the emphases on structural discrimination, affirmation of blackness, and resistance to racial domination (Feagin 2010; Dawson 2001). The result is that black ideologies are understood by be vary complex, and at times contradictory.

There is no consensus on whether or not HBCUs are sites for the dissemination of black racial and political ideologies. For instance, Dawson (2006) does not include black colleges among his list of counterpublics, those spaces blacks have used to cultivate politics of resistance. Feagin (2010), however,
argues that HBCUs are one of the only places where African Americans are exposed to counter-ideologies. Not surprisingly, scholars who are proponents of HBCUs argue that these are the primary spaces that house black political thought, especially in the post-desegregation era (Harris 2012; Strayhorn and Hirt 2008). Drawing on the literature on HBCUs, I argue that these spaces draw from a black racial frame to create an organizational logic based around racial uplift. Core racial uplift values are opportunity, cultural affirmation, and engaged citizenship (Strayhorn and Hirt 2008). Opportunity is tied to an acknowledgement of structural racism. In HBCU discourse there is recognition that blacks continue to be impacted by the legacy of historical discrimination and by the ongoing discrimination. The continued existence of racism that impacts black students becomes the contemporary justification for HBCUs’ existence. In the discourse, HBCUs also operate as spaces that validate African Americans by affirming black students’ racial identity and as well as celebrating African American cultures. Engaged citizenship references the commitment to the “common good, civility, global citizenship community service, and social responsibility” (Strayhorn and Hirt 2008: 210), and that HBCUs are schools that should equip and expect students to leave and become involved in creating more equitable communities (Jackson and Nunn 2003). Due to differences in individual histories as well as contemporary conditions and constraints (Brown 2003), exact formulation of racial uplift logic varies. For instance, elite private schools like Spelman College have maintained a commitment to educating the “talented 10th,” cultivating the upper middle class. Meanwhile public schools like Clark Atlanta or Shaw or Mississippi Valley envision uplift as opportunities for poor and less competitive black students (Allen and Jewell 2002).

Certain racial norms and practices are characteristic of black schools that are black institutional spaces. Demographics figure prominently in the racialization of HBCUs. At over 80% of HBCUs, African Americans are the majority of the undergraduate population (National Center for Education Statistics 2011). However, it must be noted that while a black majority is what marks these schools as black spaces, it is not a requirement for the HBCU designation. There are six HBCUs where African Americans are not the majority, but they retain the designation because the label applies to all schools that were founded to serve blacks. Still, the integrity of the HBCU identity is often evaluated on the basis of a
school’s demographic composition. Several times over the last decade there have been debates over whether or not predominately white HBCUs can authentically claim that identity, illustrating the importance that a black majority has for the meaning of the HBCU identity within this community of schools. In contrast to student body, there is greater racial diversity among the administration, faculty, and staff (Jackson and Nunn 2003). Part of this stems from a tradition of white control over black schools whereby whites were appointed as presidents and board members, but has also been due to the limited number of blacks who were eligible and qualified to be university members (Allen and Jewll 2002).

A compensatory model of education is also common at most HBCUs, with the exception of some of the more elite institutions (e.g. Spelman College, Fisk University, Howard University). This model is based on the understanding that African American students’ overall lower standardized test scores and grade point averages are not indication of ability to succeed in college, but rather point to the failures of inequitable and culturally insensitive education (Brown and Davis 2001). Therefore, many black colleges use lenient admissions standards, and a few are open-enrollment institutions. They also offer an extensive compensatory curriculum of remedial classes to prepare students for college-level work and succeed in graduating these students (Bridges, Kinzie, Laird, and Kuh 2009).

Campus norms indicate a black organizational environment. While most HBCU have a standard (re: Western) curriculum (Cole 2006) many HBCUs act as cultural reservoirs, and emphasize an awareness of African American history and cultures (Brown, Ricard and Donahoo 2004). African American historical figures are often prominently featured on campus art, including statues and paintings. Black artists work is displayed prominently. School archives host collections of artifacts from slavery to the civil rights movement. There are also campus traditions that tie HBCUs together, reinforcing the common bond among individual schools. Individual schools submit representatives to compete in HBCU beauty pageants, oratorical competitions, and athletic games (Jackson and Nunn 2003). HBCUs have their own football conferences, and most schools with football teams only play other HBCUs. The culmination of the black college football culture is the series of off-season games that include parades and
band competitions known as The Classics (Chicago Classics). Through these various outlets HBCUs become part of the cultural center of the black community.

The bicultural nature of the black racial frame is evidenced in socialization practices. Just as historically many colleges advocating adhering to white codes of behavior and comportment as a way to gain rights (Watkins 2001, Anderson 1988), the modern respectability politics at HBCUs casts poor, urban cultures as an impediment to black students’ upward mobility (Patton 2014). Elite private schools have strict dress codes prohibiting casual wear, such as baggy pants. A few schools go even further, however, banning practices that are largely considered expressions of black cultural identity. For instance, Hampton University prohibits dreadlocks for business majors (Wilson 2012). At Morehouse College, a private men’s school, students are not allowed to carry purses or wear sagging pants in a policy decried as both heterosexist and classist (Patton 2014). Spelman College, a woman’s school, requires modest dress as a way of communicating black middle-class status (Decker 2014b). Such conservative policies are justified as part of the necessary training black students need for participation in culturally insensitive, white-dominated work environments (Brown and Davis 2001).

Lastly, I argue that this analytic framework reveals than an HBCU is not synonymous with black institutional space. The HBCU designation is the label assigned by the federal government to schools that were founded prior to desegregation to educate blacks. Thus during a conversation with John Wilson Silvanus, the former director of the White House Initiative on HBCUs the designation “is not a racial category, but a political one and that's why six of our HBCUs are no longer predominately black.” Black schools without the organizational norms, racial logic and black racial frame may be HBCUs by virtue of their historical circumstances, but not have the institutional components that racialize a space as black.

I use the black institutional space model to establish that HBCUs are not black versions of white schools. These are different spaces organized by different racial logics and for different interests. The extensive literature on white colleges and universities and racial disparities underscores the fact that HWIs are not always effective at promoting African Americans’ intellectual and social development (Feagin 1996). In fact most of the contention over diversity in HWIs concerns the place of minorities,
especially African Americans, in white spaces. However, HBCUs that are structured as black institutional spaces center African Americans (Harris 2012).

The black institutional space model is useful for exploring how HBCUs address diversity. In the chapters that follow, I demonstrate that organizational leaders at one black university used the organizational logic to negotiate compliance with a diversity mandate such that the definition of diversity was unique to a black space. However, though they used existing principles to contain the mandate’s impact on the racial composition, school leaders and diversity personnel adopted the diversity rationalization prominent in HWIs, one that was inconsistent with the school’s traditional messages on race and racism. For them, it is the rationalization, those messages about the value of race, which the school accepts as the way diversity affords legitimacy. This two-pronged reaction reveals that the diversity challenge HBCUs face is not only one of the legitimacy of a majority black student body, but a matter of the legitimacy of their racial politics. Thus, as this particular case suggests, diversity may not undermine the demographics, but it may challenge HBCUs to conform by abandoning anti-racist racial framing. It is by adopting dominant messages of race that the university in my study comes closer in line with mainstream HWIs, but it may do so at a threat to the integrity of its black institutional space structure.

**Summary of Chapters**

According to Brown (2003) HBCUs do not all have the same political agenda and interests. By extension I argue that not every HBCU is a black institutional space. Therefore the focus of the second chapter is on the racialized organizational structure of my research site, Kenton State University. Drawing from ethnographic fieldwork, including school archives, field observations and interviews, I establish that Kenton State University has the structural components of an HBCU that is a black institutional space. The third chapter addresses the institutionalization of diversity structures. I used files from the state’s diversity commission, school texts, including institutional planning documents, and interviews with administrators and top diversity personnel to describe the introduction of diversity structures at KSU. I found that the university was challenged to institutionalize diversity as the result of a
 statewide mandate. However, due to both the nature of the mandate (vague and lacking oversight), and the school’s organizational logic (the care ethic), compliance with the state was a largely non-disruptive process. KSU crafted a diversity agenda that reinforced the principle of racialized accessibility, and therefore preserved a majority black student body. My analysis is informed by the literatures on institutional isomorphism and institutional logic to explain why and how KSU adopts diversity as a school agenda. By emphasizing the role of the organizational logic in KSU’s decision-making process, I avoid the over-determinism characteristic of purely neo-institutional accounts of isomorphism. Lastly, using data from field observations of school events, the fourth chapter examines the messages students heard about the significance of race for the university’s identity and for everyday life through the school’s diversity discourse. KSU’s diversity discourse, which I call diversity cultivation, points to the larger challenge this school as an HBCU faces to maintain its legitimacy. In this chapter I show that the diversity discourse uses the same rationale about race found in HWIs. Therefore, the discourse reflects school leaders’ efforts to socialize students about race in ways that are considered valid within the larger field.
II. KENTON STATE UNIVERSITY AS BLACK INSTITUTIONAL SPACE

The black institutional space model sheds light on the way HBCUs’ are shaped by race from within and contend with racial politics from external environment. First, black colleges and universities, like HWIs, are structured by race, meaning that their particular racial meanings (black as disadvantaged, but blackness as valuable) and politics (anti-racism) inform organizational identity, values, policies, and practices. Secondly, this model highlights HBCUs’ relationship to racialized power dynamics through which resources are hoarded for white students and white institutions at the expense of minority students and minority institutions. In my description of black institutional space, I noted that not every HBCU automatically qualifies as such. The HBCU status is a reflection of historical circumstances, and does not dictate schools’ contemporary mission, core constituents, or politics, in other words its racial structure. Therefore, the six predominately white and Hispanic HBCUs legitimately maintain their designation and access to Title III Part B funds.

In this chapter I argue that Kenton State University is an HBCU that is also a black institutional space. This is not necessarily evident at first glance, as the school’s mission and vision statements do not contain explicit references to African Americans. The HBCU designation is not emphasized, but is positioned alongside description of the school’s status as a land grant and research-intensive university. Therefore, identifying the ways in which KSU is a black space requires an analysis of its relationship with white institutional power, racial framework, and organizational logic, and norms and practices.

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<th>Racialized Institutional Power</th>
<th>Black Racial Frame and Organizational Logic</th>
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<td>White Institutional Power</td>
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<td>Care Ethic Logic</td>
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White Institutional Power

Throughout its existence KSU has dealt with direct and indirect forms of white institutional power. The racial agendas of the state’s education system, the South’s accreditation board, and local, state government and ultimately federal governments have established and upheld segregation and discrimination, then ordered desegregation, all in ways that have had a distinct impact on the university’s mission, values and practices. Therefore, white institutional power should not be seen as a distant source of tension, but an ever-present, often intrusive, component of the racialized structure.

Kenton State University began as Agricultural and Normal School for Negroes at the beginning of the twentieth century. Due to state-enforced segregation in higher education black community leaders petitioned for an institution under the provisions of the Morrill Act of 1890. Founded as a land-grant university, the school’s initial curriculum prepared graduates for jobs in agriculture and primary education. Students raised livestock and grew their own food in the acreage behind the modest classroom buildings. The normal school flourished alongside a well-regarded engineering program that became one the major draws of the university. By the 1950s the school achieved university status and, unlike many black schools at the time, secured accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The athletics program became the preeminent program among black colleges and universities, with a tradition of sending students to the Olympics, and eventually graduates to the NFL and the NBA. Agricultural and School for Negroes gained an international reputation for both its academic and extra-curricular programs and became one of the most elite public black universities in the country. With graduation rates comparable to those of the nearby white schools, the university drew black students from all over the country and countries in Africa. In the words of an interviewee, the university was “royal country.”

Behind these impressive developments were polarizing racial politics that left the university in a tenuous situation. The segregationist doctrine of the South that mandated separate schooling was not one amenable to ensuring a high quality education for the state’s black college students. From the very beginning the school operated with meager resources because it was never afforded its full share of state
allotments. The campus did not have enough classrooms to meet its growing student enrollment and it took decades for the state to release the funds to erect enough buildings. Still, university presidents expertly maneuvered the political minefield, often working with the local and national chapters of black organizations like the NAACP and the black press to air grievances with specific politicians and the state board of education.

Unlike most HBCUs, both public and private, throughout its history the presidents of Agricultural and Normal School for Negroes were African American men. Those black leaders’ involvement with race politics was a constant source of tension with the state, and those presidents believed to stir up political aspirations among the students were dismissed. Despite white politicians’ and the surrounding white community’s wariness of campus civil rights stirrings, a robust tradition of activism flourished, though mainly among students. Because of its status among black colleges, the university drew students from all over the country, some of who were unaccustomed to the segregated South. As the organized protests of the mid-20th century increased, students participated sit-ins, voter registration drives, and media campaigns to challenge segregation and voting rights violations. Ultimately the duality of the school’s identity as a site of white racial power and a site of black agency came to a head during the 1964 Freedom Summer. Bowing to intense pressure from the white political establishment, the university, like many other black colleges of the time, expelled the students participating in civil rights activity, including the Freedom Summer participants, many of whom were freshmen. That their expulsion was deeply unsettling to the university is evidenced by the fact that there is nothing about this in the school archives. Years later, in the 21st century, KSU began to herald these students as heroes of the Civil Rights Movement and of the university. They were awarded honorary doctorates, despite initial misgivings from the Board of Regents, and were often invited back to campus to be guest speakers at commencements, memorials, and campus forums.

The political victories of civil rights activism had a profound on impact on the university, which by the late 1960s was known as Kenton State University. As the school transitioned into the era of desegregation, a lawsuit represented another instance of the struggle between white institutional control
and black agency. Desegregation in this state was progressing slowly and a lawsuit was filed alleging that the state was interfering with KSU’s efforts to integrate. Since the lawsuit was filed against the state’s higher education system, every public college and university was named a defendant, including KSU. Because the suit originally involved KSU, the black university remained the focus of desegregation efforts throughout the duration of the lawsuit. Throughout the desegregation process the state attempted various approaches to achieve integration, such as proposing mergers, allotting resources for minority student recruitment, instituting racial quotas.

