From Jim Crow to diversity: racial formation as institutional logic in the U.S. National Park Service, 1935-2011

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FROM JIM CROW TO DIVERSITY:
RACIAL FORMATION AS INSTITUTIONAL LOGIC
IN THE U.S. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, 1935-2011

by

Rick Caceres-Rodriguez

A Dissertation
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From Jim Crow to Diversity:

Racial Formation as Institutional Logic

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Acknowledgements

The journey that is doctoral education is never traveled alone. The circle of family members, friends, professors, and colleagues makes the journey possible. Throughout my doctoral education I relied on so many people that played – often too many times – a pivotal role in encouraging me to always keep moving forward. When the academic workload seemed overwhelming and balancing my professional career with doctoral education untenable, they were there to keep me focused. To all of you – you know who you are – I will be eternally grateful.

Firstly, I must acknowledge my family, whose unconditional support and encouragement gave a purpose to graduate school. Indeed, I always say that my passion for public service and academia came from my mother, who, as a schoolteacher in a working-class neighborhood, always sought to improve our community by inspiring middle school kids to pursue careers in math and science as a way to better their lives. These images, imprinted onto my psyche, instilled upon me the value of education and creating knowledge. While graduate school took me away from my family, they pushed me to pursue my calling. To my family, and my partner in life, thank you.

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broadened my understanding of theory and exposed me to the work of those whom I seek to emulate.

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Abstract

This study uses the U.S. National Park Service (NPS) as case to study how racial formation in organizations is shaped by the changing institutional logics of race. It draws from the institutional logics perspective to advance theorizing on race in organizations as a multi-level process structured by societal race dynamics. It does so by studying three critical moments in the history of the NPS in which the organization was exposed, and had to respond to, varying logics of race.

In the first critical period, as the NPS began operation in the South, the organization was confronted with the realities of racial segregation that dictated a hierarchy along racial lines. In this period, I document and analyze how racial segregation clashed with the equality logic held by the organizational elite, unraveling a political process of active representation, conflict, and contestation. This section of the study provides a formidable view at how a federal agency grappled with the demands of two diametrically divergent constructs of race and their opposing prescriptions for action.

The second critical period analyzes the emergence of affirmative action as a new institutional logic in a post-Civil Rights Act environment. During this period, organizational members, particularly within the EEO and HR departments, were called to construct and enact an organizational approach to what policies ambiguously referred to as affirmative action. The organization follows suit by putting forth an infrastructure mostly concerned with the lack of representation of minorities within its ranks.

The last period analyzes new organizational dynamics in response to a U.S. society that is demographically diverse. Influential business leaders morphed diversity into the latest management imperative without which organizations lacked competitiveness. Appropriating
these ideas by utilizing business consultants, the NPS began a transitional process of racial
formation that emphasized plurality, reducing the role of race. Because this section of the study
observed a transitional phase, there were counter logics that coexisted and interacted with the
nascent diversity logic.

This study advances existing theorizing on race in organizations in many ways. It presses
for an open system approach in order to account for societal level dynamics and how they shape
organizational phenomena. However, it also shows that organizations are not mere victims, as
they too have a hand in shaping social processes like racial formation. Finally, it adds much more
fluidity (a process of social construction) to the way race manifests in organization, as opposed
to the more static view many theories espouse.
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Chapter I:

Introduction

The study and theorizing of race in organizations have relied predominantly on an individual conception of race, i.e., race is something people “bring” to organizations that, in turn, influences organizational life (Nkomo, 1992). Studies in this stream of research have been focused on discrimination (in hiring, firing, promotions, etc.), the distribution of resources (e.g., access to networks), and the allocation of power (i.e., elite/subordinate relations) (Ibarra, 1993; Pfeffer, 1983; Wharton, 1992). This over-emphasis on the individual limits our ability to study the ways in which race—as a larger social force— informs or influence organizational phenomena. Similarly, when focused on the individual level, it is difficult to analyze changes (e.g., legal framework) that impact the meaning race acquires in organizations.

The idea that organizations are race-neutral (Nkomo, 1992) has long been abandoned. The public discourse leading to the passage of the Civil Rights Act bluntly exposed the realities of racial minorities in organizations, including public institutions (King, 2007). Indeed, the Federal Government adopted and enforced racial segregation throughout its agencies; and promotion, reward, and pay favored whites (King, 1999, 2007). The evidence suggests this racial order persisted from 1890 through the first half of the 20th century, when organized groups against racial discrimination\(^1\) began to exercise greater political influence on public policy and to confront the most egregious forms of discriminatory practices (Kellough, 2003; King, 1999). However, even after the Brown case in 1954, and the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, overt forms of discrimination continued (King, 1999) and became subtle over time (Krysan &

\(^1\) The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was arguably the most visible and effective. See Meier and Bracey (1993).
Lewis, 2004). The racial order of segregation was superseded by new ways of understanding, and responding to the realities of, race in the Federal Government. Those changes are the basis for this study.

This study seeks to analyze organizational dynamics in three critical moments in the history of racial relations in the U.S. National Park Service. The first moment takes place in the Jim Crow era of racial segregation. The second critical moment begins after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the last moment extends from Robert Stanton’s directorship in the late 1990s to 2011 when data collection ceased. These three critical moments were episodes in which institutional forces influenced racial relations and the meaning attached to race within the organization.

The Study

From its founding in 1916, the National Park Service (NPS) operated mainly in the western part of the United States. In 1935, the NPS established Shenandoah National Park and began to operate in the South, in a racial order characterized by segregation, which had been institutionalized by Jim Crow laws (Dailey, 2009). This coincided with the arrival of new leadership to the NPS opposed to racial inequality, which triggered an unprecedented conflict in the organization. What policies were the NPS to enforce in the South where Jim Crow laws were the norm? Were they to adapt to the “new” environment of racial segregation and enforce it within Southern national parks? How were they to respond should African-Americans demand equal access to park facilities? These were fundamental questions the NPS had to tackle strategically and practically in a racially-contested South.

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2The selection process of these critical moments is explained in the methods section.
Jim Crow laws required in the state of Virginia, where Shenandoah National Park was located, that public places, including parks, were segregated by race (Haws, 1978). The immersion in the racial relations of the South prompted a number of organizational dynamics. This episode constitutes the first critical moment of this study.

The first critical moment began when the NPS expanded to the South. Research for this moment relies heavily on archival materials and artifacts (i.e., memoranda, official reports, and letters) that were produced during that historical time and that are preserved in the U.S. National Archives, the NPS’ archives, and Shenandoah National Park archives. Because Shenandoah was the locus of the racial conflict, given its proximity to the North, this study uses Shenandoah’s experience as the unit of analysis. This moment begins approximately in 1935 and extends to mid-1940s.

The next critical moment explored, which extends from mid-1960s to early-1970s, occurred with the establishment of a new legal apparatus following passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the advent of affirmative action. The creation of a new legal framework caused the organization to experience another episode of transformation along racial lines – this time by the institutionalization of non-discrimination practices and Affirmative Action. Furthermore, the founding of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) also restructured the environment in which racial relations were regulated – with a strong regulatory and enforcement arm. For this critical moment, this research relies on historical artifacts (e.g., memoranda, reports), oral histories from the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library, and face-to-face interviews to reconstruct the narrative and organizational dynamics that ensued during this episode.
Finally, the last critical moment explored extends from late-1990s to approximately 2011. During this episode, the organization was influenced by a new set of environmental stimuli coming from the reformulation of race and racial relations in the academic literature of management, the larger political ideology of this epoch, and the appointment of Robert Stanton, first African American to lead the NPS. Research on this last period relies on organizational artifacts (e.g., reports, strategic plans, studies, correspondence) and in-depth interviews with purposively selected individuals from various parts and levels of the organization. This critical moment is also empirically and analytically distinctive because of my involvement in the data production process and deep engagement with organizational members.

This study, primarily, aims to advance theory on the ways in which race—as a socio-historical, institutional logic—manifests in, and is influenced by, organizations. This work follows the tradition of institutional theorists who seek to uncover the processes through which institutional change is accomplished.

Exploring and analyzing the three critical moments provides answers to the driving question of this study: How was racial formation in the NPS shaped by the changing institutional logics of race?
Race in the Organizational Literature

Studies on race in organizations began to acquire prominence in the second half of the 20th century, primarily within social psychology and sociology. Race, during this period, emerged as an important category in organizational life. Prior to this realization, most research was de-racialized or drawn from the White experience – thus overly simplified (Nkomo, 1992). Since most organizations in the United States were formed by White males and management was (and continues to be) predominantly dominated by them, organizations were conceptualized as “race neutral” because Whites were deemed raceless (Minnich, 1990; Nkomo, 1992). Race was, for the most part, conceptualized to signify “the other,” but never the dominant – and taken-for-granted – White experience. Therefore, as Nkomo (Nkomo, 1992, p. 490) lamented, “…instead of race being an analytical category critical to the fundamental understanding of organizations, it [was] marginalized.”

A major social force that triggered examination of race in organizations was the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Cox & Nkomo, 1990), which banned race-based discrimination in employment and several other instances. The law-making process highlighted and amplified the effects of discrimination in organizations. It brought issues of inequality to the surface that, in turn, accentuated the significance and consequences of race not only in society, but also in organizations. Consequently, researchers followed suit by subjecting race to analysis and
scientific inquiry. The main focus of this wave of research was, and continues to be to a certain extent, the causes and consequences of variations in the racial make-up of organizations – and one’s belonging in a racial category – with respect to rewards, recognition, and equal opportunity (Ely, 1994; Ibarra, 1993, 1992; Pfeffer, 1983; Reskin, McBrier & Kmec, 1999; Thomas, 1990; Tomaskovic-Devey, 1993a, 1993b; Tsui, Egan & O’Reilly, 1992; Tsui & O’Reilly, 1989).

As research advanced, the construct of race became much more theoretically sophisticated and nuanced. Social scientists produced a tremendously diverse body of research that documents and explains the various ways in which race is materially significant in organizations. These studies can be divided into two main theoretical categories: social identity and conflict. This division is the product of the psychological and sociological emphasis. Because these two camps have dominated most of our theoretical development of race and racializing in organizations, and given that the purpose of this research is to contribute to theory, this study will focus on this line of research. This section first discusses socio-psychological studies and theories and then provides the sociological critique to psychology. Next, this review will discuss the literature in public administration from a representative bureaucracy theory standpoint and its importance in understanding racial agency in organizations.

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3 Studies prior to the passage of the Civil Rights Act focused on the incorporation and separation of ethnic minorities in the U.S., the nature of ethnic identity, and the impact of ethnicity on life experiences (Nkomo, 1992; Omi & Winant, 1986). For an example, see Park (1950).

4 Racializing refers to the process of creating and attaching racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group (Omi & Winant, 1994).
Theories of Race in Organizations

Social identity theory. Social identity research and theory seeks to explain how individuals classify in-group and out-group members along certain criteria, of which race is one of many categories. Broadly defined, identity is the location of an individual in social space (Gecas, Thomas, & Weigent, 1973, p. 477). It is important, however, to distinguish between personal and social identity. Personal identity specifically refers to “self-descriptions in terms of personal or idiosyncratic attributes such as personality, physical and intellectual traits” (Brown & Turner, 1981, p. 38). On the other hand, social identity refers to “self-definitions in terms of social category memberships such as race, class, nationality, sex, and so on” (Brown & Turner, 1981, p. 38). The process of social identification includes both self-categorization and attachment of value to such categories (Pettigrew, 1986). To further specify the theory, Turner and Giles (1981, p. 24) defined social identity as “an individual knowledge of his or her memberships in social groups together with emotional significance of that knowledge.”

The central aim of researchers on this socio-psychological construct is to understand the various ways in which social identity is experienced and becomes salient in organizations. In other words, what are the behavioral consequences of such a categorization scheme? First, social identity serves as an organizing principle (Wharton, 1992). Having a social identity is analogous to having “a sense of belonging that arranges and orders the various particular roles the individual is called upon to occupy” (Hewitt, 1989, p. 171). Furthermore, social identity influences behavior through individuals’ perception of the social categorical arrangement of those with whom we interact (Hogg & Abrams, 1988, p. 133). Thus, in a social context, individuals prefer and favor in-group members (often the dominant race or class). This, in turn, invariably influences organizational dynamics.
Social identity, therefore, is a construct that lies at the intersection of the individual and the social. It is through social identity that people deploy ascribed structural categories in social interactions (Wharton, 1992). Then, race – as ascriptive category – mediates social relationships to the extent that race becomes salient in such interactions.

The pervasiveness of race in the American context has rendered racial identity (as well as gender) as one of the most prevalent and persistent identity category shaping one’s life in organizations (Hacker, 1992). Indeed, Davidson and Friedman (1998) argued that while race is, of course, not the only social identity category by which people define themselves and others, it is, however, a governing construct by which people are categorized in the U.S culture.

Other theorists of racial identity have proposed a more nuanced understanding on the ways in which race is experienced in organizations. Building upon other sociological theories (e.g., role theory), Stryker and Serpe (1982) pointed out that individuals in an organizational context constitute a repository of multiple, at times conflicting, identity roles. Therefore, rather than understanding race as a “master” identity category, Stryker and Serpe (1982) suggest that we understand it as part of an amalgam of various interlocking identities upon which individuals draw on a contextual basis to inform behavior or make sense of the world. This idea is akin to the concept of identity salience. Such a racial identity saliency should not be seen as an attribute of the individual, but rather as a fluid deployment in social interactions. For instance, to highlight this distinction, Davis (2005) refers to “punctuated racial salience” to denote the contingency or contextual specificity of racial saliency in organizations.

At a macro level, social identity predetermines group mobilization. Wharton (1992), for example, suggests that in order for similarly situated groups to mobilize, create coalitions, and even empathize, social identities must align. This is an extension of the theory, because, in her
conceptualization, social identity also triggers or determines collective action. Scholars in public administration have called this phenomenon “active representation” under the broader representative bureaucracy theory, which will be discussed later. By doing so, this theoretical refinement emphasizes the social, political, and demographic determinants of racial (and ethnic) demarcation (Olzak, 1983; Omi & Winant, 1994).

By highlighting the social and political foundation of social identity in organizations, one begins to conceptualize organizations as the social location in which the meaning and shared understanding of these categories acquire signification, are produced, and transformed (Wharton, 1992). Organizations may not only merely follow socially-inscribed racial conceptualizations, but more importantly, they may also reform, create, or reconstitute their own. Furthermore, given the technological apparatus of today’s society, organizations have the ability of “generating categories that become taken-for-granted within the wider society,” (Wharton, 1992, p. 79) and this, too, applies to public institutions.

Though social identity theory has significant explanatory power at tracing the causes of categorization, the theory, nonetheless, has important shortcomings. Firstly, given its emphasis on the individual, social identity theory tends to ignore the role and influence of the overarching social and political environment within which organizations are situated (Wharton, 1992). This wider environment also possesses profound shared understandings about race and racializing that inform organizationally-specific categorization patterns. Also, social identities, even within seemingly similar groups, differ (Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Markus & Kunda, 1986; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1991; Wong-Rieger & Quintana, 1987). Social identities, then, encompass a plurality of identities and meaning systems, for which we cannot fully account. From this perspective, the sense of homogeneity among similar identities is flawed.
Secondly, social identity theory pays little attention to socio-historical processes. In important respects, the theory operates in an ahistorical space that gives the illusion that racial categorization is the product of atomized agents operating in “real” time. Thus, the socio-historical sphere that makes racializing possible and the conceptual space in which it takes place is minimized. Therefore, not only are categories social constructs, but also the product of a socio-historical process that, when taken into account, gives meaning and understanding to those social categories.

To fill this gap, other theoretical insights have incorporated constructs such as conflict, power, hegemony, authority, and socio-historical processes. These constructs build on social identity theory and are a complement to it.

**Conflict theories of race.** As mentioned above, the second overarching stream of research focuses its attention on the mechanisms by which race is deployed, enacted, and (trans)formed. Inevitably, these approaches see race not only as a social category, but, more importantly, as a process. Under this view, race is always unstable – a social negotiation. Rather than emphasizing race as an ascribed category that enables a particular social identity, this perspective operationalizes race as a cultural artifact constituted of social meanings and significance. As such, race is in constant flux, for the systems of meaning and significance that create it are subject to constant transformations (Omi & Winant, 1994; Loury, 2002; Banton, 1983; Lorber & Farrell, 1990; West & Zimmerman, 1987). By locating race in social interactions, one begins to shift attention from understanding its definitional aspects to examining the processes of constructing and maintaining racial boundaries (Barth, 1969). Omi

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5 Conflict here is used as an umbrella term to refer to those theories that emphasize social interactions and processes. By no means it is meant to signify that conflict is the only, or even predominant, feature of relational action.
and Winant (1992) most persuasively and eloquently laid out a theory of race, which they called *racial formation*, as a processual, interactional social endeavor. Building upon ideas of race as a social construction (Bonilla-Silva, 1997) and cultural production (e.g., Appiah & Gutmann, 1996), Omi and Winant (1994) sought to delineate a theory of race that locates it in a social, economic, political, and historical space that is (trans)formed over time. They refer to this process as *racial trajectory*. By trajectory they specifically mean “…the pattern of conflict and accommodation which takes shape over time between racially based social movements and the policies and programs of the state” (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 2). In this perspective, then, organizations – and perhaps even more so government institutions – are inherently racial. Organizations cannot escape the racial formation and trajectory of their time; they are both racially structured and structuring (Omi & Winant, 1994). Applied to organization studies, racial formation theory helps us to understand the dynamics and constant dislocations between the racial-social order (its overarching social ideology) and organizations. This dynamic, however, must be understood symbiotically. Organizations also influence the contours of the dominant racial order in which they operate by instituting policies, challenging ideologies both in court and to the public directly, creating systems, and, in the case of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), by creating a racially-based regulatory environment and enforcement apparatus. In sum, organizations play a critical role at producing, transforming, destroying, and reforming our racial order. While racial formation theory has not yet acquired footing in organizational studies (Nkomo, 1992), some of its elements are present in other theories of organizations. Specifically, if seen as micro social sites, organizations can be viewed as political systems (Pfeffer, 1981). As such, organizational members and elites engage in a constant contest
over the structuring of the racial order. Social closure and homosocial reproduction are two organizational mechanisms better understood when coupled with racial formation theory.

**Social closure.** The contest over authority and positions of power in organizations has tremendous impact in the process of racial structuring. Organizational elites are the policy- and decision-makers, and they allocate resources, create opportunities, create and enact systems which influence the distribution of power, and shape discourses in the organization. Meso-level theories of racial discrimination in organizations posit that majority group members who occupy positions of authority seek to maintain their hegemony by excluding members of racial minorities (Smith, 2002). For instance, racial job segregation (Tomascovic-Devey, 1993a,b), statistical discrimination, and class conflict (Dahrendorf, 1959; Wright & Perrone, 1977) are examples of exclusion on the part of authority elites. At a much more macro level, social closure involves other processes of exclusion. On the one hand, racial minorities are likely to be segregated into jobs, work environments, and industries with lower or no authority; and on the other, even when such factors are taken into account, they are still less likely to exercise authority when compared to their White counterparts (Tomaskovic-Devey, 1993ab; Reskin & Padavic, 1994; Elliott & Smith, 2001). Social closure can then be viewed as a mechanism which is deployed to sustain a racial order in any given organizational context. However, using Omi’s and Winant’s (1992) critique, such a deployment is a process of negotiation, contestation, transformation, deformation, and reformation.

**Homosocial reproduction.** While social closure involves a level of agency for its deployment, Kanter’s (1977) homosocial reproduction is a process less conscious and overt. Although first proposed to explain differing levels of power attainment by gender, researchers have extended the concept to also examine race differences in job authority, promotional status,
and promotional aspirations (Kluegel, 1978; Muller, Parcel & Tanaka, 1989; Baldi & McBrier, 1997; Pfeffer & Davis-Blake, 1987; Wilson, 1997; Smith, 1999; Cassirer & Reskin, 2000). Thus, workplace demographic distribution, coupled with societal racial ideology, influences organizational elites’ perception of what constitutes the “appropriate” employee (Kanter, 1977). Kanter (1977) points out that the process of power attainment is inherently uncertain. This uncertainty, in turn, encourages the development of enclaves of people who share a common set of social and demographic characteristics. Drawing from this perspective, some have found support of racial differences in promotion rates (Baldi & McBrier, 1997) and authority attainment (Mueller et al., 1989; Reskin et al., 1999; Elliott & Smith, 2001). The importance of homosocial reproduction is that it de-emphasizes the role of agency to propose a much more nuanced theory that takes into account societal overarching racial order and ideology and conscious and unconscious enactment of race. It is processual and relational in nature, and – similar to social closure – can be placed in socio-historical context.

