From Black Power to Black Studies

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From Black Power to Black Studies: How a Radical Social Movement Became an Academic Discipline.


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On November 5, 1968, black students at San Francisco State College gave President Robert Smith a list of ten demands. The first demand was that the college immediately create a Department of Black Studies. Other demands included the appointment of Nathan Hare, a Chicago-trained sociologist, as department chair and the reinstatement of George Murray, a Black Panther and student who was suspended from the college for attacking the editor of the student newspaper. A few days later, other students calling themselves the Third World Liberation Front issued similar demands for a School of Ethnic Studies. If the demands were not immediately met, the students would strike to shut down the campus. Although Smith supported black studies and ethnic studies, he would not reinstate Murray or appoint Hare. With that declaration, the Third World Strike started. From November 1968 to March 1969, students fought with administrators until the college’s next president reached an agreement ending the conflict and the first Department of Black Studies was born.

Incidents like the Third World Strike stand out in the popular imagination as black studies’ defining moment. However, protest and black power are only the beginning of the story. Soon after militant students graduated and campuses settled down, black studies entered a new stage in its development as an academic discipline. Writing in the New York University Education Quarterly in 1979, St. Clair Drake asked, “what happened to black studies?” He observed that black studies had moved away from its roots in the black student movement of the late 1960s and begun a new stage in its development:
What black studies were turning out to be was neither what their most youthful, dedicated supporters had envisioned nor what white faculties and administrators had wanted them to accept. The black studies movement was becoming institutionalized in the sense that it had moved from the conflict phase into adjustment to the existing educational system, with some of its values being accepted by that system. One of these was the concept that an ideal university community would be multi-ethnic, with ethnicity permitted some institutional expression, and with black studies being one of its sanctioned forms. A trade-off was involved. Black studies became depoliticized and deradicalized.

Drake’s theme is accommodation and compromise within the system of American higher education. Protest created an opportunity within the university system, but the black studies movement did not completely transform educational institutions. Instead, black students created an arena for the expression of new values within the university system.

At the time Drake wrote the article, much evidence supported his thesis. Fifteen hundred students had been awarded B.A. degrees in black studies; black studies professional organizations had been formed; and there were more than two hundred black studies degree programs nationwide, many of which were interdepartmental programs. The field demonstrated that it was quickly developing the institutional infrastructure normally associated with older academic disciplines.

Black studies’ recent history further confirms the contention that the field has accommodated itself to American academia. For example, at least seven universities now offer doctoral degrees in black studies, surely a sign that the field has found a place in higher education. The assembly of Harvard’s black studies “dream team” in the 1990s confirms that administrators have responded to the values promoted by the black studies movement. The implicit endorsement of black studies by the administration of an elite research university brought the field publicity and legitimacy, enabling black studies to be more fully developed in other research universities. Of course, there also has been much tension and conflict over black studies. Afrocentrists, Nile Valley scholars, and their critics argued fiercely in the 1990s. At Harvard, the tensions between black studies professors and the administration erupted into the national media. Yet, these incidents reinforce the basic point: critics focus on black studies precisely because it is located in highly prestigious universities.

Black studies programs occupy an ambiguous position in the academy. On
the one hand, the discipline is highly visible and well established in America’s most prestigious institutions of higher learning. Multiculturalists interpret the emergence of black studies as the first step in a racial diversification of the academy. From their perspective, black studies was the discipline emerging from the 1960s that encouraged women, Latinos, Native Americans, and Asian Americans to push for their own disciplines. Black studies was literally the vanguard of the multiculturalism that is now taken for granted in the academy. Supporters see the field as a necessary corrective to an uncompromising mainstream. For these reasons, black studies programs are regularly covered in black education journals, popular magazines, and major newspapers. These programs have acquired status within their universities, and some of the most reputable American scholars, such as Henry Louis Gates Jr., teach in black studies programs.

On the other hand, there are few black studies programs, and these units are small. Only 9 percent of four-year colleges and universities have a formalized black studies unit offering a curriculum leading to an undergraduate or graduate degree. I estimate that the average black studies program employs only seven professors, many of whom are courtesy or joint appointments with limited involvement in the program. A few programs consist of a single faculty member who organizes cross-listed courses taught by professors with appointments in other departments. The majority of these units do not have graduate programs. The small size and scope of many programs show that the field is not what conservative critics make it out to be—the university’s unconditional surrender to multiculturalists. Rather, black studies is a limited accommodation of new knowledge that emerged from the 1960s, when professors struggled to create a space for black-centered teaching and research.