The efforts made to integrate KSU brought both challenges and opportunities. White students were found to be reluctant to enroll in a black institution, which was still being perceived as a school for blacks only. Proposals to address the close association with blackness included renaming the university and discontinuing usage of the HBCU label. Other efforts addressed the structural deficits that made the university less competitive. During the 1980s the state court awarded KSU funds to expand the curriculum and improve the physical grounds in order to attract more white students. With this money the school also transformed the satellite campus into the headquarters for its adult education program. The most controversial measure was the minority scholarship that was awarded to white high school students with at least a 2.5 GPA. With the minority scholarship as incentive, KSU’s white enrollment rose to thirty percent. The lawsuit was formally dismissed in the early 2000s after an agreement that the state had fulfilled its legal obligation to address desegregation.

The desegregation era spanned over forty percent of the school’s history, and had a profound impact on KSU. Though the school withstood a merger with a HWI, the path to desegregation, including scholarships, quotas, and overdue financial investments, reflected whites’ power, through the legal system, to shape the university. As a result, desegregation looms as a shadow over the school, haunting its members, particularly alumni. Administrators, faculty and students of that period experienced desegregation as a prolonged racially-motivated attack on the university, and in the struggle to ward off white encroachment they emerged with a lasting sense of being under siege. That wariness contributed to
an organizational identity based around struggle, and expressed through ideological discourses of resistance, and black-affirming organizational logic.

**Black Racial Frame and Discourse**

Black racial frames operate as a roadmap, offering an explanation of the racial terrain, and provided directions for how to proceed (Dawson 2001; Bonilla-Silva 2006). The black racial frame at KSU is a liberal anti-racist frame similar to that of the broader HBCU community. At the same time, it is not the only frame represented, nor is it necessarily observable in mission statements or interviews with high-ranking administrators. As a public school, KSU is prohibited from using language that could be considered racially exclusive. However, I am able to use field observations, archives materials and interviews, to describe the racial frame. At KSU the components of a liberal anti-racist frame are 1) an acknowledgment that structural racism disadvantages blacks, 2) an affirmation of black self-determination, and 3) a politics of resistance. The racial frame provides insight into stakeholders’ understanding of how race operates, viewed through the lens of KSU’s experience with race.

**Structural Racism Causes Black Disadvantage**

School members’ perspective on the nature of racism differs from the larger society’s understanding of racism. University members generally operate with a structural understanding of racism that posits that institutional arrangements disadvantage African Americans, creating poverty and limited chances for upward mobility. For that reason, post-racial and colorblind racial discourses are not prominent at the school. Instead, people describe racial inequality as an enduring facet of American society resulting from racism that may no longer overt, but exists nonetheless.

Specific to the education, members express a critical viewpoint of primary and secondary schooling. They argue that the school systems serving blacks are inadequately resourced, and unable to provide students with the same quality of education as white and middle-class students. As a white department chair remarked, “We all recognize that children who are in low SES and children of color, no matter what color, are still getting a poor education. We all recognize that, we all know that.” Their critique of education is not confined to primary and secondary schooling, as they also understand that
similar mechanisms block black students’ access to higher education and impede on their chances at success in college. The bulk of this critique is aimed at HWIs that are described at best as being culturally insensitive spaces and at worst as being racially hostile. A white professor explained that black students at PWIs are overlooked by virtue of their low numbers, saying, “black students at majority white institutions rarely get the opportunity to be in some of the leadership roles because they're in a minority.” On the other hand, a black graduate who worked in the financial aid office focused on racial tensions saying, “prejudice [is] more predominant, even in the small white institution.”

Their understanding of structural racism is the basis for how they interpret racial antagonism and discrimination against the school. University members describe the obstacles KSU faces as an extension of the larger systemic disadvantage of African Americans, and that contempt towards blacks results in contempt towards a black university. Many at KSU claim that white antagonism is at the root of the school’s contentious relationship to the state. Interviewees described what they felt to be the state’s general disdain for the school because of its identity as a black university. As one black alumna put it, “They're thinking, ‘how can I, you know, get that Kenton State University to stop being known as an HBC,’ or ‘how do I get students to not be successful there?’ ” It is noteworthy that even those stakeholders who are critical of the school’s HBCU identity believe that the school is the target of racial animosity. Therefore, even white professors who insist that the HBCU designation is no longer relevant argue that KSU is treated unfairly because it is a black university. For example, one white professor spoke of a recent incident where a state representative made disparaging comments about KSU during a legislative session.

The senator who came out with that “I don’t give a rat's ass about KSU!” Now listen to me, that's an authority figure, a person in power for higher education who is giving a declarative statement, "I don't give a rat's ass about that, you know, KSU." You know, I actually think he said something else, it wasn't just KSU. "That black school" is what I think he said.

Another white professor commented:

In my personal opinion, and this is just a opinion, I don’t have any research to support that, is that there are people, there have always been people at the Board [of Regents] level that don’t want Kenton State University, a black institution, do not want it to do anything that would elevate it in any way that would make it comparable to a white institution.
In various ways stakeholders claim that the state wants dismantle KSU as an HBCU, or close the school. They see the state as seeking to accomplish this by denying the university its due allotment of financial support, defaming the university in the press, and appointing administrators to sabotage the school. Professors shared stories in which they interpret the state as being critical of efforts advance the university’s reputation because it is inconsistent with an agenda to portray KSU as a struggling university. One black professor said the Board of Regents responded poorly to the school securing an internship program with IBM, because, “That's the wrong image. They don’t want that image. They want the image of ‘you can't really do anything right. You're bunglers’...”

People also say that the state’s insistence on forcing KSU to operate with minimal resources prevents the university from reaching its maximum potential. This explanation does not mean stakeholders at KSU do not recognize their responsibility to properly manage the school, and from administrators to students, university members spoke candidly of the need to hire and properly train competent employees. However, operational problem are attributed to the constraints of limited resources. At a rally held to protest budget cuts, a white KSU alumna addressed criticisms that the school is less efficient than neighboring HWIs white, saying,

Well, that's what happens when it's [KSU] forced to operate with scraps. Now that is true and it’s documented...that historically from the get-go KSU had less finances to operate with as compared to these other state schools. Well I’m not a person who thinks money solves everything, but you know who came up with that saying? People who had their full share of the money!

Assertive declarations of racial discrimination reject colorblind accounts of the insignificance of race. Furthermore, KSU members’ account of structural racism ascribes a high level of intentionality to white institutional actors, especially those at the Board of Regents. Lastly, to most of the people inside the university, the blatancy of white racism necessitates an equally assertive response in the form of black self-determination.

**Affirmation of Black Self-Determination**

The discourse of black self-determination positions KSU, an HBCU, as part of the larger black community that is obligated serve the most vulnerable community members. Doing so requires KSU, in
the tradition of HBCUs, to develop its own admissions criteria that reflect an understanding of structural disadvantage. KSU’s black self-determination discourse also affirms black students’ racial identity. Within the larger society anti-black racism denigrates blackness through racist stereotypes about intellectual capacity, character, sexuality, culture, and aesthetics, giving rise to modern anti-black discourses that attribute black disadvantage to cultural deficits (Brown, Carnoy, Currie, Duster, Oppenheimer, Schultz and Wellman 2003; Feagin 2000). KSU, like many HBCUs, acts as a space that provides alternative messages about blackness (Harris 2012). Affirming the value of blackness entails a celebration of black aesthetics, specifically black beauty, black histories, black cultural and intellectual traditions, and black institutions like HBCUs. The discourses around blackness communicate to students that it is not a disadvantage, but rather a source of pride and a legacy from which they can draw strength and be empowered. The emphasis on the school’s history is one way in which students are taught to reconsider their relationship to blackness. A recent graduate spoke about how KSU helped her develop a positive black identity.

There really is something to be said about being immersed in everything that looks like you. Especially if you're coming from outlying places, you know, maybe you grew up in the suburbs and all your friends are white. And I did… So it's an identity crisis. And once you come to an HBCU you start to realize I'm kind of happy that I'm black. You know, “this looks good on me,” kind of thing… Places like KSU, these places are part of the Freedom Riders. You know all those things that you read about in they history books, like "those people went here? You know they walked this yard? I'm on this yard!” You start to take a little more pride and what it means to be black and what you can do being black.

Black self-determination discourses also emphasize modeling black professionals. Exposing students to black administrators and faculty expands their understanding of success beyond the limited examples available from the wider society that are confined largely to the entertainment industry.

**Politics of Resistance**

A third element of the liberal anti-racist frame concerns subverting white antagonism through resistance. This mostly takes the form of commitment to the university’s identity as a HBCU. Resistance to white racism has been an important factor shaping the course of the university. A prominent narrative describes how the school withstood the challenges of discrimination by remaining steadfast in their
commitment to thrive. An excerpt from an interview with a black professor illustrates a common metaphor among university members of “chicken feathers,” indicating the resourcefulness the school has used to thrive with limited resources.

You created the mess you got out here. We created something great out of it! We made chicken soup out of chicken feathers! [Laugh] You gave us chicken feathers and we made chicken soup and you're angry. You're mad about it cuz we didn't just dump the chicken feathers; we made chicken soup!

University members also discuss, and celebrate, the tradition of student activism that forced the state to more equitably fund the university.

This campus was an embarrassment. You had a student union just across from this building. The student union was rat-infested. So they neglected, they did nothing. They just left this institution out here with no funds, no nothing. The students in 1990 held a hunger strike. They came from their classes one day and their- the water pipes had burst for the umpteenth time. And their books and papers and clothing were floating down the hallway. And they filmed it! And it got on national television. And then they had this hunger strike and they were- the ambulance would be picking them up and carrying them to the hospital. And the media, the electronic, and the paper media were here from everywhere. And the Governor, they were embarrassed. They were embarrassed! And the governor decided that he wanted to settle it. And he made a deal to renovate this campus and that's why we got this campus renovated. And then we made another agreement in 2000, and we got many of our problems solved. And we got new programs and so on.

**Organizational Logic and Racialized Values, Norms, and Practices**

Kenton State University operates according to an organizational logic that I call the *care ethic*. The care ethic resembles a firm-level expression of the family institutional logic that emphasizes “community and reciprocal obligations” and values “unconditional loyalty of family relationships or reciprocal relations of communities” (Townley 1997: 263). One student said the familial environment provides, “that camaraderie, that sister-brotherly love that is missing in the black community now…It's present on campus.” The family is the core organizational metaphor as university members described themselves as related through lifelong emotional ties and accountability. School relationships are organized around providing care, which includes guidance and emotional support. These ties of support and obligation coalesce around two interrelated principles: racialized accessibility and racialized cultivation. The institutionalization of these principles has given rise to KSU’s organizational norms and practices.
TABLE II

INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE CARE ETHIC

<table>
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<th>Principle</th>
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Accessibility is the preeminent principle guiding the university. It is often spoken of as the core objective directing organizational action. Speaking about KSU’s mission, the head of Institutional Planning said, “We have existed to provide access. That's why it's number one in our [strategic] plan.”

The racialized accessibility principle has its origins in the school’s history as an institution for African Americans where racial exclusion produced a race-specific understanding of access. As a result access became inextricably linked with opportunity for blacks across the country. The relationship between access and race became less explicit after desegregation meant the university was no longer serving a population facing overt racial exclusion. That notion gave way to a more racialized sense of access that is framed in terms of socio-economic marginalization. A white professor who chaired the desegregation committee described KSU’s transition toward focusing on marginalized students.

Right after integration we went through what was called the “brain drain” when all the very best black students were given scholarships to attend, you know, some of the prestigious schools, and they would have been silly not to take them. But it took away a lot of the top students, and so it also made us focus on the fact that there are some students who can be successful who aren't being, you know, solicited by those schools and who probably won't be admitted to those schools. And so, it gives us a chance, an opportunity to serve that part of the population.

This is the trend that has endured to the present where university members speak assertively and candidly about providing educational opportunities to marginal students, including first generation, low-income, or underprepared students. A statement from a white professor captures this shifting post-desegregation focus on student condition rather than exclusively student race.

I think that the students that are best served by these types of schools are the students who are on the bubble- the ones who could fall to either side of the demarcation line. And either be
successful or unsuccessful. And these institutions have historically uh, well, for the past fifty years or so, served that population very well by taking that bubble population and helping to move them to the success side of the equation.

The university also faced structural barriers that caused a race-specific mission to recede or become less overt, since as a public institution KSU is prohibited by law from practices of racial exclusion. University members are well aware that university practices must align with the law. As such, university mission and vision statements use the language of underserved and underrepresented. For instance, Ms. Jones, an administrator in recruitment said, “I think Kenton State is one of the premier schools that still represents those students who are unrepresented.” Still, the understanding of accessibility on campus retains its association with race and in practice remains largely racialized, both because of KSUs’ history as black university and the contemporary connotations of underrepresented and underserved.

Accessibility is more than a value, and is realized through formal policies and informal practices designed to accommodate a vulnerable, primarily black student population. The principle of racialized accessibility is institutionalized through admissions policies that distinguish KSU from the state’s other four-year institutions. The university’s admissions requirements are less stringent as it requires a lower minimum standardized test score and lower high school GPA. These requirements are intended to capture students who would not meet other schools’ qualification. Ms. Jones described the obstacles prospective students encounter when applying to the other public schools in the state.

Qualifications to get into [the flagship school] is [sic] much higher than Kenton State so that in itself, because of the admissions requirement, is gonna keep a lot of those minority students from getting in. Because the minority students, most, worst case scenario would be from an underrepresented high school or inner city high school and they simply don't have the education resources to do well on the ACT or SAT to even get in or even qualify for admissions.

