

**Beyond Disruption: The Forgotten Origins of Affirmative Action  
in College and University Admissions, 1961-1969<sup>1</sup>**

August 21, 2007

Anthony S. Chen  
Department of Sociology  
Room 3001 LSA Building  
500 South State  
University of Michigan  
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1382

Lisa M. Stulberg  
Dept. of Humanities and Social Sciences in the Professions  
Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development  
New York University  
246 Greene Street – 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10003

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<sup>1</sup> This research was generously funded through a Small Grant from the Spencer Foundation; it has also benefited from the financial support of the Robert Wood Johnson Scholars Program in Health Policy Research, the University of California, NYU, and the University of Michigan. For their able research assistance, we would like to thank Claire Blumenson, Meeso Caponi, Nathaniel R. Gibson, Lindsay Helfman, Kimberly Renee Jones, Linda Lomelino, Maria Millard, Karen Muth, and Afrah Richmond. In particular, Nina Pessin-Whedbee's research and analytical work was invaluable and quite central to the project. We also are grateful to the dozens of archivists who cheerfully and expertly assisted us as we worked our way through their manuscript collections. For helpful feedback and suggestions, we would like to thank Becky Blank, John Ellwood, Jerome Karabel, Howard Kimeldorf, David Kirp, Caroline Hodges Persell, Mitchell Stevens, Margaret Weir, Harold Wechsler, Jonathan Zimmerman, the members of NYU's Education Workshop, as well as engaging audiences at Berkeley, Michigan, and the 2007 meetings of the American Sociological Association. Both authors contributed equally to researching and writing this paper. Please direct all correspondence to [lisa.stulberg@nyu.edu](mailto:lisa.stulberg@nyu.edu) and [tonychen@alumni.rice.edu](mailto:tonychen@alumni.rice.edu).

Manuscript Title: Beyond Disruption: The Forgotten Origins of Affirmative Action in College and University Admissions, 1961-1969

Abstract: What explains the rise of affirmative action policies in college and university admissions? Most accounts ascribe the advent of such policies to the social unrest that engulfed the United States during the late-1960s and early-1970s. Examining a new selection of primary sources in which policy change is closely observed, we find qualified support for disruption-centered theories. In our sample of seventeen schools, we find that affirmative action was adopted by most American colleges and universities in two, distinct waves during the 1960s. The first wave was launched in the early 1960s by liberal, northern college administrators inspired by civil rights protests in the South. Neither urban nor campus disruptions appear to have played a significant role. Among most of these early-adopting schools, a second wave of affirmative action programs—expansions of existing programs – arose in response to a campaign of nonviolent, direct action mounted by black college students in the wake of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Only among a limited number of schools was affirmative action initially adopted as a response to disruption of any kind. Historically, most of these late-adopting schools were bastions of social exclusivity favored by the Protestant upper class. Our findings underscore the importance of status-group struggle and organizational self-interest in understanding institutional change in higher education.

Few policies in higher education are more politically or legally contentious than affirmative action. The passion of both critics and defenders is matched only by the hyperbole of their rhetoric and the incommensurability of their perspectives. In 2003, only days after the Supreme Court upheld the use of affirmative action at the University of Michigan Law School, conservative commentator Shelby Steele lamented the ruling as a pyrrhic “victory for white guilt” (Wall Street Journal 2003, p. A16). The same ruling led the liberal-leaning editorial page of the New York Times to praise the slim majority for taking a “historic stand for equality of opportunity” (New York Times 2003, p. A30).

For a policy that has generated so much rhetorical heat, surprisingly little is known about where it came from. What are the origins of affirmative action in higher education? Many writers simply assume that affirmative action began in earnest shortly before the Supreme Court’s famously divided Bakke ruling of 1978. To the extent that claims about the origins of the policy are based on actual research, scholars have implicitly formulated what might be labeled a “disruption-centered” theory, *à la* Piven and Cloward (1977). The underlying intuition of the theory is powerfully straightforward: Affirmative action in higher education arose largely as a policy response to campus protests, urban riots, and other expressions of social unrest during late-1960s and early-1970s (Anderson 2004; Bowen and Bok 1998; Karabel 2005a; Wilkinson 1977). The threat to social order had grown so acute by then that college administrators were forced to stem the tide by making their institutions more inclusive.

It is easy to see why disruption-centered theories are so appealing, but the empirical evidence supporting them remains partial and limited. The most thorough and convincing research traces the onset of affirmative action at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton

(Karabel 2005a). But a great deal remains unknown, in large part because so few empirical studies of the subject exist. How representative are the so-called Big Three? Did most other selective schools adopt affirmative action at roughly the same time as they did? Is the correspondence between disruption and institutional change evident among a wide range of institutions? If so, what was the mechanism by which disruption shaped admissions policy? If the level of black enrollment in American colleges and universities displayed a marked upswing with the onset of disruption, is the increase specifically attributable to the adoption of brand-new policies, or the more aggressive implementation of existing policies, or a combination of both? If disruption does not appear to be systematically related to the rise of affirmative action policies by selective institutions of higher education, then what did drive their adoption?

In this paper, we analyze the origins of affirmative action in college and university admissions. Using newly collected data that span the 1960s, we closely trace the advent of the policy for a sample of seventeen schools. To identify the sources of institutional change, we identify the year when each school adopted affirmative action and then compare early adopters to late adopters. We ask, what is the process by which the adoption of affirmative action occurs? What distinguishes early adopters from late adopters? To what extent does the timing of adoption correspond to the onset of urban or campus disruption versus other factors?

This paper proceeds in five sections. The first section reviews the literature on institutional change in higher education, along with a burgeoning sub-literature on the rise of affirmative action. It also formulates the substantive and theoretical motivation for our project. A second section describes and justifies our definition of affirmative action in

higher education. The third section of the paper describes our approach to data collection and outlines our empirical strategy for drawing inferences about the sources of policy adoption. In a fourth section, we present the results of our analysis. In our sample of seventeen schools, we find that affirmative action was adopted by most American colleges and universities in two, distinct waves during the 1960s. The first wave was launched in the early 1960s by liberal, northern college administrators inspired by civil rights protests in the South. Neither urban nor campus disruptions appear to have played a significant role. Among most of these early-adopting schools, a second wave of affirmative action programs – expansions of existing programs – arose in response to a campaign of nonviolent, direct action mounted by black college students in the wake of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Only among a limited number of schools was affirmative action initially adopted as a response to disruption of any kind. Historically, most of these late-adopting schools were bastions of exclusivity favored by the Protestant upper class. The final section of the paper suggests how our theoretical understanding of institutional change in higher education is broadened by a consideration of affirmative action; it also points out new directions for future research.

## **DISRUPTION AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Any scholar interested in the origins of affirmative action confronts a vast but imbalanced literature. The emergence of affirmative action in employment is now the subject of numerous studies that together offer a range of complementary and contradictory perspectives (Chen forthcoming; Frymer forthcoming; Graham 1990; Lieberman 2005; MacLean 2006; Skrentny 1996; 2006; Stryker and Pedriana 1997;

Sugrue 2004). Scholarship on the origins of affirmative action in college and university admissions is far sparser by comparison.

The most useful point of departure is the sociological literature on institutional change in higher education. Much of this literature is framed by the dramatic social transformation that took place over the course of the twentieth century. At the beginning of the century, college-going was almost exclusively the province of white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant (WASP) men hailing from the uppermost reaches of the class structure. Even the most elite colleges could not have been called selective, in that their admissions process was informal and based largely on relationships with a small community of elite and exclusionary preparatory schools. The most exclusive of these were Groton, St. Mark's, St. Paul's, St. George's, Middlesex, and Kent – Episcopalian schools known collectively as “St. Grottlesex” – along with Andover and Exeter (Levine 1980, p. 86). Given the close ties between elite preparatory schools and elite colleges, there was simply no need for the latter to exercise much selectivity. As Levine (1986) has written of the period: “Before World War I, institutions of higher learning matriculated essentially all interested young people. A potential student's parents or principal – or, more commonly, his headmaster – simply wrote the president or dean of a college about the student; the boy arrived at the college in September, took the school's entrance examination, and enrolled. The student inquired about only one college; there was no admissions office, no formal application process” (p. 137). In fact, Levine found that very few of the nation's top colleges and universities turned down any applicants in the first few decades of the twentieth century (p. 139).

This cozy arrangement began to shift somewhat during the early interwar years, as growing numbers of Americans began to view higher education as “a critical avenue of economic and social mobility” (Levine 1986, p. 148). The pool of applicants gradually expanded, and elite colleges were forced to become selective for the first time (Levine 1986; Synnott 1979), relying on quantitative criteria – grades, test scores, and class ranking – as a means of discriminating among applicants. But the turn toward meritocracy did not last. Among the most successful of the new applicants were Jews, a development that met with more than a little chagrin at places like Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. To resolve their newfound “Jewish problem,” many elite colleges responded by placing severe restrictions on Jewish admission, often times imposing quotas. Indeed, among the Ivy League, the University of Pennsylvania was the rare school that did not introduce a quota on Jewish admission (Karabel 1995a, p. 655, n. 134). Elite schools thus rejected academic rigor for a “social homogeneity” that kept their schools overwhelmingly wealthy and Protestant – and white (Bloomgarden 1961, p. 11). The choice led to strikingly visible consequences. When a Princeton faculty member who had served on the admissions committee met his first group students in 1940, he could not help but express surprise at uniformity of their appearance: “It was like looking at a room full of siblings” (Bloomgarden 1961, p. 11).

The social transformation of American higher education would grow complete only after the Second World War, when the GI Bill made college an attainable goal for many working- and middle-class men – for the first time in American history. Their enrollment, followed shortly by that of their baby boomer children, caused a massive expansion in higher education by the end of the 1950s (e.g., Duffy and Goldberg 1998).

A gradual slackening of anti-Semitism made it possible for Jews to begin enrolling in colleges and universities in greater numbers, and the subsequent decades witnessed the growing inclusion of women and racial minorities as well. By the end of the century, American college students looked very different than they did on the eve of the Second World War. They were a more diverse lot in many ways, and college-going had ceased to be the prerogative of rich, WASP men. What explains such a major change?

Studies examining the onset of Jewish exclusion during the interwar period form a bulwark of the literature (Farnum 1990a, 1990b; Karabel 2005a; Synnott 1979; Wechsler 1977). In a seminal contribution, Karabel (1984) accounts for Jewish exclusion by pointing to the role of status-group struggle and organizational self-interest. Based on a comparative analysis of Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, he finds that the movement toward “social closure” at all three institutions during the interwar period was driven by the effort of the Protestant upper class to retain control over the Big Three. At the same time, he argues that the organizational interests of the Big Three were responsive to demands for social closure because they needed to retain the financial and cultural support of the Protestant upper class (Karabel 1984, p. 29). Though he broadly agrees with Karabel’s analysis, Farnum adds that institutional “values, ideology, and identity” were important “constitutive elements of interest” that critically shaped how schools responded to exclusionary forces (Farnum 1997, p. 509). Examining a different set of schools, he highlights the experience of University of Pennsylvania, which rejected Jewish quotas.



Farnum concludes that “ideologies or beliefs or values were crucial to the process of determining perceptions of organizational interest” (Farnum 1997, p. 515).<sup>1</sup>

If status-group conflict, organizational interest, and institutional identity are essential to understanding how colleges and universities responded to Jewish enrollment during the interwar period, changes in access after the Second World War were shaped by the political mobilization of excluded groups. Comparing the experience of African Americans, women, and working-class students during the 1960s and 1980s, Karen (1991) argues that variation in the degree of their political mobilization is the key to understanding their differential pattern of incorporation in higher education. All three groups succeeded in winning greater representation in higher education over the course of the period. But only African Americans and women gained access to the most highly selective institutions. These aggregate differences across groups reflected the fact that African Americans and women mobilized themselves politically, while working class students did not. Karen concludes that “it is only when the threat from below is strong and pervasive that traditional selection criteria may be amended to allow for the admission of previously excluded groups” (p. 228).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jewish exclusion forms a key storyline in Wechsler (1997), whose study chronicles the history of Columbia University, the University of Michigan, the University of Chicago, and the City University of New York. But he is less concerned with explaining changing patterns of access to higher education than understanding the “century long trend toward turning the college admissions office into a social sorter” (Wechsler 1997, p. 299). Farnum’s dissertation (1990) also considers the case of Jewish exclusion. More broadly it traces the checkered history of meritocracy at Columbia, Harvard, and the University of Pennsylvania, from the Civil War to World War II.

<sup>2</sup> Karen (1985, 1990) further develops a political-organizational model of gatekeeping in a case study of the admissions process at Harvard. Dougherty (1988), too, studies institutional change in higher education. He examines a case of community college policy-making to argue that we must not overlook the role of “government officials pursuing their own interests” (1988, p. 400).

Through a sophisticated analysis of individual-level surveys conducted by the American Council of Education in 1972 and the College Board in 1983 and 1992, Grodsky (2007) notes a similar pattern. His results indicate that African American and Latino applicants were more likely than socioeconomically disadvantaged students to attend four-year colleges rather than community colleges; moreover, he finds that the differential is strongest and most consistent among elite schools. Controlling for self-selection on the part of applicants, Grodsky concludes that the observed pattern of incorporation in his data reflects institutional policy, not student preferences. To account for it, he (2007, p. 1964) proposes a theory of compensatory sponsorship, arguing that admissions and recruitment personnel gave special consideration to racial and ethnic minorities not only to address past injustices but also to “craft new cohorts of elites that conform more closely to a vision of a just society.”

Despite the rich literature examining broad patterns of change, and despite the fact that race-based affirmative action is widespread in American higher education (Grodsky and Kalogrides 2005; Grodsky 2007), few studies have focused specifically on unearthing the origins of affirmative action policies.<sup>3</sup> Takagi (1992), examining the experience of Asian Americans, has ably analyzed the “retreat from race” in admissions policy during the 1980s. Drawing on new interview data, Lipson (2007) has explained how affirmative action, once originated, came to win near-consensus support among

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<sup>3</sup> One noteworthy exception is Grodsky and Kalogrides (2005). But it should be noted that that they do not analyze policy change *per se* but rather the degree of institutional support for affirmative action (measured by a Likert scale) as recorded in the Annual Survey of Colleges, first conducted by the College Board in 1986. They find that claims of support for affirmative action are more likely among prestigious institutions compared to non-prestigious institutions; more likely among public institutions than private institutions; more likely among institutions that face court rulings and administrative regulations than those that do not.

admissions officers and top administrators at the University of California at Berkeley, University of Texas, and University of Wisconsin. But the origins of affirmative action policies still remain largely unexamined by the literature.