The theories discussed thus far provide certain theoretical sensitivity when analyzing the racial dynamics in the Park Service. For instance, they highlight the internal dynamics of how actors experience and enact their racial identity in the organization. They also propose explanations about how organizational members institute and sustain a particular racial order. However, these theories, rooted in the closed system perspective of organizations, do not fully account for the way in which the larger institutional environment shape organized action. Therefore, these closed system theories fall short at providing a foundational footing that advances the theoretical contribution I seek to put forth. First, these theoretical lenses help us explain micro-social processes of relational action at the individual or group level. These individual and group dynamics influence and shape life in organizations – the how and why are
central to their theorizing. However, such an overemphasis on individual and group level analysis obscures their interrelationship with larger social and institutional phenomena. It is myopic to analyze individuals in organizations as atomized agents – as subjects removed from a socio-historical, ever present, context. Another limitation of this stream of research is that its focus on the micro level may lead one to assume individuals and groups have greater agency than they may actually have. Organized action at the individual and group level is embedded within, and shaped by, larger societal forces. These forces do not necessarily act as straitjacket, but minimizing their influence ignores a significant factor that structures organized action.

Furthermore, these micro level perspectives are of limited utility when the research or theoretical goal is multi-level in nature, as in this study. My research question is institutional in nature. Thus, it is imperative I locate my inquiry within a theoretical framework that helps me explore the relationship between the various levels of analysis (i.e., institutional, organizational, and individual) – how they relate to and reinforce one another. In the next section, I turn my attention to theories that attempt to address the shortcomings of the theoretical frameworks discussed thus far. They bring into the fold the outer institutional environment and put forth a theoretical understanding of organizations as social sites that are embedded within, interact with, shape, and are shaped by, social phenomena.

**The Organization/Environment Interface**

This study examines the dynamics of racial formation at three critical points in the history of the National Park Service. A comprehensive analysis of these episodes and the dynamics of racial formation need to be sensitive to the context or environment in which these critical moments took place. Racial formation in organizations occurs, in part, in response to stimuli from the environment, i.e., exogenous forces.
The organization/environment interface has been a longstanding concern in the literature of organizational change and strategic management. There are four overarching perspectives that help us understand the organization/environment relationship. The first perspective posits that organizations are embedded within an environment that exists outside of the organization; they are independent from each other (Smircich & Stubbart, 1985). This “objective” environment perspective sees the organization and its environment as real, material, and separate; akin to a naturalistic, ecological understanding of the environment in which animal species exist. Hence, according to this notion, the environment is an entity that is external to the organization and can be knowable.

The perceived environment perspective, on the other hand, argues that while environments are material, external, and independent from the organization, organizational members cannot cognitively notice all aspects of the environment (Smircich & Stubbart, 1985). Thus, the difference between the “objective” and “perceived” perspectives is their assumption about the rationality of organizational members. In the perceived environment perspective, organizational actors may misconstrue aspects of the environment, cannot “read” the environment in its totality, and are prone to produce flawed perceptions of the environment (Boyd, Dess & Rasheed, 1993; Smircich & Stubbart, 1985). The role of organizational strategists is to minimize these shortcomings.

The third perspective argues that organizational environments are enacted. That is, “organization and environment are created together (enacted) through the social interaction processes of key organizational participants” (Smircich & Stubbart, 1985, p. 726). This perspective rejects the notion that environments are separate entities that exist “out there,” but, rather, that they are accomplished through organizational processes like sensemaking (Weick,
patterns of attention, and other dispositions characteristic of organizational actors (Smircich & Stubbart, 1985).

To further explore how enactment is accomplished, it is important to understand the theoretical concept of sensemaking. Sensemaking is the socio-cognitive process whereby organizational actors translate stimuli into frameworks that allow them to attach meaning, rationalize, and comprehend such stimuli – for instance, environmental stimuli (Weick, 1995). This process is accomplished through various dynamics of language (e.g., narrative construction) (Abolafia, 2010; Weick, 1995). Sensemaking leads to action, which, in turn, creates “the materials that become the constraints and opportunities [individuals] face” – the environment (Weick, 1995, p. 31). Put differently, it is through the sensemaking-to-action recursive dynamic that organizational environments are enacted or brought to existence. For example, in his work on the Federal Reserve, Abolafia (2010) shows how the Fed engages in sensemaking to process, rationalize, and apply professionally-accepted models to a barrage of economic and market data in order to construe the state of the economy – their environment. Policy decisions are made and actions are taken based upon their enactment of the economy. These policy decisions often operate as signals sent to influence the behavior of stakeholders outside of the organization and to shape or manage the contours of the environment (Abolafia & Hatmaker, 2013). The environmental response to their signals is then the source of further sensemaking. Therefore, the Federal Reserve is an instance where sensemaking is employed to weave together economic data, models, and theories, among other factors, to enact their environment – the U.S. and global economy – and arrange a response to it (e.g., whether to loosen or tighten the flow of money in the economy).
Finally, the institutional logics perspective has been employed to link the micro, meso, and macro levels of analysis in the theorizing of the organization/environment interface (Nigam & Ocasio, 2010). This perspective theorizes organizations as embedded in a web of interinstitutional relationships (the interinstitutional system) with varying material and symbolic logics (Thornton, Ocasio & Lounsbury, 2012). Institutional logics are “the socially constructed, historical patterns of cultural symbols and material practices, including assumptions, values, and beliefs, by which individuals and organizations provide meaning to their daily activity, organize time and space, and reproduce their lives and experiences” (Thornton, Ocasio & Lounsbury, 2012, p. 2). Institutional logics, then, provide simultaneously the cognitive apparatus through which organizational actors attend to environmental stimuli and the structure that shapes the organizational context and reality. Taken as a whole, the institutional logics perspective is sort of a metatheoretical framework ideal for analyzing the interrelationships among institutions, individuals, and organizations in the social systems in which they coexist. The multilevel orientation of the institutional logics perspective also sensitizes researchers to mechanisms and processes (e.g., theorization, translation, and sensemaking to name a few) that occur at different levels of the organization/environment interaction.

Theorists of institutional logics have more recently increased their attention to the dynamics that trigger changes in logic (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999), the emergence of new, and coexistence of multiple, institutional logics (Besharov & Smith, 2014), and how the characteristics of organizational actors influence what logics are attended to (Ocasio, 2011). For instance, Ocasio (2011) proposes that the “attentional perspectives of organizational decision

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6 Many institutional orders (e.g., religion, profession) could arguably be understood as environmental stimuli when analyzed at a micro, rather than macro, level of analysis.
makers are embedded in industry structure (industry velocity), cultural structure (institutional logics), and social structure (top management team demographic)” (Ocasio, 2011, p. 1292). In other words, an organization’s attentional system—which leads to logic emergence, adoption, or change— is influenced, to a large extent, by the characteristics of its field, its members, and societal-level dynamics (racial formation, for example). Besharov and Smith (2014) also argue that the emergence of new institutional logics is also the result of the ongoing political and strategic dynamics that take place within organizations that are simultaneously nested within societal-level logics.

Institutional researchers under this paradigm explain institutional change as a transition from one logic, usually the dominant logic, to another (Hoffman, 1999). Therefore, even though logics may coexist together, it is the dominant logic that guides behavior (Thornton, 2004), prescribing the rules of action and interaction. When a new logic is introduced, it often produces a contest for dominance, as key actors press for their preferred logic. The literature suggests that these periods of conflict are transitional; they last until one logic establishes its dominance (DiMaggio, 1983) or a new hybrid logic emerges (Glynn & Lounsbury, 2005). However, as Reay and Hinings (2009) pointed out, the line of research on changes in institutional logic is overwhelmingly focused on field-level actors and pays little attention to actors inside organizations. A few exceptions are noteworthy, and this study follows, and builds upon, that line of inquiry.

In their study of physicians transitioning into a new logic of business-like health care, Reay and Hinings (2009) identified four mechanisms of collaboration actors employed for managing competing logics. Through the first mechanism, physicians emerged as experts; establishing their preeminence over professional, medical decision-making, relegating
administrators to other organizational functions outside the medical sphere. The second mechanism involved administrators’ proactive approach of including physicians as part of the decision-making process for important activities. This created an aura of unity, minimizing the likelihood physicians could form a coalition against management. The third mechanism was characterized by a newfound bond among physicians and administrators to push against the government. Such a coalition was used strategically on a case-by-case basis and based on the calculus of each side. Finally, the fourth mechanism for managing rivalry between logics was creating experimental sites for joint ventures among physicians and administrators. Such sites for innovation allowed physicians and administrators to join efforts in order to improve healthcare outcomes and experiment with new administrative models. The four mechanisms were deployed while actors maintained their separate identities. Therefore, pertinent to my study, these findings suggest that institutional change does not always have to be driven by conflict; that conflict may be the result of how actors experience changes in logic; whether the new logic aligns with their values; and the resulting power dynamics upon logic change. In this case, mechanisms for collaboration supported the co-existence of competing logics for a long period of time.

In her study of cultural organizations, Townley (2002) shows that even with significant institutional pressure adopting a new logic is much more complex and nuanced. In her study, while cultural organizations understood, and could appreciate the value of, the new performance management logic, actors resisted its adoption and implementation. This dynamic, however, was politically complex. As she explained, “although there was public compliance, privately individuals challenged, attacked, and dismissed the value of business plans and performance measures” (Townley, 2002, p. 175). The new logic was rejected outright, even though actors gave the impression to external parties that they had embraced and implemented it. In relation to
my study, Towley’s (2002) work highlights the challenges change efforts often confront and it brings to the forefront the role competing rationalities play at setting the conditions for actual change to take place.

Studies on logic multiplicity, however, often report inconsistent findings. For instance, while some studies find that logic multiplicity results in organizational chaos, and ultimately collapse (Tracey, Phillips & Jarvis, 2011), others find that it leads to organizational endurance, sustainability, and innovation (Jay, 2012). Similarly, some studies have associated logic multiplicity with conflict (Battilana & Dorado, 2010), while others have found logics tend to blend (Binder, 2007) or can coexist (McPherson & Sauder, 2013). More research is needed in order to further explain and theorize the internal organizational dynamics of logic multiplicity and why they lead to varying outcomes. To shed light on this gap, Besharov and Smith (2014, p. 365) suggest that “the implications of logic multiplicity depend on how logics are instantiated within organizations,” but researchers have not paid sufficient attention to the diverse ways in which multiple logics manifest within organizations.

In their theoretical conceptualization, Besharov and Smith (2014) propose four ideal types (i.e., contested, estranged, aligned, and dominant) of organizations for understanding how logic multiplicity manifests within them. In contested organizations, multiple logics coalesce with low compatibility (i.e., logics provide contradictory prescription for action) and high centrality (i.e., when multiple logics are core to organizational functioning), resulting in a highly volatile, conflictive organizational context. In contested organizations conflict tends to be extensive and intractable, because multiple logics are “instantiated in their mission, strategy, structure, identity, and core work practices” without a clear understanding of which logic should prevail (Besharov & Smith, 2014, p. 371).
The second type, estranged organizations, is characterized by low compatibility (i.e., logics provide contradictory prescriptions for action) and low centrality (i.e., one logic is core to organizational functioning; other logics are peripheral), ensuing a moderate level of conflict. These organizations experience less ambiguity and complexity about which logic guides action, but they still exhibit the challenge of having to grapple with peripheral logics that are at odds with the dominant logic (Besharov & Smith, 2014).

The third type of logic multiplicity, aligned organizations, is represented by a context in which there is high compatibility (i.e., logics provide compatible prescriptions for action) and high centrality (i.e., multiple logics are core to organizational functioning). In this scenario, even though multiple logics exist, they offer consistent implications for action and “exert strong influence over organizational functioning (Besharov & Smith, 2014, p. 373). In other words, notwithstanding the presence and influence of varying logics, the organization, at its core, remains united and somewhat stable. Conflict in this kind of organization is likely to be minimal, because the different logics prescribe consistent organizational goals.

Finally, in the fourth organizational type, dominant organizations, multiple logics have high compatibility (i.e., logics provide compatible prescriptions for action) and low centrality (i.e., one logic is core to organizational functioning; other logics are peripheral). These organizations are characterized by order and stability, because, even though multiple logics exist, only one logic dominates organizational core functioning and other logics are complementary. Under this regime, there is little to no conflict because the prevailing logic prescribes the organizations’ mission, strategy, structure, identity, and core work practices.

The framework that Besharov and Smith (2014) provide has significant utility at helping us understand the conditions under which conflict is likely to arise and potential explanations for
its manifestation. It also informs how logics and agency interact to affect logic multiplicity within organizations and at multiple levels of analysis; the dynamics that ensue when organizations have to respond to multiple institutional demands.

The institutional logics perspective allows us to operationalize the three critical moments this study dissects as episodes embedded in societal understanding and culture of race, a legal apparatus that enforce racial norms (e.g., race-based non-discrimination laws), political ideology with racial undertone that color public policies (Wilson, 2012), ideas and concepts produced in academe, and changes in the demographic makeup of the U.S. society are all environmental forces within which these critical moments take place. Thus, racial formation in organizations does not occur in a vacuum, extracted from the realities of the “outer” world. An analysis of racial formation must include an account on the interplay between the organization and its rather manifold environment.

In sum, these environmental perspectives will inform the extent to which these critical moments were the product of environmental stimuli and the form such stimuli took and the mechanisms through which the environment influenced the organization and the process of racial formation. They ultimately bring to our attention the context or broader external realities in which these episodes were enacted.

**Representative Bureaucracy**

An important concern of racial formation theory is the mechanisms or tools with which state institutions create, maintain, and enforce a racial order, both internally and externally. According to the theory, organizations produce this racial order through policies, administrative processes and rules, organizational practices, socialization and acculturation, and by adopting certain organizational forms. While these mechanisms operate differently depending on the
context in which the organization exists,\(^7\) they are embedded in, and are the product of, “social relations: the cultural and technical norms which characterize society overall,” (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 84) which is analogue to the environments discussed in the previous section. Because these norms vary among racial groups, they affect internal organizational dynamics along racial lines (e.g., leveraging informal networks to influence policymaking) and the way in which the organization interacts with external social actors (e.g., changing how much influence interest groups exercise in a given program development process). Therefore, bureaucratic actors are a key feature of the racial formation process, for they are the creators, enactors, and reformers of the various mechanisms through which racial formation is accomplished. To further explore and understand the intricacies of this role, as well as its consequences, the theory of representative bureaucracy is an ideal avenue.

The genesis of representative bureaucracy is often attributed to Kingsley (1944), who first observed in the British context that class-based representation in public organizations would lead to the enactment of policies that benefit the poor. In the U.S., the theory was proposed in a much wider fashion. Not only is class salient to representative bureaucracy but also sex, race, ethnicity, and sexuality, among other identity categories. The overarching theoretical proposition is that bureaucratic actors deploy elements of their social identities as they become salient in bureaucratic life, thereby advancing the interests of their social group (Bradbury & Kellough, 2011; Mosher, 1968). That is, during policymaking, program implementation, or perhaps even

\(^7\) For example, in the case of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission racial formation occurs within and through the regulatory apparatus it develops and enforces to combat race-based employment discrimination. In the case of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), racial formation occurs in part through the creation of subsidization programs to ameliorate the pressures of urban development and gentrification of predominantly disadvantaged communities. Thus, as the context varies, so does the mechanism through which racial formation operates.
during the most mundane bureaucratic transaction, beliefs, attitudes, and values color the lenses through which these actions are performed; and this applies to both minority and non-minority bureaucrats. This process is contingent in nature, however. For instance, perceived or actual administrative discretion (Meier & Bohte, 2001; Sowa & Selden, 2003), organizational structure (Watkins-Hayes, 2011), the nature of the policy domain (Keiser, Wilkins, Meier & Holland, 2002; Riccucci & Meyers, 2004), and within group heterogeneity (Grissom, Nicholson-Crotty & Nicholson-Crotty, 2009) or internal group politics (Watkins-Hayes, 2011) impact the extent to which bureaucrats “press for the interests and desires of those whom [they are] presumed to represent” (Mosher, 1968, p. 11).

With regards to race, studies have found support for the presence of this kind of representation. In their study of public schools, Meier, Stewart, and England (1990) found that black students were disproportionately placed in lower ability tracks and subjected to harsher disciplinary measures when compared to their non-minority counterparts. However, as the proportion of black teachers increased in the school district so did minority students’ performance and less disciplinary actions were taken. In this case, teachers may have been consciously or unconsciously enforcing a racial order in which “ability” – or lack thereof – is colored along racial lines.

In her well-known study of the Farmer’s Home Administration Rural Housing Loan Program, Selden (1997a, 1997b) found that representation of racial minority supervisors increased the likelihood of loans being awarded to minorities. These results were consistent across racial groups, namely blacks, Hispanics, and Asian-Americans. In this instance, race colored the lens through which administrative decisions were made or the criteria employed (e.g., Who is trustworthy? On what basis?).
Finally, more recent studies have explored active representation in the law enforcement domain. Contrary to expectations, minority representation in the police force has been associated with an increase in cases of racial profiling for both blacks (Wilkins & Williams, 2008) and Latinos (Wilkins & Williams, 2009). Specifically, in their study of the San Diego Police Department, Wilkins and Williams (2008) found that as the number of black police officers increased in the district, so did the cases of racial profiling against blacks in the same area. A similar pattern was found in the case of Latino police officers (Wilkins & Williams, 2009). This suggests that other processes that take place in organizations mediate, perhaps stronger than anticipated, the adoption of an active representative role. In this case, the authors espouse the idea that where organizational socialization is robust, as in law enforcement, black and Latino officers are pressured to conform to organizational expectations. Also, active representation in this context may jeopardize one’s career and reputation, for claims of bias or favoritism lead to adverse and disciplinary actions. As a result, minority officers may avoid the perceptions of such bias by holding minority citizens to harsher standards. Another explanation is that minority officers have simply internalized the U.S. racial hierarchy (Bonilla-Silva, 1997), and thus replicate a racial order in which people of color are subject to more scrutiny. This speaks to the contingent nature of this process; the mere presence of minority bureaucrats does not de facto translate in active representation, for they are also subject to existing social structures and society’s ideology of race.

In sum, this discussion suggests that the racial makeup of organizational members, with their respective social norms, do indeed influence organizational processes, dynamics, and practices under certain circumstances. In a practical sense, for example, representation allows for a plurivocal policy-making process and contestation of administrative decisions. Following this
perspective, then, the racial formation of organizations is structured, sustained, and reformed – in large part, but not solely – through the dynamics between minority and non-minority bureaucrats because it is produced by organizational components (e.g., administrative decisions, organizational culture, and organizational socialization) that are influenced by those dynamics. On that vein, this study sheds light on the internal push and pull, subtleties, and strategic actions (i.e., internal dynamics) associated with race, and racially charged work, in an organization.

Representative bureaucracy theory will allow us to further explore the role of bureaucratic actors, particularly racial minorities, in the racial formation process. It clarifies ideas about how and which organizational dynamics are informed by one’s social norms and socialization, as well as the consequence of that influence. In essence, representative bureaucracy complements racial formation theory by augmenting, or perhaps locating at the center, the role of organizational actors as potential drivers of the racial formation process; while taking into account institutional and social forces that structure their actions.

Figure 1 shows graphically the interrelationship of the various theoretical approaches explained above and their corresponding level of analysis. For instance, while social identity and representative bureaucracy theory operate at the individual level, conflict theories explain meso level dynamics, and racial formation as well as the institutional logics perspective focus on macro level dynamics.
Figure 1. Interrelationship of theoretical perspectives.
Chapter III:

Methodology

Prior to engaging in a discussion on the methods, techniques, and strategies employed in carrying out the research, it is important to address the epistemological underpinnings of the study. This study is concerned with processes (i.e., racial formation), which are constructed within social contexts and by social actors in a temporal space. This study uses an interpretive approach to gain knowledge on these processes and situational actors. Interpretive research seeks to achieve an understanding of meaning and meaning-making, its complexities, nuances, and processes (Haverland & Yanow, 2012; McNabb, 2004; Patton, 2002; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). Researchers under this paradigm follow a strict logic of induction; paying little or no attention to predefined concepts and theories that might force a diagnosis prior to culminating the analysis (Haverland & Yanow, 2012). Instead, an interpretive approach allows for concepts and theories to emerge from the data or research participants, in situ most of the time. This is not to say that interpretive researchers abandon entirely the usage of existing theories or concepts, but they are used to “sensitize” the researcher not to be tested or forced upon the data (Blaikie, 2000; Tummers & Karsten, 2011).

Epistemologically, interpretive research is dynamic in nature. The production of knowledge is iterative and recursive, an ongoing movement between expectations, theories, and local realities (Agar, 2010; Van Maanen, 2011). For this reason, researchers need to be responsive to changing circumstances. The design of interpretive research ought to be flexible in order to allow for revisions (when early concepts no longer explain the data) throughout the research process as necessary (Haverland & Yanow, 2012). Theoretical formulations are constantly reviewed as the research progresses and new findings and theoretical insights emerge.
from the data, or when preliminary concepts no longer explain the social realities being studied (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012).