What This Book Is About

This book’s central question is how black studies achieved this niche in American higher education. My subject is the shift from the realm of politics to educational institutions. This book is an account of how the political fray surrounding black studies (protests, the activists, and their political groups) impacted the educational field of the university (deans, college trustees, program directors, and black studies scholars themselves). The questions I ask address the institutionalization of social change. How did a radical social movement turn into a stable academic discipline? Why do black studies programs
exist in some universities and not others? What conditions prevent or facilitate the growth of black studies after a program is established? How was the black studies profession created from other academic disciplines?

My contention is that the growth of black studies programs can be fruitfully viewed as a bureaucratic response to a social movement. Black studies’ success as an academic discipline depends not only on the actions of students and faculty members, but also on administrators’ choices. Students and faculty members have to navigate the political and bureaucratic environment of universities in order to help programs survive in the long run.

This perspective on black studies’ history suggests that attention be paid both to the mobilization surrounding black studies and to the bureaucratic decisions following protest. Accordingly, I view black studies’ growth as occurring in stages corresponding to early attempts to force the adoption of black studies and later efforts to stabilize and defend black studies programs. Each stage presented black studies advocates with different obstacles and raises distinct sociological questions.

The earliest stage was a preconflict stage, when college students and African American intellectuals criticized universities and promoted the idea of a college major organized around African and African American topics. The invention of black studies was followed by conflict between students and college administrators, perhaps the best-known part of the story. Between 1966 and 1973, black studies was a pressing issue on college campuses as a direct result of the civil rights movement, a rise in nationalist sentiment, and student mobilization. Groups such as the Black Panthers and chapters of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) became prominent features on campuses and were at the front of the black studies movement. Students formed black student unions that carried out strikes, protests, and riots at dozens, possibly hundreds, of campuses. The strikes had many goals, and the creation of a Black Studies Department was often a key demand. Prominent photographs of college protest from that era, such as the black student takeover of the Cornell Student Union, depict protests carried out by well-organized black student groups.¹¹

What happened to black studies after 1968 is less well known and less understood. Following the strikes, more than 200 black studies units were created.¹² Approximately 120 of those units offer formal black studies degrees today. Programs clung tenaciously to the institutional space opened by the black student movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s. These small programs began an
arduous and never-ending process of stabilization. Program directors dealt with problems that any academic manager would face—the need to justify the program’s existence, the continuous search for qualified faculty and talented students, and yearly budget disputes. Program chairs also faced problems specific to black studies. Black studies departments were thought to have a special obligation to black students on campus and to the communities they served. The tension between service and the traditional academic goal of research was a difficulty with which many programs still cope.

The key difference between the earlier stages of conflict and later stages of stabilization was black studies’ new context. The earlier stage was mainly about mobilization and direct action. People were willing to listen to students because of a wider historical shift in race relations. Not only were African Americans demanding the same rights as whites, some African Americans were demanding power to control educational institutions. The push for black studies revolved around black intellectuals, student groups, and the debates within the civil rights movement concerning black power and cultural nationalism. Viewing the civil rights movement as a limited and underwhelming effort, nationalists adopted a more radical position, demanding the creation of institutions specifically dedicated to serving the African American community.

Nationalists framed their demands within an American tradition of pluralism, ethnic pride, and self-determination. Like immigrant groups, blacks wanted to build their own institutions so they could participate more fully in American society. Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton made this argument in their seminal text *Black Power—The Politics of Liberation*: “The concept of Black Power rests on a fundamental premise: *Before a group can enter the open society, it must first close its ranks.* By this, we mean that group solidarity is necessary before a group can effectively form a bargaining position of strength in a pluralistic society. Traditionally, each new ethnic group in this society has found the route to social and political viability through the organization of its own institutions with which to represent its needs within a larger society.”¹³ Much, although not all, of the justification for black studies was framed in similar terms. The African American community needed its own educational institutions for the cultivation of talent and preservation of culture. Because of a long history of neglect by most colleges and universities, African Americans should take the initiative to create their own institutions and knowledge base.

Black studies’ later development was characterized by a focus on legitimacy.
By the mid-1970s, student protest had waned, and black studies’ main problem was no longer its exclusion from higher education. Instead, the field faced issues of institutional survival, which depended on the ability of black studies faculty members and administrators to successfully argue that they were academically legitimate. The participants in this argument were quite different from those who protested in the late 1960s. The debate over the legitimacy of black studies was carried on in faculty meetings, conferences with deans, and the boardrooms of nonprofits that supported black studies programs.