To the extent the question is explicitly addressed, scholars have essentially postulated what might be loosely described as a “disruption-centered” theory of the origins of affirmative action policies in higher education. The basic insight behind disruption-centered theory shares obvious affinities with Piven and Cloward’s (1977) ideas about the way in which disruption and disorder can enable insurgent movements to achieve social change. The theory has emerged in many incarnations. One version of the theory assigns causal primacy to campus protest. In their landmark study, Bowen and Bok (1998) acknowledge that active recruitment of African American students grew out of a “rising concern over civil rights” that began in the early 1960s, but they insist that schools did not “significantly modify their regular standards for admission and financial aid” (p. 5). Such shifts came only after 1965. “Often spurred by student protests on their own campuses,” they write, “university officials initiated active programs to recruit minority applicants and to take race into account in the admissions process” (pp. 6-7). Wilkinson (1979) concurs, concluding that affirmative action and other “[special admissions] programs were enacted late in the 1960s to appease student militants” (p. 262). Other scholars, such as Anderson (2004), are not so careful to distinguish between types of disruption and simply trace the origins of affirmative action to a period of social ferment characterized by “[u]rban riots, campus demonstrations, the Vietnam war,

and...countercultural ‘youthquake’” that “ended political and social consensus and divided the nation” (p. 111).<sup>4</sup>

Disruption-centered theories of affirmative action have become the prevailing wisdom in the field; they are a powerful origin story, readily invoked by almost everyone writing on the topic (see also Duffy and Goldberg 1998, p. 140; Orlans 1992, p. 145).<sup>5</sup> But there is little evidence to support it. Karabel’s groundbreaking history (2005a) of admission and exclusion at the Big Three is a key exception.<sup>6</sup> Drawing on exhaustive research in the institutional archives of Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, he finds that disruption had crucial consequences for the incorporation of racial minorities. Karabel acknowledges that the campaign to dismantle Jim Crow was regarded as “morally compelling” and stirred a “deeper awareness of racial injustice among the men who ran

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<sup>4</sup> Karen’s (1991) theory of political mobilization and countermobilization is consistent with disruption-centered theory, but he also acknowledges the need for further research to clarify how political mobilization meshes with other explanatory factors, particularly the interests of governmental and university elites. Drawing on Skrentny’s neoinstitutional account (1996, 2002), Grodsky (2007, pp. 1696-1697) suggests that racial and ethnic minorities, particularly African Americans, became the objects of compensatory sponsorship through a logic of crisis management. Racial and ethnic minorities remained the objects of compensatory sponsorship, he argues, due to the diffusion of organizational norms amidst legal uncertainty over the status of affirmative action (Edelman 1992).

<sup>5</sup> The appeal of disruption-centered theories would appear to transcend ideological boundaries. To liberal-leaning authors, disruption is a powerful expression of mass discontent with social inequality and racial exclusion. To conservative-leaning authors, it is a crude instrument of racial blackmail. In a thoughtful review of Karabel’s book, Traub (2005) actually uses the exact phrase “racial blackmail,” but it seems fairly clear that he invokes the term for dramatic effect rather than as a genuine indictment of the policy.

<sup>6</sup> Karabel does argue elsewhere the effect of disruption extended beyond the Big Three. Considering developments at the University of California, he makes a similar argument. “[I]t was less the moral claims of the civil rights movement,” he writes, “than the palpable threat to the existing order posed by the urban (and, to a lesser extent, the campus) uprisings of the late 1960s that led to a rupture in long-standing patterns of racial and ethnic exclusion not only at the University of California but at colleges and universities throughout the country” (1999, p. 110).

the nation's leading colleges." But he nonetheless concludes that the civil rights movement "had not been enough in and of itself to fundamentally alter the admissions practices of Harvard, Yale, and Princeton" (p. 406). All three institutions jettisoned their race-neutral admission criteria only after a surge of "disruptive activity, both on and off campus" (p. 406).

Using changes in the level of black enrollment at each institution to infer shifts in admission criteria and practice, Karabel finds that the "watershed event" was the succession of riots in the mid-1960s, starting with the Watts riot in 1965 and followed by the 1967 riots in Newark and Detroit. Unnerved by the devastation wrought in Newark (pp. 406-407), Princeton tripled the number of African American students entering in 1968. Harvard and Yale followed on the heels of a "terrifying wave of riots in the wake of Martin Luther King's assassination" (p. 407).<sup>7</sup> Black students at both campuses mobilized to demand greater representation, but Karabel argues that their mobilization "would not have had nearly as powerful an impact in the absence of the urban riots that preceded it" (p. 406). The mobilization of students was not unimportant, but the urban riots were ultimately what made it politically possible to incorporate substantial numbers of African Americans: "What the civil rights movement had been unable to accomplish – a fundamental alteration of racially neutral admission practices that had the effect, if not

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<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that Harvard – located in Massachusetts, cradle of Yankee abolitionism – is something of an exception among the Big Three. To an extent greater than either Yale or Princeton, it seemed open to the most able African Americans. It is true that black enrollment jumped at Harvard after the 1968 riots, but it seems that a formal decision to take affirmative action had already been made in 1961 by Fred Glimp, Harvard's incoming admissions director (Karabel 2005a, p. 401). We return to this point below.

the intent, of limiting black enrollment to token levels – the riots had made possible” (p. 407).

However, with the exception of Karabel (2005a) and a very limited number of additional studies (Karen 1991; Duffy and Goldberg 1998; Wechsler 1977; Williamson 2003), empirical evidence supporting disruption-centered theories remains partial and limited.<sup>8</sup> There are simply too few studies that follow various colleges and universities closely enough over the proper time frame to sustain a broad generalization. Karabel’s conclusions about Harvard, Yale, and Princeton seem both appropriate and correct, particularly in connection with changes in enrollment patterns, but how widely applicable are they? None of the Big Three represents the average American university; these schools are unusual even among the elite echelon of selective institutions where affirmative action has been practiced the most aggressively. Harvard, Yale, and Princeton are among the oldest and most exclusive institutions in the United States, and they are arguably the most resistant to change as well. Perhaps nothing less than the credible threat of societal breakdown could have forced them to incorporate African Americans. But was disruption even a necessary (much less a sufficient) condition at other selective schools that were less stratospherically elite? What about other schools in the Ivy League, particularly ones that boasted stronger egalitarian traditions (Farnum 1990a)? What about the top public universities, like the University of Michigan or the University of California, which ostensibly were founded to serve the public interest? What about the

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<sup>8</sup> Wechsler (1977) also follows shifts in admissions practices at selected schools throughout the twentieth century. While his work does not focus solely on race, he does document the way in which student demands and action at City University of New York in 1969, “the seizure by more than 150 black and Puerto Rican students of eight buildings on the South Campus of City College” (p. 281), resulted in an overhaul of admissions at the university: the adoption of Open Admissions in the city’s school system.

leading liberal arts colleges, most of which were located quite far from any episodes of urban disorder? Did the disruptions of the late-1960s force their hand as well, or did they perhaps adopt affirmative action earlier than the Big Three? Clearly, further research on a wider range of cases is necessary before the precise scope and validity of disruption-centered theories can be fully assessed.

What also is needed is a closer look at the reasons why minority enrollment increased so sharply during the 1960s. Did the uptick reflect the adoption of brand-new affirmative action policies that were adopted in the wake of disruption? More precisely, did it stem directly from a rejection of racially neutral admissions criteria and the embrace of admission policies that permitted the consideration of race? Or did the rise in minority enrollment simply reflect a shift in institutional effort, and not a shift in policy? That is, did this expansion simply result from a more aggressive implementation of affirmative action programs that may have already been in place?<sup>9</sup> Substantial increases in minority enrollment are observationally equivalent with all of these possibilities, and it is necessary to take a closer look at the policy-making process in order to distinguish the precise mechanisms of change (Karen 1991, p. 208). This represents more than a purely empirical exercise. If it appears that the enrollment of students of color – particularly African Americans – surged directly as a result of new admissions programs implemented after campus protests or urban riots, then disruption-centered theories

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<sup>9</sup> We use the phrase “admissions policies” to designate the formal criteria and procedures used to assess candidates for admissions and the phrase “admissions practices” to designate the actual behavior of admissions officials, which may or may not conform to formal admissions policies. These definitions represent a minor modification of the framework proposed by Karabel (2005a), who defines “admissions policy” as the “criteria (academic, cultural, personal, etc.) that govern decisions of inclusion and exclusion, the procedures for assessing applications, and finally the practices of the office of admissions, which may not correspond to the official criteria and procedures” (p. 559).

would receive strong empirical validation. If only when the “threat from below” (Karen 1991, p. 228) was sufficiently strong did colleges and universities prove willing to change their admissions policies, then the advent of affirmative action could be plausibly attributed to disruption. On the other hand, it is not difficult to imagine that college officials may have begun to alter their admission policies in the years before the riots, particularly at schools other than Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. This would mean that disruption did not give rise to affirmative action at these schools so much as it contributed to the accelerated expansion of programs already underway. In this case, the origins of affirmative action would have to be sought elsewhere.

There are scattered hints that the initial adoption of racially-attentive recruitment and admissions programs may have started much earlier than conventionally thought. The possibility is more than imaginary. For example, although the University of Illinois did not appear to formally permit racial consideration in admissions until 1968, it did initiate a series of early programs to address the academic needs of matriculating students from disadvantaged neighborhoods and high schools – primarily black students. The program was launched in 1965, partially in response to the mobilization of white students the year before. The program was held over the summer of 1965, before the students enrolled, and it was designed to enable them to preemptively “correct and alleviate any deficiencies as might interfere with the prosecution of college work” (Williamson 2003, p. 61). In 1967, Michigan State University appears to have adopted something closely akin to affirmative action in college admissions. Weeks before the Detroit riot, participants in the Detroit Project fanned out to visit 13 inner-city high schools; they recruited 66 “not-normally-admissible Negro freshmen” for enrollment in the fall (Sabine 1968, p. 11). These two



examples, of course, do not qualify as conclusive evidence of a general trend, but they do suggest that it is worthwhile to look closely at a diverse sample of schools in the early 1960s to determine whether some colleges and universities were willing to modify their admission criteria before urban and campus disruptions became commonplace.

Admittedly, such programs did not appear to involve numerous students. But we nonetheless argue that shifts in institutional policy are a worthy object of sociological analysis. The explanatory focus of the literature thus far has been individual-level changes in admission probabilities, institutional-level changes in enrollment, or aggregate-level shifts in patterns of incorporation. But explaining institutional policy change – specifically the initial adoption and the subsequent expansion of affirmative action policies – would seem equally significant. There has been such a strong and abiding current of individualism and “color-blind” ideology in American political culture (Skrentny 1996), that any departure from it – towards racially-attentive admissions or otherwise – deserves attention.<sup>10</sup> What would lead college officials to break with such a long-standing ideological tradition? If the actual rise in minority enrollment is worthy of sociological accounting, so is the initial establishment of policies and programs that permit the consideration of race in admissions.

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<sup>10</sup> We use the term “color-blindness” advisedly; hence the quotation marks. The history of the term – as chronicled Bonilla-Silva (2003), Haney López (2006), Lassiter (2006), Lieberman (2005), and MacLean (2006) – warrants caution. We acknowledge that the term is laden with normative significance; moreover, we do not wish to downplay the numerous instances in which policies that were “color-blind” on their face have nevertheless had the effect of exacerbating or reinforcing inherited patterns of racial inequality. Still, we choose use it – albeit for strictly analytical purposes. In particular, we deploy the term as a way of distinguishing policies that do not explicitly invoke racial distinctions from policies that do.

There is therefore strong warrant for additional research on the advent of affirmative action policies in college and university admissions, and the key questions seem straightforward. When did selective schools other than the Big Three adopt affirmative action programs? What is the process by which the adoption occurred? As “disruption-centered” theories suggest, did most schools establish affirmative action as a response to urban or campus disruption? Did any schools establish affirmative action before the onset of riots? To the extent that there is any variation in the timing of adoption, what distinguishes early adopters from late adopters?

## **DEFINING AFFIRMATIVE ACTION**

### Varieties of Affirmative Action

Anyone proposing to analyze the origins of affirmative action must first begin with a clear and defensible definition of the policy. At the most general level, we define affirmative action as any admissions policy or program that formally permits a degree of racial consideration – however big or small – in the treatment of potential or actual applicants for admissions. Our definition is not unusual or idiosyncratic. It is consistent, for instance, with the definition presented in President William J. Clinton’s comprehensive Affirmative Action Review (Edley and Stephanopoulos 1995). There, affirmative action is defined as “any effort taken to expand opportunity for women or racial, ethnic, and national origin minorities by using membership in those groups...as a consideration” (Edley and Stephanopoulos 1995). In this respect, our general definition does not break radically from common usage by various experts in the field. Affirmative action is a kind of policy in higher education that gives racial considerations special

weight in the allocation of opportunity; race is explicitly nominated as a basis of consideration.

We nevertheless distinguish between two types of affirmative action policies. Table 2 summarizes the differences. “Soft” affirmative action involves policies or programs that aim to expand and/or enhance the pool of minority applicants to a particular school through talent searching programs or through preparatory or “bridge” programs for elementary or secondary school students or incoming college students. A clear example is the Berkeley Pledge (c. 1995-1996), a multifaceted program adopted in the wake of the regental directives that banned affirmative action throughout the University of California system in 1995 (Chávez 1998; Honan 1995; Kell 1996). This program sought to recruit college applicants from schools with predominantly minority and disadvantaged students. The program involved not only expanded outreach to minority high school applicants, but also enhanced educational programming at selected elementary and middle schools (Kell 1996).<sup>11</sup> What makes such a program representative of “soft” affirmative action is that racial considerations were invoked to bring minorities into the pool of applicants. The program even went so far as to provide assistance in taking special steps to prepare minority applicants for the rigors of the application process. But it did not actually alter the application process for minority applicants in any other regard. Like other “soft” policies, the Berkeley Pledge did not permit the assignment of special weight to their status as minorities at the point of decision to admit. Under “soft” affirmative action, race may not be considered as a criterion of admission,

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<sup>11</sup> It is important to note that the Berkeley Pledge also strove to raise the minority yield rate (proportion of admits who matriculate) by convincing minorities admitted under race-neutral policies to attend Berkeley (Berkeleyan 1996)

only as a criterion of recruitment, outreach, or preparation. While this kind of “soft” program may seem fairly routine today, it was a significant shift in practice for many schools in the 1950s and 1960s. Even recruiting in general beyond a small group of feeder schools or geographic area was not commonplace (Duffy and Goldberg 1998, pp. 44-45).