The following discussion begins with an explanation of the research site and then proceeds to discuss the research strategy and associated methods.

Research Site

The study is based on, and conducted in, the U.S. National Park Service (NPS), a Bureau of the Department of the Interior. The NPS was created in 1916 under President Woodrow Wilson’s administration to, among other things, “conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”8 Therefore, the NPS has a dual mission: to preserve the natural and cultural resources under its jurisdiction and to make them available for enjoyment.

The National Park Service is one of the most differentiated organizations in the Federal government. It is comprised of 401 units of national parks, historic sites, national battlefields, trails, and national seashores (see Appendix A for a geographic depiction). Units are added to the NPS by Congressional action; only Congress has the authority to establish them by enacting public laws. The NPS has presence in all states as well as Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and the Marshall Islands.

To accomplish its mission, the organization relies on a workforce of approximately 25,000 employees on average. During seasons of high visitation (summer and winter), the NPS

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8 From Public Law: An act to establish a National Park Service, and for other purposes, approved August 25, 1916 (39 STAT. 536), As amended by the acts approved June 2, 1920 (41 STAT. 731) and March 7, 1928 (45 STAT. 200, 235).
reaches approximately 27,000 employees. The workforce is composed of a wide array of occupations from maintenance workers to Ph.D. biologists to anthropologists to park rangers. The NPS employs nearly 200 different occupational series.

Methods

This study analyzes data from three critical moments of racial formation in the NPS organization. One might wonder, why these particular critical moments, and what makes them critical moments worth studying?

As an interpretive researcher, I went to the “field,” the National Park Service in Washington D.C., interested in studying diversity management. As I began to interact with members of the organization, conduct formal and informal interviews, and to recruit informants, it became apparent that those issues labeled as “diversity management” had deeply-rooted racial elements that I could not ignore. Indeed, most racial minorities I talked to were suspicious about that which management (as they referred to those with supervisory and managerial authority) referred to as “diversity management.” Interviews that began with a discussion on diversity, diverted – rather quickly – to discussions about race and racism.

Throughout data collection, my journal entries were overwhelmingly racial in nature. Thus, I began to question whether I had asked the right questions. I then allowed organizational members to steer my inquiry. Several informants encouraged me to “look back in history” to “understand” their current reality. They proposed the idea that the National Park Service had been through episodes where racial issues have been salient, but in different ways. Many of them argued that what appeared new to me, was actually the re-telling of an old story; but told with new nomenclature.
I could not ignore the insights of my informants. Upon that realization, I devoured several academic work on the matter, particularly the work of Young (2009) and Keller and Turek (1998), and headed to the U.S. National Archives to see what I could find. To my surprise, the intuition of my informants was correct, even without having read the literature I was familiar with or seeing the artifacts in possession of the National Archives. And thus began the reformulation of my study. Rather than simply studying current unfolding events, disassociated with the past, the image of the “episode” or “critical moment” emerged. If what I was observing in situ was not the only critical moment for studying racial formation, what were the others? I arrived to an answer after analyzing data from the archives and that provided to me via interviews. Three critical moments were identified: (1) when the organization expanded to the South, (2) after the passage of the Civil Rights Act, and (3) from late 1990s to the present. The following sections explain each critical moment in more detail.

**Critical Moment I**

**Archival research.** The first critical moment depicts racial formation in the organization during the 1930s when Shenandoah National Park in the state of Virginia was created in the Jim Crow era of racial segregation. Prior to this instance, the organization had not confronted the issue of racial segregation. For this phase, I rely on archival materials to reconstruct and analyze the socio-political dynamics within the organization. As McNabb (2004) explains, the research element in an archival study is the record.

During the process of segregation and desegregation of Shenandoah National Park, a large volume of documents (e.g., memoranda, reports, letters) was produced. This documentation is preserved in the National Archives (located in College Park, Maryland), Archives of the National Park Service (located in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia), and the Archives of
Shenandoah National Park (located in Luray, Virginia). The data collected for this critical moment consist of memoranda, letters from constituents and politicians, reports, and strategic plans.

**Critical Moment II**

**Archival research.** The second critical moment was triggered by congressional action: the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This law brought with it a new way of understanding racial relations in public and private organizations. It also brought a new language for discussing issues of race as well as an enforcement apparatus for instances of discrimination. This period spans from mid 1960s to early 1970s. To gain knowledge on the dynamics that ensued as a result of the new regulatory environment, archival data have been collected from the National Archives and Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) Presidential Library. The LBJ library contains oral histories and other data that document the lawmaking process. Also, the National Archives possess complementary artifacts such as memoranda, reports, and correspondence. These provide insights on internal organizational dynamics.

**Interviews.** To further explore stories and concepts that emerge from archival data, I conducted face-to-face interviews with Mr. Nash Castro during the summer of 2012. Mr. Castro is among the very few employees of the Park Service who lived through this period as an executive of the organization. At the time, he was the Regional Director for the Capital Region in Washington, DC. Prior to the initial interview, I had conducted preliminary analyses on the archival data so that new themes could be explored and to fill in gaps in the archival materials. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim.

I also conducted interviews with 19 employees (5 from the Equal Employment Opportunity office in the NPS and 3 retirees from the same office; 4 from the HR office; and 7
employees outside EEO and HR). Nine employees were black, two Hispanics, and six were white. There were 10 females and seven males. Four of these employees had been with the NPS for more than 30 years; therefore, they had a longer institutional memory that allowed them to contrast data across critical moments.

**Critical Moment III**

**Archival research.** The racial formation process in the last critical moment was triggered by several endogenous and exogenous pressures, among these: changes in the demographics of the U.S. (who uses parks becomes a problematic question), changes in the field of management and human resources that began to emphasize the benefits of diversity. The dynamics of these pressures began to take place during the latter part of the 1990s. Thus, this period spans from late 1990s to 2011.

Although for this phase I rely more heavily on in-depth interviews, archival research provides complementary rich data in the form of internal reports, external consultants’ reports, and strategic plans. These data come from the NPS’ Archives, informants’ personal collections, and through my own research of agency records. To discover archival materials, I asked key informants who guided me to data that, in turn, led to other artifacts. This approach was akin to snowball sampling.

The data collection strategy for this period benefitted tremendously from the fact that I, the researcher, was working permanently in the organization. This allowed me to collect data that the general public would not have otherwise accessed. For instance, some of the data were housed in electronic databases about which surprisingly few knew. Also, and perhaps more importantly, being *in situs* allowed me to collect data as they were being produced; for example,
during meetings and informal gatherings. I also gathered textual documents that were not widely published throughout the organization.

**Interviews.** The purpose of the interviews is to deepen our understanding of the dynamics and factors that influenced this critical moment of racial formation by gathering first-hand accounts. Interviews allow for a better exploration of the strategies of racial formation and their relationship with the environmental forces at play.

I have conducted 49 in-depth interviews that last between one to two hours each. Participants for interviews were selected purposively. The majority identified as white (24), 18 said they were black, 6 Hispanics, and 1 Asian. When I became member of the organization, I quickly identified several key informants. These informants, in turn, referred me to other employees throughout the organization and external stakeholders. Before selecting people for interviews, I took into account their relevance to my study, position in the hierarchy, and tenure. By doing this, I ensure important diversity in the participant pool in order to make the data richer. This sampling process is known as snowball or by reference, because it grows organically as the researcher conducts the interviews and more people are referred and recruited. The assumption is that no one knows better than informants who in the organization possess information and the kind of information they possess. Therefore, I followed my informants’ intuition and recommendations to the extent possible.

Interviews were conducted using a semi-structure protocol (see Appendix B). However, I adhered to the protocol somewhat flexibly. As Van Maanen (2011) suggests, most of the time it is more fruitful to allow participants to elaborate on issues they consider important or that the researcher has not thought about. This flexibility, again, makes the data richer because it is the product of participants’ own understandings and social realities, not those of the researcher.
Similarly, during my interview process, interviewees constantly proposed “new” questions and ways of approaching certain issues, which I explored or implemented during future interviews. This interview process underscores the iterative nature of interpretive research in particular, and inductive inquiry in general.

**Coding scheme.** Archival materials and interview transcripts were subjected to open coding following a grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to derive knowledge, concepts, and theories from the data (Eaves, 2001). As concepts and theories emerge through open coding, they are further analyzed and compared to establish relationships and links (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1994). As Tummers and Karsten (2011, p. 6) explain, “by assigning codes that have not been fixed in advance to data during the analysis, and by a continuous comparison between codes, grounded theorists develop concepts that form the basis of evolving theories.”

Grounded theory requires the researcher to apply some structure to the data, based on categories that arise from the data themselves (McNabb, 2004). As categories emerge, they are then compared with one another to establish links and characteristics. Similar codes are then grouped thematically to identify and explore patterns across categories. Finally, the data are cross-referenced with revised categories to build understanding (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).
Chapter IV:

Jim Crow and Racial Segregation in the NPS: A Representative Bureaucracy and Institutional Logics Analysis

Mosher (1968) first observed that underlying the representative bureaucracy perspective were two distinct forms of representation: passive and active. Passive representation simply refers to the extent to which the demographic makeup of public bureaucracies correlates with that of society. In contrast, active representation exists when bureaucratic actors “press for the interests and desires of those whom [they are] presumed to represent” (Mosher, 1968, p. 11; cited in Bradbury & Kellough, 2011). This perspective contends that individuals deploy elements of their social identities at many instances in their bureaucratic life, thereby advancing the interests of their social group. Therefore, it is theorized that during policymaking, program implementation, or perhaps even during the most mundane bureaucratic transaction, beliefs, attitudes, and values color the lenses through which these actions are performed.

Active representation, however, is not an organizational behavior to which all minority bureaucrats adhere. Rather, for its manifestation, it is necessary to align certain individual and organizational factors. Figure 2 is a graphical depiction of empirically-based antecedents to active representation. Among individual factors, minority role adoption (Selden, Brudney & Kellough, 1998) and perceived administrative discretion (Sowa & Selden, 2003) have been consistently linked to active representation. Minority representation role perception has been identified as a precondition to minority role adoption; however, this relationship needs further empirical attention and for that reason I have separated them as two distinct factors in this study.
Figure 2. Empirically based antecedents to active representation

Bureaucratic and extra-bureaucratic enablers, as well as hindrances to active representation, have been proposed in previous studies. High levels of administrative discretion have been positively associated with active representation (Meier & Bohte, 2001). Conversely, highly tight organizational structures where bureaucrats have little or no room to exert latitude in the performance of their work are less likely to assume an active representative role (Watkins-
Hayes, 2011). Similarly, external factors also influence the extent to which organizational actors engage in active representation. The saliency of group characteristics with the policy domain at hand (Keiser, Wilkins, Meier & Holland, 2002) as well as policy clarity (Ricucci & Meyers, 2004) influence the extent to which an active role is undertaken. In other words, instances where there is not a clear connection between the policy domain and the interests of minority groups or, in turn, the policy domain is ambiguous, the likelihood of active representation diminishes. Finally, within-group variation or heterogeneity (Grissom, Nicholson-Crotty & Nicholson-Crotty, 2009) and internal group politics (Watkins-Hayes, 2011) impact active representative role adoption. For instance, the experience of African-Americans from the South, as opposed to those from other areas, may vary the way in which race interjects bureaucratic action by geographic location.

Most studies on active representation tend to operationalize it as a policy outcome. Then, active representation becomes the product of a process, not the process in and of itself. What we can conclude from this approach is that, as Bradbury and Kellough (2011, p. 160) put it, “certain public organizations with a larger proportion of women and/or minorities in decision-making roles are more likely to produce outcomes compatible with the interests of women and/or minorities than similar organizations with fewer women and/or minorities.” Highlighting its processual nature, in contrast, advances an understanding of active representation as a political and dynamic endeavor framed by and nested within broader institutional logics (e.g., societal racial norms).

Theorizing institutional logics as “socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs and rules” (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999, p. 804) allows for the understanding of bureaucratic action from a multi-level perspective: societal, organizational,
and individual levels. As explained in previous chapters, racial formation, understood as an institutional logic, is theorized to occur at the societal level and permeates the organizational and individual spheres.

This chapter will analyze how the racial formation of an era (that of racial segregation in the 1930s, which is one of the institutional logics at the societal level) influenced bureaucratic action in the NPS using representative bureaucracy theory to analyze organizational dynamics at the individual level. The analysis incorporates a political lens in an attempt to flesh out core components of active representation: advocacy and contestation.

A Note on Active Representation as Political

A turn to the political nature of organizations flourished in the late 1970s (Farrell & Petersen, 1982). Traditional theoretical perspectives tended to de-emphasize the importance of power, conflict, bargaining, and informal procedures (Tushman, 1977). Organizations are political systems (Mayes & Allen, 1977; Pfeffer, 1981) with their own power struggles, conflicts over objectives, clashes of interests, and processes for policy and decision-making. However, in an organizational context, politics can be a rather elusive term, thus the need for definitions. Farrell and Petersen (1982, p. 405) define politics as “[t]hose activities that are not required as part of one’s organizational role but that influence, or attempt to influence, the distribution of advantages and disadvantages within the organization.” However, one’s organizational role may very well be political in nature. Therefore, Tushman (1977, p. 207) refers to politics as “[t]he structure and process of the use of authority and power to effect definitions of goals, directions, and other major parameters of the organization.” This definition aligns more closely with the process of active representation. For our purposes, however, it is sufficient to understand politics as the process of advancing group goals and interests.
From a political perspective, one is concerned with the process of compromise, accommodation, and bargaining (Tushman, 1977). Conflict is inherent to this process, as differences in objectives and preferences arise. Active representation is a strategic political objective because it refers to the process of advancing the interests of a particular constituency, normally presumed to be at a disadvantage.

A political perspective enriches our understanding of active representation in many ways. First, it shifts our attention from outcomes to processes. Secondly, it augments the role of power, conflict, and compromise inherent to these processes. Finally, it highlights the role of organizational actors and the mechanisms they employ in the pursuit of political goals.

**Desegregating Shenandoah National Park: The Dynamics of Active Representation**

**Background.** The expansion of the national park system eastward was achieved through purchases of land from individuals and businesses by the respective states, which then donated them to the National Park Service (Young, 2009). Traditionally, Congress had ceded federally owned land to the NPS without intermediaries for their management. The approach undertaken in the Shenandoah case was protracted and required the intimate involvement of multiple parties, but more prominently the states. The process created the opportunities for the states to participate in the policy-making phase. As a result, Virginia pressed for appropriate local laws and regulations to apply within the boundaries of the park, as they were concerned about having contradictory laws within their jurisdiction. The NPS agreed given that it had already created a

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9 Senator Harry Byrd to Acting Secretary Burlew (March 9, 1939), National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) RG 79 NPS Central Classified File Shenandoah, Lands (General), Camp Sites, Box 1650
precedent in other states. This agreement meant that Jim Crow laws were part of the framework with which the NPS was to manage such federal natural resources in Virginia (Young, 2009).

Accepting to adopt and enforce racial segregation within the boundaries of the park, the NPS needed a rationale to support such a policy. States’ Jim Crow laws were sanctioned by the Supreme Court in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), which created the “separate but equal” doctrine that prevailed during the first half of the 20th century (King, 2007). Under this doctrine, racial segregation was lawful as long as separate facilities were of equal stature. However, the federal government needed not adhere to Jim Crow laws for management of federal land, thus the need for a viable justification for doing so. “The National Park Service has given very serious consideration to the question of provision of recreational facilities in national parks which are located in states that maintain separate facilities,” wrote Secretary Ickes to Walter White, Secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. “I feel that in the interest of all the people the national parks should not become jurisdictional islands in the states,” and thus should adhere to local norms and customs. The framework of “jurisdictional islands,” which was never supported by legal precedence, became a consistent - although not the only - rhetorical device with which segregation was justified by the NPS.

Besides the “jurisdictional islands” construct, segregation was maintained on two more grounds. The acting Director of the NPS explained that “[o]bservations indicate that the majority of the Negro people prefer to have their own individual accommodations. Their principal

10 Acting Secretary Burlew to Senator Harry F. Byrd (March 6, 1939), NARA RG 79 NPS Central Classified File Shenandoah, Lands (General), Camp Sites, Box 1650

11 Harold Ickes to Walter White (May 11, 1939), NARA RG 79 NPS Central Classified File Shenandoah, Lands (General), Camp Sites, Box 1650
objection is to any requirement that they accept certain facilities without their individual choice.”\(^{12}\) In another memorandum, the acting Director of the NPS reiterates this point: “We realize that there will be some criticism against segregation, but we also feel that we will be subjected to more criticism by the white as well as by the colored race if there is no segregation.”\(^{13}\) The regional director of the southeastern region further concluded that “The fact is that he [an African-American] prefers to have the segregation. He desires definite services intended for his race and he feels more comfortable under such circumstances. Unless that arrangement is made, use of areas by the Negroes will always be a restricted use [sic]”\(^{14}\) (emphasis in original). Therefore, segregation was sustained on the basis that it was an arrangement to which many blacks preferred to adhere.

Finally, lack of visitation and participation in park programs was another basis upon which segregation was maintained. Arno B. Cammerer, NPS’ director, explained:

> No Negroes are refused admission to national parks. In case there will be a demand for accommodations on a large scale, such as campgrounds and the like, we are ready to install them. Of course, we can not [sic] ask our operators to invest large sums of money in facilities that will not be used. Both in the Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains National Parks we have studied the matter of equal camping facilities for colored and whites, and are prepared to authorize installations for Negroes when a demand is shown that will justify.\(^{15}\)

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\(^{12}\) Hillory A. Tolson to Walter Magnes Teller (October 12, 1940), NARA RG 79 NPS Central Classified File Shenandoah, Lands (General), Camp Sites, Box 1650

\(^{13}\) Director to J.R. Eakin (September 9, 1938) NARA RG 79 NPS Central Classified File 1933-1949 National Parks Great Smoky Mountains, Box 1101.

\(^{14}\) Mr. Evison to Director NPS (June 6, 1942), NARA RG 79 NPS Central Classified File 1933-1949 General, Box 378

\(^{15}\) Arno B. Cammerer (NPS' director) to Robert C. Weaver (Advisor on Negro Affairs) (July 6, 1936), NARA RG 79 NPS Central Classified File 1933-1949 General, Box 378.
The issue of demand became a case of circular cause. The lack of provision of recreational facilities prevented blacks’ participation in outdoor recreation,\(^{16}\) and, at the same time, lack of participation was used to justify NPS’ inability to provide adequate and sufficient facilities. This approach – maintaining limited facilities for blacks – made segregation a relatively inexpensive arrangement, thereby enhancing its sustainability.

As shown above, the establishment of segregation was accomplished and maintained through the deployment of strategic rhetorical devices coupled with physical infrastructure that delineated park boundaries along racial lines. Resorting on three main arguments to justify segregation (parks as jurisdictional islands, blacks’ preference for segregation, and lack of demand), the NPS leadership managed to preserve segregation through the first half of the 1940s\(^{17}\) – adhering to a segregation logic. Throughout this period, however, the Department of the Interior’s Office of Negro Affairs (ONA) ventured to press the NPS, with support from the Secretary of the Interior, to abandon their adherence to Jim Crow laws and practices – advocating for an equality logic.

It is important to highlight, though, that ironically while some leaders at the Department level were pressing the NPS to desegregate Shenandoah, the Department of the Interior and its Bureaus were pervasively segregated along racial lines – and blacks were subjected to wide-

\(^{16}\) For an example see Clyde C. McDuffie to Harold Ickes (Secretary DOI) (October 21, 1938) NARA NPS Central Classified File Shenandoah, Lands (General), Camp Sites, Box 1650

\(^{17}\) It is not clear when segregation actually ended in Shenandoah. The NPS officially ceased enforcing segregation in 1942 (see Newton Drury, Director NPS to Superintendent, Shenandoah NP [May 26, 1942] NARA NPS Central Classified File Shenandoah, Lands (General), Camp Sites, Box 1650). However, as late as 1948 the Department of the Interior continued to receive complaints of informal segregation (see Special Assistant to the Secretary to Chief of Lands and Recreational Planning NPS [December 28, 1948] NARA NPS Central Classified File Shenandoah, Lands (General), Camp Sites, Box 1650).
spread unequal treatment at work (King, 1999, 2007). For example, as King (1999; p. 354) documents:

“In 1927, 36 black American employees at the Department of the Interior wrote to the Secretary…protesting a ‘reorganization’ which happened to result in segregation: “the organization recently instituted in the Pension Bureau has, it is believed, by the undersigned, meant segregation in its most insidious form…We have not in the past objected to being transferred and detailed to other divisions, but when almost every colored clerk is put in one division we feel that we have every right to complain. This division which has been created for colored employees exclusively, all white clerks having been removed, is known as the “Files Division” and the allocation in it are among the lowest in the office.”