Writings on the development of black studies programs suggest that black studies had acquired some degree of legitimacy by the early 1980s. Darlene Clark Hine, then professor of history at Michigan State University, noted the increasing legitimacy of black studies in a Ford Foundation report. Early in black studies’ history, administrators opposed black studies programs because they believed such programs lowered academic standards. By the time she interviewed administrators in the mid-1980s, Hine found that the field’s legitimacy had increased because there was now a pool of qualified scholars:

The tide has turned, there has been a discernible shift among college administrators from amused contempt or indifference to enthusiastic support of Black Studies. Now administrators are eager to improve the quality of their programs and departments. One important factor has been the availability of productive, well-trained scholars willing, indeed anxious, to head and/or work in Black Studies. No longer do administrators have to rely on the local minister or community activist to oversee and teach Black Studies. If they put up the money, administrators can recruit black scholars.

Hine then argues that there is also an element of political expediency in black studies’ new legitimacy. “Another motivation fueling the change in attitude toward Black Studies is institutional expediency. Faced with the specter of declining black student enrollments, university administrators are increasingly using strong Black Studies departments, programs, centers and institutes as recruitment devices. Moreover, as is often the case, the only critical mass of black faculty working at many of these institutions is housed in Black Studies divisions.” Hine observes that ethnic studies programs are the only source of faculty racial diversity on many campuses. This claim can be hard to assess because there are few comprehensive sources of data on the ethnic composition of the professoriat in the 1970s and 1980s. But it bears noting that black studies professors tend to hold joint appointments with other programs (see...
chapter 6), which suggests that programs might be assembled mostly from faculty who already work at the university. Regardless of the accuracy of Hine’s comments, the basic point remains. For a variety of reasons, black studies programs have become an accepted and legitimate feature of many universities.

How Movements Impact Bureaucracies

This book’s theoretical goal is to develop a theory of how social movements, such as the black studies movement, initiate change in organizations and solidify their gains. Not only do I seek to understand black studies’ history, but I am also interested in how individuals challenge bureaucracies and force them to change. How did a fiery reform movement adjust to institutions of higher education? What does that tell us about how organizations respond to conflict, co-opt challengers, and absorb change? What does the durability of black studies as an academic field tell us about the durability of social change more generally?

This book is a response to recent developments in the sociological analysis of political movements and bureaucracies. Social movement scholars often focus on mobilization processes. For example, much research describes how groups come to view a given situation as problematic, recruit others to their cause, and choose to fight their opponents. This literature is characterized by theories of recruitment, tactics, resource mobilization, repression, and more recently, studies of problem framing, rhetoric, and emotional response to political problems. Movement scholars have concluded that more needs to be said about the consequences and outcomes of a social movement.¹⁶ Compared to the voluminous research on mobilization, the literature on outcomes has yet to mature to a comparable level.

Social movement researchers argue that the study of movement outcomes should address the following points.¹⁷ First, movements generate different types of outcomes, which require that one specify the outcome to be discussed. Contentious political behavior might result in outcomes as varied as electoral victories, legislation, new public attitudes, policy change, or the creation of new institutions. The type of movement outcome also depends on the target. An important recent finding is that social movements, such as the black studies movement, frequently have nonstate targets, such as private schools or for-profit firms, and demand policy changes in these institutions.¹⁸ This book examines a movement that targeted the field of universities and sought a very
specific kind of organizational change: the Department of Black Studies. The outcome analyzed is the collection of academic programs that comprise black studies as an academic area.

Second, movement scholars have argued that more attention should be paid to movement targets. One must develop a theory of how a targeted person or organization will respond to political challenges. Generally speaking, movement scholars do not have a well-developed theory of how targets respond to movement actions. Only in recent years have movement scholars asked why it is that some targets (individuals, legislatures, corporations) are particularly responsive to social movements. Sociologist and educational researcher Amy Binder raises this point in her study of how curricular reform movements introduce demands for change: “We [social scientists] are even less prepared to know why subject bureaucracies (the organizations being challenged) respond positively or negatively to their challenger’s demands, how they deliver certain victories or defeats, or about their ability to accommodate Afrocentrists’ and creationists’ claims.”

This book addresses that gap by studying the adoption of black studies programs (chapter 6) and how black students mobilized within universities (chapters 2 and 3). Through multiple case studies and statistical analysis, I can describe when universities are likely to respond to the demand for black studies.

Third, any movement-outcome analysis should consider the durability of a movement outcome. Mobilization is only the beginning of the story. The analyst must pay attention to the processes that stabilize or erode a movement’s achievements. Rupp and Taylor make a similar point in their book about the feminist movement in the mid-twentieth century. Between the suffrage movement of the early 1900s and the 1970s women’s rights movement, feminists worked to maintain the movement by building a community that would sustain interest among participants and promote identification with the movement’s accomplishments. This book complements Rupp and Taylor’s analysis. Rather than focus on what activists do to sustain a movement, I look at how organizations targeted by the movement support the movement’s achievements.