By contrast, “hard” affirmative action is any policy or program that permits the racial background of the applicant to be considered in the decision to admit. One of the most rigid types of “hard” affirmative action is known as a “set aside,” and it entails reserving a specific number or percentage of seats in the matriculating class for minority students. Perhaps the best known example is the program at the School of Medicine at the University of California, Davis, where admissions officials in 1974 reserved 16 places for racial minorities in a matriculating class of 100 (Wilkinson 1979, p. 254). A similarly rigid policy, often used in combination with set asides, involves a “separate track” of admission for minorities. This program was in place at the University of Washington Law School in 1971, when information on the application form was used to predict the first-year grade point average of all applicants (Posner 1974, pp. 1-2). Applicants who fell below a certain numerical threshold were divided into two groups. One group consisted of certain racial minorities, while the other group consisted of all other applicants below the threshold.<sup>12</sup> Minority applicants in the first group were evaluated competitively against one another, but they were not compared to applicants in the second, non-minority group. This segregation of applicants below the threshold of admissibility effectively constituted a “separate track” of consideration. In combination with a set aside

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<sup>12</sup> Posner indicates that the minority group included “black, Chicano, American Indian, or Filipino” applicants (Posner 1974, p. 2).

that was also operating at the time, Washington's separate track led to a higher admission rate for minority applicants than white applicants. Perhaps the most infamous and controversial example of "hard" affirmative action is the racial quota. The charge of "quotas" was almost always raised by critics of antidiscrimination policy whether or not it was justified (Chen 2006), but the historical record does indicate that some colleges and universities did have quota policies in place at particular moments in time. Other forms of "hard" affirmative action include point systems and use of race as a plus factor.

To reiterate our view, then, what distinguishes "soft" policy from a "hard" policy is not the consideration of race per se, but rather the point in the process at which race may be taken into account. "Soft" policies permit the consideration of race at the point of recruitment, while "hard" policies permit the consideration of race at the point of admission. Under a "hard" policy, admissions officers can place a metaphorical thumb on the scale when weighing the admissibility of a minority applicant.

#### Affirmative Action by Another Name

It is important to note that the phrase "affirmative action" was not always used to describe policies that permitted the consideration of race. In the lexicon of the early- to mid-1960s, "disadvantage" was the term of choice for college officials, and race was considered the main form of disadvantage (see, e.g., Gordon and Wilkerson 1966). Indeed, it is fairly safe to say programs that permitted the consideration of disadvantage by definition permitted the consideration of race. The lead sentence of a prominent article in the New York Times in the summer of 1964 typifies how the terms were used almost interchangeably at the time: "Throughout the nation this summer there has been

considerable emphasis on special education programs designed to help disadvantaged youngsters—particularly Negroes” (Currivan 1964, p. E4). Similarly, in response to a concerned resident of Washington State, Charles A. Evans, special assistant to President Odegaard, made it perfectly clear that the “Special Education Program” formed by the University of Washington in 1968 was meant to bring “disadvantaged” students into the student body. “The term ‘disadvantaged,’” he noted, “referred specifically to those economic and cultural factors that cause Negroes, for example, to comprise less than 1% of our University student population for last year (University of Washington Office of Minority Affairs, October 9, 1968).<sup>13</sup> This “disadvantage,” when applied in the context of the admissions process, was assumed to be economic, educational, and cultural in nature, and it was believed to limit the usefulness of traditional measures of academic achievement when judging applicants. For example, when John C. Hoy (1965), dean of admissions at Wesleyan, wrote about the dilemma of college students “from deprived backgrounds,” he expressed a set of beliefs common among his peers: “When a boy grows up in a home where neither parent graduated from the eighth grade, where there may be few books, newspapers, little conversation of an intellectual nature, where most of his peers are under-motivated and he attends a segregated school (or de facto segregated), test results will generally be poor.” Thus, for Hoy and many other admissions officials, programs or policies targeted at “disadvantaged” or “deprived”

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<sup>13</sup> Williamson (2003) notes that the federal government developed a definition of “disadvantaged” through the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) as a part of its Equal Opportunity Grant program. Under this definition a “disadvantaged” student was: “an American of college-going age whose family income and number of siblings, as well as the condition of his home, school, and community, restrict his opportunities to develop socially, culturally, and economically toward becoming a useful member of society” (quoted in Williamson 2003, pp. 159-160, note 4).

applicants were based on the idea that race and racial segregation were virtually synonymous with disadvantage and deprivation (p. 9). Tailoring a program toward these groups almost always meant the consideration of race.

This usage was far from a specialized jargon used by the administrators of elite colleges. In conflating disadvantage with race, Hoy and his peers were perfectly in step with the times and drew on a national discourse about race and poverty. This discourse found its clearest expression in the widely discussed Moynihan Report.<sup>14</sup> Authored by political scientist Daniel Patrick Moynihan, an Assistant Secretary of Labor in the Lyndon B. Johnson administration, The Negro Family: The Case for National Action was published in 1965. In it, he argued that the black family was mired in centuries of poverty, now independently reproduced its own disempowerment through high rates of female-headed households, out-of-wedlock births, divorce, crime, and unemployment. Moynihan believed that African American families were ensnared in a “tangle of pathology” (1967, chapter 4), calling them “the fundamental source of the weakness of the Negro community at the present time.” For those interested in racial equality, he urged that without “substantial “stabilization” of black families, “all the effort to end discrimination and poverty and injustice will come to little” (1967, p. 51). language conflating “disadvantage” with race, particularly in the case of African Americans, was common by the mid-1960s.

This conflation is worth noting for our purposes because it gives us the chance to make clear that the object of our explanation is not the origins of the phrase “affirmative action.” Instead, we are concerned with understanding the origins of admissions

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<sup>14</sup> See Rainwater and Yancey (1967) for an excellent discussion of the Report and its political aftermath.

programs that take affirmative action; namely, understanding how and why racial considerations formally entered into the admissions process. Hence the conflation of race and disadvantage during much of the 1960s means that affirmative action programs – as we have defined them – may have been in operation at many schools, even though the words “affirmative action” did not become commonplace until the late-1960s. As our methodological discussion will indicate, what is crucial to us is not the appearance of the phrase itself but whether there is evidence that a school adopted policies or programs (perhaps under the rubric of disadvantage or deprivation) that formally permitted the consideration of race in the admissions process.

## **METHODS AND DATA**

Our inquiry into the origins of affirmative action took a comparative-historical approach. Although large-N statistical analysis can provide the strongest basis for generalization, it simply was not feasible. There simply was not enough data, and data collection for a sufficiently large sample of institutions would have been prohibitively time-consuming and expensive.<sup>15</sup> Even if a usable large-N data set already existed, analyzing it might not have yielded nearly enough detail to illuminate the black box of institutional change. A case study, on the other hand, certainly would have provided the necessary level of detail. But it could not have sustained any broad generalizations. In much the same spirit as Voss and Sherman (2000), we therefore relied on a comparison

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<sup>15</sup> Grodsky and Kalogrides (2005) have ably analyzed the decline of affirmative action using data from annual surveys of colleges and universities carried out by the College Board between 1986 and 2003. Their sample of schools is quite large, but it does not cover the years of interest to us. More importantly, Grodsky and Kalogrides (2005, pp. 14-15) do not directly observe policy in their data. Their dependent variable is a Likert scale that measures the “relative importance of minority status to admissions decisions.”



of several cases in order to identify the actual mechanisms and processes of institutional change in a way that is more amenable to generalization than a case study.

Our sample consisted of the most selective schools in each of the three major types of institutions in higher education: private universities, liberal arts colleges, and public universities. This sampling strategy made it possible for us to detect or rule out variation across type. However, we did limit our sample to non-southern schools. The advent of affirmative action at southern schools is a subject well worth attention, but it is complicated by the struggle for desegregation of higher education in the South, which was virtually contemporaneous with the introduction of race-based affirmative action in the North. To simplify our inferential burden, we excluded southern schools from our sample, though we hope to study them in future work. Our final sample consisted of seventeen schools. Table 1 lists the schools by type of institution.<sup>16</sup>

We collected original data for all schools that were not the subject of a major empirical study (i.e., Harvard, Yale, and Princeton). This meant that we carried out intensive data collection for fourteen schools.<sup>17</sup> We were especially interested in locating

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<sup>16</sup> An even larger sample of schools is ultimately desirable. However, there is currently so little empirical evidence on the origins of race-based affirmative action, it was necessary to start with a limited set of cases. Our current work represents the beginning of a larger research project that focuses on schools other than the Big Three. This larger project will examine not only affirmative action at northern schools that did not make the current sample (e.g., University of Chicago or Stanford), but also southern colleges and universities (e.g., University of Virginia or University of North Carolina) as well as engineering schools (e.g., Massachusetts Institute of Technology or California Institute of Technology)

<sup>17</sup> In a pilot study, we collected data on the advent of affirmative action policies for a sample of one hundred of the most selective schools, based on a recent U.S. News and World Report ranking. After interviewing scores of admissions officers and school archivists, however, it became increasingly clear that research in the primary sources would be necessary. The interview data were simply too ambiguous, contradictory, and imprecise.

primary sources that would allow us to closely observe (to the extent it was possible) changes in admissions policies. We began our data collection by examining relevant articles in student newspapers during the 1960s and 1970s. (Appendix A lists the schools newspapers we read.) Based on the relevant articles, we then compiled lists of people, programs, and dates that seemed pertinent. Concerned that student newspapers might be unreliable sources of accurate information, we followed up by conducting archival research in the manuscript collections of most of the schools in our sample. The process turned up a wide range of primary sources, including articles from alumni magazines and faculty and staff periodicals, press releases, internal reports, minutes of administrative meetings, and memoranda and correspondence between key administrators. Especially useful were the records of presidents, provosts, deans of admission, and other administrative officers of the schools.

The first step in our analysis involved identifying the year in which each school in our sample adopted affirmative action. To identify the date of adoption, we looked for empirical evidence that colleges and universities were making a programmatic effort to enroll minority students (“soft” affirmative action) as well as evidence that they formally or officially permitted the consideration of race at the point of admission (“hard” affirmative action). Several types of evidence entered into our consideration. The strongest evidence consisted of contemporaneous written or verbal statements about admissions policy by admissions officers, top administrators (e.g., presidents, or provosts), or others likely to have detailed or direct knowledge of the admission process. We also accepted ex post facto claims about past policies – for instance, claims made in institutional reports – if the statements were made within a reasonable time frame of the

policy to which they referred. More specifically, we looked for statements that indicated the existence of a recruitment program as well as a policy that permitted a metaphorical thumb to be placed on the scale when weighing the admissibility of a minority applicant.<sup>18</sup>

It is worth reiterating that we did not code a school as having adopted affirmative action if it adopted only “soft” affirmative action. Evidence of “hard” affirmative action was necessary for us to identify the year of initial adoption. Nor did we code as affirmative action a program targeted for the “disadvantaged” or “deprived” if there was no evidence that it permitted the consideration of race. We thus coded the initial adoption of affirmative action at each school if and only if there was evidence indicating the establishment of “hard” admissions policies that permitted the consideration of race. This approach to operationalizing our dependent variable is fairly stringent, and it did not bias us against finding evidence that contradicts disruption-centered theories. In fact, it may have actually biased us in favor of finding evidence in support of them. To the extent that our sample includes a number of schools that adopted “soft” affirmative action policies before any disruption and adopted “hard” affirmative action after disruption, then the effect of disruption would be overstated. These schools, classified as post-disruption

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<sup>18</sup> Within the limits of our data, we tried our best to identify the initial date of adoption as precisely as possible. However, in some cases, we could not be entirely certain of the exact year. In these instances, we sought to make coding decisions that minimized the bias in our analysis, or even biased us in favor of finding support for disruption-centered theories. For instance, if there was uncertainty about the exact year of adoption for a particular school, we tended to choose the later date.

adopters, would be more properly classified as pre-disruption adopters under a less restrictive definition of affirmative action that counts “soft” affirmative action.<sup>19</sup>

Once we coded the date of initial adoption for all the schools in our sample, we compared our results with a basic chronology of urban and campus disruption. We noted the schools that adopted affirmative action before the onset any urban or campus disruption (pre-Watts) as well as the schools that adopted affirmative action after the onset of disruption (post-Watts). We also sought to determine whether the adoption of affirmative action at each school was preceded by a campus protest, or at least the credible threat of a campus protest. Next, we compared early-adopting schools with late-adopting schools. This took the specific form of comparing pre-Watts adopters with post-Watts adopters. Although there were other plausible ways to draw the line between “early” and “late” in our sample, we used this one because of it is indelibly marked as a historical dividing line in the literature and clearly posited as a major source of institutional change (e.g., Karabel 2005a, p. 406-407). From our comparison, we infer that the factors that distinguish the early adopters (pre-Watts) from late adopters (post-Watts) were responsible for differences in the timing of adoption.

## **EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS**

Our preliminary analysis reveals significant temporal variation in the initial adoption of affirmative action. This variation is not strongly correlated with either urban

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<sup>19</sup> This is actually the case with the University of Washington, which appears to have taken strong and early action to enroll more black students before the onset of riots and protests. Its early actions, however, do not meet our criteria for identifying affirmative action, and it is thus a post-disruption case in our initial chronology. We discuss our handling of Washington in more detail below.

or campus disruption. Figure 1 displays the initial date of adoption for all seventeen schools in our sample. It also includes the dates of four major riots that took place in the late-1960s. Visual inspection indicates very little correspondence between policy adoption and urban riots. The majority of adoptions – eleven of them – appear to cluster in the early- to mid-1960s, before the outbreak of the Watts riot in 1965. The trend toward adoption begins climbing upward in 1963, when the Birmingham showdown and March on Washington galvanized national attention toward civil rights. In our sample, adoptions reach a peak in 1964, the year that Congress passed the Civil Rights Act. The trend toward adoption falls as riots begin to engulf American cities, starting with Watts in 1965, culminating with riots in Newark and Detroit in 1967, and more or less drawing to a close in 1968 with the riots that swept the country after the King assassination.