This kind of workplace racial segregation was instituted throughout the federal government and applied with impunity in most aspects of the personnel management system, particularly in hiring and promotions, as well as working conditions (King, 1999, 2007). For instance, the Department of the Interior’s Geological Survey ordered, in 1943, that toilets be racially separated as the number of black women in the workforce increased (King, 1999). Therefore, addressing racial segregation and racial relations in the workplace, at the time, had its own internal contradictions.

Mirroring the social realities of the 1930s, NPS’ expansion east and southward brought together two conflicting institutional logics that guided organizing principles. The segregation logic prescribed an organizational arrangement in line with the segregationist practices of the South with limited and separate facilities for blacks. Under this logic blackness did not have the same stature as whiteness – the former subordinate to the latter. The equality logic, espoused by the organizational elite in Washington DC and black bureaucrats, sought to equalize park access to black constituents comparable to that of whites. The equality logic rejected the hierarchical
structure along racial lines that the segregation logic purported – the idea that blacks needed to be relegated to less desirable park grounds or services.

The divide in institutional logics closely mirrored that of the North vs. South ideology of race at the time. For instance, the superintendent of Shenandoah – and larger cadre of southern park managers – being from the South seemed to see segregation as the “normal” social arrangement, one the NPS could not change through its actions. On the other hand, organizational elites in Washington, led by the Secretary of Interior, Mr. Ickes, born in Pennsylvania and raised in Chicago, and who led the Chicago NAACP, held the northern value of equality – sharply at odds with the segregation logic. As Besharov and Smith (2014, p. 370) argued, “when members adhere strongly to a particular logic, they are more likely to support that logic inside the organization and incorporate it into core operations, in part because they are more responsive to pressure from field-level actors associated with that logic.” Each side was not only exerting pressure in favor of their beliefs, but was also doing so given the circles or networks they were part of or had to respond to – the field-level actors Besharov and Smith (2014) refer to. Southern park managers belonged to a community that had Jim Crow laws and did not vacillate to ensure they were upheld and enforced. Similarly, those in Washington responded to constituents who abhorred racial segregation and sought to bring equality among the races.

The following sections elaborate on how adherents of each institutional logic sought to counter their opponents and the organizational devices employed to advance their goals.
Strategy 1: Making the Case: Narrative Construction

Racial segregation was more than merely an organizational arrangement; it was a culture, with its own logic and modes of operating (Hale, 1999). As such, segregation was not simply a matter of policy, but rather a way of understanding – and attaching meaning and order to – racial beings. This depth or complexity obfuscated the target, for not only it was the practice of racial segregation that was being contested, but the set of customs, norms, and cultural schemata that sustained it. Addressing these social factors was a tremendously difficult endeavor because of their pervasiveness and embeddedness in public action, which were some of the very reasons that persuaded NPS officials to adopt and enforce segregation in the first place.

The intricacies of the set of actions and social factors that made segregation possible required an interpretive apparatus to render its essence, thus making contestation plausible. The intent of this strategy is to craft a narrative that is rhetorically persuasive around which to structure the policy conflict. Active representative actors use this strategy to bring their contender to their sphere of understanding or guiding framework. This is particularly important when the conflict is over policies as complex as racial segregation or that are deeply rooted in ideology. Multiple understandings of a given policy or organizational issue enhance ambiguity and complexity (Weick, 1995). This strategy seeks clarity and simplicity.

Legality as a structuring narrative frame. The Office of Negro Affairs (ONA) first constructed a narrative to combat the segregation logic by putting forth a counter logic around ideals such as justice, equality, and democracy.\(^\text{18}\) However, in its early stages, these ideals had

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\(^\text{18}\) W.J. Trent (Adviser on Negro Affairs) to Harold Ickes, Secretary (March 20, 1939) NARA NPS Central Classified File Shenandoah, Lands (General), Camp Sites, Box 1650
little resonance. As a result, this type of narrative did not gain adequate footing as to disrupt the status quo and advance their goal of racial integration. A new frame was necessary.

Department of the Interior’s Solicitor, Nathan R. Mangold, became an indispensable ally to ONA. Mangold, like Secretary Ickes, held such values as racial equality and integration, condemning instances of discrimination even within his own agency. Nevertheless, more than an ally, the Solicitor was a strategic tool that helped ONA craft and deploy a new frame with which to oppose racial segregation: legality. Framing the policy debate as a “matter of law” gave ONA a powerful rhetorical device to corrode most arguments upon which segregation was supported.

Legality was a formidable frame. As Silbey (2010, p. 474) argues, “law is not merely an instrument or tool working on social relations, but also a set of conceptual categories and schemata that help construct, compose, and interpret social relations.” An important interpretive authority this frame possesses is the demarcation between lawful and unlawful. Enacting this frame, the ONA and the Solicitor highlight these boundaries to maximize their effectiveness, especially given the profound institutionalization and structure of the U.S. legal infrastructure. Another important device of this frame is its close adherence to strongly held constitutional principles.

At the request of Solicitor Mangold, a legal analysis was to be performed to understand the legal implications of abandoning racial segregation. “Whether the United States Government should continue to follow this Virginia policy in the Shenandoah National Park or should modify the extent of segregation and discrimination or should abandon it entirely must, however, be critically examined with reference not only to the spirit of our democracy but also with regard to the legality of a nonsegregation policy and to the possibilities of the practical operation of such a
policy," asserted the assistant to the Solicitor, highlighting his focus on the *legality* of a change in policy. Following the logic that characterizes legal narratives he further argues for desegregation:

> It is clear therefore that the United States acting through the Secretary of the Interior is not prevented by its relations with the State of Virginia from exercising discretion in the regulation of racial relations within the Shenandoah National Park. Furthermore, even though the State of Virginia had positive laws requiring the segregation of races, those laws would not be effective within an area under the exclusive jurisdiction of the United States Government. Collins v. Yosemite Park and Curry Co., 304 U.S. 518 (May 31, 1938).20

This argument was intended to counter the “jurisdictional islands” construct upon which the NPS relied to support racial segregation. While the NPS sought to erase the boundaries of the park to mirror local customs and norms, the legal narrative of the ONA showed that such a practice was by choice, rather than legal mandate. A legal narrative along this line delegitimizes one of the founding rhetorical blocks upon which segregation was instituted and sustained.

Solicitor Margold further enhances the legalization of the narrative to disrupt segregation. “You have requested that I advise you on this matter from the viewpoint of both law and policy,” he writes to Secretary Ickes. He continues:

> The legal aspects of the problem are not complicated. Segregation, as proposed by the National Park Service, is constitutional and otherwise legal, provided that the facilities available to members of each race are in all respects equal. Consequently, I must advise you

19 Phineas Indritz to Solicitor Nathan Margold (January 12, 1939) NARA NPS Central Classified File Shenandoah, Lands (General), Camp Sites, Box 1650

20 Ibid

21 Solicitor Nathan R. Mangold to Secretary Harold Ickes (January 17, 1939) NARA NPS Central Classified File Shenandoah, Lands (General), Camp Sites, Box 1650
that the proposal made by the Park Service could be adopted without infringement on the constitution or other principle of law. I am constrained to add, however, that it appears from information now before me that the separate facilities now installed for the Negroes in Shenandoah National Park are by no means equal to those which have been installed for white people. It appears that the facilities for colored people are not as numerous, as adequate, as appealing or as well cared for as are those made available for whites. On the basis of that information it is, therefore, my conclusion that the segregation of the races as now practiced in the Shenandoah National Park constitutes an infringement of constitutional principles.22

The parsimony gained with this frame is evident in this text. Even when using a constitutional analysis, the Solicitor explains that the issue is not complicated and proceeds to delineate the requirements for constitutional compliance. *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) rendered racial segregation legal (King, 2007), but prescribed certain criteria for its legality (e.g., separate facilities must be equal). In his analysis, the Solicitor argues that the NPS does not comply with that constitutional requirement, and thus considers the practice illegal. This pronouncement is important because it empowers ONA’s rhetorical repertoire, which it later used strategically. For instance, armed with this frame, the Advisor on Negro Affairs, W. J. Trent, cautioned Secretary Ickes that “following local custom will involve the National Park Service in serious discriminatory practices. This arises from the fact that in states where separate facilities are required by law, it is also required that equal facilities must be provided. It is obvious that no such equality obtains.”23

22 Ibid

23 W. J. Trent to Secretary Ickes (March 20, 1939) NARA NPS Central Classified File Shenandoah, Lands (General), Camp Sites, Box 1650
The NPS initially objected, in a rather contradictory way, to the characterization that segregated facilities were not of the same quality. For instance, countering the Department’s impression, Shenandoah’s superintendent argued:

“…With regard to the Lewis Mountain Picnic Ground which has been developed for negro use, I wish to advise that the member of the Solicitor’s Office is in error when he says that I told him that the Lewis Mountain area is inferior in every respect to similar facilities provided for white people. In talking to him about this matter, I went over the various areas provided for the white people, and in some cases it is true that the aesthetic value of the location is superior to that of Lewis Mountain, but this is applicable only to Dickey Ridge and Sexton Knoll. Lewis Mountain has as good an outlook and as good surroundings, if not better, than Elkwallow or South River.

As for the facilities installed in the various areas, they are identical – that is, standard comfort stations, standard fireplaces, standard tables, standard walkways, standard drinking fountains, and hard-surfaced driveways and parking areas. Lewis Mountain is not as large as the other areas as it is not felt that facilities of equal size should be provided for a group which constitutes less than one percent of our total visitation.”  

In his response, the superintendent begrudgingly concedes that only facilities for whites, although not all of them, are aesthetically superior and larger than those of blacks. He, however, does not question that fact and, instead, reasons that the differing visitation volume accounts for such a discrepancy.

Later that year, and given the mounting pressure to address the inequity on park facilities for blacks, the superintendent was asked to bring more facilities closer to parity. In a memorandum stipulating the parameters of an agreed upon project, the superintendent “…agreed

24) J. R. Lassiter to Director Demaray (February 8, 1939) Shenandoah NP resource management records collection, 1880-1996, Box 30, Folder 1
to provide an additional room at both Panorama and Swift Run Gap for the exclusive use of negroes who desire dining facilities. These facilities,” he continued, “will render similar accommodations to the negroes at these points that the white people now enjoy.”

Thus, while initially the superintendent disagreed with the conclusion that park facilities differed in quality along racial lines, he later took measures to address –though never fully eradicate– that issue and appease, at least temporarily, officials from the Department.

Active representative actors engage in narrative construction to process and recompose the narratives that ascribe meaning to the policy conflict at hand. As shown above, narrative construction is an iterative process of probing with narrative constructs until an effective rhetorical device is found. In this case, ONA first employed constructs that were philosophically and ethically sophisticated (justice, equality, democracy), but that perhaps did not directly establish a connection to a powerful coercive force like that of the U.S. judiciary. As probing continued, legality – the force of law – was adopted as a frame to compose a narrative that advanced their strategic objectives. The adoption of this narrative was facilitated by the intimate involvement of the agency’s Office of the Solicitor, who serves as departmental legal adviser. Such a partnership was important not only for narrative construction, but also particularly during periods of conflict across offices within the Department of the Interior.

25 Superintendent to Director (April 6, 1939) Shenandoah NP resource management records collection, 1880-1996, Box 30, Folder 1
Strategy 2: Fighting Organizational Elites: Coalition Building and Conflict

The work of the Office of Negro Affairs (ONA) was characterized by conflict. Fighting the implementation of segregation laws – which were institutionalized through policy, practice, and signage – created camps of fervent opponents. In this setting, opposition to desegregation was led by Shenandoah’s superintendent (the highest-level park official), J. R. Lassiter. In the organizational structure of the National Park Service, park superintendents have significant latitude in the management of national parks. They are also involved in the policy-making process of policies to be implemented within the jurisdiction of their parks.\textsuperscript{26} Thus, by virtue of his role, Lassiter was in a position to effectively interfere with ONA’s efforts. He was mostly effective at voicing and enacting resistance. Others in high level positions at the NPS also resisted changes to the policy of racial segregation.\textsuperscript{27}

Active representation, as proposed above, is better understood as a political pursuit. As such, conflict is an inherent feature of this process. Differences over policy objectives and preferences fuel conflict. To maneuver around and manage conflict, ONA resorted in a set of strategies that it deployed tactically as events unfolded.

**Leveraging power and influence.** The ONA was politically expedient at maximizing the power and influence of key organizational actors. In large part, it needed to rely on others to achieve its goals, because ONA did not have any formal authority to set policy or control formal processes. Not only did ONA need a narrative with which to combat opposition, it also needed a

\textsuperscript{26} See for example Director Newton B. Drury to Superintendent Shenandoah (May 26, 1942), NARA RG 79 NPS Central Classified File Shenandoah, Lands (General), Camp Sites, Box 1650

\textsuperscript{27} See for example Regional Director, Region 1, to Director NPS (June 6, 1942), NARA RG 79 NPS Central Classified File 1933-1949 General, Box 378
sphere of influence to effect change. The Secretary, Assistant Secretary, and the Solicitor became the vehicles through which ONA directed its efforts.

On January 3, 1939, W. J. Trent, who then directed the ONA, learned of a conference with NPS’ superintendents to be held in Washington, D.C. two days later. “It is urgent that the question of the participation of Negro citizens in all of the benefits of the National Park Program be discussed fully and frankly,” he wrote to the Secretary requesting time to address the superintendents. Such a venue, he thought, “offers a very fine opportunity to present some points to the assembled officials.” The Assistant Secretary endorsed his participation, and finally the chairman of the conference agreed to allot time for W. J. Trent “to present his problem.” This conference was a major opportunity for ONA to influence park policy by appealing to the leadership of the NPS from across the U.S. Strategically, if park superintendents from other areas pressed NPS leadership to abandon its policy of racial segregation, ONA’s likelihood of success would have increased exponentially.

This strategic move, however, did not bear fruit. Assembled superintendents did not agree on a change in policy, rather they ratified the practice to follow local customs, even if they entailed racial segregation. In their report, superintendents stated:

It is recommended that, in providing accommodation for Negroes in National Park Service areas, the control, type and extent of accommodation conform to existing State laws, established customs of adjacent communities, and Negro travel demands.

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28 W.J. Trent to Secretary (January 3, 1939) NARA NPS Central Classified File 1933-1949, Box 10

29 Ibid

30 O. A. Tomlinson to Demaray (Assistant Secretary) (January 5, 1939), NARA NPS Central Classified File 1933-1949, Box 10

31 Recommendations of the National Park Superintendents’ Conference (January 1939), NARA RG 79 NPS Central Classified File 1933-1949, Box 9
Instead of creating the envisioned coalition of park superintendents to oppose the policy of racial segregation, it actually solidified such a policy. Indeed, the superintendents endorsed the rationale that the NPS had been using for enacting segregation. This action strengthened opposition to the ONA’s cause.

Another attempt to build an influential coalition to disrupt NPS’ policy was by involving the two U.S. Senators from Virginia, Harry F. Byrd and Carter Glass. Logically, pressure – or at least a pronouncement – against racial segregation from influential politicians of the state in question seemed an attractive strategic move. The Department of the Interior was very careful approaching politicians of that stature. The letter to request their involvement was drafted many times,\textsuperscript{32} for interpretation and persuasion were of great concern. To persuade the Senators, the final letter highlighted the protestation against the policy by blacks and the legal issues to consider, emphasizing that the Federal government need not follow state laws.\textsuperscript{33} “[T]he abolition of any policy of segregation is equally constitutional and legal since the United States, having exclusive jurisdiction in the management of the park, is not bound by either the laws or customs of Virginia,” expressed acting Secretary Burlew to the Senators.

The attempt to gain support from the Senators bore no fruit. Indeed, the Senators expressed unequivocal support to racial segregation within the park and questioned the veracity of the claims the Department made as well as their intentions to desegregate the park. Carter Glass threatened:

\textsuperscript{32} Acting Solicitor to Acting Secretary Burlew (February 27, 1939), NARA RG 79 NPS Central Classified File Shenandoah, Lands (General), Camp Sites, Box 1650

\textsuperscript{33} Acting Secretary Burlew to Senator Harry F. Byrd (March 6, 1939), NARA RG 79 NPS Central Classified File Shenandoah, Lands (General), Camp Sites, Box 1650
It is obvious that you are familiar with the segregation laws of the State of Virginia. Of course I completely approve these laws; and if the Interior Department desires to disregard them, either in fact or spirit, it will have to take full responsibility for any such remarkable proceeding.  

Such a vehement threat and support for segregation made ONA and the Department of the Interior realize that building a powerful and influential coalition with external stakeholders might be a risky endeavor, let alone highly conflictive. Attempts to gain outside supporters to effect policy change, then, were abandoned. After this incident, acting Secretary Burlew felt that they “have gone far enough” and to continue to engage in coalition building with external stakeholders “would stir up the subject to an undesirable point.”

Coalition building, in this context, is a strategy the ONA employed to gain adherents and create a powerful front to which their opponents would succumb. Simultaneously, a coalition that includes internal and external stakeholders could enhance ONA’s legitimacy, especially when supporters are esteemed or influential members of the organization or outsiders with similar characteristics. Furthermore, an effective coalition could expand its sphere of influence. For instance, ONA engaged in coalition building, in large part, to make desegregation the cause of many ‘others,’ not simply its own cause. However, coalition building, as seen above, is a highly contested process and, at times, counterproductive. The ONA’s effectiveness, nonetheless, depended upon their ability to gain supporters with enough influence to effect policy change.

34 Senator Carter Glass to acting Secretary Burlew (March 7, 1939), NARA RG 79 NPS Central Classified File Shenandoah, Lands (General), Camp Sites, Box 1650

35 Assistant Secretary to Associate Director NPS (March 15, 1939), NARA RG 79 NPS Central Classified File Shenandoah, Lands (General), Camp Sites, Box 1650
Due to ONA’s failure building powerful coalitions against racial segregation – first with NPS’ superintendents and later with U.S. Senators – it ceased insisting on such a strategy. Rather, it focused on leveraging the partnership it had already developed with the Secretary, Assistant Secretary, and the Solicitor. The quartet was highly effective at countering their major opponent, Superintendent Lassiter, and NPS’ leadership to press for incremental change. If desegregation was to be realized, ONA needed to seize institutionalization of small gains progressively.

**Strategy 3: Dismantling Racial Segregation: The Institutionalization of Gains**

The fight against segregation aimed at three specific aspects of its manifestation: policy, structural devices (e.g., signage), and practices. These three elements were intricately comingled. The demise of one resulted in the weakening of the others. Such a triangular arrangement meant that ONA could focus on the structural devices that made segregation a reality, while simultaneously weakening both policy and practice, for example. In other words, if segregation were to survive, it needed a perfectly aligned triangle with its three components intact. Without explicitly articulating the existence of this relationship, the ONA early on realized that deprived of a powerful coalition to effect rapid change, it needed to incrementally disintegrate the elements that made racial segregation possible.

Institutionalization of gains is a strategy that seeks to entrench in practice changes, usually small, that advance the overarching objective. In highly contested scenarios, gains can easily vanish if not institutionalized as policy, structure, or practice. Institutionalizing gains requires constant, consistent, and timely opportune pressing for desired changes. The process is highly contested given its political nature. Opposing camps attempt to interfere, delay, or entirely
disrupt each other’s gains. Thus, institutionalization occurs when these challenges are overcome and the policy, structure, or practice is adopted and normalized.

**Playing desegregation: Testing the waters.** Segregation, in large part, was founded upon principles and set of assumptions that were highly contested, but nonetheless effective at sustaining such a racial order (Omi & Winant, 1994). Strategically, the ONA was less effective at the discursive level because – even after adopting the legal frame – of the pervasiveness of segregation in the areas adjacent to the park. The ONA needed a different strategic move. Without abandoning entirely its rhetorical contestation, the ONA sought an institutional approach. Supporters of segregation, as shown above, argued that it was an institutional necessity – desegregation signifying disorder and instability.\(^{36}\) Opponents of segregation sought to experiment with these assumptions.

On March 24, 1939, Secretary Ickes summoned to his office Assistant Secretary Burlew, Assistant Secretary Chapman, W.J. Trent from the ONA, Col. White, and NPS’ Associate Director Demaray. Secretary Ickes was undoubtedly on the side of equality and integration, as evidenced throughout his prior work with the Chicago NAACP, but it was W.J. Trent who guided the bureaucratic maneuvering to dismantle segregation. However, Trent did not possess the political capital and authority to direct changes in policy and practice; thus he continued to leverage Secretary Ickes’ authority. In this meeting, they were going to explore the possibility of finding a middle ground, so to speak, a way to corroborate whether the preoccupations espoused by those who favored segregation were founded.\(^{37}\)

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\(^{36}\) Mr. Evison to Director NPS (June 6, 1942), NARA RG 79 NPS Central Classified File 1933-1949 General, Box 378

\(^{37}\) Associate Director Demaray to Director NPS (March 25, 1939), NARA RG 79 NPS Central Classified File Shenandoah, Lands (General), Camp Sites, Box 1650
Writing to the Director of the National Park Service, Demaray explained the group’s decision:

[I]n Shenandoah National Park, we were to select one large picnic area, most conveniently located, and permit both races to use it. No signs indicating race segregation within the picnic grounds or in the comfort stations are to be permitted within this area. In all other picnic and campground areas in Shenandoah, signs are to indicate that they are for Negro and white visitors…Superintendent Lassiter was directed to come to Washington Monday for a conference on a selection of the picnic ground to be open to all comers.38

Segregation, as institutional arrangement, was going to be tested. This, naturally, was not to be construed as a prelude to the dismantling of segregation. However, if successful, it was the beginning of its de-institutionalization process.