The reference to unequal educational resources underscores the university’s justification for lower requirement: greater leeway is afforded to minority students because they have not been given access to high quality k-12 education.

Affordability is another aspect of admissions that reflects racialized accessibility. KSU is the least expensive public four-year institution in the state, from application fees to tuition, to room and board and other costs of attendance. This affordability is described as a selling point for the university that
allows them to attract a variety of students. The informal practices of racialized accessibility, informal in the sense that that are not official, codified, or sanctioned by the state, are just as important as those formal policies. Despite the school’s official requirements KSU has informally used an open admissions policy, accepting students with qualifications below even their minimum requirements. A student government representative was forthcoming about his own qualifications saying, “I came in with an ACT score of an 18, and you had individuals who came in to KSU with ACT of a 13 or below.”

The university’s student profile attests to the effectiveness of racialized accessibility, as students who are usually underrepresented at PWIs are present at KSU in significant numbers. When I was in the field the average high school GPA was a C+ and the average ACT score was below 18, both below the state’s mandated requirements, other school’s averages, and even the minimum requires of KSU. The school enrolled the highest percentage of Pell grant eligible students, had the highest percentage of black enrollment, and the second highest enrollment of non-traditional students (students over 24).

The aim of the racialized cultivation principle is two-fold: compensatory human capital acquisition and racialized character development. KSU seeks to help students establish the necessary skills and body of knowledge for matriculation and viable employment. At the same time the mission statement includes “commitment to service” as one of the educational objectives and the vision statement identifies the cultivation of “global leaders” among the school’s future objectives. These two thrusts, one internally-directed and the other externally-engaged, are also institutionalized through formal and informal practices.

All educational institutions at all levels are responsible for disseminating academic information, and higher education is increasingly expected to design curricula that easily translates into occupational skills (Suspitsyna 2012; Saunders 2010). However, KSU’s student body requires special attention to human capital acquisition. The university has a large population of first generation students coming from low-income families, and it is a widespread organizational narrative that these students suffer the consequences of structural disadvantage, and lag behind many of their peers as a result of substandard or ineffective K-12 schools. KSU has adopted the stance that these students can catch up, and that it is the
institution’s responsibility to compensate for the shortcomings of primary and secondary schooling. Those inside the school also explained that the work they do is difficult, and catering to a marginalized student population is more challenging than working with only the most competitive students. A member of the national alumni administration said,

They [HBCUs] can take you where you are and help you get where you need to go, and they help you fulfill your purpose. And a lot of universities don’t operate like that. They really take a product which is maybe high academic performing, and you know, take them through a higher education process. And it's- I don’t really see it's as much work as we do in HBCUs.

KSU’s interest in developing well-rounded students is consistent with higher education’s tradition of civic-mindedness. However KSU, like other HBCUs, pursues this through racialized character development that includes racial identity. A positive racial identity is considered the foundation of individual self-worth, and ultimately the basis of empowered citizenship. A solid racial identity is believed to ground students, and to impart the confidence necessary to withstand racial hostilities. Scholars have found that the idea of being anchored in racial identity is considered one of the primary benefits of attending black colleges (Freeman and Gail 2002; Freeman 1999). During one interview an African American student remarked, “all my family members have gone to HBCUs, and they say get your roots at the HBCUs and then you can go anywhere else you wanna go.” To that end, the school attempts to build racial identity in the form of racial character.

The other components of racial character are respectability, resilience and responsibility. Within HBCUs and other black institutions respectability has long been a strategy for managing white hostilities, and providing a podium from which blacks could demand equal rights (Patton 2014; Andersen 1988). Regarding respectability, the school emphasizes a specifically middle-class self-presentation of dress, speech, cultural tastes, and social networks. School members describe the benefits of joining black fraternities and sororities, connecting with alumni for internships, participating in public speaking, etc.

Like the cultivation of respectability, building resilience in students is meant to help them overcome the obstacles of their background (i.e. poverty) and to strengthen their resolve to withstand anticipated hardships. A professor and graduate from the 1960s remarked, “HBCUs not only teach you
academics, they nurture, they teach you self-worth. And how to survive in turbulent times.” Adaptation to difficult conditions is actually described as part of the school’s cultural experience. A history of underdeveloped grounds is now part of the organizational origins narrative. Students, staff, faculty and administrators of different races recounted in interviews and at school events the struggle with insufficient resources, a limited curriculum, a modest employee income, and all of these are related proof of the resiliency of the people who made up the university. As one white professor said,

“It was started by African Americans, actually the first buildings were built by the students, ok? It wasn't handed to the African Americans, and said, "Here you got yourself.” No, no, no. The federal government gave them some land and they didn't have a university, they had a high school. They called them normal schools back then. Right, ok? Little high school and it was, they taught how to teach and some agriculture and then over the years it became a college and now it's gotten, we're working on getting Carnegie accreditation and all the good stuff that you wanna have and be [a] number one, research university.

Those origin stories are coupled with the university’s contemporary struggle with customer service. In fact KSU has a poor reputation for customer service, especially with financial aid and housing. Inadequate resources and services are put together as charactering building experiences, forged in an organizational culture of adapting to limitations, of “making do.” According to Dr. Cox, KSU’s IDC,

The way we nurture our students here, you can't get it anywhere else. You might stand in line at financial aid for two hours, but once you leave Kenton State University you can go anywhere and conquer anything because you've learned how to be resilient. You've learned how to deal with the hard times. You've learned how to live in a residence hall that didn't have any hot water. You've learned how to go through the line at the cafeteria and get chittlins...So those are the things that we carry on in life and look back and say, "man, I cannot believe I went through that." But you'll be able to go anywhere else and succeed because of the cultural things that you learned. (Emphases mine)

Lastly, the school aims to instill in students a desire to help local, national and international communities. Commitment to service is considered the hallmark of the HBCU contribution because black schools have met African Americans’ academic needs, and black school graduates have been the majority of black professionals, and have been among their most prominent political activists (Douglas 2012; Jackson and Nunn 2003). At KSU all work, from professors to custodians, is understood as service that contributes to the survival and well-being of African American communities. A black recruiter said that KSU professors “reach back and teach one.” Students are taught that the ultimate purpose of their education is
to improve their communities. An African American graduate and professor spoke with me about the
priority the school places on service, saying,

*They want you to come in to learn what is required of you to learn, but you're not complete unless
you go out and you serve mankind*... So the mission of Kenton State University is to prepare
students to go out from the halls of the university and then to serve and to earn, to make a living
and then to serve mankind after you get that... If you don't take what you've learned here and take
it out to the society and serve- your service to some group, somebody, then you've not met all the
things that Ken- that HBCU has for you.* (Emphasis mine)

Racialized character development is formalized in the school through 1) relations of intimacy, 2)
intensive immersion, and 3) student accountability. Relations of intimacy are necessary to do the work of
cultivating students. There are specific formal and informal organizational cultural practices that are
conducive to building the types of relationships that allow administrators, faculty and staff to transcend
their official duties to work on racialized character development. Through the institutionalization of
intimacy and familiar relations, organizational members acquire entrée into students’ private lives.

The open-door policy is one way KSU institutionalizes intimacy. Students have exceptional
access to personnel, including administrators, that extends to the highest level. For instance students
requesting an appointment with the university president could expect to be accommodated within the
week. During one afternoon spent in the office of the Vice President of Students Affairs I watched
students make walk-in appointments. He spoke about this later on saying,

*Here at Kenton State University, we have an open door policy and so the students come in to visit
me, just to keep me up to speed on how things are going with them personally, what things are
going on on campus, just some initiatives they have. So it's truly a family affair where you know
the students.*

With a student-teacher ratio is 18:1 KSU also uses small class sizes to foster a sense of intimacy.

Students and faculty alike spoke proudly of professors’ awareness of and investment in students’
emotional well-being. A junior Communications major captured this saying,

*See, a lot of professors- they know us by our names. They build a relationship. They take out the
time. [They ask] "What's wrong with you cuz usually be all happy? Today you [are] just sad.
What's wrong?"

Many students expressed appreciation of the faculty involvement in their personal lives.
Most classes where teachers invested in your life, they don't allow you to be in the classroom without participating or maybe getting your personal cell phone number. "Where you at?" [Laugh] "You need to be in class."

Professors are expected to demonstrate interest in their students, and with small classes they can notice and comment on changes in student engagement. Faculty having students’ personal contact information is also legitimate in the context of institutionalized intimacy, and I observed professors calling students’ cell phone numbers to check in on them.

Intimacy also provides license to address personal needs. The university operates a program that provides food and basic toiletries for students with financial hardship funded by donations from faculty, staff and administrator. Individually, school employees provide financial assistance, sometimes paying tuition and fees, or subsidizing students’ costs of attending with money for food and housing.

Lastly, the institutionalization of intimate employee-student relations allows employees to participate in racialized character development. The attention to respectability, understood as the demonstration of middle-class sensibilities, often stemmed from the concern that students lacked proper role models at home. Many KSU employees saw it as their responsibility to correct students, and model an alternative. For example, during one interview a financial aid officer described delicately navigating around family socialization to encourage more modest clothing.

Now see the kids know when they see me coming, them pants better be up. If your skirt is too short I'll say, "I see Christmas." And they say what are you talking about? I say, "I see all your gifts." It's, cuz I've seen them come with some of their parents who are dressed similarly and I wait until they're [the parents] gone and then I talk to them about it, and say, "listen, baby" you know and I'll pretend like I didn’t see their parents. Um, we try to teach the kids respect.

The emphasis on respectability extends beyond individual interactions and is part of the campus discourse. Messages of respectability are infused into nearly all campus discourse, from recruitment to commencement. For example, during a fall recruitment event the president delivered a stern message to prospective students and their parents about the cultivation of proper behavior. Attendees were told that sagging pants and other “street” practices would not be permitted for their own good, and parents were assured that the school would replace their children’s unseemly behavior with more modest forms of
presentation. As a testament to this the next speaker, a recent graduate, described his transformation from an unmotivated slacker to a self-directed college recruiter.

Intimacy was only one mechanism by which KSU attempted to cultivate African American students. Another way the school formally addresses respectability, resilience and responsibility is through immersion in a black cultural environment. Many interviewees, not all of whom were black, justified the school’s explicitly black organization culture, arguing that despite the segregation that characterized most students’ neighborhoods and schools, they had not been afforded the opportunity to build a strong sense of themselves as African Americans. The school therefore seeks to expose them to black histories, philosophies, political thought, aesthetics, etc.

Intensive immersion is institutionalized through school curriculum and the campus environment. KSU had a formal Black Studies department offering students the chance to earn a bachelor’s degree or to minor in the program. The immersion went beyond the formal major, but was also infused other courses. Teaching about African Americans sometimes supplemented standard course material and at other times replaced it altogether. For example, as part of a course in American history, students bought purchased two texts- a traditional history textbook and a text on the history of African Americans. According to a white student in that course, the majority of readings and content came from the latter book. In interviews students discussed accessing the school archives to connect the content of the assignment with the school’s historical struggle or efforts.

Lastly, having a black majority is understood as an important part of building students’ black self-identity. Though many were careful to explain that the school didn’t have to be “99 or 100% black” and that racial exclusion was not the goal, they were clear that black students benefited from learning in an environment in which the majority of students are black, and faculty, staff and administration are predominately black. The president of the national alumni association, like others I interviewed, expressed this view when he remarked,

I always say every black student should spend one or two years at an HBCU. And I say that because the, there's a social element to college. If you're the majority in the social environment your experience is up here. [Respondent places hand high above his head]
Students also felt that the majority experience freed them from the alienation common to black students at PWIs. Being black at KSU provided a sense of safety that allowed them to focus on growth and development. A student government association representative captured this sentiment when describing how he benefitted from attending KSU.

I feel like getting an understanding of yourself, not so much the material, the content, but just the understanding who you are as a person. I feel like that's an experience that you gain going to an HBCU because you're around people who are like you and have the same experiences as you, overwhelmingly. That's, that's the majority experience. (Emphasis mine)

While relations of intimacy and immersion encouraged students to turn inward to reflect on their identity and values, student accountability was meant to help students understand their ability to shape their broader circumstances, beginning with the school. Therefore, students were encouraged to understand themselves not only as constituents, but more importantly, as stakeholders. There was a level of accountability to the university that separated KSU, and other HBCUs, from predominately white schools, and it involved the responsibility to maintain and secure the school’s financial viability and to defend its reputation and integrity as an HBCU.

The financial hardships that plagued KSU throughout its history continued to the present and alumni donations often lagged behind other universities. During the time I was in the field it was reported that four percent of alumni made regular financial contributions to the university. To instill in students a sense of responsibility for the school’s finances, the university encourages donations. The alumni association founded a pre-alumni council to students for their post-graduate relationship with the school. One of the programs, called the “5-Dollar Holla” encourages students to make donations of $5 to be matched by administration, faculty and staff.

Beyond financial matters, students are involved formally in accountability through participation in campus culture. Students, especially student leaders, play a significant role in the work of preserving the school’s heritage. They have a sense that they are obligated, more than faculty and administration, to preserve the school’s HBCU identity by impressing it upon new students. For example, when I asked a
student government representative how knowledge of the HBCU identity is disseminated among students, he replied,

    Well, it comes primarily from the students themselves. It comes primarily from the upperclassmen who are able to share that with many of the freshmen, many of the sophomores…So I think that's one of the biggest things students learn, it's from other students like myself and other members of the student government association. And so they have orientation classes but you know that's on the administrative portion, but people need to go further beyond that.