Table 3 breaks out the initial adoptions school-by-school and year-by-year. (For readers interested in finer-grained evidence about individual schools, Appendix B describes the initial adoption at each school in greater detail.) Our analysis of the evidence – in this case student newspapers – suggests that few schools initially adopted affirmative action in response to actual or threatened disruption on campus. In fact, most demonstrations that protested the underrepresentation of racial minorities did not begin until 1968. Often, they were precipitated by the King assassination.<sup>20</sup> By contrast, most affirmative action programs in our sample appear to have been launched for the first time before 1968 – and in the absence of student protest of any kind. For instance, in 1961, Harvard established the first affirmative action policy in the United States under incoming admissions director Fred Glimp, who announced that the school would begin to

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<sup>20</sup> Though the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley in 1964 touched off a period of student disquiet on American campuses, it did not directly concern racial inequality.

seek greater diversity and give less weight to “objective” factors (Karabel 2005a, p. 401). In 1964, administrators at the University of Michigan and the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) started a new program aimed at “disadvantaged” students – primarily racial minorities – whose secondary school preparation would not normally make them admissible (Papers of Franklin D. Murphy, June 30, 1965). Northwestern University adopted affirmative action in the handful of months leading up to the Watts riots. Its program targeted primarily students from predominantly black high schools in Chicago. Few of these students, it appears, would have qualified for normal admissions (Northwestern University, Subject Files, n.d., p. 2). Though the absolute numbers of students admitted under such programs were small by any reasonable standard, most of them had two crucial features in common. First, they disregarded, suspended, or modified traditional admissions criterion for minority admits. Second, they did not appear to have been adopted by administrators as a result of collective mobilization from below.

Of course, disruption was not completely irrelevant. Among the set of eleven schools that initially established affirmative action before disruption (pre-Watts), there is evidence that it set into motion a “second wave” of affirmative action, primarily in response to campus protests triggered by the King assassination. This included Harvard, but also schools such as Wesleyan, Swarthmore, Cornell, and the University of Michigan, among others. Here the effect of disruption – specifically the surge of collective mobilization after King’s death – was not to launch affirmative action programs but to expand and accelerate programs that were already in place. Racial considerations received greater weight in the admissions process. At the same time, there is evidence that affirmative action was adopted for the first time by a small set of schools after urban

riots or campus protests. Among the Big Three, according to Karabel, Yale and Princeton reconsidered their traditional admissions process only in the wake of Watts. Yale began to modify the weight and significance it ascribed to the college boards when considering minority applicants, while Princeton created a distinct category in their admissions process (Karabel 2005a, pp. 384, 394). (After the Newark riot and the King assassination, black enrollment at both schools rose dramatically.) Among the Little Three, Amherst established affirmative action only in 1968 after the King assassination, and Williams followed suit the next year after black students on campus mobilized a protest (see Appendix B). Of the top public universities, both the University of Washington and University of California, Berkeley seemed to have adopted their affirmative action programs in the wake of disruption (see Appendix B), though the cases are somewhat complicated.<sup>21</sup> In sum, campus protest had variable effects on admissions policy. It triggered a “second wave” of affirmative action among early adopters, while it encouraged laggard schools to adopt affirmative action for the first time.

But what was the process by which affirmative action was initially established? If disruption does not account for adoption in the majority of our sample, what does? And precisely how did disruption work in the limited number of schools where it appeared to have an effect? Answering these questions requires a closer look at the policy-making process at individual schools. We begin this part of our analysis with the Ivy League.

### The Ivy League

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<sup>21</sup> Berkeley and Washington are complicated cases that defy simple classification; however, our preliminary analysis treats them as conservatively as possible vis-à-vis disruption-centered theories. We discuss them in more detail below.

By the early 1960s, colleges and universities in the Ivy League were beginning to reconsider qualifications for admission, as they had at other moments in the twentieth century. Colleges and universities had become more academically selective through the 1950s and into the 1960s, responding to the flood of baby boomers who wanted a college education and who, unlike their parents' generation, applied to multiple colleges. This substantially changed the nature and organization of admissions offices (Duffy and Goldberg 1998), and it changed the way in which admissions officers approached their work. To select their freshman classes, admissions officials across the Ivy League began to rely more heavily on grades and test scores, and the academic quality of admitted students rose substantially (Duffy and Goldberg 1998, pp. 35-43, 82). But, many soon questioned the validity of standardized metrics of academic achievement, like grades and SAT scores, and raised concerns that success by these measures should not define qualification for elite college entry (Duffy and Goldberg 1998; Karabel 2005a; Lemann 1999; Wechsler 1977).

Part of this questioning of admissions standards was about race and a concern for equal educational opportunity (Gordon and Wilkerson 1966, pp. 149-150). But, administrators by the early 1960s had other concerns, as well. In 1964, the new dean of admissions at Yale, R. Inslee ("Inky") Clark, worried that Yale primarily admitted safe but boring WASPy candidates – "the well-rounded, pleasant, jovial, athlete type" from New England prep schools, rather than "the abrasive kid," "the scientist," "the egghead" or "the oddball" (Karabel 2005, pp. 349-350). Brown University admissions officials worried, in 1962, that an admissions focus solely on academic achievement without primary attention to character was problematic, writing: "one of the most unfortunate



outgrowths of increasing admission competition is the rise of the ‘sleeve plucker’: the self-centered student whose concern for his own advancement makes him haggle over grades and drives him into just enough activities to give the appearance of contribution without real enthusiasm either for learning or for the well-being of the community” (Brown University 1962, p. 2). Williams College trustees worried that a sole focus on academic standards was dangerously narrowing the college’s applicant pool (Duffy and Goldberg 1998, p. 44). In response, Brown and Williams sought and received grants from the Ford Foundation, in 1962, to test alternative definitions of merit by admitting “risk” or “sleeper” students to comprise 10% of each class (Hechinger 1963; Turpin 1965).

At the same time, in the early 1960s, schools began to turn their attention to recruiting African American students, leading the New York Times to proclaim, in the summer of 1964, that “the emphasis this year on the Negro appears to have reached a new high” (Currivan 1964, p. E7). Many schools began their own recruiting efforts (Duffy and Goldberg 1998, pp. 138-139), and, by the mid-1960s, there were a few active national programs that helped with this process. First, the independent National Scholarship Service and Fund for Negro Students (NSSFNS) which was founded in 1948, remained active in the 1960s and sponsored a new program called the College Assistance Program. This effort worked to recruit African American high school students from around the country to substantially increase African American college enrollment (Gordon and Wilkerson 1966, p. 137). Second, the Cooperative Program for Educational Opportunity (CPEO) was a recruitment program organized in 1962 by the eight Ivy League schools, joined a year later by the Seven Sisters, and funded by the Carnegie Corporation in 1964 to improve outreach to black students (Yale University, Brewster

Records, February 5, 1964, p. 1). During the early years of the decade, a number of colleges and universities – like Dartmouth, Princeton, and Yale, among the Ivies – began their own summer programs for similar purposes (Duffy and Goldberg 1998, p. 139; Gordon and Wilkerson 1966, pp. 140-141). The president of Dartmouth, John Sloan Dickey, noted in the New York Times in the summer of 1964, that the programs had a compensatory purpose, to determine “whether an intensive and highly individualized effort on a campus of higher education can help remedy the academic and cultural deprivation which stands between a promising potential and its educational fulfillment” (quoted in Currivan 1964, p. E7). Recruiting and compensatory efforts like these doubled the number of African Americans students admitted in the Ivies and Seven Sisters in just one year between 1964 and 1965 (Gordon and Wilkerson 1966, p. 136). These were primarily recruiting programs, not “hard” affirmative action programs that nominated race at the point of admission. However, these recruiting and outreach programs often began at the same time as or were shortly followed by shifts in admissions policy.

Surprisingly, Dartmouth represents one of the earliest cases of “hard” affirmative action in our sample.<sup>22</sup> This is an interesting case because it is so unexpected. Dartmouth is far from an urban area and has a reputation as one of the more conservative, cloistered Ivies.<sup>23</sup> Dartmouth began its affirmative action programs in 1962, as a collection of recruitment programs. Notably, white students associated with the Dartmouth Christian Union lobbied for the established of outreach programs, founding, in 1963, the student-

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<sup>22</sup> Note that we identify Harvard as adopting affirmative action in 1961, based on a close reading of Karabel (2005) and his sources.

<sup>23</sup> Although a 1962 report noted that Dartmouth graduated its first African American student in 1828. This was 42 years before Harvard did the same, though Harvard had a reputation for being relatively open to African Americans historically (Puttkammer 1962, pp. 12, 37)

led Negro Admission Encouragement Committee (NAEC). This program sent letters to guidance counselors and black alumni as part of its efforts. In 1962, Dartmouth also joined CPEO (The Dartmouth, May 21, 1963; The Dartmouth, November 20, 1963). A Dartmouth report on admissions, dated February 1961, articulated a rationale for a focus on recruiting as an admissions tool. With regard to admission of black students, among others, the report noted: “because recruitment is active while admissions is relatively passive, we believe that the numbers of some of the special groups on the Dartmouth campus may be influenced more by the recruitment policy and activity than by the admissions policy. . . . There are relatively few Negro applicants at the present time and if it were decided to increase that element of the cross section, pointed recruitment would be the means rather than simply including a preference in the admissions policy.” (Dartmouth College, Errol G. Hill Papers, February 1961, p. 21).

In and of themselves, however, these recruitment programs do not constitute “hard” affirmative action by our definition. But, there is evidence that students recruited through such programs were given special consideration as a matter of policy. In a letter in March 1962, Director of Admissions, Edward T. Chamberlain, Jr. noted that it was practice to “take into account the background from which a boy comes.” He observed: “As a matter of fact, I know we bend over backward to help Negroes if they can show any capacity at all for handling the work at a place like Dartmouth College.” (quoted in Dartmouth College, Dartmouth Christian Union Papers, November 6, 1963, p. 1; also see Puttkammer 1962, p. 38). Similarly, by the end of 1963, the Assistant Director of Admissions, Davis Jackson, wrote to a principal of a Chicago high school that he was seeking African American applicants and was willing to waive the ten dollar application

fee and the January 1st application deadline for any promising and interesting students (Dartmouth College, Dartmouth Christian Union Papers, December 30, 1963, p. 1).

Dartmouth officials denied that standards were lowered. But they argued that standards were not applicable to students recruited through these programs. This was a fine distinction, but one that Dartmouth explicitly drew. Standards were not lowered; they were simply not appropriate and, therefore, they were overlooked in some cases. Noted a December 1968 report on equal opportunity at Dartmouth (The McLane Report) on the standards used to evaluate students recruited by the DCU and the Application Encouragement Committee: “It would be wrong to say that standards are lowered or eased for this group since most of the selection criteria used for normal applicants are not applicable. It can be said that no black, deprived white or Indian candidate who was thought to be capable of handling the work at the College has been denied admission.” (Dartmouth College, Erroll G. Hill Papers, December 1968, p. 8).

These shifts in policy resulted in small, but significant changes in the number of African American admits and matriculants at Dartmouth. In 1963, there were just 3 African American matriculants. This number jumped to 14 in 1964, 16 in 1965, 17 in 1966, 18 in 1967, and 29 in 1968. (The Dartmouth, May 27, 1964; Dartmouth College, Erroll G. Hill Papers, December 1968, p. 8).

Dartmouth also was the first school to sponsor the A Better Chance (ABC) program. The program provided summer training to academically talented secondary students “from culturally or educationally disadvantaged situations” to enter participating college-preparatory independent schools (Dartmouth College, Project ABC Papers, November 1963, p. 1). Most of the students in the program were African American and

were low-income. While the program was not a direct recruiting tool for Dartmouth, the goal of the program was to increase access to college. The program did eventually provide Dartmouth with an additional pool of applicants.

Dartmouth was not the only early-adopter in the Ivy League. In early 1963, Penn worked with the other Ivies in recruiting black students through CPEO and NSSFNS. William G. Owen, dean of admissions, acknowledged that many students recruited through these mechanisms were judged by a different yardstick than other students. As he noted in an interview: “many Negro students do not meet the minimal qualifications solely because of the inadequate facilities for education provided by their native states. In such cases the admission office will judge the applicant on his potential ability to maintain satisfactory scholarship at the University rather than on the courses lists in his secondary high school record” (Daily Pennsylvanian, February 26, 1963). After a conference with other Ivy League Schools in 1961, Columbia formed a recruitment program called the Talent Searching Program. In 1963, dean Henry S. Coleman acknowledged that Columbia did not hold some black students to the same standards on their College Board Scores, even though it did not admit anyone who would clearly “be over his head” (Columbia Spectator, October 15, 1963). Cornell’s Committee on Special Educational Projects (COSEP) implemented a program for the recruitment, admission, and training of “culturally disadvantaged students” in 1964. This program was responsible for the admission of black students. COSEP students were admitted “without reference to any specific requirements for admission.” However, academic standards for attainment of the degree were no different for the COSEP student: “[b]y the time he

graduates, he will have the same qualifications as anyone else with a degree” (Cornell Daily Sun, January 20, 1964).

Most of these affirmative action programs adopted before 1965 seem to have arisen largely at the initiative of liberal administrators, with the backing of their presidents, as we discuss in more detail below. So, too, the Ivies and their staffs did not act in isolation. In fact, they worked together through CPEO and through formal conversations and informal interaction in a small professional community, to articulate their vision for bringing more black students to their campuses and to develop institutional mechanisms to achieve this shared goal. This cooperation was not completely unprecedented. Though the schools were in competition for students, they also learned from each other, through visits and correspondence, particularly during periods of change in admissions practices and policies. For instance, Synnott (1979) reports that the incoming dean of Yale College visited twenty schools in the South and West, then Harvard and Dartmouth, in 1926, learning about admissions at Yale’s competitors during the height of selective schools’ debate about Jewish admissions (p. 153). Karabel (2005a) writes that, decades later, as the Ivies were considering African American admissions, the new, reform-minded dean of admissions at Yale, “Inky” Clark, spent the spring of 1965 visiting colleges and universities across the country gathering information about admissions approaches and practices (p. 351).