The experiment, which took place at Pinnacles campground, was so successful that Assistant Secretary Burlew demanded the NPS to consider desegregating more areas on an experimental basis. In the experiment, they did not witness the type of clash or racially motivated violence that proponents of segregation had predicted. It seemed as though there was a change in actual behaviors. As a result, desegregation began to be incrementally institutionalized.

“[A]ssistant Secretary Burlew has requested that the Park Service give serious consideration to opening…other picnic and campground areas in Shenandoah National Park to both the Negroes and white people before the opening of the next season” wrote NPS’ acting Director Demaray to Taylor, chief of engineering. The acting Director corresponded with Taylor, asking him to conduct a study on visitation patterns of African-Americans to recommend how and to what extent the NPS was going to desegregate other facilities within the park.

38 Ibid.
In his study, Taylor observes that “[t]he Superintendent [of Shenandoah] advises against much more common use of areas at this time. He thinks that in time there could be more common use without difficulty, but that it must come gradually. The Superintendent thinks that there must be segregation in dining rooms and for lodging.”

Institutionalization of gains, i.e., desegregation, was faced with contestation. Such a contestation is manifested through resistance and dilatory tactics.

Taylor’s discourse is cautionary. Upon assessing the current state of the park and visitation patterns, he points out: “I think it would be well to try out one other picnic area for common use, but I do not wholly favor the use of any of the four existing areas now intended for whites. The Dickey Ridge Picnic Ground is much used by people from Front Royal who would strenuously object to common use.”

Echoing Superintendent Lassiter, he concludes that he thinks “there should be segregation in dining rooms and lodging.” The report expressed a negative outlook for furthering desegregation. It also highlighted the fact that visitation among blacks on average was around 1.05% in 1939 and 1.07% in 1940 of total visitation.

Despite Taylor’s recommendation to proceed cautiously with the desegregation program, Assistant Secretary Burlew further presses for a complete de-institutionalization of segregation, drawing conclusions from the very same report. Newton B. Drury, NPS’ Director, explained to Superintendent Lassiter:

39 Mr. Taylor (January 23, 1941), A report on developments for public use in Shenandoah National Park with particular reference to racial use. NARA RG 79 NPS Central Classified File Shenandoah, Lands (General), Camp Sites, Box 1650

40 Ibid

41 Ibid

42 Ibid
[I]t has been agreed [between NPS’ Director and Burlew] in view of the small percentage of negro [sic] visitors, slightly over one percent of the total visitation, and the further fact that in the picnic areas designated for white use only there has been some use of these picnic grounds by negroes that during the coming year no segregation will be exercised in any of the picnic grounds.

This decision is made on the understanding that it is experimental for the coming year, that negro use will be carefully observed, and that no publicity or statements will be given out locally regarding this decision. No other change is contemplated at this time as present arrangements at the various operator’s units appear to be working out satisfactorily.

With regard to campground use, apparently no negro campers have been observed and should negroes arrive with camping equipment they should be directed to the Lewis Mountain campground.43

Assistant Secretary Burlew pressed for a different reading of the Taylor report. While Superintendent Lassiter and Taylor himself strongly recommended a gradual, incremental process of change – especially given the seemingly lack of visitation among blacks – Burlew put forth a different interpretation to further institutionalize desegregation. In his view, the reported lack of visitation made a stronger case for desegregation, countering Lassiter and Taylor. With the success of the initial experiment, Burlew gained confidence at using his power and authority to press for increased desegregation. Desegregation now took an exponential turn.

**Erasing boundaries: A war on signage.** An important device that institutionalized segregation was signage. Physical demarcation of spaces along racial lines was an effective tool for enforcing separation and racial hierarchy, as the places reserved for “Whites” were more

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43 Newton B. Drury NPS’ Director to Superintendent Lassiter (February 25, 1941), NARA RG 79 NPS Central Classified File Shenandoah, Lands (General), Camp Sites, Box 1650
numerous, better cared for, and of greater natural value.\textsuperscript{44} These signs demarcated the boundaries to which the races were to submit within the park. Therefore, it was imperative that the de-institutionalization of segregation includes eliminating the infrastructure that sustained it. Disrupting such an infrastructure weakened other factors that made segregation possible.

The first disruption to the signage program was subtle – yet significant – in nature; it sought to diminish its discursive power. Areas designated for whites were delineated with signs that read: “For White Only.” The usage of the word “only,” its directedness and absoluteness were the source of contention. The word “only” evokes a sense of declaration, unequivocality, and rigidity; indeed, an effective discursive device. The ONA sought to change the signs to read simply “White,” along with a change in size. Smaller signs were, naturally, less conspicuous and, potentially, less effective.

These efforts were countered with fierce resistance and contestation. “Reference is made to your memorandum of July 6 relative to the proposal to change the ‘For White Only’ signs to read ‘White,’”\textsuperscript{45} wrote an outraged Superintendent Lassiter to the NPS’ Director challenging the logics and effectiveness of such a change.

I believe that what we need is more and bigger “For White Only” signs. We are continually having Negroes in the white picnic grounds, and I enclose herewith copy of report of an incident at Big Meadows Picnic Ground last Sunday... So far the mingling of the races has only brought criticism from the white, and the separation has brought criticism from the black.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{44} Phineas Indritz to Solicitor (January 12, 1939), NARA RG 79 NPS Central Classified File Shenandoah, Lands (General), Camp Sites, Box 1650
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{45} Superintendent Lassiter to NPS’ Director (August 1, 1940), NARA RG 79 NPS Central Classified File Shenandoah, Lands (General), Camp Sites, Box 1650
\end{flushright}
I think the best policy to pursue is definite segregation, either by separate areas or by setting aside a portion of each area for Negroes…

Of course, with our present attitude of providing a Negro area and not advertising it, we merely aggravate the situation. I still don’t understand how a Negro is to know that there is a place in the Park for him if we are afraid to publish such a fact…

It seems to me that we are making a mountain out of a mole hill in becoming excited every time a high-toned Negro files a complaint about segregation of races. Non-segregation may be all right for some people in some sections, but I think non-segregation in the south will work to the disadvantage of the southern Negro, although it might be to the advantage of the rare Negro tourist.

To the proposal for changing the size of all signs demarcating racial segregation, Superintendent Lassiter countered, “It is not possible under our present appropriation to provide a ranger for each one of our developed areas to direct parties to their proper areas; and since this matter must be handled by signs, they must be large enough and conspicuous enough to accomplish the purpose.”\(^46\) To such defiance, Burlew turned to the ONA for guidance and counsel. “I am at a loss as to what the next step should be,”\(^47\) Burlew confided to W.J. Trent. Contestation, as these actors well know, cannot be confronted with brute force, but rather strategically – in a pondered, yet assertive fashion.

The ONA pressed for the dismantling of signs incrementally. Taking advantage of the reported lack of visitation, the ONA, acting through Burlew, suggested eliminating signs which presumably serve no purpose. “According to Mr. Taylor’s report there are ‘White Only’ signs at

\(^46\) Superintendent Lassiter to Director (September 16, 1940), NARA RG 79 NPS Central Classified File Shenandoah, Lands (General), Camp Sites, Box 1650

\(^47\) Assistant Secretary Burlew to W.J. Trent (September 23, 1940), NARA RG 79 NPS Central Classified File Shenandoah, Lands (General), Camp Sites, Box 1650
Elk Wallow, South River, and the proposed Pond Branch picnic grounds,” wrote NPS’ Director to superintendent Lassiter. “These signs should be taken down,” he ordered. Not all signs, however, were taken down; the signs at Big Meadows and Lewis Mountain were to be retained. Nonetheless, the institutionalization of desegregation continued its incremental progress.

The elimination of signs did not result in the anticipated fiasco Superintendent Lassiter warned against, except few rare incidents of visitors concerned with the lack of identification, according to Lassiter. Thus, on May 22, 1942, after discussing the matter with W.J. Trent, Assistant Secretary Burlew fired off a memorandum to NPS’ Director requesting extending desegregation once and for all across Shenandoah, and potentially other southern parks. The experiments proved successful and most physical infrastructure was already eliminated, therefore, the next logical step seemed total desegregation. The Director of the NPS requested another study to proceed cautiously with the new demand. At this juncture, however, the pillars that sustained the park segregationist program were so weak (no signs and most areas already desegregated) that such a study was more pro forma than influential for policy-making. The infrastructure that sustained racial segregation had been disintegrated. However, it is important to note that it is not completely clear when actual behavioral change toward integration within the park took effect. As late as 1948, six years after Burlew’s memorandum demanding

48 Newton B. Drury NPS’ Director to Superintendent Lassiter (February 25, 1941), NARA RG 79 NPS Central Classified File Shenandoah, Lands (General), Camp Sites, Box 1650

49 Ibid

50 Superintendent Lassiter to NPS’ Director (August 1, 1940), NARA RG 79 NPS Central Classified File Shenandoah, Lands (General), Camp Sites, Box 1650

51 Newton B. Drury to Superintendent Shenandoah (May 26, 1942), NARA RG 79 NPS Central Classified File Shenandoah, Lands (General), Camp Sites, Box 1650
desegregation, once and for all, the Department of the Interior continued to receive complaints of informal segregation. The nature of such complaints suggests that the broader local racial animus continued to spill over into the park, and that actual behavioral change required more time to be realized. Also, and ironically, as the pillars of segregation in Shenandoah were being dismantled, the Department of the Interior continued to practice racial segregation in its own workplace until the Brown case was decided in 1954 (King, 1999).

The ONA maneuvered around contestation strategically, institutionalizing small gains. This incremental and gradual, yet assertive, approach seems effective in highly conflictive environments. As a political actor, the ONA seized opportune occasions to embed incremental gains into policy, structure, and practice. Desegregation, as cultural and material manifestation, was much more arduous to realize through a drastic change in policy, given the decentralization of the organizational structure and the local environment in which the park was embedded. Institutionalization of gains, at a macro level, ensured the progressivity of the change process and its stability along the way.

**The Dynamics of Active Representation From an Institutional Logics Perspective**

As Hale (1999) carefully chronicles, Jim Crow laws effectively added the force of law to the existing culture of racial segregation in the South of the late 19th Century and first half of the 20th Century. There were other rituals (e.g., public lynching, mob violence) that further solidified a culture that demanded the supremacy of the white race. Such a culture prescribed the nature of racial relations in a racially segregated South. As such, they regulated the material practices and values along racial lines (racial formation) and, therefore, constituted the societal institutional

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See Special Assistant to the Secretary to Chief of Lands and Recreational Planning NPS [December 28, 1948] NARA NPS Central Classified File Shenandoah, Lands (General), Camp Sites, Box 1650.
logics at the time. The segregation and equality (its counter logic) are institutional logics because, as Besharov & Smith (2014, p. 366) argue, they provided “a coherent set of organizing principles” that informs social and organized life. Once the NPS was confronted with the segregation institutional logic, it unraveled an internal political contest intended to settle the conflict between the logic to which the local community adhered and that of the senior leadership of the NPS. This internal dynamic is best understood when analyzed as a form of active representation. In this case, members of the organization as part of their organizational responsibilities performed this type of representation consciously and deliberately – and their behavior was sanctioned by organizational elites. In an environment plagued with conflict over policy objectives, these actors deploy a set of strategic tools to accomplish their mission. Three main strategies emerged from data analysis: narrative construction, coalition building, and institutionalization of gains. They engage in narrative construction to process, compose, and recompose the rhetorical apparatus of the policy debate. This strategy aims at dismantling the logics and coherence of the opposing narrative. Coalition building is pursued to leverage their power and influence vis-a-vis the relative power of their contenders. Recruiting allies, especially influential members of the organization, strengthens their capacity for effecting logic change. Finally, institutionalization of gains is employed as a mechanism to embed gradual change into policy, structure, or practice. This strategy structures the progressive course of the policy change at hand. Table 1 provides a summary of the three strategic actions; definitions were drawn from the data.

Despite the discussion of these strategic actions in an orderly fashion, it is important to highlight that the data do not suggest such an order. Instead, as events unfold, strategies are deployed opportunistically, at times simultaneously, and iteratively. At a higher level, they comprise
an amalgam of strategic actions that are mutually dependent and mutually reinforcing. For instance, in the case herein analyzed, the coalition between the ONA and the legal arm of the Department of the Interior allowed for the construction and adoption of a stronger narrative repertoire around a legal theme.

Table 1: *Active Representative Actor's Strategic Approach*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Action</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Intent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narrative construction</td>
<td>The process of composing and/or recomposing a rhetorical apparatus</td>
<td>To put forth an opposing understanding of the policy debate in a compelling fashion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition building</td>
<td>The process of establishing partnerships or networks with internal and external stakeholders</td>
<td>To leverage power and influence, thereby enhancing capacity to effect policy change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutionalization of gains</td>
<td>The process of embedding in policy, structure, or practice desired goals</td>
<td>To ensure progression of the policy change as well as to structure such a process</td>
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</table>

**Conclusion**

This chapter presented a model in which racial formation within the NPS was shaped by the external institutional logics (i.e., racial segregation / equality). It shows how the various forces of the environment (the institutional logics) in which the organization is embedded created an internal contest to counter and respond to the prevailing logic of the state government. This process was characterized by conflict, politics, contestation, and the deployment of myriad
strategic efforts intended to diminish the dominance of the opposing logic. The Office of Negro Affairs, in this case, was an example of active representation as it led most of the efforts to combat the segregation logic.

The next two chapters further explore the interaction of institutional logics at different levels and through different mechanisms. Chapter VII puts forth a theoretical framework for understanding these dynamics.
Chapter V:
The Emergence of Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity as Institutional Logics

Introduction

The previous chapter analyzed how racial formation unraveled within the National Park Service in response to the two overarching institutional logics of that period: racial segregation versus integration. Bureaucratic actors in Shenandoah National Park, led by its Superintendent, sought to institutionalize racial segregation as NPS practice in places where segregation was a local custom – one of many ways in which they justified the practice. They effectively racially segregated Shenandoah for several years, but were confronted by NPS’ leadership, and that of the Department of the Interior, who favored the integration logic. The bureaucratic dynamic of racial formation that ensued mirrored the larger societal dichotomy (north vs. south) about the meaning of race as, among other things, indicator of one’s place in society.

The way in which the NPS faced an explicit and profound encounter with issues of race makes the Shenandoah case an ideal starting point for studying the dynamics of racial formation from an institutional logics perspective. This is because it brought to the surface what are often tacit constructs, like the meaning of race, how these constructs inform organizational action, and how they are shaped by larger institutional logics. As explained before, however, institutional logics change (Besharov & Smith, 2014) because they are the byproduct of complex socio-historical phenomena that are in constant flux. Therefore, racial formation in the NPS did not end when Shenandoah was integrated – when one logic prevailed over the other one.

While, as in Shenandoah, the NPS had ceased for the most part the practice of racial segregation in the late 1930s, the NPS continued to racially discriminate in other aspects of
organizational life (e.g., hiring, promotion, performance management) (King, 2007). In fact, as King (2007) documents, in the 1940s and 1950s it was fairly common for Federal agencies to engage in acts of racial discrimination with a large degree of impunity. It was very common, for example, for managers to use unfounded pretexts to pass over blacks in promotion actions (Gooding, 2013; King 2007).

Since the Presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR), and due to pressure from the civil rights movement, all Presidents have issued executive orders to reduce discrimination in employment (Gooding, 2013). For instance, FDR issued executive order 8802 to create the “Fair Employment Practice Committee” in response to demands from the March on Washington Movement led by A. Phillip Randolph (Gooding, 2013)53. Such broad and far-reaching civic activism, in effect, gave form to the next wave of institutional logics that shaped racial formation in the NPS: equal opportunity and affirmative action

Equal opportunity and affirmative action became the law of the land upon the passage of the Civil Rights Act (CRA) of 1964 to end racial discrimination in employment. Even though the act did not apply to the public employment context (Kellough, 2003), the CRA brought significant impetus to the anti-discrimination movement in public bureaucracies. In 1972, Congress enacted the Equal Employment Opportunity Act (EEOA). The EEOA essentially extended the protections laid out in the CRA to Federal, state, and local government employees (Kellough & Rosenbloom, 1992).

The term Equal Employment Opportunity refers to the obligation laid out by law that workplaces be free from discrimination based on legally established protected classes such as

53 An in-depth discussion on the civil rights movement and how it influenced Federal Government practices and policies is beyond the scope of this study. For such an analysis, see King’s (2007) work.
race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, disability, or genetic information. In contrast, affirmative action\textsuperscript{54} refers to the set of practices and policies put in place to actively recruit, hire, retain, and promote women, minorities, individuals with disability, and veterans. Therefore, while EEO is meant to prevent and remedy workplace discrimination, affirmative action is intended to increase minority representation in the organization.

The CRA and EEOA put forth a framework for managing race and racial relations in Federal bureaucracies. However, as Dobbin (2009) thoroughly documents, such a framework was significantly vague in practical terms. For instance, while the law and executive orders asked agencies to take “affirmative actions” to reverse the effects of past discrimination, it did not define how they were supposed to do so (Dobbin & Sutton, 1998). Indeed, the concept of affirmative action itself was left undefined, even though agencies were asked to submit affirmative action plans (Dobbin, 2009). Thus, whereas the overarching goal of the EEOA was somewhat clear (i.e., to eradicate racial discrimination from all aspects of personnel decisions), it left significant latitude for agencies to figure out how to make sense of and implement its requirements.

Dobbin’s (2009) work shows that due to the vagueness in the law described above, HR and EEO offices were strengthened and led efforts within organizations to institute programs intended to address underrepresentation of minority groups. In his well-documented analysis, Dobbin (2009) illustrates how these offices gave meaning to, and instituted in practice, the

\textsuperscript{54} Affirmative action is no longer used in the federal employment context. Instead, federal agencies are required to submit an annual report to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM)—who in turn submits an overall report to Congress—detailing the demographic distribution of the agency and their efforts or best practices to increase minority representation. This is called the Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program (FEORP), which Congress required by statute 5 U.S.C. 7201.
ambiguous mandates of the law. In line with this work, this chapter studies affirmative action and equal opportunity as a new wave of institutional logic that prescribed new meaning to – and created new organizational practices to structure – racial formation in the NPS.

**Structuring Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity**

*A new system of meaning.* When I began my fieldwork a few employees who had been in the HR and EEO offices for a long time were very excited about my project. One of them in the HR office was about to conclude her forty-first anniversary with the Federal government, 38 of which she spent in the NPS. The others had also spent at least 32 years with the organization. “I’m glad you’re looking into this,” confided one informant in reference to my questions about the past. “People today don’t know how we got here – how it was back then.” I was fortunate to have encountered individuals with crucial institutional memory to reconstruct the nuances of how changing institutional logics influenced organizational action.

*Interviewee:* You have to understand that affirmative action was kind of a dirty word – most employees didn’t even like the EEO office. But back then we were 99 percent white, [laughter] or close to it.

*Researcher:* But why do you say it was like a dirty word? would you elaborate?

*Interviewee:* Sure! When the whole affirmative action thing started, many people thought it was like giving preference to black people. That we were coming up with programs to favor them at the expense of our white employees. I always heard these complaints from white employees, they were a bit mad with the program, because for blacks we were just doing the right thing;

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55 The total sample was comprised of 8 employees from EEO, three of which had retired; 4 employees from HR; and 7 from other parts of the organization outside EEO and HR. Nine employees were black, two Hispanics, and six were white. There were 10 females and seven males. Overall, black females were overrepresented in both EEO and HR departments, when compared to their representation in other parts of the organization and the U.S. population writ large.
they actually wanted us to do more! [laughter] But because whites were the majority we had to be careful about how we talked about affirmative action. It was generally unpopular. And even among ourselves in EEO it was tricky because we wanted to pretend there was this colorblindness to the work we did. But the affirmative action program required us to develop plans, set some targets, and you had to measure progress. I guess the point of it was to increase the number of minorities coming in to the Park Service [as employees], or at least applying to our jobs. [black female in EEO]

Another interviewee explained:

The way I looked at affirmative action was: you came from slavery, then you had a whole lot of laws to segregate black people. So, affirmative action was a way to level the playing field. Blacks were denied jobs because they were black, [also] promotions. You look right now, how many blacks are in leadership positions in this organization? Look at the front office. So back then white people in the field [assigned to park units] thought they were being passed over, that blacks or people of color were taking their jobs or were given extra points. But affirmative action was not about that, but it was perceived that way.