Students play a lead role in promoting black campus culture, often invoking Afrocentric perspectives of black resistance in response to institutional struggles. Two recent challenges were the demotion of African American Studies from a major to a minor, and the cancellation of prominent black leader’s invitation to speak on campus. Student leaders framed both as attacks on KSU’s HBCU identity and held rallies in which they pledged to wrest responsibility away from the state and school administrators and recommit the school to its black-focused agenda. In an “HBCU pledge”, the students present promised to proactive in addressing the challenges KSU faced and preserve the school’s core principles. Beyond campus activities and cultural expressions of the HBCU identity, students are also expected to play a more fundamental role in shaping the university. During a panel commemorating a school anniversary, students asked former presidents how they could be involved in strengthening the relationship between administration and students. One president replied that the university must emphasize transparency on both ends, and he encouraged shared governance. Whether or not he was sincere in this, it is nonetheless important that a university president told students to participate in governance at some level. This is not inconsistent with the active role students have had in shaping the school’s environment, as students have always been on the front lines of civil disobedience, from challenging segregation in public facilities to organized resistance against the desegregation lawsuit.

    One of the informal manifestations of accountability concerns protecting the university’s representation. In general HBCUs struggle with poor representation in the media and are often portrayed as mismanaged and inefficient (Gasman and Bowman 2011). At KSU students are admonished to avoid
contributing to negative press. An officer in financial aid had the following to say about student complaints:

They're not getting their way, so they call the newspapers saying, "We're standing in line. There are 300 people standing in line"...And as a people, we air our laundry too much. You know, stains and all, we put them out there. So we got to learn to stop doing that.

In fact, this extends throughout the entire school, from administrators to alumni. For example, at the annual alumni convention attendees were told that their negative complaints about the school were directly tied low acceptance rates among admitted applicants. Still, students feel they have an obligation to draw attention to matters interpreted as detrimental to university, particularly as it relates to the university’s HBCU identity. One example that illustrates this is student response the results of the Miss KSU pageant. Due to regulations, the elected Miss KSU was unseated but a new one was not named, and as such KSU did not have a representative participate in the annual Miss HBCU competition. Students interpreted this as a blow to the school’s HBCU identity, with many student leaders claiming it was intended to create distance from the HBCU identity. The students took to Facebook and Twitter to protest and this drew attention from the larger HBCU community. After the press was involved, the matter was resolved.

Service to those outside of the school is also considered part of the accountability to KSU, and is a way students demonstrate their understanding of the university mission. An administrator in university planning described the school as “a service university. It’s part of our mission. It’s part of our motto.” Furthermore, KSU operates a center for community engagement, reflecting their central identity as a service university.

“So that it wasn't a matter of just talk anymore. It was a matter, a concrete entity that was there to um support all of the service initiatives at the university. Um, and we're also a community-engaged university. Carnegie community engaged university.”

It is part of the campus culture and is a formalized part of the student curriculum. A financial aid advisor commented, “On this campus, we have that give back attitude cuz they [students] have to do community service. That’s a requirement, freshmen year you have to do it.”
The meaning of service is not limited to voluntary acts of community engagement, but also includes political activism. Students participate in efforts to address mass incarceration, voting rights, urban renewal, educational reform, etc. Campus organizations like 100 Black Men, National Association of Colored Women’s Club, and the fraternity system facilitate activism, connecting students to local and national campaigns. Students interpret this as service work, and they also see it as a continuation of the legacy of resistance, underscoring the political nature of social engagement.

Each of these practices and norms points back to the care ethic. This logic is the organizational blueprint that reflects the school’s condition as a site for blacks when they were excluded from white schools, and a place for blacks who continue to face obstacles in higher education. Through the care ethic the relationship between employees and students is organized as a family where employees provide for, protect and mold students who are expected to reciprocate through service to the school and eventually their communities. The care ethic is a family logic, and at KSU it is fundamentally a black family. It is a commitment based on race as a status that ties members to each other, to the university’s past, and to its future.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have demonstrated that Kenton State University is a black institutional space. A key insight from the black space framework is that KSU has never been autonomous and separate from the larger organizational field. Dawson (2001) perhaps does not consider HBCUs to be black counter-publics because black colleges, like KSU, have always been regulated by white institutional power, shaped by its interests in preserving white privilege, first through segregation and then through managed inclusion, as was the case with desegregation.

However, the black institutional space framework also illuminates the ways in which African Americans at KSU have resisted racist control. White institutional power has never been absolute, and as a result liberal anti-racist political frame developed and helped cement the school’s identity as a site of racial resistance. The anti-racist frame is the foundation of the organizational logic, the care ethic, which crystalizes resistance around the twin foci of racialized access and cultivation.
My purpose in framing KSU as a black institutional space is to provide an analytic framework for interpreting the school’s response to diversity, both as an imposed mandate from the state and also as a norm in higher education. In the next two chapters I show that KSU’s organizational logic and also its interests in securing legitimacy shaped the institutionalization of diversity. Through the process of translating diversity to a black space, school leaders preserved a black majority population but undermined the anti-racist racial frame. Thus the black institutional space framework directs attention to complex relationship between racial demographics and racial politics, demonstrating that black spaces must constantly contend with the norms and values of the larger white racial field of higher education.
III. INSTITUTIONALIZING DIVERSITY STRUCTURES AT KSU

Previous work has attributed the spread of diversity structures in higher education to normative and mimetic isomorphism. Because diversity is not law, its near ubiquitous status indicates that organizations have copied each other, and have also developed shared cultural appreciation for diversity (Lipson 2007). Berrey, in her research on the transformation of race-conscious policies at the University of Michigan, notes that even as schools engage in mimicry, decision-makers “must adapt such practices and imbue them with meanings that make sense in their local milieu” (2008:108). Like Berrey, I find that an account relying purely on isomorphism does not adequately explain the emergence of diversity structures at KSU. Why and how diversity becomes institutionalized draws attention to both the nature of the external pressure to diversify and also the internal process that give meaning to diversity, a process, I argue, that is organized by the school’s organizational logic. Thus, though KSU complied with the state mandate through institutionalizing formal diversity structures, university decision-makers tailored the response to preserve the black majority population. The care ethic was the prevailing rationale guiding the development of diversity structures, particularly the principle of racialized accessibility, but the ambiguous nature of the diversity mandate was of equal importance. Taken together, diversity is introduced as a non-disruptive organizational objective.

The Commission on Diversity

The desegregation lawsuit era drew to a close a decade into the twenty-first century. Its dismissal marked an agreement amongst the courts, Board of Regents, and public schools that a dual system of higher education, one for blacks and one for whites, no longer existed. African American enrollment at formerly segregated white schools increased during those forty years. At KSU white enrollment peaked at approximately forty percent in the 1980s but leveled off to nearly twenty percent afterward. With the end of the lawsuit the state transitioned from addressing inclusion as a matter of desegregation and toward the interests of diversity.

After the lawsuit the state introduced an initiative to maintain the progress made during the desegregation era and also expand consideration for what constitutes inclusion. The Commission on
Diversity was established under the auspices of the Board of Regents, and headed by the Director of Diversity. The state provided the Committee with the same operating budget that had been used for desegregation, and from this budget it annually awarded grants to individual schools, and hosted diversity conferences and workshops.

Diversity differs from desegregation because the two are very different projects. Desegregation was about the legal issues of civil rights law and anti-discrimination. It operated by imposing standards and goals onto schools, making pronouncements about campuses, and constantly monitoring the state of desegregation at schools, especially KSU. All of this was done with the authority of the federal government and the weight of penalties (i.e. less state appropriations and further lawsuits). Desegregation was law. Diversity, in the words of Ellen Berrey, is “extra-legal” (Berrey 2008b). In this state diversity was envisioned and designed to be an organic project that complimented schools’ existing priorities and institutional vision. The diversity mandate was the product of, and was in line with, the development of diversity projects all over the country where the focus changed from anti-discrimination and redress to serving the needs of institutions (McLean 2006). In other words, diversity is not civil rights program, but an organizational program, and as a result it prioritizes organizational interests (Collins 2011).

For this state, the key difference between desegregation and diversity was in the definition of what groups constituted diversity and how should schools acquire those groups. The most significant development was the new status of race. Under desegregation, race was the primary focus and it was approached very narrowly as the number of black students at HWIs and white students at the HBCU. Whereas desegregation concerned race, Commission documents defined the objective of the diversity initiative as

The inclusion and support of groups of people with a variety of human characteristics that go beyond the legally protected classes of race, sex, age, religion, national origin, disability status, veteran status – to include, but not be limited to, other categories such as socio-economic status, sexual orientation, first generation college status, urban or rural upbringing – and other personal characteristics that shape an individual’s identity and life experience in a substantive way.
With diversity, race left the foreground and was repositioned, even buried, alongside a host of status eligible for consideration. That race was no longer of primary significance is further evidenced by the stipulation at the conclusion of the lawsuit that banned the use of race-targeted recruitment practices. A diversity scholarship replaced the minority scholarship, and it was not awarded on the basis of race, but rather GPA and whatever other qualifications individual schools chose to consider.

The conclusion of the race scholarship and other racially-marked practices was one indication of the difference in how schools were to institutionalize diversity in comparison to desegregation. The other had to do with the infrastructure. The Commission advised schools to establish a committee overseen by an Institutional Diversity Coordinator (IDC) who liaised with the Commission. The IDC and committee constructed a diversity master plan and submit annual reports on the status of campus initiatives. The extent of the required diversity structure stopped at an IDC, a master plan, and an annual report.

Not only were there fewer structural requirements, but the directions were non-specific and ambiguous. During the desegregation era, court-appointed commissions established concrete rules for the hiring and enrollment of minorities, defined as blacks at HWIs and whites at KSU. For example, KSU was required to increase white enrollment to fifty percent. Additionally, desegregation practices were standardized. Each school’s objectives were supported by the same desegregation structures and practices, including the Office of Minority Affairs and the minority scholarships. The organization and intentionality of the state’s desegregation project stands in stark contrast with the diversity mandate. The Commission on Diversity provided few guidelines and no specific goals, and as a result the diversity initiative was almost entirely campus-driven and campus-directed. Schools designated their own “targeted subpopulations,” their own goals for enrollment and retention, and designed their own diversity initiatives. The rationale behind this level of autonomy was that schools should be free to design diversity in as non-intrusive a way as possible. However, as a result the Commission’s approach was ambiguous to the point of being conflicting. Specifically, the Commission’s instructions call for
objectives that support the plans schools already have in place, and that these objectives simultaneously be both malleable and concrete, as well as bold, but sensible.

Lastly, the oversight structure of the state’s diversity initiative differed significantly from desegregation project. The latter project had multiple oversight structures in place. As it took place under the ordinance of an ongoing lawsuit, there was strict oversight and all schools were being monitored for compliance. Schools submitted detailed annual reports and had regularly scheduled external audits. The statewide diversity project involved almost no oversight. The Commission on Diversity operated mostly through suggestions, as in suggested diversity populations, and suggested diversity policies and initiatives. And while school diversity officers submitted yearly reports, the Commission did not exact penalties of any kind for failure to meet projected goals.

As in instances across the country, the state’s diversity initiative can be evaluated in terms of its effectiveness for creating real change in the public school system. The Commission explained the rationale behind the autonomy as a way to allow schools to construct plans and practices that matched existing goals, but with little direction and no penalties, there is little accountability. Studies show that accountability structures are essential to creating change (Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelly, 2006). Yet the lack of specific goals, oversight, and penalty are precisely the conditions that allowed KSU, a historically black university with a distinctive commitment to African Americans, to craft its own vision of diversity.

Organizational Diversity at KSU

Organizational scholars note that when determining how to respond to a demand organizational leaders assess its type and strength, as well as the extent to which compliance compliments existing organizational goals (Sauder and Espeland 2009; Dobbin and Kelly 2007; Espeland 1998; Oliver 1991; Meyer 1983). This is the case for the institutionalization of diversity at KSU. Overall, diversity was not met with resistance, but instead decision-makers’ viewed the Commission’s requirements as mandatory, but not unreasonable. This is in contrast to the popular understanding of desegregation. School leaders, including those involved in translating the diversity mandate into organizational practice, did not speak about diversity the way they talked about desegregation. To explain why they did not feel diversity was
an institutional threat I turn now to the way they interpreted the mandate, and I argue that it was interpreted as non-threatening because it could fit within the parameters of the organizational logic, specifically the principle of racialized accessibility. I begin by looking at how the care ethic acted as the guiding force, informing what the school would do and why. Looking here first will make it easier to recognize the commitment to the principle of racialized accessibility in the way diversity is institutionalized- from planning to implementation, and from targeting groups through retention.

Before the Commission on Diversity, university documents indicate an expected increase in non-black enrollment, specifically among Hispanic students. Still, the school anticipated that maintaining a predominately black student body. Interviewees routinely insisted that diversifying the student body would not come at the expense of black enrollment, a sentiment captured by frequently remarks like “we will always serve black students.” Such assertions reflect the influence of the care ethic, the organizational logic or blueprint for organizational life at KSU. The care ethic acted much like an institutional logic that Thorton (2004) described as an instrumental part of the decision-making process because it shapes members’ perception of the appropriate response and the strategy leaders ultimate take. The values, rules and beliefs of the logic help determine “what answers and solutions are available and appropriate in controlling economic forces and political activity in organizations and markets” (Thorton 2004: 13).

The university took steps to ensure that diversity did not mean unseating African Americans. They did this primarily by taking advantage of the Commission’s lack of specific guidelines to interpret access as the essence of the initiative. By doing so they treated the state mandate as a reinforcement of their existing focus on underserved racial minorities, specifically African Americans. Thus KSU emphasized access as their core mission for diversifying the school. One manifestation of the operationalization of diversity work as access is the list of targeted subpopulation KSU leaders assembled and inserted into planning documents. The groups included in the list, among which were low-income students, transfer students, and immigrants, are underrepresented in higher education. The director of
Institutional Planning, Dr. Mason, explained that the list was consistent with the school’s commitment to providing opportunities for underserved student populations.

This university's been around to serve the needs of the underprivileged and the underserved. We have been very conscious of that mission. That historical mission. It was of course started to serve African Americans. We've expanded the doors to include other groups that are underserved.