These administrators were not acting solely of their own accord. They were not motivated only by their own beliefs or commitments, whatever they may have been. Many of them also were responding to alumni interest in a more racially diverse student body at their alma maters. These concerns were raised very early on, much before

campus or urban unrest of any kind. For instance, an alum of Brown University, Lawrence D. Ackman, wrote in a letter to Brown's President, Barnaby C. Keeney in 1963 with his concerns. He noted that college presidents tended to say: "We'd like to have more Negroes attend our school, but, we cannot in good conscience accept a 'less qualified' Negro in preference to a white, just because of his race." Ackman considered this "shirking their responsibilities to the public at large." The average "well-educated Negro" makes a "disproportionately great contribution" to his community and society in general. Then he goes on to say: "In order to ensure that these 'less qualified Negroes' will be able to 'fill their shoes' at Brown, I suggest that they be given an accelerated catch-up course...to make up for previous schooling deficiencies." (Brown University, Barnaby C. Keeney Papers. December 16, 1963, p. 1). Hence the establishment of affirmative action in much of the Ivy Leagues was led by liberal administrators, spurred in many cases by the interest of liberal alumni.

### Liberal Arts Colleges

If the early history of affirmative action in the Ivy League suggests a key role for liberal administrators, their influence was nowhere more visible than it was at liberal arts colleges such as Swarthmore College and Wesleyan University. In 1962, Swarthmore president Courtney C. Smith hired John C. Hoy to serve as a new dean of admissions, and his arrival marked a period of experimentation in admissions (Swarthmore College, Courtney Smith Papers, Box 89, May 29, 1962; Wesleyan University, Hewlett Diversity Archives, Box 16, November 19, 1998, p. 1). Hoy had attended an integrated high school in New York City and had played football on his high school team (Wesleyan University,

Hewlett Diversity Archives, Box 16, September 10, 1999, p. 1). A 1955 graduate of Wesleyan University and a former assistant director of admissions there, Hoy already had a reputation as some one who cared deeply about racial diversity on college campuses. Hoy also seemed to have a strong sense of mission with respect to admissions work, believing that universities had a central role to play in American reform, particularly during such times of tremendous social and political change as the 1960s (Swarthmore College, Courtney Smith Papers, Box 89, May 29, 1962). It was for this reputation, and the understanding that Hoy would bring his commitment to diversity-centered policy shifts at Swarthmore, that President Smith brought him to campus in 1962 (Wesleyan University, Hewlett Diversity Archives, Box 16, November 19, 1998, p. 1).

To be certain, Smith himself had long been concerned with recruiting black students. In 1960, he even wrote that “leaning over backwards” in favor of black applicants was Swarthmore’s usual practice. “It should be pointed out,” he noted, “that we do frequently make concessions in matters such as Board score performance for Negro applicants if there is reason to believe, as is many times the case, that the cultural factor is causing them to test at a lower level than represents their true abilities” (Swarthmore College, Courtney Smith Papers, Box 56, December 19, 1960). Smith’s own biography is relevant to his approach to admissions, too. He had served in the Naval Reserves during World War II, as a “liaison officer for Negro personnel” in Pensacola, Florida. In this position, he worked alongside African American sailors to “optimize the[ir] performance . . . and to help them to feel part of the navy team and not outsiders” (Stapleton and Stapleton 2004, pp. 33, 36; also see Milton 2004; Van Til 2004; Wesleyan University, Hewlett Diversity Archives, Box 16, September 10, 1999).



Smith also was aware that some white Swarthmore alumni were concerned, as well, with the lack of racial diversity on campus. For instance, in September of 1959, alum Clifford Earle wrote to Smith: "I'm writing to share with you my concern over what seems to me an important weakness in the education Swarthmore offers, namely the extremely small enrollment of American Negroes in the student body (just about ½ % during my years of enrollment." He went on to say: "I am concerned for two reasons. First, because our own education as members of the Swarthmore community is incomplete when it fails to give us a chance to mix with Negroes who share our culture. The experience of meeting American Negroes who are not maids, janitors, or jazz musicians but future doctors, businessmen, or teachers is, I believe, at least as important to our education as the experience of meeting alert people from other countries. I personally regret the fact that I have known only a few Negroes at all well and none intimately." He made an appeal to institutional purpose as well, noting: "as a school with a Friends tradition, Swarthmore ought to be concerned for justice in this area as it has been in such areas as academic freedom." (Swarthmore College, Courtney Smith Papers, Box 56, September 27, 1959).

Smith responded sympathetically to alumni concerns and seemed to share them. But, it was Hoy who instituted the first affirmative action programs at Swarthmore. In 1964, Hoy stepped up his recruitment of African American students, both by inter-collegiate cooperation and through the involvement of external public and private support. That year, Swarthmore joined with other Philadelphia-area colleges and universities to increase African American recruitment and enrollment in area schools (Swarthmore Phoenix, February 21, 1964). More significantly, Hoy sought and received

a \$275,000 grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, in the spring of 1964, to recruit, support, and fund African American and “other culturally disadvantaged” students (Swarthmore Phoenix, April 14, 1964). Rockefeller provided similar support to six other schools at the time (Swarthmore College, Courtney Smith Papers, Box 2, September, 1968, note 1). Geared primarily to African American students, this program resulted in a near-tripling of the number of matriculated African American students in the fall of 1964, from five in 1963 to 14 in 1964 (Swarthmore Phoenix, September 18, 1964; Swarthmore College, Courtney Smith Papers, Box 1, July 1, 1964, p. 38; Swarthmore College, Courtney Smith Papers, Box 2, September, 1968).

In 1964, Hoy was offered the opportunity to become the dean of admissions at his alma mater, Wesleyan. He accepted. He was recruited to Wesleyan specifically to bring changes to the admissions process that would result in a more diverse student body, and he quickly instituted a new effort to recruit and enroll black students (Wesleyan University, Hewlett Diversity Archives, Box 16, November 19, 1998, p. 2; Young 1988, p. 5). As a result of his efforts, Wesleyan admitted the “Vanguard Class” in the spring of 1965. It enrolled substantially more black students than in previous years. Hoy reported that, in 1964, before his efforts began, 2 black students enrolled, comprising 0.7 percent of the entering class. The following year, in 1965, 14 black students enrolled in the freshman class, comprising 4.5 percent of the class. The next year, in 1966, 33 black freshman made up 8.9 percent of the incoming class, while in 1967, 39 enrolled first year students made up 10.9 percent of their class (Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Box 106,

March 7, 1968, p. 3).<sup>24</sup> There is clear evidence that affirmative action was taken in their admission. In a 1967 report to the Rockefeller Foundation, Hoy wrote of the “different criteria for admission” (p. 3): “Standard selection procedures have been found inadequate. Enough evidence was available to indicate that test scores (S.A.T. and A.C.T.) were not to be used in the same way for this group of candidates. Since our experience was limited we decided to ‘gamble’ on compelling candidates who presented personal evidence of motivation and ability, and to judge students without undue attention to aptitude tests, rank in class, and advanced placement information” (Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Box 106, March 1967, pp. 2-3).

Hoy was influential in expanding recruitment and admissions for African American and other “disadvantaged” students at both Wesleyan and Swarthmore. But, once he left Swarthmore, black matriculation just limped forward, expanding very slowly under the new dean of admissions, Fred Hargadon. In the decade before these new recruiting and support efforts, from 1953 to 1963, Swarthmore had enrolled a total of just 20 African American students. This number tripled in the four years following the Rockefeller grant, from 1964 to 1968, as 61 students out of approximately 1100 were African American (Swarthmore College, Courtney Smith Papers, Box 2, September, 1968, p. 4). The recruiting and admissions strategies that produced these modest gains

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<sup>24</sup> In an earlier document, from 1967, Hoy included a table with identical numbers, but indicated that these numbers applied not just to African American students, but to “Negro, Puerto Rican and American Indian” students (Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Box 106, March 1967, p. 2). It is unclear whether the table in the 1968 report should have been similarly labeled, or whether all of the students of color admitted under the program were, in fact, African American. Young (1988) indicated that one of the 14 students of color admitted in 1965 was Latino, while 13 were African American (p. 14). Regardless, it appears from the writing of Hoy and others, that most of these students of color admitted in the Vanguard Class and during these years in the mid-1960s were African American.

focused largely on “non-risk” applicants, those who generally met Swarthmore’s academic criteria for admissions (Swarthmore College, Courtney Smith Papers, Box 2, September, 1968, p. 11). The Admissions office seemed to place a thumb on the scale, but a relatively light one (Swarthmore College, Courtney Smith Papers, Box 2, September, 1968, p. 17).

Beyond Hoy’s effort and legacy, Swarthmore clearly experienced a “second wave” of post-disruption policy changes, as well. The college represents an archetypal case in which an existing affirmative action program was “hardened” by student protests and demands. The first set of admissions policy shifts, in 1964, largely can be attributed to a reform-minded young, white administrator whose vision for change was backed by Swarthmore’s president. The second set of policy changes, however, came just months after the King assassination, when the college found itself embroiled in a major controversy over admissions policy.<sup>25</sup>

In the summer of 1968, Dean Hargadon produced a report that documented the slow pace of change in African American admissions and called for a change. This report provoked significant protest by the Swarthmore Afro-American Students’ Society (SASS) on a number of grounds, including that it cited revealing data on Swarthmore’s African American students and that SASS was not consulted before Hargadon’s report was complete. SASS signaled its immediate displeasure with the report by staging a walk-out, of about 35 students, of an October 1968 Admissions Policy Committee meeting (Etheridge 2005). Then, SASS issued a number of demands, including active

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<sup>25</sup> Swarthmore represents just one such example of a school in our sample with both a pre- and a post-disruption wave of affirmative action policy shifts. Others include Harvard (Karen 1990, p. 235) and possibly Wesleyan (Clark 1973; Young 1988).

involvement of SASS in black student recruitment efforts, “the acceptance and enrollment of 10-20 ‘risk’ Black students for next year and the provision of extensive supportive programs for them; a commitment by the College to enroll a total of 100 Black students within three years and 150 within six years; and the appointments of a Black assistant dean of admissions and a Black counselor” (Swarthmore Phoenix, January 10, 1969; Etheridge 2005). Central to SASS’s demands was the provision that Swarthmore begin to admit students in the “risk” category, defined as “students with poor educational backgrounds and academic credentials far below normal Swarthmore standards (such applicants often also have extreme financial need)” (Swarthmore Phoenix, December 17, 1968).

When its demands had not been met by January 7, 1969, SASS staged a series of non-violent protests (Etheridge 2005). SASS members organized an occupation, by about 25 students, of the admissions office on January 9. They staged a walk-out of about 100 students at a campus meeting to discuss admissions, and they began a hunger strike by four SASS members on January 13. During this time, the student newspaper, the Swarthmore Phoenix, began to produce supplemental issues to cover this conflict, calling the stand-off between the administration and SASS “the current Black admissions crisis” (January 10, 1969). Student actions in early January were also covered near-daily in short blurbs in the New York Times and articles in other national news outlets.

The conflict ended abruptly, when President Smith suffered a heart attack and died in his office, in the building that was, at that very moment, occupied by protestors (“Dr. Courtney C. Smith” 1969; “Subversion of Reason” 1969). In response, SASS ended its occupation of the Admissions Office on the afternoon of January 16. After President

Smith's death, as a result of both the conflict and subsequent negotiations between SASS and the college's administration, Swarthmore made a number of changes to its admissions practices. An Ad Hoc Black Admissions Committee was formed (Swarthmore Phoenix, February 25, 1969); two black administrators were appointed (Swarthmore Phoenix, May 10, 1969); and Swarthmore administrators articulated a "target" number of black matriculants of 25 per year in the first few years of the new program and 35 per class in the following years (Swarthmore College, Robert Cross Papers, Box 12, March 19, 1970, p. 5). As well, the Admissions Office began considering and admitting some of the "risk" students at the heart of the admissions controversy. "Unconventionally qualified" became the new phrase for these students (Swarthmore Phoenix, January 9, 1970 and April 10, 1970). The Phoenix reported in May of 1969: "For some students, the Admissions Office weighed more potentiality over past performance, especially for less advantaged students" (May 6, 1969). These first few classes after the policy shift included the admission of approximately ten "unconventionally qualified" students per class, for which interviews and letters of recommendation were weighed more heavily in the admissions process (Swarthmore College, Robert Cross Papers, Box 12, March 19, 1970; Swarthmore Phoenix, April 10, 1970 and May 15, 1970).

The result was a relatively large increase in the number of African American students admitted to Swarthmore. In 1968, only eight African American students matriculated in the class of 1972 (Swarthmore Phoenix, September 20, 1968). By May 1969, Dean Hargadon announced that the following year's entering class would have 31 black students of 340 entering first years (Swarthmore Phoenix, May 6, 1969).

Swarthmore had started affirmative action in 1964, absence of student action, but it took a far more aggressive stance after the mobilization of black students on campus.

### Elite Public Universities

Private colleges and universities were not the only institutions of higher education to adopt affirmative action. Two of the most significant programs took root at public universities in the mid-1960s. One of the earliest was the Opportunity Awards Program at the University of Michigan. In 1963, after conversations with Francis A. Kornegay, executive director of the Detroit Urban League, provost Roger W. Heyns formed a faculty advisory committee to evaluate Michigan's admissions policies. It concluded that existing methods of enrolling "deprived" students were inadequate, and the university should begin formulating new approaches. President Harlan Hatcher acknowledged that some faculty had expressed concern that Michigan was "lowering standards" by admitting deprived students, but he reassured his audience that "this was not the case" and that "lowering standards of graduation would be unwise." It is true that "[t]heir preparation does not permit them to be competitive initially, but they do have the ability to do the work required once the handicaps of poor training have been corrected" (University of Michigan, Harlan Henthorne Hatcher Papers, Box 57, September 30, 1963).

Heyns and Hatcher followed up on their deliberations by establishing the Opportunity Awards Program in 1964 (University of Michigan News Service, March 5, 1964). Heyns made no secret of his own reasons for leading the effort. In a letter to a concerned faculty member, he explained why Michigan wanted to "increase the number

of qualified Negro students enrolled here.” The first was simply to “extend educational opportunities for academically qualified students who are presently disqualified for reasons which are largely financial.” There was evidence that such students were capable of doing the academic work at Michigan. Their failure to meet all of the admissions requirements was due less to intellectual ability than a persistent lack of economic resources. At the same time, Heyns also felt morally compelled to act. As a public university, Michigan was obligated “to participate appropriately in the national movement to improve the status of the American Negro in our society” (Heyns to Maynard, April 7, 1964, Folder: Negro, Re 1963-4, Provost Papers). Though the devastating riot in Detroit was three years away and student uprisings would not convulse campus until a year thereafter, Heyns and Michigan moved to establish affirmative action in 1964.