Researcher: let me interrupt you, briefly, so what was affirmative action about then?

Interviewee: good question [long pause]. You know, it was really hard to explain affirmative action. We didn’t have a consensus as to what it was supposed to mean so we had to be careful what we said and how we said it. People were very sensitive and words were taken literally and sometimes people read too much into memos or what we said in the EEO office. We were constantly paranoid about how our white employees would receive this message or that message. A lot of the work was done quietly in headquarters and regional offices, we were very careful not to communicate a lot of what we did to employees broadly. They would’ve taken things out of context. But to answer your question, I think affirmative action was the government’s response to the many years of discrimination against minorities. Affirmative action was supposed to fix it, and we tried our best. But if you asked me for a definition, it’s hard to define because it meant different things depending on who you asked. It was kind of strange at first because people were giving all kinds of definitions, and as leadership changed, so did the definition or even the approach. Some regions put together affirmative action committees to figure it out, others had more of a top-down approach where the regional
director decided what to do. We were pretty much all over the map initially. But you need to realize, this was a major change. We were technically segregated, even here in Washington, and not only did we have to integrate, we had to take some extra steps. And managers didn’t know what those extra steps were supposed to be. It was more than a 180-degree change, because not only did we have to stop discriminating based on race, but we had to go out of our way, and show we were going out of our way, to bring people of color to the Park Service. [black male in EEO]

“At first I was very confused,” shared another informant, “with the whole concept of affirmative action. It wasn’t clear to me.” She continued: “we had a hard time agreeing on a definition as employees were asking, and senior leadership was looking to us to provide that kind of advice. But we were not getting much help from the Department [of the Interior] or the EEOC – depending on who you asked you got a different answer. It was very frustrating.”

Throughout my interviews, affirmative action initially emerged as a shift, but it was not clear to what. As evidenced in the quotes above, it was initially an arduous concept to define; informants could “see it, but [they] couldn’t put their finger on it,” as one of them characterized those early days. Consistent with Dobbin’s (2009) study, perhaps given that the executive order that set forth affirmative action was plagued with ambiguity and gaps, the early phase consisted of defining, or making sense of, the emergent logic.

Given that the NPS was expected to develop and implement a set of reparative actions to increase minority representation based on its affirmative action plan, those actions helped give form to the meaning attached to the program. That is, the broader affirmative action logic of action prescribed a set of scripts that, in turn, helped organizational members better make sense of the affirmative action program, in a self-fulfilling prophecy fashion. The main three overarching scripts could be referred to as palliative (i.e., actions were intended to address the symptom –lack of minority representation–not necessarily its causes), strategic (i.e., actions
were intended to be driven and informed by goals derived from analysis), and recursive (i.e., actions were intended to progress in such a way as to become routine). These scripts signaled the conditions for action. An interviewee explained this process as follows:

...you know, Rick, we weren’t too much concerned about affirmative action per se, you can call it whatever you want, we just knew what needed to be done. We knew where we had been and where we needed to go, where we needed to be. We weren’t hung up on whether ‘it meant this or it meant that.’ We needed to roll up our sleeves and get to work. So we started doing that. White employees probably would’ve liked us to engage forever in a discussion on what we were going to do and why, but we just started to do some things. We had to produce reports with our numbers, how many minorities were in the organization, sometimes by region, and what we were going to do to increase the numbers. We had brainstorming sessions – many with employees outside the EEO office – and we came up with really good ideas. That’s how we tackled this whole affirmative action thing. The question was: what were you going to do to increase the number of minorities in the organization? The answer to that question was the affirmation action program. That’s what it was.

*Researcher:* but why do you think the other way around, coming up with a program scope first, a way to define what it is you’ll do, why was it so hard?

*Interviewee:* people had all kinds of ways of looking at it. So, we realized, to be in compliance, we had to start doing something. You have to start somewhere, especially with something of this magnitude. Remember, Rick, not every employee wanted affirmative action to succeed, so we had to do things we could later point to. So, when people complained about the concept in the abstract, we could point to what we had done or a concrete example that would show them what the whole thing was all about.

[black female in EEO]

As actions began to take place and be more visible, employees began to rationalize the new paradigm. “I had a few employees come to me asking why there was so much emphasis on assisting minorities succeed, but not them” a manager recalled as he was explaining to me how affirmative action was implemented. “For many white employees, especially males, we were
choosing winners and losers. They felt as if we were taking something away from them – a right of some sort, or something they were entitled to. It was really hard to confront those questions. I didn’t know what to say, and many of my colleagues didn’t either.” This experience with white employees was told over and over as employees and managers alike shared with me their recollection of how affirmative action was seen and understood by the workforce, who at the time was overwhelmingly comprised of white men. Words like “favoritism,” “unfair advantage,” and “privilege” were associated with the program by this segment of the workforce – developing a counter narrative that defined what affirmative action signified to them. Indeed, one manager, who at the time of implementing affirmative action was a lower level employee, confided that many of his peers “saw affirmative action as an affront. We thought of it as an illegitimate way of some groups getting their way. It was hurtful to watch all the attention go in one direction. Over time we kind of got used to it.”

Those in the HR and EEO offices had to carefully navigate the conflicts inherent with the program as they were crafting what it was supposed to mean and be through action. “Our job was to figure out ways to invite and embrace potential employees of color. For God’s sake, they couldn’t even apply before this [affirmative action] came along! Or if they did they weren’t being hired; so the result was the same.” Such open and welcoming response stemming out of the HR and EEO offices was an important feature of the new logic. “If we wanted to see results, we had to start doing things differently,” explained one interviewee highlighting the call to action and necessity to bring the program to life through action. As other informants put it:

Interviewee: ...and all of a sudden, Rick, affirmative action became about recruitment, retention, and promotion for the most part. So if we wanted to do affirmative action, we had to work on those three areas, and we told managers that. If you want to work on this you have to do something about those three areas. To give you an example, some regions organized workgroups, we love
workgroups here [laughter] – they had to come up with the strategies. So, for example, all of a sudden you had people going out to universities, minority serving universities – people were going out. That’s something that started with this, we always thought that, like our park visitors, applicants had to come to us. But no, we started to go out to talk about the Park Service, what we do, the jobs we hire for. All that. It was quite amazing because no one from the Department [of the Interior] or any other agency, I think, told us we had to do that. That came out some of the brainstorming sessions we had. And then regions that were lagging a bit behind started to adopt what others were doing, some of the things that came out of this [EEO] office in headquarters. [white female in EEO]

Interviewee: To be honest with you, I think the main thing about affirmative action was the recruitment issue; and actually, promotion too because we saw minorities were stuck at the lower grade levels. So, it was mainly those two things that drove a lot of what we did. If we were going to address the overwhelming underrepresentation of minorities, we had to focus on those areas. And we did. Although [laughter] you probably don’t think we accomplished much by looking around. Our SESers [senior executives] are mostly white men [...] but regardless, a lot of work went into the affirmative action program.

Researcher: how did you guys decide what to focus on, what to work on? You mentioned recruitment and promotion, why those areas, and what else did you do if anything?

Interviewee: Well, we had to do something, you know, and at that time not a lot was coming out of the EEOC, so even the Department [of the Interior] didn’t have a clear idea of what we were supposed to do. So, we frankly did what made sense to us. I mean, this is not rocket science. If you want to fix the lack of representation, you have to bring people in. That was clear, but what wasn’t clear was what we could and could not do. And we were walking a fine line trying not to piss off white men too much – that would’ve killed the program. So, it was a lot of testing, this notion of recruitment was new to a lot of us. Back in the day, people just applied to job announcements that were kept in the lobby of the building. Or they knew someone, or someone told them there was a job open. When affirmative action came about, we started to question a lot of those things. At the park level, you’d see generation after generation of family members working in the same park. It was common back then to see that. And we thought that was one of the things that kept this organization so white. So
now that we had to think about these things, it was eye opening. Then, how do you fix it? For us, recruitment was a big part of the answer. [Hispanic female in EEO]

_Interviewee_: We were not going to achieve anything if we didn’t have the recruitment piece in there. It [affirmative action] had to be mostly about that. And we pretty much agreed on that. There’s no debate about that. We also talked about promotion because we wanted to see minorities at all levels – and we wanted the workforce to see that too. But recruitment had to come first, and be front and center. You can’t promote what you don’t have! [black female in EEO]

_Interviewee_: Honestly, I would’ve preferred we’d come out and flat out said we were doing the right thing to do. I don’t like to sugarcoat things and employees needed to know that it [affirmative action] was necessary. I brought this up in many meetings but the majority felt it was abrasive, you know, and they didn’t want to be blunt. The work was kind of clandestine at first, not a lot of visibility to it. So I had to go along, I wasn’t a manager or anything like that so I had no choice. I would’ve pushed for a more drastic approach, but they didn’t want to. So, they said, we need to hire more minorities.

_Researcher_: When you say you would have liked to see a more drastic approach, what do you mean?

_Interviewee_: I looked at the whole thing as the government giving us, I think Ford was president then and then Carter – they were giving us the green light to think outside the box. The few minorities we had, I said let’s put them on a fast track to leadership jobs. But they didn’t think management would’ve approved that. So we came up with a couple of things that were good, but to me they didn’t go far enough. Hiring was the biggest thing, but it was like we were trying to have minorities apply, they weren’t guaranteed a job. So, we weren’t that effective, I said: minorities should be considered first. But they kept telling me managers weren’t ready to be told how to hire. That made me mad because managers were the ones that had been discriminating in the first place.

_Researcher_: How do you think your approach would have been received?

_Interviewee_: That was their point. They didn’t think it was going to work because the whole thing was not well liked to begin with. So,
they said, you want to create more backlash. Being a black woman I wanted to see change right away, but they thought it was too abrupt. And I understood their point. I mean, I wanted it to work. So that’s why we started to focus on hiring. We started soft, though, a bit too soft for me. But, hey, at least we were doing something to fix the, the issues we had – and that was better than what we had before that. [black female in HR]

The quotes above further show how affirmative action was defined and translated into action. Recruitment –hiring more racial minorities–became the principal strategic action around which EEO and HR employees coalesced. Opening employment opportunities to racial minorities, therefore, became its defining component.

As Dobbin (2009) explains in his institutional analysis, affirmative action had to be constructed within organizations because there was no specificity as to how it was supposed to be implemented. Affirmative action, then, took multiple forms as organizational members drew from their local realities to shape it into strategic actions and programs. My interviews consistently report a similar phenomenon. Professionals in the HR and EEO fields had to assemble a response to the vaguely defined affirmative action requirements. In doing so, they took cues from their local context to inform what to focus on – which later became to be known as their affirmative action program.

As the data above suggest, the new affirmative action logic presented a panoply of organizational challenges and opportunities that, up until this point, had not been directly addressed. As Ocasio (2011) argues, changing institutional logics changes the attentional devices of organizations. As new elements are attended to, they begin to inform the meanings attached to organizational phenomena. In this case, affirmative action provided the raw materials, a lens through which organizational members began to question their practices and organize a response.
A few realizations began to give form to how organizational members, particularly within HR and EEO, made sense of the new logic. First, they realized that no one above them (i.e., Congress, White House, Department of the Interior) was going to explicitly articulate what affirmative action meant and how it was going to be implemented. As many remarked: “we had to figure it out,” “you got a different answer depending on who you asked,” “it wasn’t clear.” They were not used to this much change coming without a carefully prescribed set of implementation steps or guiding principles. They interpreted it as a license to innovate, to do things they had never done before; especially because they were seemingly committed to seeing affirmative action succeed. Secondly, they realized there was a clear call to action. Something needed to be done, even when it was not clear what. Many referred to this as: “we had to do something,” “we couldn’t just wait and see,” “we needed to start somewhere.” Thirdly, they realized there were significant threats to the program that could jeopardize its existence or success. These threats needed to be taken seriously as they approached their work; thus, they did not engage in significant risk-taking. Examples of this realization include: “we had to be careful,” “this was unpopular,” “white employees complained.” Together, this set of realizations served as boundaries that delineated the contours of what affirmative action became to mean.

Because actions drove affirmative action’s meaning-making process, three overarching practices defined much of what the program meant: recruitment, promotion, and, to a lesser extent, retention. These three areas served to guide much of the strategizing and practices that were implemented within the organization. While the previous institutional logic was largely about racial relations, affirmative action was constructed around the issue of representation.
Affirmative Action in Practice

Racial categorization and numeric representation. Although racial categorization for measurement purposes in the U.S. began with the Census Bureau (Humes & Hogan, 2009), there was never a concerted effort at categorizing and quantifying Federal employees prior to the CRA for management purposes.

The Civil Service Commission, and later the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, made it mandatory for Federal agencies to collect data on their racial make-up for reporting purposes and upon which they were supposed to create their affirmative action plans. As explained above, this is how the EEO program was created and its various functions designed.

In a memorandum to all park superintendents in 1969, Director George Hartzog summarized the outcome of a meeting on the Department’s approach to the nascent EEO program:

I am very pleased to be able to share with each of you Secretary Hickel’s statement regarding the Department’s position on the EEO program. This statement was made before a meeting of Bureau Directors and Equal Employment Opportunity Officers, and the Secretary left no doubt in our minds that he expected top management to get personally involved in seeing that the EEO program in Interior becomes a successful program. Accordingly, I expect each of you to be personally involved in implementing the Secretary’s guidelines. I want particularly to call your attention to the following excerpts, which express clear and positive actions expected by the Secretary:

‘I expect more effort to see that this situation is changed.’

‘It is unacceptable to me.’

‘I am not looking for excuses.’

‘And again I say, I am not looking for tokenism. I am looking for results.’
‘I am asking that each of you take a good hard look into your own in-house employment programs. Furthermore, I intend to follow up this through detailed reports from the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity here in the Department.’

‘Naturally this Department has many American Indians employed in the Bureau of Indian Affairs. But I am disappointed to report that if we exclude the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Interior ranks last in minority group employment among all the Cabinet Departments.’ [Emphasis in original]

‘This is not a situation to be proud of – and I expect it to be changed – promptly.’ […]

Adhering to the vagueness that characterized affirmative action in its early stages, the NPS Director, in the letter above, shared with the highest echelon of the organization a set of broad statements that were seemingly intended to add impetus to the program. The statement suggests, and as my interviews confirmed, the lack of minority representation was the problem that shaped the new logic, and informed the approach to its deployment in practice (i.e., recruitment, promotion, and retention).

As an interviewee lucidly explained:

I don’t recall if we did this, but I don’t think before affirmative action we were collecting much data. The field hated it because we would send out these data calls asking them to go through EEO forms and count how many minorities employees they had, and whites. It was very tedious, but we weren’t this big back then, but it was still a lot of work. And then they had to put together tables to summarize the numbers. You know, so you had this barrage of tables in front of you with all these numbers that told you how many minorities you’d hired, by grade level how many were there, and those who had left. So if there’s a promotion to a high level job we would look at the applicant pool. We started to collect all that stuff.

56 Director Hartzog to all National Park Service Superintendents. EEO box, folder 027. Archives of the National Park Service, West Virginia, USA.
Researcher: and what would you do with the insights?

Interviewee: the regions would send us what they’d do based on the numbers. So, they could say, based on our numbers we think we should target a ten percent increase in minority hires, but the – or something like that. They came up with what they thought they needed to do. And for the most part we were in agreement. But if we thought they weren’t doing enough, we could ask them to be more aggressive with the targets. You had parks like Yellowstone, in the middle of nowhere, so we would give them a break, but other parks that could come higher, we asked them to do more. That was the beauty of having the numbers, you know, we could go back and compare whether they’re moving the needle. [black female manager in EEO]

The EEO apparatus soon began to create organizational artifacts, especially templates, to allow for proper quantification, reporting, and strategizing. The national EEO office in Washington, DC was in charge of crafting the reporting schema, coordinating the quantification and reporting requirements, and evaluating the strategic actions of each regional office. At the Washington level, then, the EEO office would analyze the NPS-wide numbers to determine where they stood in terms of minority representation. This evolved into a recursive learning exercise.

Using arithmetic to attach meaning to racial categories made available the options quantification and mathematics provide. That is, as a figure, race could be used for setting goals, objectives, and identifying strategies for action. As one employee explained to me: “...collecting, or actually tracking, the data helped to – it was like a roadmap we didn’t have.” The quantification, or emphasis on numeric representation, permeated all three elements by which affirmative action was known at NPS.

Interviewee: ...and managers were kind of annoyed we were tracking all this [sic] data. I think they preferred we didn’t because, in a way, we were kind of taking some power away from them. I remember one altercation where I was discussing with a supervisor a recent promotion action where he, the issue was, he kind of
violated a few steps. So I was explaining to him the process and, in a way, I was throwing some data points about promotion – and how minorities weren’t being promoted. Not that he cared much, but – I don’t think he did – but it kind of helped explain why we had certain processes in place. I think the numbers helped a lot. We knew we had a lot of work to do, but many people didn’t see it. I think the numbers helped us show the magnitude. So it wasn’t anecdotal – we got that pushback a lot. [black female manager in HR]

*Interviewee:* When it came to recruitment you always had to measure progress. We were, sometimes we were traveling, and that wasn’t cheap, so we had to show something. But we had already started to track, and to measure things. I mean, we also had to submit our numbers to the Washington office. They weren’t really up our [expletive] but our leadership here at the region wanted us to track things anyway. Oh God! ...we spent countless hours putting together reports – typing those things. [black male in EEO]

The quantification of racial categories later morphed into a more systematic cycle that structured how affirmative action was enacted in practice. Quantification continued to be a landmark throughout the process, entrenched in the ritualized structures that later took form. However, as more resources were put into the program, new complexities and functions emerged beyond reporting and counting. Functions like analysis and strategizing began to take prominence. “You had to see the numbers first,” as one interviewee put it, “but then we had to come up with what you were going to do [...] We couldn’t be complacent.” The data suggest that quantification was the initial step, and the NPS did just that for some time, but they later increased in sophistication – adding layers of complexities. Affirmative action became a process.

*Interviewee:* Sometimes it felt like Washington was only interested in hearing what we were going to do. Yes, we showed them our numbers, but then they’d get hung up on what we said we were going to do; and they’d ask all kinds of questions. [laughter] A lot of that was fluff, and they knew we were all putting a lot of [expletive] in there, they’d send it back. But it’s funny because they themselves would put all kinds of crazy [expletive] in the final plan, they knew we couldn’t do most of the things they put in there. [black female in EEO]
Interviewee: I’d say it took us some time to figure out what to do with the numbers. Our numbers were so small, the Director was mad, the Department [of the Interior] was mad, everybody was mad. It was a bit overwhelming because, what do you do? how do you change that? We had to think hard, but it wasn’t enough to just say we didn’t have minorities, or that they weren’t applying. It was our job here in Washington to take it a step further. And actually push our regions to take that extra step. But people weren’t prepared, it was – they had to be trained, and we sent folks out to be trained on how to do this right. The number piece of it was easy, the issue was the rest of the program. We could all do data calls, but then you had to analyze the numbers, are we going up or down. And then, what do you do about those facts? And the answer may have been different if you were in a rural park versus an urban setting – so it wasn’t that simple. [white female manager in EEO]

The process – or cycle, as it was iterative – involved four steps: data collection (quantification), analysis, strategizing, and execution (see Figure 3).

![Diagram](image)

*Figure 3. Affirmative action planning process.*
The data collection phase involved gathering quantitative data on the numeric representation of minority groups in the NPS. To accomplish this, the EEO office in Washington would send out a data call to all regions for them to provide their counts of minority employees. Then, that data would be analyzed in the next stage to uncover areas where minorities were significantly underrepresented. At times, though not always, it also included comparing NPS numbers to those of the Labor Department to make a proportional comparison with the U.S. civilian labor force. Once deficits were identified, in the next step management would develop actionable strategies to increase numeric representation among minorities. Finally, in coordination with the EEO office in Washington, regional- and park-level employees implemented set strategies. The process would recur iteratively.