Their choice of targeted populations also reflected the racialized nature of the racialized accessibility principle. There was a heavy emphasis on local immigrant communities, many of whom were first-generation Latinos. Leaders referred to Hispanics’ status in society, and higher education in particular, as justification for their inclusion. For instance the IDC, Dr. Cox, described Hispanics as facing barriers to upward mobility that are similar to those blacks encounter. He said,

Most of them are first generation students. Most of them come from economically disadvantaged homes, one-parent homes or whatever. They face some of the very similar struggles that we do, so how can we turn our nose against them when we've been across the bridge that they're trying to come across?

At KSU, therefore, diversity means a variety of disadvantaged students, even whites since, “a number of them actually come from underprivileged backgrounds” according to Dr. Mason. The only exception was international students whose social status never came up in interviews, but instead were considered assets whose presence provided cultural exposure.

Still, the most important consideration was to the status of African Americans, and KSU used two approaches to target African Americans specifically. First, and most clearly, African Americans are the only racial group among the targeted subpopulations. But another way in which they are able to include African Americans is, ironically, by defining diversity in ways other than race. Diversity personnel often insisted that defining diversity only as race would not capture the existing heterogeneity among the student body. For instance, a former director of the diversity committee member described a variety of differences, not all demographic or about race.

But first of all I think the first way that people in this country begin to look at diversity, they look first at race...diversity is more than just the first way we look at it and see the color, ok? Diversity uh also means uh, and we're still about looking at people who are first generation uh, college students whose parents never have been and they're the first one on their family to graduate.... you have the people who and, and, and among that group there are people that have no clue what
to do to get to college or to stay in college, or to what you do after you get the degree…So, you know, those are, there are number of things that you have you look at in terms of that kind of diversity. Also have the diversity that uh you might um think about in terms of abilities and the access for them…

The effect of this approach was that nearly all forms of disadvantage included at KSU- low income, first generation, and underrepresented- applied to African Americans. Thus using underrepresented as the basis allowed school leaders to make the decision to target black men as a diversity subpopulation. As justification, Dr. Brainer, a faculty member on the diversity committee said, “black men are becoming rare on college campuses, even HBCUs.” A statement from one of the diversity coordinators, Pallavi, explains this rationale.

Underrepresented student population not only includes international or multicultural students. That is one of the populations, but it also includes those who may have lesser access to different avenues at KSU. Or are actually finding it a little difficult to continue in higher education. One of the problems in, not only in [here], but other places, around the country is, you know, the retention of African American males in higher education. So they're also one of the groups of students we're actually reaching out to and trying to make sure they're actually getting retained and continuing their higher education to the utmost population…It's not necessarily minority, but the ones that are actually underrepresented.

KSU established a diversity infrastructure similar to ones found in other institutions. Offices, personnel, master plans, and recruitment and retention practices were all in place by 2012. The diversity plan was one of the first steps in the process and one that had a great deal of significance for school members. From student government leaders to administrators, interviewees could recite passages from the plan verbatim or had it nearby in pocket-sized versions of the school master plan. The five-year diversity plan provided a working definition of diversity and outlined the procedure for transforming diversity into a core priority. The explanation of diversity’s relevance mirrored that found in many HWIs. Diversity was described as an asset resulting in institutional growth and development, and was defined broadly using the language of the Commission documents with references to statuses like race and gender, in addition to those other forms including rural or urban settings and physical appearance.

The document outlined KSU’s strategy for institutionalizing diversity, beginning with incorporating diversity into institutional planning, an identifying the targeted diversity subpopulations. According to the plan, the school aimed to increase each group’s enrollment by one percent annually over
the five-year period. New recruitment strategies were sought to accomplish this goal. One stipulation however, was that in accordance with the final dispensation of the desegregation lawsuit, and the university was prohibited from using race-conscious recruitment practices. Therefore, the plan called for non-racialized strategies and practices. Lastly, the Diversity Master Plan made provisions for formal diversity offices, headquartered by a new Office of Diversity.

The university did in fact implement the requirements of the plan. KSU introduced diversity into the list of institutional core values. In accordance with the call to incorporate diversity into the planning process, each of the university’s four separate institution-wide plans prominently featured diversity as a goal. Most significantly, diversity was listed as a performance item in the institutional planning documents. According to Dr. Mason, the head of Institutional Planning, this move was intentional and meant to demonstrate the school’s commitment to the project.

More so than the plans, the formal diversity offices were prominent signs of the university’s efforts to institutionalize diversity. KSU established the Office of Diversity under the President’s Office and located it in the presidential suite of the main administrative building. The IDC led the office and was the campus liaison to the Commission of Diversity. The office submitted annual reports to the state, reviewed diversity grant proposals, evaluated progress toward diversity goals, and oversaw all diversity related campus programming. As called for in the institutional planning document, there was inter-departmental to organize strategies to attract and retain underrepresented students. As the central headquarters for underrepresented populations, the Office of Diversity coordinated activities with the Office of Multicultural Affairs, the Office of Disabilities Services and the Office of Veterans Services. The Office of Multicultural Affairs was the former Office of Minority Affairs. It dealt primarily with international students, assisting them with matters ranging from visas to writing. It was also the office that coordinates diversity programming, including cultural clubs and events. Next was the handful of cultural affinity student organizations. The most recent, a professionalization organization geared toward Hispanics, was established during my first weeks of data collection in 2012 and became the fastest growing student organization, for which it garnered a special award during KSU Spirit Week. Another
organization, the Cultural Connections Society had been around for over a decade, but its membership was beginning to grow as a result of more attention to campus diversity.

For diversity personnel the university looked inward, in some cases using the officers from the desegregation era to oversee the diversity programming. The Institutional Diversity Coordinator, Dr. Cox, was an African American alum who previously worked in the president’s office and therefore had a high level of visibility on campus prior to this appointment. The director of Multicultural Affairs, Ms. Sheldon, was formerly the director of the Office of Minority Affairs. A white university member, Ms. Sheldon had worked at KSU for several decades. Likewise, the diversity recruiter, also white, had also spent years working for KSU, and for most of that time he was in charge of promoting the school to white prospective students during the desegregation period. Ethan Wolcott, a diversity coordinator, was the only outside appointment. His background was in corporate America and he said the university president brought him in for this position because his racially ambiguous appearance and accent served as a literal embodiment of multiculturalism. The last of the diversity personnel were three graduate students of Hispanic and Asian backgrounds.

Having identified populations and goals, established offices and appointed officers, the school used a host of diversity practices to achieve its objectives. The majority of the recruitment practices were meant to help KSU increase non-black enrollment. However, they were aware of the constraints given the state’s prohibition of race-conscious recruitment. As an administrator in admissions remarked, “We try not to do anything that says, ‘Ok, this is a minority recruitment event,’ because that’s really against what the whole settlement was, so we have to be careful with how they label things.” Still, the school maneuvered around the state’s requirements with strategies intended to attract Hispanics, whites, local immigrants, and international students.

A series of recruitment practices had been in place for several years before to end of the lawsuit to attract Hispanics, such as a Spanish-speaking recruiter and a Spanish language version of the school webpage and application for admissions. There was also a minority recruiter who focused on the state’s predominately white counties. To these practices the school added more personnel and programs. One
the most significant additions was the diversity scholarship that replaced the minority scholarship. While eligibility for the latter was restricted to white students, geographic location, rather than race was the key requirement. The school used it to recruit students from rural communities. The minority recruiter’s responsibilities were extended to organizing all diversity recruitment activities, which included visits to local schools as well as predominately white counties in other states. He, along with the IDC and a cadre of Hispanic students, routinely attended Hispanic college fairs and meetings of the city’s Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. They also represented KSU at local high schools with large immigrant populations. Additionally KSU introduced an on-campus recruitment program targeting non-black students. The school increased its efforts to attract international students as well, especially in Europe and Asia. KSU’s president took several trips overseas with the Study Abroad staff to publicize exchange programs and highlight the school as an affordable option for students looking to study in the States.

Regarding the race neutrality of these practices university members were well aware that they walked a fine line between compliance and violating the terms of the settlement. To both go after non-blacks and remain in compliance the school used geography as a proxy for race. Plans for race neutral recruitment included more targeted in-state forays into rural areas in addition to the larger metropolitan centers. One of the diversity administrators explained the university’s attempt to circumvent the state’s restrictions.

Now there are certain things that you can still put, you hope gear you towards getting a diverse group. For example, when we stop using race, one of the things they did was start using targeted counties…we targeted counties and the counties might be predominately white counties surrounding, so you still, there's a good chance you could get students, you know, minority students.

Additionally, the way the diversity scholarship was awarded suggests that whites were still the intended recipients. While technically a regional scholarship, nearly all of the eligible state counties are predominately white. This was reflected in the larger narrative about the scholarship on campus. For instance, an African American student felt living in a predominately white county helped him secure the scholarship, saying “it’s for living in certain areas…I’m from a predominately white area so I think that’s one of the reasons.”
Retention practices focused on support services for underrepresented students were mostly geared toward getting them acclimated to the campus environment. For instance, the director of the Multicultural Affairs Center described it as a space to give international students “a break from the US.” The office sponsored a mentoring program for first-year international students that paired them with participating students. Also, campus diversity programming, including the weeklong cultural diversity celebration, was used to facilitate non-black students’ participation in campus culture.

**Evaluation of the Diversity Infrastructure**

Like other externally imposed mandates, diversity practices are often only superficially incorporated in order to contain the impact (Embrick 2006). However, KSU fully integrated diversity measures into existing organizational operations, and there are indicators that it was done so that diversity was treated as an important university objective. First, several steps were taken to ensure that the diversity structure had a high level of visibility. The university core values list, which was on the website, press releases, recruitment materials, was amended to add diversity. The Office of Diversity was included amongst the executive initiatives of the President’s Office. The diversity office and its personnel were also physically located within the President’s Suite. Pallavi, a graduate student diversity coordinator, commented on the significance of office’ proximity to the president saying, “It’s a sign of leadership towards diversity and multiculturalism.” Headquartering the Office of Diversity inside the President’s Suite ensured that students were both aware of its location and of its importance. Additionally, diversity was added as the list of develops that were monitored and assessed annually through the school’s internal evaluation system. This level of internal oversight indicated that university leaders did intend to take diversity seriously. Another sign of the investment in diversity is the transformation of the Office of Multicultural Affairs. When I first visited the office it was small room located in the Student Affairs suite. I conducted my interview of the director in its second location, a much larger office comprised of multiple cubicles in one of the classroom buildings. That second location allowed more students to see the office on their way to social science courses. By the time I left the field the office was relocated to the former Alumni Center, a two-story house in the heart of the
campus. The new location, inaugurated with a grand opening ceremony that drew the press, was equipped with state of the art technology and nearly a dozen meeting rooms, a kitchen and backyard.

However, certain practices prompted concern that the university was not really committed to racial diversity. One of the problems was the inconsistency in the targeted subpopulations list. Within a single document, the Diversity Master Plan, there were two different lists of targeted populations. Furthermore, the list in the twenty-year master plan did not match the five-year institutional plan. The multiple lists are no doubt the result of having three institutional planning documents circulating throughout the university at the same time, a problem the Director of Institutional Planning was attempting to resolve while I was in the field. For my research I chose the list from the institutional planning documents because that is the same list that is evaluated annually along with other university projects. Multiple lists did cause some confusion, and some university members believed it indicated the school’s lack of a commitment to diversifying. For instance, one white member of the diversity committee said the lists pointed to a larger problem of inefficiency and lack of intentionality. He explained that he, along with students in one of his courses, provided an internal evaluation of the school’s diversity practices, and found that “the university has three or four documents that are critical documents that purportedly guide the institution…and they all say something different.” He continued,

“They're all different. It says you know there's no continuity, there's no cohesiveness, there's no unity, there's no substance. Everybody does what they want. So basically the university hasn't made much progress over the last year. Basically with diversity.

The lack of consistency over which groups count as diversity led to tension over school initiatives, most notably the decision to make black men a special targeted group. One white professor expressed his dismay that black men were chosen to be a targeted subpopulation over Hispanics.

The president this year had the opportunity to focus on a particular, minority group to increase the face of, you know, to increase the minority representation at the university. The President elected to go with black men. As a minority group. Um, people were shocked throughout the university. Additional interviewees expressed this same consternation about the black men initiative, suggesting that the school may not have done a sufficient job at communicating the rationalization behind their approach
to diversity. That topic is beyond my current focus, but it does suggest that the racialized accessibility principle was not self-evident or automatically accepted as legitimate by all organizational members.

**Conclusion**

The development of diversity structures at KSU is not a clear-cut case of institutional isomorphism. Though diversity is a state mandate that results from legal proceedings, its institutionalization at KSU is not an instance of coercive isomorphism. As I indicated in this chapter, the Commission requirements are vague and there is lax oversight and therefore the external pressure cannot be considered coercive. And yet the process of developing diversity is not entirely different from what has happened at other schools. There are some elements of mimicry present. Portions of diversity statements read like those found in HWIs, i.e. diversity is an asset to leverage, and diversity is more than protected statuses. The extensiveness of the diversity infrastructure, above and beyond what the Commission required, reflects the influence of the wider organizational field. Beyond structural similarities it is also important to note that the diversity structure is not purely symbolic, and I have shown that it is not decoupled from core organizational processes. Instead, as has been found to be the case for other schools (Berrey 2008), KSU uses its own distinctive interpretive lens, the care ethic, to create a project consistent with the principle of racialized accessibility.

In this chapter I have argued that organizational leaders used the care ethic to inform their response. The care ethic is an organizational logic through which school members come to understand and model KSU as a refuge for outsiders, specifically African Americans, in higher education. When this logic is applied to diversity the school envisions it as a project that will embrace marginalized groups into the family, an interpretation that welcomes non-black outsiders but does not compromise its responsibility to African Americans. In operationalizing diversity strictly as access for underrepresented groups KSU differs from many HWIs whose definition of diversity includes, but is not confined, to access. And the university protects that definition by using organizational insiders as diversity personnel. The significance of having personnel who are alumni and in some cases also long-term employees is that they understand organizational priorities. Most are deeply committed to the principles of the care ethic,
having themselves benefitted from KSU’s intensive approach to education. The school’s strategy insulates it from outside influences, as professionals from other institutions are often the quickest routes to introducing external logics (Pache and Insead 2010). The way KSU defines targeted populations is therefore largely uncontested from within, and because of the lenient and hands-off nature of the Commission, from without.