Affirmative action took root at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) the same year. Under the leadership of chancellor Franklin Murphy and dean of students Bryon H. Atkinson, UCLA established the Educational Opportunities Program in 1964. At a meeting with high school administrators, Atkinson noted that UCLA had long maintained an “open door” policy that admitted all students who met university requirements, but it was clear that such a policy did not lead to the enrollment of significant numbers of disadvantaged or minority students (Murphy Papers 1964). “The purpose of the program,” noted Ann Allen, its first administrator, “was to expand educational opportunities for environmentally and economically disadvantaged young people, many from minority groups” (Murphy Papers 1965a). It was a “compensatory” program and the “first of its kind on a University of California campus” (Murphy Papers,



1965a, p. 1, 4). The first group of specially recruited students, numbering 33 in total, were enrolled at UCLA in the spring semester of 1965. Most students qualified for enrollment at UCLA, though it is unclear whether their test scores and high school grade point averages were lower than the average. But it was clear that UCLA was genuinely interested in trying new approaches, and it did not hesitate to give EOP students a limited amount of preferential treatment when it was necessary. Three students were not properly qualified, but they were admitted by the EOP through the utilization of a special rule at the University of California that exempted 2% of the student body from meeting university standards (Murphy Papers 1965b). The absolute numbers were extremely small, especially at a school like UCLA, but the nature and purpose of the program was clear. No disruptions were in sight, but UCLA was taking affirmative action, just as Michigan was doing thousands of miles to the East.

At the same time, disruption was not entirely unimportant. Our analysis of the data suggests that urban riots did lead a limited number of public universities to adopt affirmative action programs for the first time – largely in the absence of widespread student mobilization. Berkeley provides one illustration. Here the precipitating event does seem to have been the massive riot in Watts. Of course, Berkeley was a strong candidate for change. Weeks before the riot, University of California President Clark Kerr had asked all UC campuses to “consider the advisability of increasing the percentage [of admits not meeting general University requirements] to 4% in light of the need to bring minorities and the culturally deprived into the University” (Murphy Papers 1965c). In monitoring the response to his request, Kerr surely would have paid special attention to Berkeley, his old campus. More important, Kerr’s successor at Berkeley, Roger W.

Heyns, had been instrumental in starting affirmative action at the University of Michigan in 1964. Even in the absence of Kerr's request, he might have taken the initiative to start affirmative action at Berkeley. Programs aimed at increasing minority admissions, he would later note, were a "great interest of mine and something that I thought we were obliged to work on" (Heyns 1987, pp. 21, 54). Thus it is plausible that Berkeley would have taken affirmative action without the spur of Watts. Still, Berkeley had done little in the early 1960s to expand access to higher education for racial minorities. In fact, when he became Berkeley's chancellor in 1965, Heyns was "astonished" by the lack of black students on the Berkeley campus (Heyns 1987, p. 54). The only initiative of note had been a scholarship program aimed at disadvantaged high school students; it was known as the Special Opportunity Scholarship (Office of the Chancellor, University of California, Berkeley 1966a; Office of the Chancellor, University of California, Berkeley 1966b).

Watts broke through the inertia and accelerated the timetable of change. There is little evidence of widespread student demand for action, but Chancellor Heyns nevertheless commissioned a special advisory committee to contemplate new approaches to breaking down what amounted to the de facto segregation of the Berkeley campus (Office of the Chancellor, University of California, Berkeley 1965). The result was the Equal Opportunity Program (EOP), launched by Berkeley in 1966. William Somerville was appointed director, and he was given the responsibility of "increas[ing] the minority and low-income population on campus as significantly and as soon as possible" (Daily Californian Weekly Magazine, October 3, 1967). Somerville wasted no time getting started, visiting over 50 predominantly minority high schools to convince more students

there to make applications (Daily Californian, May 12, 1966, p. 1). The recruiting trip proved immensely successful. Four hundred minority students applied for admission. Of these, 135 applicants were accepted after a thorough review process in which their applications were individually scrutinized by a committee comprised of Somerville, admissions officials, and a faculty representative (Daily Californian Weekly Magazine, October 3, 1967, p. 1). Though they were required to make up their course deficiencies and meet other university standards, roughly 60 percent of EOP students in 1966 (68 out of 113) did not initially satisfy Berkeley's admissions requirements when they were first admitted (Langlois 1967, Table 4; Office of the Chancellor, University of California, Berkeley 1966c).

Watts was clearly a source of motivation and legitimation for Somerville himself. A profile in the Daily Californian noted one of his most prominent rationales for backing the EOP: it would bring to Berkeley students who will have the "greatest talent for resolving the social problems of Watts, and other ghettos" (Daily Californian, May 16, 1966, p. 1) In fact, William Somerville, would repeatedly link the mission of EOP to Watts throughout his tenure at the EOP. "In some places we're producing inter-racial illiterates," he said in a typical pronouncement. "I'm surprised there aren't more blow-ups like in Watts" (Daily Californian, November 8, 1966, pp. 1, 18).

But cases such as Berkeley were uncommon among the schools in our sample. In fact, what concerned most administrators was not actual or potential disorder in central cities, where, it should be pointed out, few of their institutions were actually located. Apart from schools like Yale and Princeton, which thought of themselves as national institutions and therefore self-consciously responded to national events (Karabel 2005a),

there is little evidence to indicate that urban riots were more than a convenient post-hoc justification for experimentation. When disruption was a factor, it was instead collective protest by black students and their supporters on their own campuses that led a small number of the selective colleges and universities in our sample to change their admissions policies. Here the precipitating event was not Detroit or Newark but the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr on April 4, 1968.

The effect of the King assassination on admissions policy was nowhere clearer than the University of Washington, where the mobilization of black students led to the establishment of affirmative action for the very first time. To be sure, Washington was a strong candidate for change, just as Berkeley was. Few schools could boast of a stronger and earlier commitment to racial equality. In 1959, president Charles Odegaard had signed a university directive, Memorandum No. 22, which announced that “educational opportunities” at UW were “open to all qualified applicants without distinction or preference on account of race, creed, or color” (University of Washington President Records 1959). The formal adoption of a school-wide policy of non-discrimination made Washington fairly unique among American institutions of higher education.

Still, black students did not matriculate in greater numbers than before. By 1963, after four years of officially proclaiming a commitment to formal equality, Odegaard began to wonder why there were so few African American students participating in a commencement ceremony over which he was presiding; it was then that he remembered being struck by the “thinness of the stream of black students coming to the University” (University of Washington Senate 1965; University of Washington Daily, October 30, 1968). Odegaard soon concluded that the “merely open door policy of neutrality is not

sufficient to effect the remedy needed to meet our purpose, that is, to help blacks in any reasonable proportion to use University opportunities” (University of Washington Daily, October 30, 1968,). In response, he convened an informal group of faculty and staff to “develop positive programs to encourage the enrollment of more persons from culturally and economically deprived areas of our community and state and to assure their success after admission” (University of Washington President Records 1965a). The group took more formal shape in 1965 as a standing administrative committee known as the Committee on Special Educational Programs (CSEP) (University of Washington Senate 1965; University of Washington President Records 1965; University of Washington President Records 1966b). After nearly six years of official non-discrimination, Washington seemed poised to take more aggressive steps.

Nevertheless, the steps it took did not amount to “hard” affirmative action. That summer, Watts came and went – clearing the way for Berkeley to establish the EOP – but the riot did not lead Washington to start any analogous programs. Through the CSEP, it did contemplate a variety of other options, from improving financial aid packages, to forging ties with Tougaloo College in Alabama, to reaching out to minority neighborhoods in the greater Seattle area (University of Washington President Records 1965c). In 1966, it increased the number of students enrolled in its Upward Bound Program (University of Washington President Records 1966a). Yet it did not take the next and decisive step of adopting affirmative action in admissions – until 1968.

King’s assassination dealt a heavy blow to everyone on campus and quickened the pace of change. Odegaard canceled afternoon classes on April 5 to honor King’s memory (University of Washington President Records 1968). A memorial for King was held three

days later at Edmonson Pavillion. Odegaard naturally spoke, and he urged everyone on campus to “be brothers to one another” (Alumnus, Summer 1968, pp. 4-5). Charles A. Evans, a distinguished and well-respected professor of microbiology, gave a particularly moving eulogy. It was clear that he had been personally affected by the tragedy, but his words also reflected a broader sentiment among the faculty and administration – a profound and genuine sense of grief tempered by a renewed sense of purpose. “In our sorrow at the loss of Dr. King,” he said to the 5,000 men and women in attendance, “it is appropriate that we dedicate ourselves to the cause for which he died” (Evans 1968b). He continued: “Let us...strive step by step to create in our University and in Seattle, conditions where racism shrivels and dies and leadership in the fight against racism can flourish” (Evans 1968b). The speech struck a responsive chord throughout campus. A memorandum signed by scores of faculty indicated that they were prepared to accept to the idea that “special steps must be taken in order to insure equal opportunity” (Evans 1968c).

But it remained unclear what specific form the special steps would eventually take. King’s assassination was felt most deeply by Washington’s black students, and it was their collective mobilization that finally pushed the administration to address admissions policies. A little over a month after King’s death – and only a few days after police stormed Columbia’s campus on Morningside Heights – members of the Black Student Union (BSU) presented Odegaard with a series of demands. Central among them was increasing the number of minority students on campus. The BSU went so far as to specifically enumerate the numbers of African Americans, Native Americans, and Mexican Americans they wished to recruit (Odegaard 1968, p. 3). Odegaard responded

by letter on May 10, inviting the BSU to advise the university as it contemplated specific policy reforms. Ten days later, at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Senate, thirty black students marched unannounced into the room. A heated exchange of views ensued. The students then occupied the President's office along with a bank of office suites nearby. A prolonged sit-in was averted only when Odegaard and the Executive Committee agreed to sign a statement that pledged them to take concrete steps at the next Senate meeting "to fund an expanded recruitment of minority-group students" (Odegaard 1968). The next meeting proved extraordinarily productive, with all sides converging on a similar position. Shortly after the Senate meeting, Washington announced the establishment of the Special Education Program (SEP), which was meant to "increase the number of minority students from ethnic groups [that] have a substantial disadvantage in our society" (University of Washington Office of Minority Affairs, December 3, 1968; University of Washington Office of Minority Affairs, September 1971).

There could be little doubt about the impetus for change. In a report to the University Senate, Evans made it perfectly clear that it was the "pressure exerted by the Black Student Union" that "generated a substantially increased commitment by the University to recruit more of these students" (Evans 1968ba, p. 1). There could be even less doubt that the SEP represented a major departure in admissions policy rather than simply a vigorous "soft" recruiting program. In the fall quarter of 1968, 257 black students enrolled at the University of Washington, most of them under the auspices of the SEP (Evans 1968a). These students had been admitted under a different policy than previous cohorts. Washington had traditionally regarded a high school grade point average of 2.5 or above as minimal evidence of the "ability to progress satisfactorily

toward a degree program.” A limited number of students who did not meet the requirement were admitted on the “basis of individual evaluation of their qualifications.” By contrast, over ninety percent of students in the SEP were “accepted on the basis of an individual evaluation of their qualifications” (Evans 1968a, pp. 2-3). In speaking of the new policy, Odegaard was careful to make a distinction between entrance and exit requirements. “We have not changed the exit requirements from the University,” he said. “The requirements for degrees remain the same” (University of Washington Daily, October 30, 1968). But he acknowledged that most SEP students were “admitted by discretionary action” (University of Washington Daily, October 30, 1968). The years of affirmative action at Washington had unquestionably begun.

## **DISCUSSION**

Our findings suggest little support for disruption-centered theories of affirmative action in college and university admissions. But if disruption does not seem analytically valid, then what does account for the temporal pattern of adoption that is observed in our data?

We propose that differences in the observed timing of adoption are best understood in terms of Karabel’s theory of status-group struggle and organizational self-interest (1984, 2005a). Institutional change in higher education, he argues, reflects primarily the struggle of dominant status groups to achieve social closure, often by winning the authority to define certain cultural ideals, such as the conceptions of “merit” embedded in admissions policy (Karabel 1984, pp. 3-5). More specifically, dominant groups attempt to retain control over the valuable cultural and economic opportunities



that are afforded by elite colleges. They do so by defining “merit” (within limits) in ways that favor them. At the same time, Karabel insists on the central importance of organizational self-interest. As he notes, elite colleges and universities are “organizations with their own distinct interests.” But under “normal circumstances,” they are “likely to be most responsive to the claims of external groups that control needed resources” (Karabel 1984, pp. 4-5). “To the extent that [they are] dependent on a single such group for such needed resources,” he concludes, elite colleges and universities are “likely to be effectively under the control of that group” (Karabel 1984, p. 28). Both factors taken together explain why Harvard, Yale, and Princeton imposed Jewish quotas during the interwar period. A dominant faction of the Protestant upper class wished to exclude Jews from tapping into the opportunities that elite education could offer, and the Big Three – all of whom were dependent on the WASP upper class for financial resources – obliged with little hesitation.

We see a similar logic at work in the advent of affirmative action in higher education during the 1960s. Although the Protestant upper class gradually declined in strength and coherence after the Second World War, it still remained influential through much of the decade. By 1963, it had lost the battle to exclude Jews, but it still fought to maintain some degree of the social closure that continued to give it preferential access to valuable educational and occupational opportunities. Its continuing struggle for dominance remained successful at the schools with which it had become historically linked over the course of the twentieth century. Such schools continued to confer exceptional opportunities, and they also continued to depend heavily on the Protestant upper class for financial resources. The identity of such schools is not difficult to pin

down. Among the major private universities, Harvard, Yale, and Princeton remained the most socially exclusive. Amherst and Williams were the two most social exclusive liberal arts colleges. Among public universities, it was the University of Virginia that was most socially exclusive. The exclusivity of these schools and their link to the Protestant upper class can be made evident by reviewing the alma maters of the men listed in the 1963 New York Social Register. Table 4 displays the top five alma maters by type of institution. In order of popularity, Yale, Harvard, and Princeton are clearly the most favored private universities, outstripping the fourth place school (Columbia) by at least a factor of four. Of the liberal arts colleges, it appears that Williams, Amherst, and Trinity were the most preferred. The fourth most commonly listed alma mater was Colgate, which had less than half as many as Trinity. Men with degrees from public universities listed the University of Virginia with the greatest frequency. No other public school came close. Berkeley was a distant second. It would thus seem that Yale, Harvard, Princeton, Williams, Amherst, Trinity, and possibly Virginia were the schools most central to the social reproduction of the waning Protestant elite during the 1960s.