I collected and analyzed several regional and national affirmative action plans from 1969 to 1978. They all followed, rather ritualistically, the same format and approach to planning and strategizing. These organizational artifacts laid out the various issues and actions by which the organization was going to increase the number of racial minorities within its ranks. The tone throughout was very formulaic and adhered to rigid structures (templates and guidelines) that made them extremely consistent.
Table 2: Page 5 of the Southeast Region’s Affirmative Action Plan for fiscal year 1975

Program Element 2. Recruitment Activities designed to reach and attract job candidates from all sources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Target Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are few if any minorities in the General Schedule particularly in the 025 [park ranger] Series at the GS-5-7-9 levels in the Southeast Region.</td>
<td>1. Increase the seasonal employment of minorities and women specifically in the 025 [park ranger], 026 [park ranger technician], 090 [park guide], and 301 [clerical] Series. Regional Goal: 10% minority employment</td>
<td>Regional Associate Directors, Park Managers, EEO Officer</td>
<td>May 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Increase the permanent full-time or subject to furlough employment of minorities in 026 and 301 Series. Regional Goals: 026 Series: Minorities 10, women 5 301 Series: Minorities 4</td>
<td>Regional Associate Directors, Park Managers, EEO Officer</td>
<td>September 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are only two minority Superintendents and one Female Superintendent in the Southeast Region.</td>
<td>1. Increase minority Superintendent by one. 2. Increase female Superintendent by one</td>
<td>Regional Director</td>
<td>April 30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 is an example of the kind of assessment and strategizing characteristic of what became the affirmative action process. There is a problem statement and there are action items associated with the problem. It identifies who is responsible for the action items and a timetable. In this example, the Southeast Region was primarily concerned that in the organization’s most prominent occupational fields (park ranger and clerical personnel) there were few minorities. As a result, it prescribed actions to be taken to enhance seasonal employment, usually the gateway to full-time employment, among minorities to achieve a 10 percent representation goal, among other quotas.

Some phases of the process, particularly the strategizing and execution, were sources of conflict. Data collection and data analysis were more mechanical phases conducted within EEO, and at times with assistance from HR. Conversely, strategizing, involved identifying ways to address minority underrepresentation, usually by setting hiring goals that some thought they were unnecessary and a form of favoritism, as many informants explained above. On the other hand, others thought they were not ambitious enough in order to make a difference. It seemed almost implausible to strategize in consensus – EEO and HR informants took it as inherent in their work.

Execution, implementing strategic goals, was also a source of contention because EEO and HR had to work with management in order to accomplish their affirmative action goals. As table 2 above shows, executing on set goals was a shared responsibility between high-level management and EEO. As an EEO informant explained

“… and many times we’d have to meet [with regional management] because I didn’t think we were moving along [meeting our goals], and I’d share my concerns. And I’d get upset because I didn’t know who was doing what. I think – it seemed to me that on paper everything looked good. Where the rubber meets the road, you know, actually
getting things done, it felt like herding cats. I’d bump heads a lot with my management, although respectfully and diplomatically. But they thought they were doing all they could, and I just didn’t think so. So there was a lot of back and forth on that.” [black female in EEO]

Other informants shared similar stories explaining many of the challenges and conflict inherent in the execution phase – when strategies were supposed to be translated into action. As the informant above implies, during this phase there is room for different perceptions about the pace of action, scope of action, and sense of progress to emerge. For instance, the data above suggest that EEO professionals tended to have a sense of urgency, preferred bolder actions, and had a more pessimistic sense of progress – all of which contributed to disagreements and conflict.

**Overcoming Barriers and Jumping over Hurdles**

**Communication.** As alluded earlier in this chapter, many white employees saw affirmative action as a program intended to “unfairly” assist employees of color. The disdain with which the program was received by this segment of the workforce was palpably felt by the EEO and HR professionals I interviewed. In fact, they feared the extent of their disapproval would derail the entire program, representing a major threat.

“...you had to look around the room to make sure you could actually talk about the things we were doing. The thing was, we were setting goals, pretty much a quota hiring system, and Caucasians were vehemently opposed to it.

*Researcher:* How about Caucasian managers?

*Interviewee:* Leadership bought into what we were doing and even the Director would send out memos asking managers to support what we were doing. So we weren’t too concerned about managers. We were afraid of our rank and file employees because they could call their member of congress, they could file complaints, they could twist our words and use them against us, they could sue the organization, etcetera, etcetera. They could do a lot of damage because even if they didn’t win in court or in the
EEOC, it would’ve sent a message to management. And we were swimming in uncharted waters. We didn’t want to make a lot of noise or draw too much attention.”

*Researcher:* ...so why do you think white employees were opposed to affirmative action?

*Interviewee:* Well, they didn’t like what we were doing because they felt it wasn’t for them. That’s my impression. It’s like taking your kid’s favorite toy away and then – and they love to play with it but, and then they can’t anymore. Your kid’s going to be upset.

[black female manager in HR]

As white employees explained to me:

*Interviewee:* For many of us, and please don’t think I speak for all Caucasians who were around back then, this is just me – it was tricky. The, the issue sort of became why are you singling out certain groups? So, many of us at the time felt that the Park Service was playing favorites. That’s how it came across, because – the thing was why did you need the extra stuff? We were competing for jobs based on our qualifications, or that – that’s how we thought – the system was based on who was the best qualified. So affirmative action didn’t seem to go along with that. [white male park ranger]

*Interviewee:* I’m old now, but back then, you know, we were working hard. I was in the [park unit] ...working my way up as a ranger and then, the thing, I don’t recall exactly, maybe it was late 70s or in that neighborhood. So they were trying to get more minorities in, all well and good, I had no problem with that [...] In a way, though, it seemed like it was meant to give minorities a bit of a leg up. In hindsight, I now see what they were trying to do, but when you’re in the middle of it, and then you’re competing with minorities, the fact of it is, it – maybe it kind of rubs you the wrong way. I know many of my colleagues felt that way. [white male park management]

*Interviewee:* ...to answer that you really have to put yourself in our shoes back then. I’m not a prejudiced person, but back then things were quite different, and the – you know, you’re trying to move up, you’re trying to succeed. So at times, yes I’m not gonna lie, it felt as if all the attention went to minorities. Again, you look at things now and it’s like WOW! DUH! [laughter] we haven’t made much progress, have we? No no, but in all seriousness, hindsight is always 20/20, going through it at the time didn’t feel quite right
As the informants above suggest, employee perception of fairness became a management challenge that, if left unaddressed, could have evolved into a major obstacle threatening the viability of the affirmative action program. EEO and HR professionals quickly realized that managing that perception was paramount. As a result, as they explained, communication was tightly controlled, only engaging relevant parties as necessary. Communication to the workforce was carefully crafted, ensuring that it did not exacerbate many of the sentiments that were already brewing throughout the workforce, particularly among white employees.

The perception of fairness barrier, therefore, was largely overcome by creating segmented communication structures. Most communication, as interviewees explained, around affirmative action took place among EEO and HR professionals because they created and managed the infrastructure that instituted the affirmative action process. They were obviously the protagonists of the process. Also, the emphasis on action, which EEO and HR could largely control, did not require much communication to the workforce. This allowed them to carry out their functions in coordination with their professional peers throughout the organization. Finally, the vagueness that surrounded the program seemed to have worked to their benefit because, even though they were in fact setting targets or quotas, the workforce did not seem to have fully grasped the nature of the program. Employees would have been fiercely opposed to, and perhaps taken swift actions against, affirmative action if they had a clear understanding of what it entailed. The scarcity of communication might have played a role in preventing employees from forming a concrete formulation of the program against which they could revolt.

**Geography.** The NPS, as an amalgam of park sites throughout the US, is a very complex organization. It is actually a web of rather distinct sub-organizations, with their own interests and
cultures. Therefore, to create, give form to, and deploy a program to be implemented nation-wide is quite arduous. This was especially true in the case of affirmative action. “You couldn’t have just one strategy and call it a day,” one interviewee stated as she was firmly explaining the issue of geographic dispersion. “The issues at Yosemite were different than Grand Canyon or Olympic,” she continued, “so you really needed to account for that...”

...each region was supposed to look at their communities, so they could set targets based on that. The – sometimes parks would have a hard time figuring out what they could actually meet. So we always told them to be realistic in terms of where they were located. If you’re a rural park, most likely your local community is predominantly white, than if you’re an urban park or historic site. But that didn’t mean you don’t do anything – many took it that way. We said, well, you might have to do more, have a larger travel budget to send folks out to do recruitment. That’s to give you an example. But the, those differences had to play a role, no doubt about that. [black female in EEO]

Interviewee: It’s like the saying, what is it? ‘you can’t make a silk purse out of a sow’s ear.’ A lot of these parks were very remote and we weren’t getting minorities to apply [for jobs] – there weren’t any around. Initially it felt like insurmountable. We couldn’t just get black people on a bus and ship them to, I don’t know, a random remote park, and give them jobs. That would’ve been easier [laughter]! [...] Some park managers even complained that people in Washington had no clue what we were doing, because we would ask questions about some of their goals. The thing was – well, some had a point. Here in Washington we’re around a lot of diversity, but that’s not the case out there in the field [...] Wait, didn’t you just go to Acadia?

Researcher: Yes, a couple of weeks ago.

Then you probably saw there wasn’t a lot of diversity. And we’re not in 1970 or the 80s [...] That was a big limitation. [Hispanic female in HR]

The excerpts above are examples of the kinds of barrier differing local realities posed to the effectiveness of affirmative action. Action plans needed to thoughtfully accommodate, and respond to, the racial makeup of the surrounding community in which sites were embedded. This
was because the local community supplied the labor force from which the NPS hired. Therefore, as the interviewees explained, because many sites were located within white communities, devising a strategy to increase minority representation was difficult. Furthermore, the kind of strategic action that seemed obvious under these circumstances required more resources (e.g., travel funding) park managers were reluctant to divert from other programs.

Although the issue of geography – and its resulting racial arrangement – limited the set of strategic tools available to the NPS, it forced them to concentrate on what was achievable, and to leverage those options. The analysis above illustrates this dynamic, but another interviewee further shared that “[...] because numbers were, when you look at what really matter, they were national. So we’d work mostly with units we thought we had a better chance at bringing people in. Then once in the service, they could move to other park units that had greater issues of underrepresentation.”

**Resources.** Related to the geographic challenge – though a challenge in its own right – the lack of resources was often cited as a major limiting factor. Affirmative action was an unfunded mandate; agencies were expected to absorb the cost. The fact that the EEO office had to be created and staffed represented a major expense. Therefore, there was not enough discretionary spending power with which EEO and HR professionals could support the program. In fact, most worked on their affirmative action efforts “on the side” because, especially as the program was being shaped, they had to work on conducting investigations, facilitate conflict resolution sessions, as well as other administrative duties associated with the EEO program. On the HR side, they also had other duties in addition to supporting the EEO office with the nascent affirmative action program.

_**Interviewee:** [...] it was a lot, and I mean: a lot. It was a lot on our plate because this was extra. EEO management, maybe the –
maybe this is still true today – management tends to pay attention to the complaint part of the equation. And then we were creating the affirmative action program in addition to that [...] Investigations took a lot of time, with, well, just the interviews alone could take you a long time – we now contract that out. We use more contractors now. But, going back to your question about back then, we had to do everything [...] [We were] a bit stretched too thin. [black female in EEO]

Interviewee: In hindsight, affirmative action should have been its own separate office, maybe. Maybe they didn’t have the money for it, but we would’ve been able to do much more. EEO was already overwhelmed with the other stuff we had to do.

Researcher: How about HR?

Interviewee: Same thing for HR – they had all the other personnel actions to worry about. None of the affirmative action stuff was full-time for us. It wasn’t a terrible situation but it was far from ideal. Because, the pieces – you really needed to have people just work on that. [black female manager in EEO]

Interviewee: There wasn’t much money or funding for this. That really hampered our ability to do more things [...] be a bit more creative. You know most of the people here today – most of my colleagues have already retired, but back then there was passion for this work. You came to do this work because you deeply cared about this [unintelligible] making a difference and all that [...] But, yes, more money would’ve helped tremendously. [white female manager in EEO]

Resource scarcity was an important barrier that those working on affirmative action had to overcome. As with the other barriers, left with no other option, they developed ways to adjust their strategic actions to the resources made available to them. As they explained, many of their efforts had to be scaled down to their fiscal reality. Needless to say, this had a direct impact in their ability to meet the program’s goal of increasing the representation of minorities within the organization. Each and every time I posed a question about challenges and barriers they faced with affirmative action, the lack of resources was never absent from their responses.
Conclusion

The adoption of affirmative action had a profound impact in the ways in which my informants operationalized, and amounted a response to, race in the NPS. While the visibility of race, especially in the black/white dichotomy, made racial segregation possible and enforceable, affirmative action brought an aura of reparation, fairness, and justice. This was the case even when much of the work around it was conducted behind the scenes within specialized professional enclaves (i.e., EEO and HR) to avoid criticism from the majority white workforce. Even though they could not forecast, or have a sense of, the degree to which the program was going to be effective, its mere existence –the very idea that “something was being done” about racial relations and minority underrepresentation–gave them a sense of hope. In part, they felt that the work they were doing was transformative and a step toward a new, more racially mixed, organizational reality.

I was surprised with the vividness and specificity with which my informants shared their stories, even those who were already well into retirement. I assumed that studying affirmative action in the 21st century was going to be extremely challenging, if not almost impossible. Such a naïve assumption utterly underestimated the significance of affirmative action and the vigor with which it shaped the lives of many at NPS to the point that it was memorably imprinted onto their psyche. Many of the interviews left me with the impression that it was deeply personal stories that I was uncovering, as opposed to aspects of their professional work. It was clear affirmative action to them was more than a public policy, an organizational program, or a regulatory requirement with which they had to comply; it seemed sewn within their own conception of selfhood and personal history.
Affirmative action, therefore, for the employees I interviewed at the NPS, became to define their professional identity. The new regulatory scheme challenged EEO and HR professionals to find innovative ways to overcome underrepresentation of minorities in the organization and to foster an environment of equal treatment. Many became to think of themselves as “strategists” and “relationship builders.” The success of the program depended on their ability to strategically identify untapped opportunities that could be leveraged as well as building trust and a healthy working relationship with managers with the authority to hire.

Informants were called upon to perform along a binary. On the one hand, they were responsible for enforcing the new non-discrimination laws by investigating complaints and issuing decisions. On the other hand, they had to collect data and draft reports highlighting deficiencies in minority representation that they later used for further strategizing. This dynamic cultivated a professional identity similar to that of a physician. That is, while they had to prescribe solutions to symptoms (e.g., complaints of racial discrimination, conflict), they could not lose sight of the broader health of the organization (e.g., minority representation, productive employee relations).

Affirmative action also transformed the process of racial formation in meaningful ways. The new legal framework mandated racial equality and eradicating all vestiges of discrimination in the organization – particularly throughout the personnel management system. Furthermore, it demanded that NPS take necessary steps to increase minority representation at all levels and throughout the organization. Put simply, affirmative action became a framework to reverse the Jim Crow-like ideology of race premised on racial separation and subjugation of blackness. It also formulated a new perspective centered around the idea of reparation. Race became a symbol signifying those against whom harm or injustice was inflicted and, therefore, were eligible to
benefit from the affirmative action program. In other words, while traditionally whiteness had enjoyed most social and organizational benefits, affirmative action was an attempt to reverse that dynamic by decisively targeting racial minorities in order to enhance their employment prospects.

Even though race had already been a construct impacting organized life, affirmative action gave it prominence – augmenting the way in which race penetrated formal channels for decision-making. It forced the NPS to more directly imbue racial considerations in core organizational processes (e.g., hiring, promotion). In doing so, the NPS, as an actor in the racial formation process, helped shift the meaning of race – pairing it with ideas such as equality, fairness, and integration.

This chapter also shows how affirmative action was shaped over time as a logic of action from legislation to institutionalization at NPS. The public administration literature has well demonstrated that government agencies enjoy a great deal of discretion over policy-making through the policy implementation process (Bryner, 1987; Meier, 1993; Rourke, 1984; Wilson, 1989). Affirmative action was not immune to that phenomenon. When affirmative action was designed, only broad parameters were prescribed that shed light on its intentions and scope. As informants described, there were no guides or specific, formulaic set of actions to which they were to adhere. Rather, actors had to engage in significant sensemaking (Weick, 1995), decision-making, and sensegiving (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991) – all of which shaped affirmative action’s trajectory from legislation to institutionalization.

In the sensemaking phase actors employed their cognitive abilities to develop a shared working understanding or mental framework to translate affirmative action from a set of regulatory concepts and requirements (e.g., achieving racial parity) into action. This shared
mental framework is better understood as constitutive of a logic of action – in this case, prescribing a set of ideals that advance a new symbolic order to repair remnants of racial discrimination. Logics of action are a set of material practices and symbolic constructions that demarcate organizing principles and are “available to organizations and individuals to elaborate” (Friedland & Alford, 1991, p. 248). Sensemaking is one of the ways through which such elaboration (i.e., developing frameworks and strategies for action) is accomplished.

Navigating decision-making, a process plagued with politics and conflict, was crucial in the institutionalization process of affirmative action. Implementing a program vaguely defined in law and regulation augmented the importance of decision-making at the NPS level. As documented in the chapter, strategic questions about implementation abound, particularly around data collection, communication, and program scope. These are examples of the kind of deliberative exercise EEO and HR departments engaged in as affirmative action began to take form. Careful and well-thought-out decision-making reduced the likelihood for fatal errors to be made – especially given that affirmative action was not fully embraced by the workforce writ large.

Finally, sensegiving was instrumental strategic device that advanced the institutionalization process of affirmative action. Sensegiving can be defined as an interpretive process in which actors influence each other through persuasive and evocative language (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). During sensegiving actors, particularly within the EEO and HR departments, sought to put forth an organizational understanding of the meaning and purpose of affirmative action. As a strategic action, sensegiving seeks to advance a narrative to neutralize or control the overarching meta-narrative (i.e., the prevailing account or storyline) and, therefore, influence actors and organizational action. In this case, actors put forth a narrative centered
around the notion that affirmative action was resolving a long-standing problem – that of racial discrimination at NPS. They also sought to enhance their narrative by suffusing a sense of urgency and resolve.

This analysis contributes to, and builds upon, extant literature on affirmative action in many ways. In the public administration scholarship, that literature is divided into two overarching streams, which I will refer to as the environmental and evaluative camps. The environmental camp focuses on the political, legal, and societal responses to affirmative action policies (Kellough, 2006; Riccucci, 1997a; Rosenbloom, 1984; Ewoh & Elliott, 1997). For instance, in her analysis of U.S. Supreme Court decisions on affirmative action from 1976 to 1996, Riccucci (1997a) concluded that the legal standing of affirmative action programs has eroded overtime and predicted that – if the pattern continues – institutions will have greater latitude determining whether increasing the number of minorities in the workforce suits their interest. A highlight of Kellough’s (2006) analysis is his detailed account of how U.S.’s sentiment toward affirmative action began to change in the 1990s, when state legislatures or through referenda outlawed affirmative action. Kellough (2006) shows how as public opinion about affirmative action worsen, the number of proposals to make it illegal grew.

The evaluative camp focuses on the extent to which affirmative action programs have been effective, its impact, and barriers to implementation. These studies often measure effectiveness as whether affirmative action has increased the share of women and minorities in the workforce (Ballard & Lawn-Day, 1992; Harris, 2009; Hendricks, 1984; O’Sullivan & Stewart, 1984). For instance, in her study of minorities and women in the academy and federal government, Harris (2009, pp. 367-368) concluded that “white women as a group have been the largest beneficiaries of affirmative action followed by smaller but important gains for minorities,
especially underrepresented minorities.” Another example of this line of research is O’Sullivan’s and Stewart’s (1984) case study of affirmative action training programs, where they find that the effects of seminars intended to influence behavior is unclear.

This study builds upon the two research camps discussed above in that it sheds light on the organizational process through which actors collectively give form to the very meaning affirmative action acquired. It is less concerned about effectiveness as it is about the meaning-making process that brought the program or policy to existence within the organization. The emphasis on how this process unfolds is important for many reasons. Firstly, it underscores the importance of narrative construction during policy implementation and the stories that emerge throughout the process which shape the contours of the program. While the evaluative research camp continues to report minor progress since affirmative action was instituted –measured as how much the share of minorities in the workforce has increased overtime–the analysis of my research attempts to provide some insights on the why. For instance, my informants reported “ambiguity” and the need for them to “figure it out,” that is how the affirmative action program was installed, therefore going back to the genesis –i.e., how actors confronted crucial questions about the program, its scope, the racial tension, and the tradeoffs they had to make–seems an important part of the puzzle. This study is a step in that direction and contributes to that analysis.