The black studies movement is an example of a social movement targeting bureaucracies. The evolution of this academic community offers an opportunity to explore how movement activists challenge organizations and how managers respond. The short- and long-term success of the movement depends on college administrators as much as students and activists. As a social movement outcome that has endured for almost forty years, black studies programs call
attention to the conflicts and interactions that stabilize and promote movement outcomes in general.

While social movement research motivates my research questions, I turn to organization theory for answers because black studies emerged most forcefully within universities.²² Broadly speaking, organizational sociologists tend to explain structural change (such as a new black studies program) in terms of an organization’s internal dynamics or its political-legal environment.²³ Those who view change as the outcome of internal processes suggest that change is adaptive, that is, people within the organization tend to see change as a response to problems, such as disruptive student protesters. Therefore, it is important to consider an organization’s culture, resources, and structure when discussing an organization’s ability to respond to problems. This internal perspective draws attention to the effects of university budgets and administrative actions on the ability to create and support black studies.

The other approach to organizational change emphasizes the social environment. In other words, organizations change because they are forced to by outsiders (such as the government) or in response to social trends. Management fads are the best example of this.²⁴ Managers adopt new business strategies only because others do so. In the eyes of some organizational theorists, the environment is of utmost importance because an organization’s ability to accomplish its goals depends on the legitimacy it derives from the state, accreditation agencies, other organizations, and influential elites.²⁵ From this point of view, black studies’ survival and growth should depend on how professors and program chairs deal with the elites who confer legitimacy to their academic programs.

Theories of organizational change suggest that social movements do two things. First, they disrupt the normal state of affairs within the organization and start the process of responding to what the movement demands. Political activists persuade workers and clients that they should have different interests.²⁶ Organizational participants will demand policies in line with their grievances. This challenge is a renegotiation of the organization’s existing political order. The ability of an organization to accommodate change will depend on resources, culture, and decision-making processes. Even if administrators agree with activists, they might lack the bureaucratic skills to make change happen or make the policy permanent.²⁷

Second, social movements change the political-legal environment of the organization. Movements introduce new ideas in the hope that they will become
widely accepted. They reframe old arguments and make ethical appeals. For example, the civil rights movement spent much effort persuading others that segregation should be immediately ended. Women’s rights proponents urged that men and women be treated equally in the workplace and at home. Prolife activists try to communicate their view about human reproduction to the general public. New ideas and policy proposals can be adopted by the elites who have the power and money to encourage change in organizations.

This book draws from both approaches to organizational change. A great deal of attention is given to activists, administrators, and the daily activities of the university. Budgets, administrative decisions, and protest tactics are all considered important. The book also takes seriously the political environment created by the civil rights movement and cultural nationalism. By changing race relations in America, these political movements made it possible for black students to enter the university in larger numbers, the crucial factor leading to black studies programs. These changes in American politics also changed racial discourse. Before the 1960s, it would have been difficult for anyone to effectively demand an academic unit dedicated solely to black culture. Civil rights struggles expanded the range of what was an acceptable educational proposal. The push for black studies required not only protest at the university but also a broader shift in how educators and academics thought about black higher education.

From Movement to Discipline

This section outlines my argument about how social movements impact organizations and its application to the evolution of black studies. The story begins when movements form, confront organizations, such as universities, and make claims on these organizations for new policies. Black students demand new courses, faculty appointments, and the creation of instructional units. Movement participants feel that confrontation is the only option or that it is a particularly strategic option. Movement leaders have expended a great deal of effort in diagnosing a problem and constructing a framework that points to collective action as a remedy. Actors are dissatisfied with the larger cultural order and demand changes in existing institutions. In the case of black studies, students and intellectuals feel that educational institutions are too recalcitrant. Colleges and universities cannot be trusted to introduce reforms
on their own, or they will co-opt any reforms. Black student activists believe that institutions of higher education need to be pushed.