At KSU organizational leaders institutionalize diversity in a way that reinforces for the commitment to African Americans. Still, despite being included in the definition of diversity none of the new diversity practices actually target African Americans for recruitment and retention. In fact, these practices lean heavily toward non-blacks. Why is this the case and what does it mean? The fourth chapter will reveal that the campus diversity project is also guided by the care ethic organizational logic, but this time focused on the cultivation principle. While diversity as access provides the justification for recruiting non-blacks, diversity as cultivation shows that their presence is largely meant to benefit African Americans. However, unlike diversity as access, diversity cultivation is inconsistent with the existing racial ideology in certain ways, and I explore this to demonstrate a moment of flux in the structure of the black institutional space.
IV. THE MESSAGES OF DIVERSITY CULTIVATION

In contrast to desegregation, KSU had far more control over the way diversity was defined and institutionalized, allowing the school to continue its focus on African Americans. However, as the previous chapter indicated, even though organizational leaders included African Americans in their list of targeted populations, the recruitment and retention practices at the core of the diversity infrastructure concern non-African Americans. This is because the diversity infrastructure was designed to support both the intellectual and character development of an African American majority through contact with non-black students. In other words, the commitment to the principle of racialized cultivation influenced the course of diversity on campus. KSU developed a diversity cultivation agenda to teach black students to value cultural differences, and communicated this through messages that intercultural competency has a place in the workforce, and that appreciation for racial and ethnic differences is a civic duty.

In this chapter I examine the diversity cultivation messages disseminated on campus during events such diversity programs, school celebrations, and recruitment efforts. I also draw on interviews with school administrators and diversity personnel to shed light on their motivations and strategies for promoting diversity as a value. I argue that diversity cultivation is a type of racialized cultivation that is more similar in content to the work done at HWIs than it is to KSU’s traditional approach to racialized development. The messages of traditional racialized cultivation promote an appreciation for black culture, and also impress upon students a responsibility to serve the black community and advance the cause of racial justice. Assertive claims that racism persists and operates through structural discrimination figure prominently in this discourse. In contrast, diversity cultivation is overwhelmingly concerned with personal profit and national prosperity. Furthermore, diversity cultivation minimizes racism in favor of non-structural accounts of race. This finding in particular points to mimetic isomorphism as an important mechanism in the institutionalization of diversity at KSU. Organizational leaders and diversity personnel are motivated to adopt diversity cultivation as a campus agenda because they believe that HWIs have been doing so to provide the best quality education, and KSU actors accept
these practices as legitimate. Therefore those inside KSU turn to diversity to remain competitive by staying in line with the norms of the field.

**Diversity for Racialized Cultivation**

Organizational leaders and diversity personnel described the institutional merits of diversity, claiming it improved the quality of education offered to students. That their arguments in favor of diversity resembled those made in PWIs was not a coincidence. It was felt by those inside KSU that PWIs had already recognized diversity as a means of growth and development, and they believed that KSU was behind this trend. Therefore, interviewees described the turn toward diversity as catching up with the rest of the field, often directly referencing HWIs. For instance Dr. Cox, the Institutional Diversity Coordinator (IDC), explained the case for diversity at an HBCU saying, “You think, well, the majority institutions need diversity at their schools. But we need it too. We need it too!” He continued on, saying,

We're gonna always be a historically black college. Can't take that away. Historical is historical, right? Ok. But that doesn't mean that we cannot embrace all of the other cultures, that we can't do some of the similar things and best practices that we see at some of the other institutions to continue to grow our university. (Emphasis mine)

The reference to “best practices” indicates that KSU employees were influenced by the way diversity was turned into practice elsewhere. During a panel discussion of former presidents, one spoke of his desire to introduce diversity as an institutional value, mentioning a popular book on diversity. He said,

My vision was to build upon the proud history of Kenton State University and to expose our students to the international scene- at that time Thomas Friedmen had written a book *The World is Flat*- I wanted to make sure all my administrators became very familiar with, not only opening the doors of Kenton State University to the state and the region, but to look at the global perspective. (Emphasis mine)

His remarks also reveal KSU members’ construction of diversity as non-American nationality. They imagined non-U.S. peoples and cultures to be the type of diversity they most needed for institutional development. “Global” was the descriptive buzzword for diversity, from administrators to alumni. KSU’s “global education” featured a “global component,” exposing students to the “global perspective,” thus preparing them to join the “global workforce.” During an appearance on an urban news program, the
International Studies director said, “For the students that are currently attending our university, we have as a vision for them that they should become part of a global community.”

This “vision” pertained to African Americans and their post-graduate success. Statements made in various venues, from interviews to recruitment programs, demonstrated that African Americans’ development was the central concern, and that non-African American students were recruited and retained to assist the school in its efforts. Sometimes this was communicated explicitly. During the same news program mentioned above one of the diversity coordinators, an international student, stated that the school designed cultural events to “help African American students to know about the world.” At other times, this intention was made clear as personnel made distinctions between “our students” and “international students,” or “diverse students,” and “multicultural students.” For instance, Dr. Cox’s distinction between “our students” and “other” students also suggests that racial diversity was used in service of the African American student body.

In order to prepare our students to be global productive citizens who are able to compete in a global society, we need to be able to expose them to various aspects of a global society, which would mean bringing in students of other students, faculty and staff that look different than they do, think differently than they do and bring a different perspective as it relates to pedagogy and it relates to social activities and as it relates to just interacting in a college or an environment of higher learning. (Emphasis mine)

Assisting the development of African Americans was not only the message about non-blacks, but it also the message to non-blacks, particularly prospective students. As part of the new recruitment program the school hosted nearly 50 Hispanic high school juniors and seniors who were told, “We want you here to help educate all of the students. I’m not sure that any other university is gonna tell you that. That’s why we want you here.”

Diversity Discourses of Organizational Identity

But to use non-African American students KSU had to first recruit them, a task to which recruitment and diversity personnel devoted a significant amount of consideration. KSU had been struggling to recruit other races since the desegregation era. One obstacle the school continued to face was its poor reputation outside the black and HBCU communities. Within these communities, KSU’s
illustrious legacy and extensive alumni network allowed it to attract black students from all over the country. Locally, however, negative press highlighting instances of mismanagement and campus violence plagued the university. KSU also had a reputation for being poorly resourced and racially exclusive. University members confronted these perceptions, constantly according to some, and found that they made recruitment very difficult. For instance, Sarah, a Hispanic diversity coordinator, worked to make entrée into the state’s Hispanic communities and frequently confronted misgivings from that community. I asked her to explain people’s reservations and she said,

That notion, I guess, of being HBCU, "there's not really a lot of Latinos there, they don't got it together, it's not organized, there's always trouble, it's not a safe place." The list goes on and on. "We have these bad kids there." All these things.

Being perceived as a university for black students only was considered a challenge to the diversity agenda. In response, diversity and recruitment personnel crafted narratives explaining to outsiders that KSU was not exclusive, and these diversity narratives about organizational identity provided alternative accounts of the school’s relationship with race. Racial diversity was described as a long-standing institutional feature and value, dating back to KSU’s foundation. Pallavi, an Indian diversity coordinator, explained the rationale for this framing saying, “We don't want everyone to think just because it's an HBCU it's not diverse. And we also have to come to think that KSU actually started off on the basis of diversity.” She contributed to KSU’s diversity recruitment efforts by travelling to high schools, giving talks at college fairs, speaking on television, and helping to organize the university’s first diversity recruitment program. In all of these venues she made variations of this statement, one time saying, “When it [KSU] was starting off, it was actually started off to promote diversity.” Mr. Jones, an administrator in recruitment, took a similar approach to explaining the school’s past. During an interview he spoke about how he explained that KSU was not racially exclusive to white high school students.

I go through the whole gambit of explaining, "well hey, we were founded to accept everyone while our counterparts, other universities, were founded to only accept whites. So we never had in our history where you couldn't come." (Emphasis mine)

The need to change outsiders’ perception inspired the diversity recruitment slogan, “Seeing is Believing” to convey the idea of a multicultural university environment instead of a “black only” space. For the
university’s first on-campus diversity recruitment program, participants attempted to paint a picture of a multiethnic campus, while the director of International Studies pled with prospective students to “believe what you see.” Current non-black students served as the evidence for prospective to “see” and “believe” through the testimonies they offered of their experiences. Pallavi referenced student cultural groups in efforts to convince audiences that multiculturalism was at the heart of the school’s identity saying, “When I say that I represent KSU, that’s what Cultural Connections Society represents- KSU’s culture.” Participants were especially proud to share that the Cultural Connections Society had been voted viewers’ favorite float in the recent Homecoming Parade. The director of Multicultural Affairs described racial diversity as a priority extending, “all the way to our President’s Office.” Students spoke of the friendly environment and resources available to the “multicultural student.” Cultural affinity organizations such as the Cultural Connections Society were described as outlets for non-black students as well as opportunities to facilitate interaction with the larger black student body.

**The Racial Messages of Diversity Cultivation**

There was a consensus among organizational leaders beyond the core diversity personnel that HBCUs are not exempt from prioritizing diversity and multiculturalism, and that doing so was consistent with existing interests in human and cultural capital development. The kind of diversity program that emerged at KSU considered awareness of racial differences a form of capital to aid in upward mobility. Therefore contact with non-African American students and displays of non-African American cultural practices were very important. Diversity cultivation had a similar underlying rationale as racialized cultivation— that students lacked the necessary inclinations to thrive outside of black communities. Like the traditional racialized cultivation diversity cultivation involved exposing students to tastes associated with middle-class lifestyles. Unlike the traditional racialized cultivation the messages of diversity did not include service, community commitments and obligations, and anti-racism. Instead, the messages of diversity cultivation were that gaining proficiency at working with people of different backgrounds was valuable job skill, and that developing an appreciation of cultural differences was their civic duty.
Like the traditional racialized cultivation, the work of cultivating appreciation of diversity in African Americans was considered compensatory in nature, providing the kinds of socialization that underprivileged minority students are perceived to lack. The context diversity personnel describe for promoting diversity at KSU differs from findings based on historically white schools. The students at HWIs are described as arriving at college already familiar with the dominant diversity discourse of difference, appreciation and profit, and indicate that diversity figures prominently in their decision on what school to attend (Berrey 2011, Kirkland and Hansen 2011). Based on my interviews and observations, people inside KSU felt students had not embraced the value of diversity, and did not understand its utility. Therefore, much of the diversity rhetoric was geared toward getting students to recognize the potential benefits diversity afforded.

Diversity personnel spoke extensively about what they perceived as African Americans resistance to racial difference. From the head recruiter’s assertion that black institutions have intentionally been “slow to diversify,” to the IDC’s insistence that blacks are stuck “in our own little corner” the argument was that the larger black community’s disinterest or even intolerance made diversity cultivation a challenging undertaking. Some interviewees explained that the root of blacks’ resistance was suspicion of non-African Americans. For example, during an interview with Ethan, a diversity coordinator of Caribbean heritage, I asked how efforts to incorporate diversity at KSU compared to the same work at a HWI. He replied that whites do a better job at accepting international students than do blacks because African Americans are distrustful.

I don't know if a predominately white school would have as many challenges. Why do I say that? Hmm. Now, this is just an opinion…in a predominately white setting you are not as alienated. Why is that? I really don't know. I really cannot answer that, but I think the mindset of the typical African American-- they have a feeling of "us" or "them." You're either part of us or you're them, you're with them. You know that attitude? And if you don't show characteristics of the typical African American, you would be almost ostracized. (Emphasis mine)

The IDC described African Americans more as cautious than intolerant. He explained that blacks’ wariness of KSU’s diversity initiatives were rooted in misgivings about the state’s motives with the Commission of Diversity. He noted that many black alumni observed the disparities in whites in high-
ranking positions at KSU and blacks at HWIs. This awareness made his efforts to defend racial diversity at KSU more difficult, a “catch-22.”

Our race looks at the makeup of some of the deans and things like that and they'll say 'well, why it's more white deans than there is black deans [at KSU], what is that all about?' Well, we're trying to show our diversity. But then the flip side of that is when you go to the white universities you don't see the black deans. So still our people are still being left out, so it's like it's a catch-22.

The organizational members I interviewed felt that ultimately many African American alumni, students and even some faculty were concerned that the state initiative was intended to displace black students and alter the identity of the university. Sarah, the Hispanic coordinator, related an uncomfortable conversation with a black KSU alumna who said she wouldn’t consider sending her daughter there for college because the presence of non-blacks meant that "KSU ain’t HBCU anymore." I also witnessed people challenging the authenticity and integrity of KSU’s HBCU identity. This often happened during casual conversations I had with people throughout the city when they asked me about my research. On multiple occasions African Americans, including those who were graduates of other black schools, expressed surprise to learn that KSU was still considered an HBCU. They would reference the desegregation lawsuit, the minority scholarship, and the recent and well-publicized growth in diversity activities as the basis of school’s contested identity. Therefore, diversity personnel often thought of their work in terms of combatting resistance. When Sarah described her experience as “being on the battlefield side, of fighting for this whole idea of diversity, ” she captured the feelings of many involved in promoting diversity on campus.

Concern with discrimination and displacement was perceived as one of the biggest obstacles in the way of blacks embracing diversity. To counteract this, diversity personnel spoke of their desire help African Americans associate race with opportunity and not only with racism. This statement from Dr. Cox, the IDC, illustrates that perspective.