This theory of status-group struggle and organizational self-interest fares well empirically in comparison to other possible explanations for temporal variation adoption, including the presence of liberal administrators, urban riots, and campus riots. Table 5 lists all seventeen schools in our sample and indicates whether each of the four explanatory factors is present. The schools are divided into early and late adopters according to whether they initially adopted affirmative action before or after the Watts riots. This cut-off point was chosen because it is central to the literature. If the Watts riots did indeed contribute significantly to the adoption of affirmative action, it seems only

reasonable to think that schools adopting affirmative action before Watts are somehow categorically different than schools adopting affirmative action after Watts. The question then becomes what distinguishes early adopting schools (pre-Watts) from late adopting schools (post-Watts).

At first it may seem that none of the four factors possesses much explanatory validity. But it should be borne in mind that our criteria for defining affirmative action are conservative, and Berkeley and Washington are difficult cases to classify. Both schools were strong candidates for institutional change. In the case of Berkeley, Clark Kerr had already ordered all campuses at the UC system in 1965 to explore the possibility of admitting more minority students through a doubling of the percentage of admits not meeting general admission requirements. Furthermore, incoming chancellor Roger W. Heyns had pioneered affirmative action at Michigan out of a sense of commitment to the civil rights movement. Lastly, due to outbreak of the Free Speech Movement in 1964, Berkeley administrators had little opportunity to take early initiative on civil rights; their attention was occupied elsewhere. For all these reasons, it seems reasonable to think that Berkeley could easily have been an early adopter, or may have adopted affirmative action even if Watts had not occurred.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, it seems reasonable to think that Washington may very have adopted affirmative action without the round of student protests after the King assassination. Under the leadership of president Charles Odegaard, Washington aggressively explored options for going beyond the “open door” policy that it had formally announced in 1959. In fact, it formed the Committee on Special Educational

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<sup>26</sup> In the alternative, Berkeley does rank as the second most socially exclusive public school, with a third more men in the 1963 Social Register listing it as their alma mater than the third most exclusive public school, Michigan (see Table 4). This would render it consistent with the analysis that we outline below.

Programs in 1965 before Watts. Just like Berkeley, it is reasonable to think of Washington as a borderline case in which affirmative action (under a less stringent definition) is being taken as early as 1965 or could easily have been taken before the student protests of 1968.

If the Berkeley and Washington cases are either excluded or coded as early adopters – for the reasons outlined above – then a clear picture emerges. Urban riots help explain why late-adopting Yale and Princeton altered their admissions policy, but they do not appear relevant to the adoption of affirmative action by late-adopting Williams and Amherst. Campus protests seem relevant to the initial establishment of affirmative action at Williams, but no other school. The two critical factors that most consistently distinguish early from late adopters are whether there are liberal administrators active at the school and whether the school is tightly linked to the WASP elite. In fact, it seems highly plausible that the two are actually related. Liberal administrators had relatively freer rein to experiment with broadening the admissions process at less socially exclusive schools that were not strongly associated with the Protestant upper class and did not depend on it for financial resources. To the extent that they were present, liberal administrators had less latitude for experimentation at the socially exclusive schools on which the WASP elite was dependent for social reproduction – schools that were highly dependent on the WASP elite for financial resources.

There are clear exceptions to our analysis. For instance, Harvard – clearly an elite and socially exclusive institution – was the earliest adopter of affirmative action in our sample. As noted above, Harvard's location in Massachusetts also may have helped explain its early openness to affirmative action. Massachusetts was not only the historic

home of northern abolitionism, it was also the site of one of three of the country's Fair Educational Practices acts, a 1949 state law in the Bay State that barred most educational institutions in these states from discriminating on the basis of "race, color, religion, creed or national origin" (see Saveth 1951).

Our analysis also necessarily simplifies the complicated dynamics at each individual school. For instance, certain admissions officials at some relatively late-adopting schools took their own initiative to change their admissions plans, often at the urging of liberal administrators. At these schools, where incremental change was afoot, disruption may have simply strengthened the hand of the reformers. For example, Yale had a reputation as being "an exceptionally insular institution" (Karabel 2005a, p. 321) and hung on doggedly as a bastion of the WASP elite. For instance, Karabel (2005a) writes that Yale did not remove its Jewish quota until the first years of the 1960s and retained a culture of anti-Semitism within the admissions office during this time (p. 331). One estimate for the 1961-1962 year placed Yale at the absolute bottom of the Ivies with respect to Jewish enrollment (Oren 2000, p. 211). Yet Yale, while a relatively late-adopter, embraced race-based affirmative action as part of a broader shift in admissions policies and practices. Yale's president promoted "Inky" Clark, who had witnessed the racial and religious bias of his colleagues as an admissions committee member in the early 1960s (Karabel 2005a, p. 331; Oren 2000, p. 215), to bring deliberate change to Yale's admissions office. Clark brought in new staff members who he believed would bring a fresh approach to admissions and a new focus on a more diverse student body (Karabel, 2005a; Oren 2000). The university also proved to be a leader in "soft" affirmative action practices, heading the national CPEO recruitment program under the

direction of Yale's Charles McCarthy, Jr. (Oren 2000, pp. 225-226; "Yale to Share" 1964).

Nevertheless, our analysis of the broad pattern exhibited by the seventeen schools in our sample suggests that the most socially exclusive schools were slowest to implement race-based affirmative action in admissions. This inference depends on excluding Berkeley and Washington from the analysis or coding them as early adopters, but we believe there are reasonable grounds for either choice, given the historical circumstances and the stringency of our approach to coding the dependent variable.

## CONCLUSION

What explains the origins of affirmative action in college and university admissions? Our analysis of newly collected data for a sample of seventeen schools has yielded evidence that contradicts disruption-centered theories. We find for a majority of schools that a "first wave" of affirmative action (1961-1965) arose largely at the initiative of liberal administrators who were emotionally, morally, and politically moved by the non-violent civil rights movement of the 1950s and early 1960s – from the early efforts to desegregate schools and lunch counters, to the 1963 March on Washington and King's electrifying "I Have a Dream" speech, to the violent and widely-televised reaction of southern segregationists to peaceful civil rights demonstrators in Birmingham and elsewhere.<sup>27</sup> At many of these schools, a "second wave" of affirmative action programs, which often represented clear extensions of first-wave programs, arose in the immediate aftermath of the King assassination (1968-1969), which served as a crucial catalyst for a

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<sup>27</sup> Thank you to Caroline Hodges Persell for underscoring this point to us.

campaign of nonviolent, direct action by black college students and their supporters in the North. Urban riots and campus protests led to the initial adoption of affirmative action only at a small set of schools – primarily the most socially exclusive schools that were historically tied to the reproduction of the Protestant upper class.

Our findings have clear implications for scholars interested in the history of civil rights and affirmative action in higher education. First, they reveal that the working assumption of most authors writing on the subject is not empirically valid. Affirmative action did not begin in the late-1960s as either a steam-valve meant to quell mass discontent, or a hard-won benefit of collective mobilization against racial exclusion, or the policy payoff of “racial blackmail” (Traub 2005) by black militants. Instead, it began in the early- to mid-1960s as a quiet policy initiative of northern, white liberals inspired by the civil rights movement in the South. As civil rights activists marched on Washington and Congress was passing the Civil Rights Act, administrators of colleges and universities in the North were taking affirmative action – injecting racial considerations into their admissions process – in a clear effort to actively integrate their own campuses. The usual periodization is highly misleading.

This study also has significant implications for the sociological study of institutional change in higher education. First, it confirms and broadens the relevance of Karabel’s theory of status-group struggle and organizational self-interest (Karabel 1984). If the theory has strong utility for explaining the imposition of Jewish quotas in the interwar United States, it also seems relevant for understanding the advent of affirmative action in the 1960s. In fact, it is the same status group that is involved. In both cases, it was a WASP elite striving to engineer social closure – and their favored institutions

responding accordingly. However, in the case of Jewish quotas, the WASP elite was demanding change, while in the case of affirmative action it was blocking change. Though the Protestant upper class has declined in strength and coherence since the early 1960s, our study suggests that sociologists of higher education in the United States – where social conflict plays out on not only class but also racial, ethnic, and religious lines – would do well to remain mindful that understanding patterns of institutional change requires identifying the competing status groups that are involved, ascertaining their (public and private) demands, and determining how much different organizations depend on them. Second, our study outlines several concrete mechanisms of institutional change in higher education. In particular, it shows the value of Karen's emphasis on university elites as a major source of policy change (Karen 1991, p. 228). Particularly at moments when the object of their discretion is not highly visible as a subject of public policy and political discussion, university officials enjoy considerable autonomy in shaping institutional policy, and they possess considerable latitude to follow their own preferences or the preferences of their main constituents (e.g., alumni, legislators). Under a wide range of circumstances, understanding the perceived aims and ideological commitments of university officials can be crucial to understanding institutional change.

Our investigation has far from exhausted the possibilities, however. The origins and development of affirmative remain a rich area of inquiry, for historians and other scholars of American higher education as well as sociologists interested in institutional change in higher education. Future research might profitably explore the path dependence (Abbott 2001; Pierson 2004; Weir 1992) of status-group struggles. In particular, it might focus on analyzing the connection between the response of elite schools to Jewish



applicants in the interwar period and their adoption of race-based affirmative action a little more than a generation later.<sup>28</sup> Our evidence suggests that some early adopters of affirmative action may have been primed for action with respect to racial minorities by the way in which they went about reforming their admissions policies with respect to Jews. Late adopters of affirmative action may have been those schools at which the conservative wing of the WASP elite retained the strongest grip. Here, administrators and alumni were the slowest to respond to the black freedom struggle. In fact, it may have taken urban riots or campus protest to break their complacency.

There is also a strong need for additional research on the role of liberal administrators and their justification for affirmative action. We need more studies in the mold of Lipson (2007). While liberal administrators were inspired by the civil rights movement in the early 1960s, their rationale for affirmative action was complex and began to shift in subsequent years. By the late-1960s, administrators began to invoke nascent ideas about the value of diversity. As a 1967 New York Times article reported on this broad “diversity” goal among the Ivies: “Yesterday, when the schools sent out their 12,354 highly prized letters of acceptance, one, undoubtedly, went to the archetypal Episcopalian from Greenwich and another to the farmer’s son from Montana, for balance. But,” the article continued, “increasingly letters also are going to the promising Negro from Newark and to the public high school student from the Bronx” (Borders 1967, p. 1). How and why did the motivating ideas behind affirmative action begin to shift among university officials?

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<sup>28</sup> Thank you to Howard Wechsler for urging us to examine this connection.

Liberal administrators may have been motivated to expand affirmative action by the need to remain competitive in recruiting. As we have discussed, higher education changed tremendously in the post-World War II era, significantly effecting admissions practices. For the first time, schools had to really compete for admitted students, as students began to apply to multiple schools (Duffy and Goldberg 1998, p. 37) and no longer were required by the College Board to indicate their first-choice school during the application process (Duffy and Goldberg 1998, p. 38; Karabel 2005a, p. 294). There was a new competitive dynamic at work here, and admissions officials responded accordingly. In this civil rights era, as selective schools newly competed for all students, they also competed for a small pool of students of color that they deemed qualified for admission. An article in Time Magazine in April of 1967, entitled “Courting the Negro,” quoted the admissions director from Amherst, Eugene Wilson: “Admissions people used to talk about what the average College Board score of their entering class was. . . . Now the status symbol is how many Negroes you get” (“Courting the Negro” 1967, n.p.). Similarly, Gordon and Wilkerson wrote, in 1966, that “the quest for Negro students. . . by prestige institutions in the East. . . has become ‘the thing’ to do” (p. 136). Duffy and Goldberg (1998) wrote, of the period, that “competition for the best black students was intense” and had become somewhat of an “obsession” (p. 141). In a September 1968 report, Swarthmore’s Dean Hargadon wrote that “the competition for enrolling qualified Negro students is keen, and an exceptionally able Negro student has more colleges sitting on his doorstep than an all-state quarterback with an 800 verbal” (Swarthmore College, Courtney Smith Papers, Box 2, September 1968, p. 1). It is unclear whether the timing of this new competition for students of color impacted the earliest adopters of affirmative

action, though we believe that the dynamic was in place by 1964.<sup>29</sup> It may be that the schools that were not at the absolute top of their peer group may have taken an earlier and more aggressive approach to race-based affirmative action in an attempt to win the competition for the small pool of minority (particularly African American) students. This might help to explain why many Ivies that were not part of the Big Three were generally quicker to adopt affirmative action, and why Wesleyan and Swarthmore adopted affirmative action plans before Amherst and Williams did. Here, again, more empirical research is needed.

Case studies and comparative analysis of other schools could help to test or refine our preferred explanation. The case of Trinity College, which is a common alma mater among men listed in the 1963 Social Register, deserves further exploration. One would expect it to have adopted affirmative action tardily. A comparison of two different schools within the same metropolitan region – Harvard versus Boston University, or Princeton versus Rutgers – might prove useful for tracing how different schools respond in divergent ways to similar social and political events. A historical sociology of affirmative action among engineering schools and southern colleges and universities remains unwritten. Although any analysis would be complicated by desegregation, it would provide a fine opportunity to further explore institutional change in a vastly

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<sup>29</sup> For example, McCarthy proposed a pre-freshman summer program at Yale, designed as a preparatory program for a select group of admitted students. He wrote to President Kingman Brewster that this program could increase the number of African American students that Yale could admit. Writing of Yale's strenuous five-class courseload, McCarthy urged: "Harvard, which provides a freshman program of four courses, has thirty-one American Negroes in its entering class this year: Yale has only twelve, and last spring four Yale negro [sic] rejects were eagerly admitted by Harvard." He continued: "The solution we propose is a special summer program to be held as a transition from high school to Yale for certain candidates." (Yale University, Brewster Records, October 5, 1964, p. 1).

different context, involving different status-groups and conceptions of organizational self-interest.