After movement participants develop a cognitive framework that identifies political problems, they generate alternatives to existing institutions by creating new organizational forms and demanding change in existing organizations. This is a natural outcome of political disputes. Management researchers have often found that low political consensus in an organizational field is associated with the flourishing of multiple organizational forms.³¹ When movement participants conflict with existing organizations, they have the opportunity to change an organization’s agenda, alter the organization’s structure, or introduce a new organizational form. The proposals emanating from a movement reflect the variety of interests within a movement. In some cases, movements will duplicate existing organizational forms in an attempt to bolster their legitimacy by association with the mainstream. For example, sociologist Elizabeth Armstrong documents how homosexual rights groups, for a time, attempted to improve homosexuals’ public image by creating groups imitating mainstream organizations.³² In other cases, movements explicitly reject existing organizational forms so they can create new ones or demand substantial changes in existing bureaucracies. Because movements are composed of groups with differing goals and ideologies, the interaction between a movement and an organizational field results in a primordial soup of new ideas and organizational structures, from which future institutions will be built. In chapters 2 and 5, I describe some of the alternatives to the predominantly white university that were proposed by black nationalists, such as departments of black studies and black think tanks.

Movement participants will then use a variety of tactics to create opportunities for change. A voluminous literature describes the diffusion, employment, and efficacy of movement repertoire.³³ Successful protest can disrupt existing institutions and create opportunities for new organizational forms. Black students were more than willing to use the methods of the civil rights movement for their own agenda. The early days of black studies were filled with sit-ins, rallies, demonstrations, and occasional violence. These actions forced administrators to pay attention to student demands, which led to new programs.

Then, there will be competition among new organizational forms.³⁴ Early in black studies’ history, there were calls for all kinds of new organizations: black
studies colleges, interdisciplinary black studies programs, degree-granting departments, and research centers. One scholar even called for the “black university,” which would remedy the failings of the traditional historically black college.\textsuperscript{35}

The varied processes behind the success of some new organizational forms (departments of black studies) over others (the black university) are explored in detail in the rest of the book. In some cases, the success of a new form is due to the superior tactics employed by its advocates. For example, William Gamson famously argued that the strategic use of disruptive tactics contributes to movement success, which implies that violence might help establish some organizational forms.\textsuperscript{36} In chapter 6, in an analysis of how the use of nondisruptive tactics increases the chance that a university will create a black studies degree program, I show that student tactics mattered.

Some organizational forms will be inherently unstable. Social movement researcher Francesca Polletta’s recent study of highly democratic movement groups suggests that groups built on consensus might not be durable because attaining a high degree of in-group agreement is a difficult and time-consuming task and the demands of participatory democracy might conflict with identity driven interests. In other cases, organizational forms might be stable but are incompatible with the interests of incumbents or seem illegitimate to a wider public. Therefore, one would expect a movement’s demands to be accepted when they are compatible with elite interests or cultural values. Hanspeter Kriesi and Dominique Wisler also raise this point. Movements can trigger institutional reform when new policies and, by implication, new organizational forms resonate with existing political culture. This argument is also made by Amy Binder, who has studied how movements change school districts and their curricula by developing proposals compatible with internal organizational culture.\textsuperscript{37} The importance of legitimacy and elite interest as a factor behind the survival of black studies programs appears throughout this text.

Other factors contribute to the institutionalization of a movement’s demands. A new organizational form might survive because others can ascribe their interests to it. In the opening sections of this chapter, I describe how administrators tolerated black studies because these programs satisfied the need to diversify the professoriat. In contrast, black students defended these programs because they were seen as supporting the black community. Other researchers have noted this as well. John David Skrentny’s discussion of civil rights and affirmative action policies shows how different actors attach their
own meanings to a new state policy. According to Skrentny, one reason that affirmative action policies have survived is because they could be used by Democratic and Republican administrations to build coalitions and manage critics. A related factor is plasticity. When movement participants and decision makers can modify an organizational model to suit their interests, the organizational form is more likely to survive.³⁸

It is also important to remember that sequencing plays an important role. Movements often have a clearly delineated life cycle, that is, movements often have peaks of popularity and effectiveness.³⁹ Any organizational form that comes too early or too late might have great difficulty becoming established. A proposal for change might seem out of place before people have accepted the need for change. Indeed, there were various proposals for organized black scholarship, but without the urgency of the 1960s, these proposals did not result in widespread institutional change within universities (see chapter 2). Similarly, a proposal for change might fail simply because it was created late in the process of change; earlier forms might quickly institutionalize, making it harder for later forms to dislodge them.

Given this view on how movements have their proposals assimilated into mainstream institutions, this book situates black studies programs within the context of the civil rights and black nationalist movements. As an educational unit that adopted traditional modes of academic organization, black studies degree programs were inherently stable and could draw resources from the university. In chapters 4 and 5, I argue that black studies programs survived when they resonated with the culture of higher education. Other forms of black studies—such as “inner-city studies” or nationalist black studies—failed because they were incompatible with the beliefs about what constituted legitimate teaching and research. Throughout this book, one also sees instances of how black studies benefited from being multivalent and malleable, often combining with African studies, Caribbean studies, or other forms of ethnic studies.