We have a hard time talking about diversity, black folks do. Cuz we’re like, “Why do we have to be diverse?” But we do need to be. It's power in diversity and I’ve found that. It is strength in diversity. It's strength in differences. All the way back from the biblical days. But we don't look at it like that. We get caught up in our world with,"well, the black man has been this. Black man struggled so hard”…Not that it's still not a struggle, but can we focus our energies somewhere else that's gonna help everybody? When our kids can see us doing real positive things, it helps
them. If they see us constantly harping on, you know, "racism and this, this, this," then it doesn't help them.

Dr. Cox’s comment echoed the perception among diversity personnel that hyper-vigilance was an outdated and ineffective way to promote progress for African Americans. Sarah’s comment below on moving the focus to economic prospects instead of racial justice illustrates the diversity cultivation prescription for progress.

Yesterday I was racially profiled by a police officer. So it's like there are connections, but now we need to prepare our students for that global perspective, to really open it. Because we're talking about years before the history that we went there [KSU], and now there's this burst of diversity and being prepared for the world in this global perspective when you're a professional.

The diversity cultivation messages that I observed reflected similar kinds of ideas. In challenging students to embrace diversity, university members spoke of releasing suspicions and seeking opportunities for personal development and economic opportunities.

The most prominent message on the utility of diversity was that successfully working with people from different racial and cultural backgrounds constituted a necessary skill set for participation in the labor force. Much of the conversation dealt with the university’s obligation to prepare to students for what was often described as a fast-paced, global job structure wherein every occupation involves constant transnational interactions. Organizational leaders and diversity personnel variously described the school as a “lab,” “a training ground,” and a “place to practice” working with people of different racial backgrounds. The Vice President of Academic Affairs saw the university as facilitating this process saying,

There's going to be a need for our students to build those relationships, to understand the various cultures that we have on campus. And to appreciate those cultures and to understand that once they get out into the workforce there are going to be a plethora of races and ethnicities and cultures that they'll have to address and individuals that they'll have to work with. And so now is the training ground to prepare those students for what they will experience outside of the university. (Emphasis mine)

The idea of the university as the “training ground” for the multicultural work environment was communicated directly to the public as well. This was the pitch used by a Chinese diversity coordinator during an appearance on a news program.
All African American students are going to graduate. They are going to leave their Ivory Tower and go to the society. They’re going to have coworkers, colleagues from different cultures. They have to know how to deal- not deal- how to handle relationships, how to deal with different kinds of people from different cultures. How can they have the opportunities? Right here with the Multicultural Center. We are offering them opportunities to have this kind of experience, to give them a leg up so later in the future than can have a competitive advantage in the job market.

(Emphasis mine)

At times KSU made its case to students using the familiar cultivation themes of obligation and responsibility. However, in contrast to an obligation to serve underserved, this was an appeal to advance the interests of national prosperity. During a panel discussion featuring former presidents, the moderator asked participants to reflect on the significance of diversity for an HBCU. Each one told students that it was their obligation as citizens take advantage of the way in which exposure made them more productive workers. The statement from one president in particular captured the idea that racial differences confer opportunities, and in this case the opportunity for national competitiveness. He began by stating, “homogeneity can stifle, but heterogeneity can raise all kind of interesting possibilities,” then proceeded with a stern warning about the disastrous implications of resistance to intergroup interaction.

The more diverse you are, the better you’re gonna get at answers that are important in terms of living and competing in American social order…You had better learn how to accept diversity otherwise America’s gonna be a second rate nation. And you’re gonna be the benefactor of it if you do not understand how important it is to relate to each other, share common aspirations, and move with utmost quickness to join and bond with each other, and try to create a sense of belonging and caring in this country.

The interest in cultural exposure here is similar to the rationalizations provided at HWIs (Berrey 2011; Stevens 2007). However, at KSU the broader exposure narrative is contoured to the specific context of low-income black students whose opportunities for intergroup contact are considered constrained by the structural barriers of segregation. Many university stakeholders described the black students as confined to their immediate neighborhoods and therefore woefully underexposed. Furthermore, the economic constraints that confined poor blacks to segregated communities also prevented them from taking advantage of traditional and costlier outlets for exposure. In general African American students are less likely than other racial groups to participate in study abroad programs both at HWIs and HBCUs (Murty 2012; Blackmon and Blackmon 2007). Diversity personnel explained in a straightforward manner that
the content of diversity programming was meant to accommodate students’ lack of experience and opportunity. As Pallavi remarked,

   A lot of students don't know about what's going on, you know, outside their communities. So that's basically the whole reason we're creating more of these activities on campus-- so they get to know about the different cultures.

Importantly, the cultures the school became invested in highlighting were from non-American racial and ethnic groups. As Dr. Cox stated, “Our students don’t get to travel abroad, so we're bringing abroad here.”

For “bringing abroad here” the school relied heavily on cultural showcases. Expressions of ethnic identity through demonstrations of customs, including music, food, sports and dances were the bread and butter of diversity programming. Throughout the year the school hosted music festivals, parades, fashion shows, film series, and commemorated holidays like Diwali, Chinese New Year and Day of the Dead. Events often included tutorials, such as the Chinese New Year celebration where participants were instructed in the proper use of chopsticks. The purpose behind all of these events was to replicate as well as possible the experience of international travel. Thus, during the culminating event of the diversity calendar, Cultural Awareness Week, the university’s main thoroughfare was turned into a bazaar with ethnic themed tents. Dr. Cox described the event, saying,

   You'll get a taste of Nigeria, you'll get a taste of Ghana, you'll get a taste of Liberia, you'll get a taste of Brazil, you'll get a taste of Bangladesh. So all around and you're gonna taste their foods, you can see how they dress, you can see how they dance, you can see their music. Everything that they want to show you about their country will be there.

These were events for an African American audience and not international students. The director of Multicultural Affairs was explicit about this, saying “it really defeats the purpose” if only international students attend because “a lot of what we’re trying to accomplish is for domestic students to gain a better appreciation, understanding of different cultures.”

Character development was also part of the discourse of diversity cultivation, and it concerned a commitment to improving intergroup relations. As the head of institutional planning remarked during a forum on multiculturalism, diversity challenges people to reflect on the question of, “how do we handle
all of these things in a way that addresses Rodney King’s question, can we all get along?” According to university members, intergroup tensions were rooted in a failure to value difference, and so the path to harmony lay in developing an appreciation for uniqueness. To help foster appreciation, participants in diversity programs would highlight differences in ethnic group dispositions. For example, during a forum on diversity in the classroom, the moderator asked for advice on how to facilitate positive cross-cultural interactions. A Japanese-American professor said that American students had to be mindful of Japanese students’ sensitivity to facial expressions and tone of voice. In contrast to introverted Asians, Hispanics were often described as energetic. A diversity coordinator once remarked to an audience of students, “Whenever I’m surrounded by Latinos I feel so excited because you can feel the power. You guys are always so exciting!” At other times speakers would declare their love for diversity, for various cultures and different foods. More importantly, without appreciation, tensions, even hostilities, would arise. Therefore, students were told that it was their moral obligation to engage people of different backgrounds. During the same forum on diversity in the classroom mentioned above, the head of institutional planning characterized homogenous friendship networks as worrisome. He admonished students to consider the following questions:

Am I comfortable with myself so that I can project that in terms of building new relationships and new friendships? And to ask yourself ‘who are my friends? Who do I hang out with? Who do I go to lunch with? Who do I go to dinner with? Who do I call when I have a problem? Who are those friends?’ If you can’t count them beyond your own immediate neighbors, and beyond your own immediate group, then of course, you have to ask yourself, and say to yourself, I need some more work on myself. That’s where we need to be going in turns of the work on ourselves in order to perfect the country we call the United States of America. (Emphasis mine)

Descriptions of intergroup relations like the one above relied on individual-level accounts, looking at individuals’ choices absent structural factors, and thus focused on prejudice. For instance, at another point during this forum the conversation turned to Hispanics and immigration. A Latina panelists acknowledged anti-immigration sentiment but stated emphatically that it was Latinos’ responsibility to promote tolerance by avoiding self-segregation. Speaking of her decision to avoid a Hispanic neighborhood she said,
Do not blame anybody else for your choice [of where to live], and for your decision to be where you are. Because when you came here, you knew the consequences. The first two years that I moved here I said ‘no, why do I have to live there [with Latinos]?’ And so it was my choice to move to [a neighborhood] where there were no Latinos.

In response KSU’s IDC stood, shouted, “I’m glad your said that!” and encouraged the audience to applaud. These messages of choice and responsibility offer decontextualized interpretations of racial dynamics that do not account for minorities’ desire to avoid white racial hostility (Krysan, Carter, and van Londen forthcoming) or acknowledge the institutionalized discrimination that restricts racial minorities housing options (Charles 2003; Massey and Denton 1993).

**Conclusion**

To rationalize the introduction of the diversity infrastructure, organizational leaders crafted a justification specific to the HBCU context, relying on the racialized accessibility principle. In contrast, for the everyday diversity work, which I have called diversity cultivation, these same organizational actors did not develop a rationale that is different from what is stated in the larger organizational field. Instead, the messages of diversity cultivation are not in any meaningful way distinctive from the rhetoric at HWIs. The significance of this finding is two-fold. First, it demonstrates the influence of the wider organizational field, reintroducing the issue of institutional isomorphism. Second, that the messages of diversity cultivation are inconsistent with KSU’s traditional racial discourses sheds light on how this approach to diversity affects the meaning of race in this black institutional space.

Diversity cultivation reflects the norms of the organizational field. Higher education is organized by white racial ideologies, values, norms and practices (Brunsma, Placier and Brown 2012; Moore 2008; Chesler, Lewis and Crowfoot 2005), and as such these ideologies, values, norms, and practices are taken for granted as legitimate in the field. Since the diversity project of higher education emerged from white spaces, then it too is accepted as the legitimate way to approach race. In the previous chapter I attributed the development of diversity structures partially to mimetic isomorphism. In the face of little instruction from the state, KSU copied the practices of other schools, creating diversity offices, officers, and recruitment practices. Still, the school imbued these practices with values specific to the institutional
context, which meant confining their definition of diversity to disadvantaged populations, specifically African Americans. For diversity cultivation on the other hand, KSU chose a more faithful translation of the work done at HWIs because school leaders saw it as consistent with their interests. Both exposure to cultural differences and active engagement in cross-cultural interactions are treated as ways schools fulfill their educational obligations (Berrey 2008; Hurtado 2001) and that KSU mimics the rationales demonstrates its adherence to the new professional standards in the field. This aspect of their response more closely resembles traditional mimetic isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) than does the introduction of formal diversity structures.

Along with the diversity rationales came the underlying messages about race and racism. Straightforward discussions of racism were a norm on campus, and the school’s history with discrimination was actively recounted in settings from classrooms to commencement. Celebrating the school’s tradition of anti-racism was part of the curriculum, including athletes’ homework, research for student government elections, and freshmen orientation. Yet, messages about racism are absent from diversity cultivation, as they largely are at HWIs (Chesler 2004). This was not by accident. Diversity personnel and others affiliated with this work were clear in their intentions to redirect blacks’ focus away from the traditional civil rights orientation and toward an emphasis on appreciation and cooperation, a move they believed was better suited for the contemporary political climate. This shift was represented in the content of diversity programming where students were offered non-structural accounts of race. They were told that racial differences were fundamentally about cultural identity instead of differential access to resources, and that the value of race lay in “leveraging” these differences for economic gain—both personal and national—and greater social cohesion. Addressing structural racism was not mentioned as a benefit of diversity. Complaints about stagnated national productivity were not connected to the institutionalized practices that block minorities’ potential contributions. Instead, the messages of racism reduced it to interpersonal intolerance and ignorance that could be remedied through awareness and appreciation.
Another pattern that points to non-structural accounts of race is the minimization of racism in organizational identity discourse. In efforts to recruit non-African American students, the school promoted a revised account of university history. Contrary to their claim that diversity is a founding principle, Kenton State University was established as a segregated institution for African Americans. Campus markers like commemorative plaques display the school’s original name as *State Agricultural and Technology School for Negroes*, attesting to the university’s original racial status. Additionally, the archival record does not indicate that integration was historically school leaders’ concern. The significance of claiming that KSU was never segregated goes deeper than the matter of technical accuracy. Using the language of diversity to frame the school’s history sanitizes the past by ignoring the ways in which the school was shaped by white institutional control. Claims that the school was always integrated obscure the state’s racist practice of using KSU to maintain white spaces. Efforts to control KSU’s racial composition continued though the desegregation era during which time KSU was subjected to disparate treatment, being alone among the public institutions to have to use a quota system. This history with racism has remained an important part of the organizational narrative and the school’s liberal anti-racist frame, thus this recruitment strategy is inconsistent with organizational norms.