Lastly, we need more research that goes beyond the initial adoption of affirmative action and situates the case of affirmative action more broadly among studies of institutional change in higher education. How did affirmative action develop over time? What explains why it took the specific forms it did at different institutions? Why did it begin to come under fire in the 1970s, and why did some institutions remain committed to it more strongly than other institutions? How and why did it persist after Bakke, and what explains why it began to falter during the Clinton administration? Why did the effort to roll back affirmative action take the form of state referenda, and not legislative repeal? At a broader level, how typical is affirmative action of institutional change in higher education? Are the conclusions of sociological research based on affirmative action widely applicable to other types of policy in higher education? The research agenda is wide open, and much work remains to be done.

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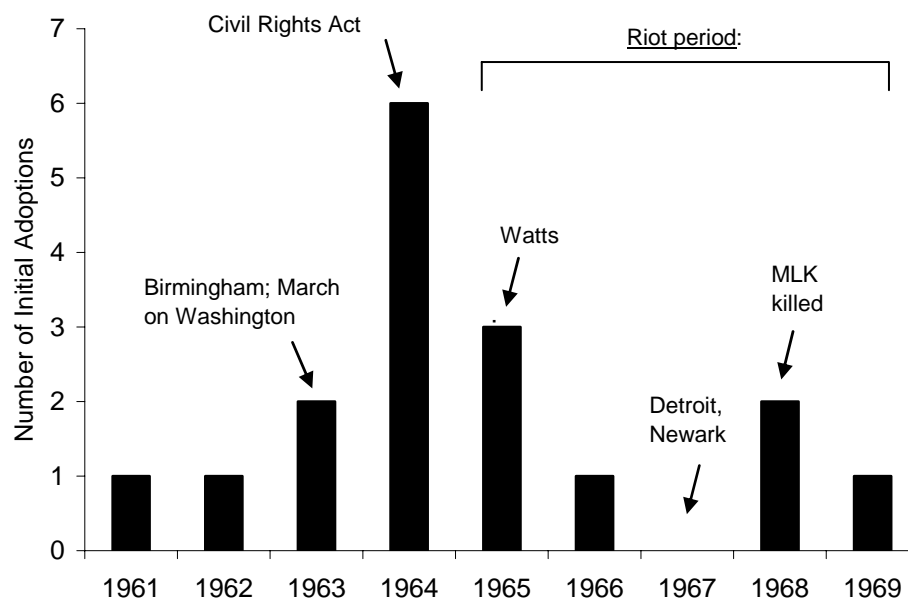


FIG. 1—National, race-related events and the initial adoption of affirmative action among seventeen American colleges and universities, 1961-1969



TABLE 1  
SCHOOLS IN SAMPLE BY TYPE OF INSTITUTION

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*Private Universities*

Brown  
Columbia  
Cornell  
Dartmouth  
Harvard  
Northwestern  
University of Pennsylvania  
Princeton  
Yale

*Public Universities*

University of California, Berkeley  
University of California, Los Angeles  
University of Michigan  
University of Washington

*Liberal Arts Colleges*

Amherst  
Swarthmore  
Wesleyan  
Williams

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NOTE.—Sample includes only schools outside the South. N=17.

TABLE 2  
TYPES OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Type	Description	Example
<u>“Soft” Affirmative Action</u>		
Recruitment	“Talent searching” or training/bridge programs designed to expand and/or enhance the pool of qualified minority candidates applying to a college or university.	National Scholarship Service and Fund for Negro Students (NSSFNS), 1948 - ; Berkeley Pledge, 1995-1996
<u>“Hard” Affirmative Action</u>		
Set aside	A specific number of slots in the admissions pool that are set aside until they are filled with minority admits.	UC Davis Medical School, 1973-1974
Quota	A floor or ceiling requiring that a certain number or percentage of minority applicants are admitted.	
Separate track	A program in which minorities applicants are evaluated only in comparison to each other and not with the general pool of applicants.	University of Washington Law School, 1971
Point system	A policy whereby applicants are assigned points for various qualifications, and minority applicants are automatically awarded a specified number of points based solely on their minority status.	University of Michigan undergraduate college, 2001-2003
Plus factor	A system in which minority status counts as one of many “plus-factors” that admissions officers have the option of considering, so long as applicants are all compared to one another.	University of Michigan Law School, 2001 - present

NOTE.—“Soft” affirmative action refers to programs that use racial considerations to expand the pool of applicants considered for admission. “Hard” affirmative action programs are implemented at the time of admissions decisions, and they involve putting a metaphorical thumb on the scale for applicants belonging to selected groups. Dates are not meant to be exclusive.

SOURCES.— Kell 1996; Wilkinson 1979, p. 254; Posner 1974, pp. 1-2.

TABLE 3  
THE INITIAL ADOPTION OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AMONG SEVENTEEN AMERICAN  
COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, 1961-1969

Date	School
1961	Harvard
1962	Dartmouth
1963	Columbia, Pennsylvania
1964	Brown, Cornell, UCLA, University of Michigan, Swarthmore, Wesleyan
1965	Northwestern, Princeton, Yale
1966	University of California, Berkeley
1967	
1968	Amherst, University of Washington
1969	Williams

SOURCES.—Authors' research in the primary sources. See Appendix B for sources on individual schools.

NOTES.—Northwestern adopted affirmative action in 1965 before Watts. N=17.

TABLE 4  
TOP FIVE ALMA MATERS OF MEN LISTED IN THE 1963 NEW YORK SOCIAL REGISTER BY  
INSTITUTIONAL TYPE

Private Universities	No.	Liberal Arts College	No.	Public Universities	No.
Yale	2234	Williams	325	Virginia	160
Harvard	1746	Amherst	94	California (Berkeley)	36
Princeton	1422	Trinity	82	North Carolina	33
Columbia	311	Colgate	34	Michigan	24
Cornell	144	Hamilton	32	Wisconsin	22

SOURCES.—Adapted from Hawes (1963).

NOTES.—Public universities exclude the Naval Academy and West Point, which would have ranked between Berkeley and North Carolina.

TABLE 5  
FACTORS EXPLAINING TEMPORAL VARIATION IN THE INITIAL ADOPTION OF AFFIRMATIVE  
ACTION

School	Liberal Official	Urban Riot	Campus Protest	WASP Elite
Early:				
Harvard (1961)	✓			✓
Dartmouth (1962)	✓			
Columbia (1963)	✓			
University of Pennsylvania (1963)	✓			
Brown (1964)	✓			
Cornell (1964)	✓			
UCLA (1964)	✓			
University of Michigan (1964)	✓			
Swarthmore (1964)	✓			
Wesleyan (1964)	✓			
Northwestern (1965)	✓			
Late:				
Princeton (1965)		✓		✓
Yale (1965)	✓	✓		✓
University of California, Berkeley (1966)	✓	✓		
Amherst (1968)				✓
University of Washington (1968)	✓		✓	
Williams (1969)			✓	✓

APPENDIX A  
SCHOOL NEWSPAPERS EXAMINED, 1960-1980

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*The Amherst Student*, Amherst College  
*The Brown Daily Herald*, Brown University  
*The Columbia Daily Spectator*, Columbia University  
*The Cornell Daily Sun*, Cornell University  
*The Dartmouth*, Dartmouth College  
*The Daily Bruin*, University of California, Los Angeles  
*The Daily Californian*, University of California, Berkeley  
*The Daily Northwestern*, Northwestern University  
*The Daily Pennsylvanian*, University of Pennsylvania  
*The Michigan Daily*, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor  
*The Swarthmore Phoenix*, Swarthmore College  
*The Daily*, University of Washington  
*The Wesleyan Argus*, Wesleyan Argus  
*The Williams Record*, Williams College

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## APPENDIX B

## THE INITIAL ADOPTION OF “HARD” AFFIRMATIVE ACTION FOR SELECTED U.S. COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, 1961-1969

Year	School	Description and Source
1961	Harvard	Harvard’s incoming director of admissions, Fred Glimp, decides to seek greater social and racial diversity and to “give less weight to the so-called objective factors (rank in class and test scores)” (Admission and Scholarship Committee,” Report on the Admission and Scholarship Committee,” 1960-1961, p. 197, quoted in Karabel 2005a, p. 401; Puttkammer 1962, p. 19)
1962	Dartmouth	Dartmouth begins a number of outreach programs, notably led by the Dartmouth Christian Union as well as CPEO ( <u>The Dartmouth</u> , May 21, 1963; <u>The Dartmouth</u> , November 20, 1963). For students recruited through these programs and mechanisms, “most of the selection criteria used for normal applicants are not applicable.” Dartmouth instead looks for other evidence that the student would have “a reasonable chance of being able to cope with Dartmouth’s academic rigor” (Dartmouth Christian Union Papers. November 6, 1963; Papers of Erroll G. Hill, December 1968, p. 8)
1963	Pennsylvania	Penn joins with the other Ivies in recruiting black students through CPEO and NSSFNS. Of applicants recruited through such channels, Dean of Admissions, William G. Owen, acknowledges that the “admission office will judge the applicant on his potential ability to maintain satisfactory scholarship at the University rather than on the courses lists in his secondary high school record” ( <u>Daily Pennsylvanian</u> , February 26, 1963).
1963	Columbia	Columbia begins to recruit black students aggressively in the early 1960s. In 1963, Dean Henry S. Coleman acknowledges that Columbia does not hold some black students to the same standards on their College Board Scores, even though it does not admit anyone who would clearly “be over his head” ( <u>Columbia Spectator</u> , October 15, 1963).
1964	Michigan	The Opportunity Awards Program targeting Detroit youth (University of Michigan News Service, March 4, 1964) is established. It arises after year-long discussions about how to include “deprived” students whose academic “preparation does not permit them to be competitive initially” (University of Michigan, Harlan Henthorne Hatcher Papers, September 30, 1963).
1964	UCLA	The Educational Opportunities Program is established by the administration for “environmentally and economically disadvantaged young people.” It is a “compensatory educational effort” (UCLA Office of the Chancellor—Administrative Subject Files of Franklin D. Murphy, 1935-1971, June 30, 1965).
1964	Cornell	The Committee on Special Educational Projects (COSEP) implements a program for the recruitment, admission, and training of “culturally disadvantaged students” and becomes responsible for the admission of black students. Students admitted under COSEP could be admitted “without reference to any specific requirements for admission.” However, “[b]y the time he graduates, he will have the same qualifications as anyone else with a degree” ( <u>Cornell Daily Sun</u> , January 20, 1964).
1964	Swarthmore	Dean of Admissions John Hoy aggressively begins to recruit black students in the early 1960s. In the spring of 1964, Swarthmore receives a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, of \$275,000, to recruit, support, and fund African American “and other culturally disadvantaged” applicants to the college (geared primarily toward African American students) ( <u>Swarthmore Phoenix</u> , April 14, 1964).
1964	Wesleyan	Wesleyan hires Admissions Director John Hoy from Swarthmore. The following year, in 1965, Wesleyan admits the

- Vanguard Class after a recruiting surge. In an article in the Wesleyan University Alumnus in May 1965, Hoy notes that 60 students “from deprived backgrounds,” most of whom were African American, had applied and 30 had been admitted in April 1965, up very substantially from previous years. Hoy notes that the test scores of these students were generally lower than others admitted to Wesleyan: “[M]ost most had modest scores. However, the spunk and motivation were there” (Wesleyan University, Subject Files, May 1965, pp. 8-9).
- 1964 Brown In the early 1960s, Brown begins aggressively recruiting African Americans. In 1964, the Director of Admissions, Charles V. Doebler, writes that some degree of “special consideration” is given to African Americans, but “no student is admitted if it is absolutely clear that he has no chance for success at Brown (Doebler, n.d., pp. 1-2).
- 1965 Northwestern Northwestern begins a small recruitment program called Northwestern University’s Chicago Action Project. This program recruits “disadvantaged,” mainly African American, students from predominantly minority high schools in Chicago. According to a grant proposal for the project: “Under the conventional admission requirements of the University few of these students would qualify for entrance” (Northwestern University, Subject Files, n.d., p. 2).
- 1965 Yale The admissions office adopts a new flexibility in its admission criteria and begins to “seriously consider the possibility that SAT scores [especially for African Americans] might reflect cultural deprivation rather than lack of intelligence” (Karabel 2005a, p. 384).
- 1965 Princeton The Admissions Committee begins giving black applicants additional consideration in admissions “by giving them a special category (and round in the admissions process)” (Karabel 2005a, p. 394).
- 1966 Berkeley Berkeley establishes the Educational Opportunity Program, which seeks to “increase the minority and low-income population” on campus (Daily Californian Weekly Magazine, October 3, 1967, p. 1). Sixty percent of the students do not satisfy Berkeley’s admissions requirements (Langlois 1967).
- 1968 Amherst Amherst steps up recruiting efforts (Amherst Student, April 15, 1968). President Eugene S. Wilson later notes that “black students have been favored above all other groups” (Amherst Student, March 9, 1970).
- 1968 Washington After the assassination of Dr. King, Washington establishes the Special Education Program (SEP), which is meant to “increase the number of minority students from ethnic groups have a substantial disadvantage in our society” (University of Washington Office of Minority Affairs, December 3, 1968; University of Washington Office of Minority Affairs, September 1971). This program uses a separate track of admissions (University of Washington Office of Minority Affairs, March 27, 1970).
- 1969 Williams In response to mobilization from the Williams Afro-American Society (WAAS), The admissions committee begins to work with the WAAS on black admissions. Curtis Manns is appointed Assistant Dean and given the special responsibility for admission of African American students (Agreement Reached Between the Provost of the College and the Williams Afro-American Society 1969).

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NOTE.— See main text for description of the criteria by which affirmative action is identified. For some Ivy League schools, it appears that such programs may have been adopted in earlier years, but the primary sources do not contain definitive evidence, and we have chosen to date such programs more conservatively, in later years



When did affirmative action begin? President Franklin D. Roosevelt took the first step in 1941, when he issued a directive forbidding defense contractors from using racially discriminatory hiring practices. President Richard Nixon built on Johnson's legacy in 1969 with the "Philadelphia Order," which set specific goals and timetables for federal contractors to hire shares of minorities reflecting the racial makeup of their local area. State and local governments soon introduced affirmative action programs of their own, as did many colleges, some with great enthusiasm. In 1996, a California referendum banned affirmative action in state employment and university admissions, and seven other states have since taken similar action.