Once a new organizational form, such as a Department of Black Studies, gains a foothold, durability often depends on the ability to become well integrated with other institutions. By taking advantage of the practices that stabilize any organization, social change can outlast the movement that created it. Therefore, it is important to focus on how workers within an organization establish and defend new institutions. Once conflict subsides and a new political order has emerged within an organization, managers, workers, and other organizational participants decide how to manage new units and complete
tasks. The period following mobilization and conflict is one in which managers and workers must create the unit and embed it within existing organizations.

The choices regarding the construction management of an organizational form will have consequences for the survival of a movement outcome because rules create opportunities for supporting or undermining a movement outcome. The rules regarding personnel, budgets, and authority all create opportunities for deinstitutionalization or retrenchment. Mark A. Covaleski and Mark W. Dirsmith, for example, show that changes in university budgeting rules at the University of Wisconsin gave state legislators and the governor an opportunity to attack certain academic programs and university research projects.\(^40\)

Within the context of black studies’ development, professors and program chairs must learn to survive within the university environment and use it to their advantage. They face decisions about hiring faculty and recruiting students. They must decide whether to pursue departmental status or to become an interdisciplinary program. Rules for governing a program must be developed and implemented. If the rules are poorly designed or the program does not have the procedural protections of older departments, then black studies programs can be attacked at crucial points in the university budgeting process and personnel decisions. A movement’s proponents must skillfully operate within the bureaucratic environment or risk losing what has been gained.

Outsiders also can stabilize movement outcomes. An important insight from the new institutional school of sociology is that organizations are highly dependent on outsiders for legitimacy and money.\(^41\) Educational institutions, like universities, are constantly interacting with wealthy donors, accreditation agencies, and others who wish to support particular types of social change. The same things that make an instance of institutional change, like a black studies program, attractive to insiders might also make it appealing to outsiders. The ultimate impact of a social movement on an organization may be affected by how outsiders support change within the organization.

Finally, an occupational group forms. After the protest subsides, individuals work in the units created by a movement and form a professional identity. The existence of an occupational group attached to a movement’s outcome is an important indicator of movement durability. An occupational group develops an identity based on its emergence from a social movement and its relationship to other occupational groups. The group recruits from other occupations and begins to develop its own internal work rules and prestige hierarchies. Fur-
thermore, the occupational group must adjust itself to its bureaucratic environment. No longer can the group’s identity be based solely in the politics of challenge. The degree to which an occupational group finds a niche in the system of professions and occupations is an informative measure of the impact that a movement has had, and how far a group must move from its origins in protest to ensure survival.

The importance of occupational groups as a movement outcome is well illustrated by black studies programs. Soon after the establishment of these programs, academics assumed the role of black studies professor and created professional organizations such as the National Council for Black Studies. Individuals who seek to develop their academic reputations as black studies professors must learn to create reputations consistent with academic culture, which has its own career ladders and forms of professional validation. In the final empirical chapter of this book, I discuss what the profession of black studies looks like today and how it is built on existing academic disciplines. Rather than becoming an academic community disconnected from traditional academia, black studies is a thoroughly institutionalized community, with strong connections to the existing humanities and social sciences.

This model of movement-induced organizational change, which is summarized in Table 1.1, describes how political mobilization interrupts an existing political order and creates opportunities for new institutions, such as the black studies major, that embody new values. However, it is by no means certain that these institutions will continue to exist. Abstract ideals must be converted into routine practices, which may be well designed or poorly conceived. The rules governing an institution might invite further conflict or, conversely, lead to a movement’s outcomes becoming accepted as a “normal” aspect of an organization.

The degree to which a movement’s outcomes are an acceptable and routine feature of an organization depends on how much a movement and its allies can work within the moral and legal framework governing the organization. If the people who occupy an institutional space created by a movement will not accept the organization’s governing framework or do not possess the skill to maneuver within this context, then the institutional space is at risk. Thus, the pressing issue for this book is how black studies’ allies adjusted to the demands of the academy.
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**Table 1.1. A model of how movements change bureaucracies**
Situating the Argument

This research builds on the work of those who seek to understand black studies as an educational institution, social movement, and organizational phenomenon. My contribution to this diverse body of literature is to provide a generic theoretical framework linking mobilization processes with institutionalization and testing the theory with evidence culled from black studies’ history. This examination addresses gaps in the social history of black nationalism, research on the organization of black studies programs, and the sociology of race and educational institutions.