The interests in preparing African American students for successful post-graduate lives shaped campus diversity programming. However, the content of diversity cultivation introduced a different understanding of what it means to be a properly educated African American, a meaning that is in some ways at odds with traditional ideas. These messages reveal a complex approach to diversity, one that is not characterized by an effort to reduce or displace the black student majority, but rather to alter the ways both insiders and outsiders understand race, including the university’s experiences with racism. The diversity plans protect racialized access but the campus programming promotes changes that are not necessarily demographic, but instead cultural, targeting elements that are important parts of what makes KSU a black institutional space.
V. CONCLUSION

For Historically Black Colleges/Universities, diversity projects represent both opportunities and challenges. Those schools that develop diversity agendas, introduce diversity infrastructures, and implement the policies and practices that result in multiculturalism and racial heterogeneity stand to reap the rewards of heightened status. Indeed, as the recent wave of articles in The Chronicle of Higher Education attests, the rest of the field of higher education has begun to show interest in how these schools go about attracting non-black students. At the same time the main challenge that concerns many HBCU supporters is that the racial diversity project poses is the potential to displace African American students and black heritage of these schools. Through this research I have explored an HBCU’s experience with adopting diversity and its impact on racial priorities. My research was guided by the following questions: 1) How was diversity institutionalized at KSU? 2) How did organizational leaders treat diversity practices in light of existing organizational interests? 3) Did the institutionalization of diversity impact the schools approach to race? I found that organizational leaders introduced diversity efforts to comply with a statewide mandate, but that they acted strategically to preserve the black student majority. At the same time, the university adopted diversity discourses that were at odds with the traditional messages about race and racism. Therefore, the impact of the institutionalization of diversity was not demographic, but ideological. My findings indicate that it is important to recognize the racial power dynamics that are the context in which organizations’ diversity practices operate. At KSU the use of the mainstream diversity rationale points to the unequal racial power dynamics HBCUs encounter. The diversity messages that are accepted and celebrated in the wider organizational field are messages that obscure racism. Therefore, to the extent that KSU adopts diversity messages to provide a legitimate education, it must rely on messages that are inconsistent with the university’s internal anti-racist and black affirming racial frame. In the end, the messages of diversity cultivation raised the risk of jeopardizing the integrity of the black institutional space.
Summary of Chapter Findings

In the second chapter I established that Kenton State University is a black institutional space. I described how white institutional power has operated as a controlling force within the university, from the very beginning with segregation and extending through long process of desegregation. However, though intrusive and often coercive, white institutional power has never been absolute, and the other components of KSU’s racialized institutional space are evidence of black agency. The liberal anti-racist frame is a rejection of state control and the societal messages of black inferiority, and the tenets of the frame reflect school members’ understanding of contemporary racial dynamics in the broader society, and also within the university. The liberal anti-racist frame asserts that racism continues to disadvantage African Americans, and it affirms black self-determination and a politics of resistance. At the level of organizational practice, this frame acts as the foundation of KSU’s organizational logic, the care ethic. Because African American students are believed to face distinctive disadvantages, the school’s relationship to its primary constituents is organized as a family that provides intensive intellectual, physical and emotional care. The principles of racialized accessibility and racialized cultivation are the materialization of the care ethic, and they guide KSU’s focus on low-income and first generation African American students. The university is also committed to the cultivation of upwardly mobile black graduates by providing a learning environment that affirms African American identities, cultures, and politics, and instills a commitment to engaged citizenship.

In the third chapter I describe the development of the diversity infrastructure at KSU. I argued that KSU integrated the diversity infrastructure in a manner that reinforced its commitment to an African American majority population. The school’s response was the outcome of the combination of the state’s ambiguous and lax diversity mandate, and the activation of the care ethic logic to guide university action. Given leeway by the state to define diversity as they pleased, school leaders drew from the principle of racialized accessibility to direct attention toward underrepresented populations, and prioritize African Americans. Thus this aspect of KSU’s approach to diversity was consistent with the pre-existing values.
I devoted the fourth chapter to another dimension of the school’s diversity efforts, the messages of diversity disseminated by organizational leaders and diversity personnel to prospective and current students. The messages of diversity cultivation were intended to influence audiences’ understanding of race both as it relates to school identity, and as a characteristic of American social life. However, KSU’s diversity rhetoric was inconsistent with the liberal anti-racist frame. The messages of diversity cultivation minimized the school’s experiences with structural racism, and it also rejected structural racism as a force shaping race relations and students’ life chances. I argued that the racial politics of the diversity cultivation rhetoric was evidence of how KSU had adopted the diversity rationale dominant in the field and originating in HWIs. I concluded that the institutionalization of diversity at Kenton State University preserved the black majority, but contradicted other important aspects of the black institutional space, specifically the anti-racist counter frame.

**Theoretical Contribution**

The black institutional space framework was necessary to explain how KSU institutionalized diversity and how that process affected the school’s approach to race. Using a racialized institutional space framework is my primary contribution to the study of diversity in organizations, and it has use for evaluating the course of diversity at predominately white spaces like HWIs and businesses. The literature on diversity in organizations involves different takes on whether or not diversity as an organizational project is designed to advance racial equality. While more moderate opinions describe diversity as a compromise (Berrey 2008), proponents of diversity amass a pile of evidence of improved learning outcomes and intergroup cooperation (Gurin, Nagda, Lopez 2004; Gurin, Hurtado, Gurin 2002; Chang and Astin 1997), and detractors call attention to the way diversity is used to deflect attention away from addressing racial equality (Collins 2011b, Moore and Bell 2011; Ward 2008; MacLean 2006). The racialized institutional space framework, introduced by Moore (2008) can redirect the focus by calling attention to the institutional environment in which the diversity project is practiced. The racialized institutional space framework emphasizes the dynamics of racial power in an organization, represented as the dominant principles, values, racial ideology and norms in a particular firm. I suggest that to the extent
that the racial power dynamics, through its attending elements, operate to advance white racial privilege, then the diversity project will do so as well. This is a suggestion that can be explored in future research.

In the midst of these challenges to viability and legitimacy, HBCUs are making efforts to defend their existence and affirm their legitimacy by introducing some of the more well-regarded practices and trends in higher education. Black schools are being encouraged to view racial diversity as a way to remain competitive. My study has shown that a school can adopt diversity practices without drastic demographic changes, a finding that may relieve some of the anxiety of those concerned about the impact of diversity. However, my research also indicates the diversity project is as much ideological as it is demographic. To preserve the anti-racial frame and make it available to a broader demographic of students, HBCU leaders must also be mindful of the messages of diversity, and take care to craft discourses that reflect the legacy and heritage of these black institutional spaces.
CITED LITERATURE


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U.S. Department of Education: Title III Part B Strengthening Historically Black Colleges and Universities


An Invitation to Participate in the Research Study,
“Diversity Initiatives at Historically Black Colleges and Universities”

The widespread efforts of American colleges and universities to increase the diversity of their student bodies has led scholars to study the emergence of a “diversity consensus.” However, this observation is based almost completely on studies of diversity initiatives in predominately white institutions. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have been overlooked in this larger discussion of campus diversity and diversity initiatives.

Courtney Carter is conducting research about the initiatives HBCUs use to address student body diversity. She is specifically interested in hearing from people who are knowledgeable about school diversity initiatives, including various schools officials, individuals from state oversight committees, from organizations committed to HBCU advocacy, and from alumni organizations.

You are being asked to take part in this study, and your participation will consist of answering questions in a face-to-face interview lasting no longer than 90 minutes. Interviews will be scheduled at your convenience. The interview will be audio-recorded. You may stop the audio recording at any time during the interview or decline to have the interview recorded. If you decide to participate, please rest assured that the interview will be carried out with the strictest of confidentiality. No one other than Courtney will have access to the audio files. Audio files will be erased after transcription and coding. Courtney will not identify anyone who has participated in the research.

Your participation in this study may involve slight feelings of discomfort when asked about the details of your organization, and there are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research. However, you might also find your participation in this study to be purposeful since you will be discussing the agenda and activities of an organization that is working to improve the lives of the people it serves. Please remember that your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may choose not to answer questions or altogether discontinue participation at any time, for any reason, without penalty.

For questions, comments, or further information about this study please feel free to contact Courtney Carter directly at 773.418.6528 or cocater@uic.edu or William Bielby at 312.996.5380 or wbielby@uic.edu. The research protocol number is #2011-0666.

Courtney Carter
Ph.D. Candidate

William Bielby Ph.D.
Faculty Sponsor
If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the UIC Office for the Protection of Research Subjects toll free at 866.789.6215 or uicirb@uic.edu and reference Research Protocol #2011-0666.
Consent for Participation in Social Behavioral Research Study,
“Diversity Initiatives at Historically Black Colleges and Universities”

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have been neglected in the growing scholarly literature on student body diversity initiatives. Courtney Carter, a PhD student in the Department of Sociology at the University of Illinois at Chicago, is doing research on the efforts of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to address student body diversity. Courtney is specifically interested in understanding how HBCUs implement diversity initiatives. Her research involves interview with school officials and administrators, faculty and staff, students, school alumni, officials in state oversight committees, and members of organizations committed to HBCU advocacy.

You are being asked to take part in this study, and your participation will consist of answering questions in a face-to-face interview lasting no longer than 90 minutes. Courtney may ask you for a follow-up interview if, during the course of the research, she encounters information you may be able to address. Interviews will be audio recorded, though you may stop the audio recording at any time, or you may decline to be audio taped at all, and still participate in the interview. There is a risk that a breach of privacy and/or confidentiality can occur. However, Courtney will carry out all interviews in the strictest confidentiality. No one other than Courtney will have access to the audio files which will be erased after transcription and coding. Courtney will not identify anyone who has participated in the research.

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I acknowledge that Courtney has explained to me the details of my involvement in this research, the need for the research, and has offered to answer any questions that I may have concerning the procedures to be followed. I understand that I may decline the use of audiotape, opt to have a portion in the interview conducted without audiotape, or may discontinue the use of the audio tape altogether at any point and still participate in this interview. I freely and voluntarily consent to participate in this study. I understand that I may keep a copy of this consent form for my own records.
☐ Yes, I consent to the audio-taping of this interview with the full understanding that I may opt to have a portion of the interview conducted without audio tape, or may discontinue the use of audio tape altogether at any point and still participate in this interview.

☐ No, I do not consent to having any portion of this interview audio-taped.

(Respondent Signature) ___________________________ (Date) ___________________________

(Investigator Signature) ___________________________ (Date) ___________________________

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Courtney Carter
Ph.D. Candidate
University of Illinois at Chicago
Department of Sociology (MC 312)
1007 West Harrison Street
Chicago, IL 60607-7140

William Bielby Ph.D.
Faculty Sponsor
University of Illinois at Chicago
Department of Sociology (MC 312)
1007 West Harrison Street
Chicago, IL 60660-7140

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Courtney Carter  William Bielby Ph.D.
Ph.D. Candidate  Faculty Sponsor
University of Illinois at Chicago  University of Illinois at Chicago
Department of Sociology (MC 312)  Department of Sociology (MC 312)
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(Investigator) ____________________________ (Date) ________________

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Courtney Carter  William Bielby Ph.D.
Ph.D. Candidate  Faculty Sponsor
University of Illinois at Chicago  University of Illinois at Chicago
Department of Sociology (MC 312)  Department of Sociology (MC 312)
1007 West Harrison Street  1007 West Harrison Street
Chicago, IL 60607-7140  Chicago, IL 60660-7140

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the UIC Office for the Protection of Research Subjects toll free at 866.789.6215 or uicirb@uic.edu and reference Research Protocol #2011-0666.
VITA

Courtney Myrtle Carter
Department of Sociology (m/c 314)
University of Illinois at Chicago

RESEARCH AND TEACHING INTERESTS
Racialization, Racial Ideology and Discourse, Diversity, Organizations

CURRENT POSITION
Ph.D. Candidate, Sociology, Graduate Student Instructor, University of Illinois at Chicago

EDUCATION
Ph.D., University of Illinois at Chicago, Sociology, (Expected August 2015)

M.A., University of Illinois at Chicago, 2009

B.A., Truman State University, Kirksville, MO, 2004

PUBLICATIONS


Carter, Courtney. “‘We’re an HBCU’: The HBCU Diversity Agenda and Contention Over School Identity.” In Sharon Collins, and David Embrick (Eds.) Challenging the Status Quo: Diversity, Democracy, and Equality in the 21st Century” In Preparation.


HONORS AND FELLOWSHIPS
Excellence Through Diversity Doctoral Fellowship, University of Pennsylvania, 2012-2013

Emerging Diversity Scholar Citation, National Center for Institutional Diversity, University of Michigan, 2013-2014

Diversifying Higher Education Faculty in Illinois Fellowship, Illinois Board of Higher Education, 2008-2012

Joe R. Feagin Distinguished Undergraduate Paper Award, American Sociological Association, 2004

President’s Distinguished Scholar Award Scholarship, Truman State University, 2000-2004

PRESENTATIONS AT PROFESSIONAL MEETINGS
Workshops and Guest Lectures
Carter, Courtney. 2014. “Racial Diversity Discourse and HBCUs’ Racialized Values.” Guest Lecture, Department of Sociology, Vanderbilt University.


Carter, Courtney. 2012. “‘Everything is Always and Only Black:’ Diversity as a Corrective to Organizational Blackness at an Historically Black College/University (HBCU).” Education and Inequality Workshop, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA.

Conference Presentations


Carter, Courtney. 2013. “‘Everything is Always and Only Black:’ Diversity Framed as a Corrective To Racialized Organizational Identity.” Eastern Sociological Society, Boston, MA.


Carter, Courtney 2010. “Cut and Paste: Organizational Diversity as a Racial Project In Historically Black Colleges and Universities.” Association of Black Sociologists, Atlanta, GA.


Carter, Courtney. 2006. “Resettlement and Race: Ethiopian Jews in Israel.” Policy And the Everyday Conference, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst, MA.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE
University of Illinois at Chicago, Graduate Student Instructor, Spring 2010-Spring 2012
Introduction to Sociology (Soc 100)
Social Problems (Soc 105)
Race and Ethnic Relations (Soc 225)
Senior Research Seminar: Mediated Popular Culture and Social Inequalities (Soc 490)

Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago, IL, Instructor, Fall 2011-Spring 2012
Introduction to Sociology (Soc 100)
Sociological Analysis (Soc 230)
Sociology of Marriage and Family (Soc 214)
Harold Washington College, Chicago, IL, Instructor, Spring 2012
Race and Ethnic Relations (Soc 210)
Sociology of Marriage and Family (Soc 203)

University of Illinois at Chicago, Teaching Assistant Fall 2006-Fall 2014
Introduction to Sociology (Soc 100)
Qualitative Data Analysis (Soc 509)
Introduction to African American Studies (AAST 100)

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS
Research Affiliate, Center for Minority Serving Institutions (CMSI), University of Pennsylvania
Diversity Scholar Network, National Center for Institutional Diversity, University of Michigan
American Sociological Association
Society for the Study of Social Problems