Earlier writings on black studies’ evolution tend to fall into three categories. First, there are historical treatments of the black power movement such as Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar’s Black Power, William van Deburg’s New Day in Babylon, and Donna Murch’s dissertation on the roots of the Black Panther Party in Oakland community politics and California educational institutions. These books are historical overviews of black nationalist politics that address student movements of the 1960s and early 1970s. Not surprisingly, black studies is a frequent concern among these historians. Some inquiries, such as Wayne Glasker’s history of black student unrest at the University of Pennsylvania and Joy Williamson’s treatment of the black power movement at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, focus exclusively on student politics. These studies are extremely valuable social histories that enrich our understanding of black nationalist politics, but they do not present a systematic theory of black power’s long-term impact on prominent organizations like universities. They focus on the sources of black nationalism as a movement and its cultural impact, or they describe in rich detail the manifestation of black power politics on particular campuses. In general, it is not the goal of these studies to provide a general theory of how a movement might trigger lengthy processes of institutional change.

Second, there is a genre of books and articles written about the organization, history, and operation of black studies programs. Three recent anthologies define this genre: The African American Studies Reader, edited by Nathaniel Norment; Out of the Revolution, edited by Delores Aldridge and Carlene Young; and the Encyclopedia of Black Studies, edited by Molefi Asante and Ama Mazama. Older studies from the 1970s and 1980s and numerous articles in black studies journals also debate the merits of organizing black studies programs in one way or another and describe how these programs are accepted in univer-
sities. For example, Nicholas Aaron Ford’s 1973 book *Black Studies: Threat or Challenge* discussed the different ways that one might organize black studies. Education scholar Charles A. Frye wrote a similar study of how university professors view black studies programs. Various black studies associations also issued periodic reports until the 1980s, summarizing the state of the field. These reports often contained statistical profiles of the field based on surveys completed by department chairs.

These books cover a wide range of topics and offer numerous perspectives on the organization and evolution of black studies programs, but they do not provide extensive discussions of how black studies evolved as an educational institution. Introductory black studies textbooks, like those written by Maulana Karenga and Abdul Alkalimat, observe that black studies has passed through various phases of institutionalization. These authors justifiably limit the discussion because they wish to focus on substantial issues of black history and culture, such as the Harlem renaissance or the history of slavery. In other cases, the discussion of black studies as an institution focuses on the field’s origins and says little about the field’s long-term development or institutional structure. Yet other texts analyze black studies from a normative perspective. They describe what black studies programs should be doing, rather than their actual bureaucratic development. This literature also provides brief case studies of specific programs and personal recollections of what occurred at particular colleges.

There are exceptions to these general tendencies and prognoses of the field. For example, Carlene Young wrote an essay titled “The Academy as an Institution: Bureaucracy and African-American Studies,” which argues that success within the academy means understanding how African American studies scholars can satisfy bureaucratic imperatives. There are also two articles in sociological journals, written by Mario Small and Jo Ann Cunningham, that use case studies to understand how black studies programs withstand bureaucratic attack. These two studies show that interdisciplinary organization and the development of intellectual niches help programs survive. My contribution to this literature is to build on these explanations to more fully elaborate the possible paths that black studies programs can take and the broader social forces that shape entire disciplines.

Third, there are sociological monographs and journal articles dealing with educational politics and race that touch on black studies. These would include Amy Binder’s *Contentious Curricula* and David Yamane’s *Student Movements*
for Multiculturalism. These books focus on how an academic reform movement began or its immediate impact on a school or college. For example, Yamane’s book examines the adoption of new courses. Binder’s book is a comparison of Afrocentric and creationist reform movements at the primary and secondary levels.48

Studies in this tradition look at the immediate aftermath of mobilization and do not explain how bureaucratic processes support social change in the long term. For example, Yamane’s book focuses on the adoption of new multicultural courses in response to student protest at the University of California and the University of Wisconsin. Once the student protesters went away, why did hostile administrators not co-opt the courses for their own ends or eliminate them? What kinds of professors taught these courses? What factors erode or support institutional change? How do administrators reinforce or undermine social change? Yamane focuses on the adoption of an innovation, not long-term institutional outcomes. Similarly, Binder’s discussion of curricular reform movements focuses primarily on the immediate impact of Afrocentric and creationist challenges on school districts. Binder leaves open the question of how curricular changes are institutionalized in the long run and how the school districts themselves perpetuate the movement’s demands. My goal is to extend the story of innovation and the immediate response to conflict to show how mobilization sets the stage for long-term institutional survival.

The Remainder of the Book

Black studies’ transformation from radical project to institutionalized expression of racial difference is the subject of this book. In the chapters that follow, I unpack some key episodes in black studies’ evolution to uncover the processes that allowed black studies to move from revolutionary action to stable academic enterprise.

Chapter 2 discusses social trends in the 1960s that made black studies possible: university desegregation, the rise of nationalist groups, and disillusionment with the civil rights movement. Social movement theorists would label these trends framing and mobilization processes. Disillusionment with the civil rights movement prompted activists to believe that mainstream institutions were too resistant to change without more radical steps being taken. The framework for understanding race relations in the late 1960s suggested to activists that new institutions needed to be created. At the same time, formal groups, like the Black Panthers, were created to promote black power. These
groups were a crucial resource for black students, who were admitted to predominantly white campuses in large numbers for the first time. Black students, who often agreed that reform of the college curriculum was not enough, used nationalist groups as launching pads in the struggle for black studies.

Chapter 3 examines the Third World Strike at San Francisco State College in detail because it is the event that set the black studies movement in motion. For many scholars, the Third World Strike is the origin of black studies as a formal institution. It was the first time that students staged a massive campaign to shut down a campus so that its leadership would approve the creation of a Department of Black Studies. I examine the strike not only for its historical interest, but also as an instance of how a social movement creates institutional alternatives and interacts with a targeted organization’s leadership. Students of organizational conflict will find my account of interest because of the attention given to the administrators who managed the college during the conflict. What is striking is the marked contrast between the two men who led the college. Unlike his predecessor, Robert Smith, S. I. Hayakawa, who was college president during most of the strike, ended the conflict on terms he found acceptable. Robert Smith had been completely unable to cope with the strike, which led to his resignation. How an unpopular leader like Hayakawa managed to prevail in a difficult situation is an engaging story that sheds light on how administrators manipulate their environment to gain leverage over protestors.

Chapter 4 discusses how students, professors, and administrators within the universities attacked and defended black studies departments and programs. The chapter discusses the evolution of formal black studies programs in three American research universities—the University of Illinois at Chicago, the University of Chicago, and Harvard University. The purpose is to understand the growth and decline of black studies programs by comparing three academic units that were all founded in response to student unrest but varied greatly in their long-term success. The factors encouraging outcome durability are in evidence in these case studies: organized students push black studies on the university agenda; resonance with academic tradition helps programs; programs are altered and reinterpreted by proponents; savvy insiders know how to steer proposals through committees; and institutional rules undermine some programs while protecting others. The goal is to see durable institutional change as the outcome of a delicate combination of bureaucratic processes.

Chapter 5 approaches the growth of black studies from a different perspective. The book switches from looking at the internal workings of universities
to examining the university’s social environment. I study the role of philanthropies in supporting academic programs. Chapter 5 looks at why a large philanthropic organization, the Ford Foundation, chose to support black studies programs and some of the effects of that sponsorship. The chapter advances the thesis that the Ford Foundation developed a strategy of limited support for black studies focusing on research universities and, for a limited time, historically black colleges. The ultimate purpose was to encourage black studies programs across the country to emulate sponsored model programs. In the end, I argue, the foundation’s support was too episodic and inconsistent to have an impact across an entire discipline, although grants did help programs through difficult early years. The ability of an organized philanthropy, like the Ford Foundation, to channel or otherwise manipulate social change is mitigated by the fluctuating attention within the foundation and the grantees’ changing institutional needs.

Chapter 6 takes a bird’s-eye view of black studies. Instead of looking at a single program or university, I examine the entire population of degree programs and the professors who work in these programs. I answer a number of basic questions about black studies degree programs—such as which schools are most likely to establish programs, the effects of student protest on program creation, and the characteristics of the people who hold tenure-track appointments in these programs. This data shows that black studies, as an intellectual community, is highly integrated with related disciplines and has acquired much, although not all, of the institutional trappings of older, more established disciplines. Since black studies’ position in the academy is characterized by open boundaries with other disciplines, I argue that the field is an example of a permanent “interdiscipline,” a highly developed but not completely self-contained intellectual community.

Chapter 7 summarizes the research presented in the book and returns to St. Clair Drake’s observation that black studies programs are an institutionalized space for racial difference. Starting with the finding that black studies programs are mainly a phenomenon of research universities yet maintain an identity distinct from the rest of the academy, I argue that black studies is an example of a “counter center,” a formalized space for oppositional consciousness existing in mainstream institutions. This concept, I argue, can not only help researchers understand the position of black studies programs in universities, but also broaden our understanding of how social movements affect large organizations such as worldwide religions, mass political parties, and the state.