Secondly, this study underscores the dynamic nature of what affirmative action meant to organizational actors and how differences often caused conflict. As Kellough (2006, p. 3) argued, while affirmative action is familiar to most Americans, it is not “always well understood.” However, most of the scholarship on the subject do not problematize that issue at the organizational level, as most studies focus on the larger public debate. This study is an attempt to explore that debate at the organizational level.
Finally, while many studies investigate the extent to which affirmative action has been effective (e.g., Harris, 2009; Hendricks, 1984), they often overlook the interplay between the organizational sphere and larger social dynamics that influence its implementation. In that vein, this study focuses on that interplay, highlighting the many ways in which they are mutually reinforcing. Dobbin (2009) is an important exception to this critique because his study precisely investigated how the way personnel managers implemented equal opportunity programs, in turn, influenced the law-making process of Congress, often limiting the scope of affirmative action as implemented by corporations. This study adds to Dobbin’s (2009) work by exploring the internal organizational dynamics (e.g., conflict, politics) during policy implementation. Dobbin (2009), on the other hand, is more concerned with understanding the inter-institutional relationships (i.e., executive branch, Congress, and the private sector) through which affirmative action emerged and evolved.
Chapter VI:
De-racializing Racial Discourse and Action: The Diversity Logic

Introduction

In 1990, Roosevelt Thomas published in the Harvard Business Review perhaps one of the most lucid argument for the idea that things were changing in racial discourse (Thomas, 1990). His piece bore the augural title: “From Affirmative Action to Affirming Diversity.” In this article, Thomas argued that “sooner or later, affirmative action will die a natural death” because “…the realities facing us are no longer the realities affirmative action was designed to fix” (Thomas, 1990, p. 107).

The increase of women’s participation in the labor force (Hayghe, 1994) and the waves of immigration into the US since the 1970s (Camarota & Zeigler, 2016) had contributed to greater diversity in the workplace. Such a rise in diversity also fostered a new form of pluralism (Zhou, 1997). The idea of the American society as a melting pot began to be questioned in favor of greater pluralism and individualism. While some differences were easier to melt down into a new homogeneous sense of community, other groups began to claim their right to resist assimilation, thereby preserving their heritage and diverse cultures (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Blacks, Latinos, and other immigrant groups not only could not fully conform with the demands of assimilation, they saw it as negating their own selfhood and identity. As a result, assimilation acquired a more fluid meaning (Alba & Nee, 2003), even accommodating difference and uniqueness.

See Roediger (2006) for a study on how European immigrants (Italians, Polish, and Jewish) developed a sense of whiteness, in part, due to their involvement in the labor movement, and became part of the broader white America. Ignatiev (2008) studies the same process in the Irish community.
The new social norms that embraced heterogeneity, coupled with the rapidly changing demographics in the post-1970s U.S., drew attention to issues of diversity and multiculturalism in organizations. As Thomas (1990, p. 112) tellingly put it: “So companies are faced with the problem of surviving in a fiercely competitive world with a workforce that consists and will continue to consist of unassimilated diversity” [emphasis in original]. Whereas affirmative action was about increasing representation, the rising emphasis on diversity emerged as a business asset. This idea was further reinforced, six years after Thomas’ article was published, by David Thomas and Robin Ely (1996) in their “Making Differences Matter: A New Paradigm for Managing Diversity.” In that piece, the authors argued that diversity could be a competitive advantage if employees’ diverse perspectives were directly connected to their work roles. These two 1990s articles are often credited as having engineered diversity into the business parlance – and essentially provided a new approach to how organizations responded to the realities of race in the workplace.

For our purpose, the changing demographic dynamics post 1970s, the addition of new immigrant groups and women into the labor force, and the re-definition of what assimilation meant created the conditions for a new institutional logic to emerge. This chapter studies NPS’ interaction with the new diversity logic, as organizational members attempt to transition towards it. As such, this period is transitional in nature, right in the midst of change – although, the diversity logic throughout the research period remained peripheral, on the margins. It did not gain enough footing to become the prevailing logic or at least prominent enough to influence organizational functioning. Studying a period when a nascent logic is emerging allows us to explore the various dynamics that comprise logic creation and framing (i.e., the way in which logics emerged and are defined), brokering (i.e., the way in which logics are discursively
promoted or championed), and the effects of logic multiplicity (i.e., the way in which logics interact or coexist with one another) using the NPS as a case.

The sample for this part of the study was comprised of 49 participants who agreed to be interviewed. The majority identified as white (24), 18 said they were black, 6 identified as Hispanics, and 1 Asian. Interviews lasted between 1 and 2 hours. Several employees were interviewed more than once when transcripts were not clear or there was missing information. To protect their identities all names are pseudonyms, except when referring to the NPS Director.

**The genesis.** On August 4, 1997, President Clinton appointed Robert G. Stanton Director of the National Park Service, where he served until 2001. Stanton became the first, and thus far only, black or person of color at the helm of the NPS. Unlike many of his predecessors who became Director without having worked in the organization, Stanton retired from the NPS after a 35-year career in the organization prior to becoming Director. He held multiple posts throughout the NPS from iconic parks to small units to regional administrative roles to important jobs in headquarters, in remote as well as urban areas. Often times, in fact, too many times, he told me he was the only person of color not only among the park workforce, but also the surrounding community. National parks, particularly iconic parks, are embedded within, and replicate, monolithic racially and culturally white enclaves. To people of color, this renders their race a salient object (Steck, Heckert & Heckert, 2003) and triggers a state of heightened vigilance (Steele, Spencer & Aronson, 2002). Throughout his career, Stanton experienced the varied ways in which race intersects, and is defined by, social interactions in the organization – experience that informed his administrative agenda as director of the NPS.
Many interviewees explained to me how *diversity* penetrated the organizational lexicon—and to some extent organizational practices—during Stanton’s tenure as Director. An informant succinctly explained that

[Stanton] was the first African-American director—the only African-American director of the Park Service. And he went on a goal to make the Park Service look like the face of America. He actually said that. ‘Every time I go to a park, I want the park’s employee population to reflect the face of America.’ And he harped on that; and that was his goal. And he was director for a long time. [white male, senior HR manager]

Director Stanton began to shift from an affirmative action logic to a *managing diversity* one—an attempt to redefine the prevailing institutional logic. Another informant confirmed that it was under Stanton’s leadership “that we started to talk about diversity in a much more deliberate way.” Prior to his tenure, while diversity management was being studied and discussed in the academic and business spheres (Thomas, 1990), it had not permeated organizational discourse and practices at the NPS.

In order to trace the genesis of the diversity logic back to Stanton’s tenure, I conducted extensive archival research. I could not locate any document, artifact, or evidence that diversity had already penetrated at least the organizational lexicon prior to 1997, when Stanton became director. In the 1997 NPS strategic plan—the first instance I could find where diversity is pronounced a strategic imperative—Stanton stated that “managers at all levels of the organization will be held accountable for decreasing underrepresentation and increasing diversity based on their opportunities to recruit and hire employees at various grade levels throughout the
organization” (p. 36).\(^5^9\) This statement was part of the “organizational effectiveness” section of the plan, as suggesting that diversity is a precondition to organizational effectiveness.

Furthermore, somewhat incorporating Thomas’ (1990) argument, the same 1997 strategic plan went on to argue –in a section entitled “Demographics: What does the changing face of America mean for parks in the 21st century?” – that:

“Profound demographic changes are taking place in the United States in terms of immigration and ethnic populations. With its current growth rate, the population in the United States will double in about 75 years. Half of the nation’s growth will come from recent immigrants and their children. Trends indicate that minorities, including American Indians, African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and Pacific Islanders, will collectively exceed the Anglo population sometime during the next century. This is an important issue because parks have historically been used mainly by the white middle class segment of the population, and many parks lack the ability to attract and offer park experiences that are meaningful to visitors from varied ethnic backgrounds, or have not yet made their park values relevant to them.” (p. 55).

The statement above further rationalizes the need for diversity as a strategic imperative, given broader societal forces. Subsequent strategic plans I reviewed also contained diversity goals, although they include less discussion on the rationale for instituting them in the first place, as Stanton’s first plan did. For example, the 2000-2005 strategic plan, after stating by how much they intend to increase diversity (by 25%), it goes on to simply state that “the NPS will recruit, hire, develop, promote, and retain a qualified, highly-skilled, and dedicated workforce that reflects the rich diversity of our national parks and nation” (p. 31). Nonetheless, from this point forward, diversity remained part of the organization’s strategizing. For instance, the 2004-2005

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“Workforce Plan” names diversity a key issue and laments that “…diversity […] has not been fully achieved throughout the National Park Service” (n.p.).

Finally, during Stanton’s tenure, diversity did not merely become part of the strategy development process, but he led the first serious and important efforts at making it part of its core functioning. For instance, he organized a national committee of agency leaders charged with the goal of identifying ways for institutionalizing diversity. As Mary Bomar—who at the time was Regional Director for the Northeast Region, but later became NPS Director in 2006—recounted in a report “…during NPS Director Bob Stanton’s tenure, I had the privilege of working with him on a national committee on institutionalizing diversity and had the opportunity to better understand the agency’s challenges. Many of the issues I saw then are still with us today. Our workforce diversity is not all that it could be and there is still an imbalance between the NPS workforce today and the ‘face of America’” (p. vi).60 This conference sought to build upon recommendations the NPS Advisory Board had made, which Stanton requested. That report—published in 2001, which was Stanton’s last year as Director—was yet another clamor for greater workforce diversity.61

In sum, while Stanton cannot be credited with having formulated the notion of diversity in the organizational domain, he was undoubtedly the first serious champion of its adoption and application in the National Park Service. As explained above, it was during his tenure that diversity effectively and consistently penetrated the organizational lexicon and, perhaps more


importantly, he raised the profile of diversity, as an issue to be tackled, to the highest echelons of the organization. The data for this chapter, therefore, should be understood and analyzed as a continuation of Stanton’s legacy—the product of his efforts to address NPS’ longstanding issue of underrepresentation of minority groups within its ranks.

Framing the Diversity Logic: Organizational Strategies and Methods

The institutional logics perspective contends that macro- or societal-level institutional logics manifest and operate within organizations in manifold ways, given that organizations vary by geographical, historical, and cultural context (Greenwood, Diaz, Li & Lorente, 2010), as well as the individual experiences and identities of organizational actors (Lok, 2010). The National Park Service is embedded in, and influenced by, the process of racial formation that takes place in the U.S. at various historical moments with their own unique characteristics—as well as the ways in which organizational actors draw from that macro-level process to influence internal organizational dynamics.

When I started to collect data for this research, I realized that I was in the middle of a process of rupture with regards to racial formation, as if a new way of approaching issues of race had emerged. At that time, I did not know what that rupture was from—it only became apparent about a year after data collection began and after preliminary data analysis was performed. The sense of rupture was pervasive and profound. My interview notes were replete with judgments that rendered the organization “broken,” that proclaimed, “things are not working,” “something needs to be done if we are to survive,” “other organizations are already doing this, but we are not,” and in its most condemning form, “leadership doesn’t seem to get it.” These organizational actors had articulated and appropriated a logic of management and action that countered the
prevailing institutional logic. This new logic was centered on principles of diversity and inclusion as drivers of organizational management and action.

**Framing an Emerging Institutional Logic**

Institutional logics – particularly those that counter prevailing logics – must be defined and demarcated (Besharov & Smith, 2014). This is accomplished through a discursive mechanism often referred to as *framing* (Granqvist & Laurila, 2011; Hirsch, 1986; Meyer & Höllerer, 2010; Werner & Cornelissen, 2014), as we also explored in Chapter IV. Framing can be defined as the “creation of shared conceptions that constitute the nature of social reality […] through which meaning is made” (Scott, 2003, p. 880). As such, frames are important elements of the cultural-cognitive nature of institutions, as they carry and transmit the very fabric with which institutions are produced and reproduced (Beckert, 2010; Scott, 2003). Unsurprisingly, then, reframing has been identified as a powerful precondition to institutional change (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011, 2012).

While a frame may seem a static construct, framing is often accomplished through a political struggle, at times unraveling a framing contest (Benford & Snow, 2000; Rao & Kenney, 2008). Many times framing is intended to provide meaning and understanding to a set of events, social processes, or organizational dynamics. Applied to institutional logics, my data suggest that framing (and its resulting frames) plays a critical role in molding the content and texture of new logics as well as it provides a discursive apparatus for actors to juxtapose and compare multiple institutional logics. Framing and the emergence of new frames also help institutional entrepreneurs challenge prevailing institutional logics. Frames could take the form of justifications, adding concreteness to a far more abstract institutional logic. For example, and as I will discuss in the next section, interviewees appropriated the language of business to articulate
the benefits of diversity for the organization. Frames like “efficiency” and “high performance” were used to structure the meaning with which diversity was associated.

**A Rational Discourse: The Business Approach**

When I started my fieldwork, I was quite surprised to find out the NPS had hired business consultants to help them “get the diversity program off the ground,” as someone put it to me. As I dug deeper into their role, a senior official in the workforce directorate, which housed the HR and EEO departments, explained to me that they wanted to make sure they adopted the “best practices” from private industry and took a “very strategic approach to the issue.” The consultants, there were two of them, both women and from the same company, had two main roles. Firstly, they were supposed to help the NPS come up with a diversity strategy that would delineate the set of programs needed to launch and sustain a diversity program. Secondly, they were supposed to train a cadre of agency employees, including a few managers, on how to do “diversity work.”

It became clear early on that consultants, versed in the business parlance and exigencies of market forces, were very preoccupied with the way in which employees at NPS were not picking up the “strategic” language they preferred. In one of the about five meetings I attended with NPS employees and the consultants, the lead consultant became visibly exasperated when she realized many of the documents that employees worked on did not follow the guidelines of a more succinct template she had provided. The irritation erupted because, as she went on to explain, “we can’t solve all social problems here. So we have to be very specific.” NPS employees were being overly broad, in her view, but the complexities of the problem demanded

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62 While I agreed to keep the company name confidential, it is important to highlight it was a small boutique consulting practice based in New Jersey.
they break it down into pieces they could later tackle. Her template was intended to assist with that process of digestion, so to speak.

The consultants had a modus operandi that began with developing a business case. If there was something almost drilled into the psyche of the NPS employees working with the pair of consultants, it was that the business case had to be front and center. In our meetings, I could not even count the number of times the word “business case” was uttered – it was constantly used, almost ceremonially so. The business case was essentially like a biblical verse that justified the need for the organization to embark on this new diversity work.63 “If you can’t tell me why we are doing this, we might as well go home” admonished the lead consultant one time. The business case served as a founding frame. The very *raison d’etre* upon which the diversity edifice was supposed to be built. Proponents of the new logic adopted and deployed what they had learned.

Interview transcripts, notes, organizational documents, and artifacts show a constant and progressive preoccupation for framing the new *diversity* logic in business terms. The Stanton years had a milder business aura, which is why I argue it progressively acquired such a business flavor, so to speak. After having been advocating for a change in logic since the late 1990s and not having a critical mass supportive of it, proponents of the new logic resorted to the discursive strategies business consultants exposed them to and re-defined the new logic in rational, market-like, and economic jargon. Transcripts are replete with such codes as “cost-benefit analysis,”

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63 I was asked not to disclose the content of the business case because the National Leadership Council (NLC), the governing body of the Park Service, never formally adopted and widely published its content. It was, however, a brief, generic statement that highlighted the benefits of diversity – particularly at appealing to a broader visitor base and potential employees pipeline.
“business imperative,” “market forces,” “customer base,” “best practices,” and “return on investment,” to name a few. One of the main outcomes of this exposure to the consulting lexicon is that many of my interviewees, in a rather awkward way, began to use similar language to answer my questions. A homogenization in the way they articulated and framed the diversity logic had taken place.

Under this corporate frame, citizens become customers and organizational action subject to the economic calculus of maximizing agents. However, this dramatic shift from the previous frames centered on numeric representation and access is a strategic move. Many informants consistently confessed that the new frames are the product of previous failures. Many of them asked rhetorically: “How are we going to make this stick if we are not on the same page, speaking the same language?” The language is that of corporate America, capitalism, and strategic decision-making. Organizational members learned it from the consultants, and often heard their leaders articulate and even demand conformity.

The diversity logic carried a motivation based on strategic self-interest and expediency for NPS. One informant summarized it to me the following way,

The way I look at it is from pretty much a business case. I started off looking at it as like a moral thing. And I don’t look at it that way anymore. It’s nice that it’s the right thing to do, but that doesn’t get you anything. And so, you know there’s all kinds of people who should be doing the right thing; but then you’re counting on people’s morals to guide you through an organization, but that doesn’t work. Because it was the right thing to do 30 years ago. It was the right thing to do when the Park Service was created 100 years ago. It was always the right thing to do. It was always the right thing to do. It was the right thing to do when slavery existed in this country. People knew that! But that doesn’t get you anything in the end.

I started off from the position that it was the right thing to do, and after thinking about it for a long time, and decided it doesn’t matter
whether it’s the right thing to do or not. It’s more or less a *survival thing*… [black male, senior manager]

A white male employee put it this way:

… and we have been talking about this for quite – it’s been awhile. A lot of people will tell you that. But with Peter now; he’s making all kinds of investments. Having people help us with this is huge because we really need to find a way, as an organization to come together and get it done. And it feels like we’ve been in this tunnel for so long and now there’s a tiny little bit of light shining through. I don’t want to be overly optimistic, but it does feel different now. Peter’s bringing people from private industry who’ve done this. So we have sort of developed a much more clear idea of why we are doing this. Before, people were just saying all kinds of things, and they’ll give you all kinds of reasons. But now we are focusing on the same things, so when we communicate out it makes sense. You have to connect it back to the mission, right; that’s what employees get out there in the field. How does it benefit my interp[retation] and ed[ucation] program, my conservation program; how does diversity relate to what we do? That’s the way we look at it now. People need to see the benefits, the value this stuff brings. All the other things are well and good, but they haven’t gotten us very far.

[white male, park superintendent]

A supervisor in a small park, referring to how the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) supported the diversity and inclusion efforts, explained:

I very much like where this is going. It feels like we have a lot more enthusiasm now. We have the NPCA throwing a lot of money and people into this. It feels a lot more organized than we’ve ever been. You got all the same people saying ‘we have to do something’ ‘this ain’t right’ over and over and over and nobody listened. We’re making headways now, you know, the – drafting the business case. Leadership now can’t say ‘we don’t know what you’re up to, we don’t know what this is all about’ or any of that. It’s now crystal clear what the diversity strategy is all about, and they can’t ignore it like they have been for so long. I showed it to

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64 Interpretation and education (internally within NPS often referred to as interp and ed for short) programs are the educational talks intended to educate the general public on park natural or cultural resources.
the superintendent, he loved it. It kind of gave him something to chew on, I know it can be confusing. People kept asking ‘why are we doing this?’ ‘why are we doing this?’ Here it is! Because if we don’t, we have no Park Service; programs get obsolete, visitors don’t come, Congress won’t care. We just don’t have an organization without this.

*Researcher*: Do you think it’d be that extreme?

*Interviewee*: Oh yes, I have no doubt in my mind. We had a few sessions where [the consultants] ran us through the studies on this. It’s pretty clear if we don’t jump on this now, later might be too late…I don’t think we’re exaggerating. [white female, park-level supervisor]

As the quotes above show, interviewees tended to make a distinction between the past and the new approach. They referred to the past as not having produced much change, as if it was in a state of stasis from which they were now transcending. A key part of the shift resides in how they began to operationalize the problem, the diversity dilemma, by appropriating the language to which the consultants had exposed them. According to the diversity logic, it was imperative now for them to connect diversity to core organizational functions and operational needs. When the interviewee above refers to *survival*, for example, the point is that the Park Service over time will become a collection of relics only a few will care about. That if the NPS does not respond to the changing demographics of the U.S., the preferences of the younger generation, preferring technology to the outdoors, the organization is on a death spiral. Highlighting this point, another interviewee confessed: “…we actually don’t do a good job preparing for the future. When you think about it, our job is to talk about the past. So a lot of people have a hard time wrapping their head around this diversity work because it’s forward-looking. And it’s scary because it might even mean we have to change how we do things.” The tone with which the diversity logic was explained, and the selection of words, closely mirrored what one would expect of a large corporation in a quest to expand market share and compete effectively.
Similarly, other interviewees initially articulated the new logic along moralistic principles – “it’s the right thing to do.” Early on, however, they realized that morality was not a shared construct the same way that the business ethos was. Also, morality, to many, seemed abstract – an elusive construct. Strategically appropriating business concepts and principles seemed the right framing strategy, for managers and elite members of the organization are socialized in those concepts and expected to act and make decisions according to them.

Another interviewee, making a similar argument, explained:

The other stages of the strategy – from a long-term organizational change point of view – is that the 4,200 supervisors have got to be convinced that it’s the right thing to do, based on a business case, and not all morals. So it’s not the morally right thing to do, it’s the business case right thing to do. So if we are going to survive as an organization, if you are going to have the money that you need to run your operation, if you’re going to have the people and resources that you need to do your job, you need to do this. And we need to convince [leadership] of that. [white male, senior HR manager]

Breaking away from the right-thing-to-do moralistic paradigm, however, is not a simple endeavor. The new logic, which was not the prevailing institutional logic, coexists among multiple logics in a subordinate position. Furthermore, as inherently racial, the larger racial formation process and societal-level logics influence the very contours of the new logic. It influences available frames and the likelihood of success. Many informants shared a sense of stagnation or lack of progress in terms of diversity work – irrespective of the “businessness” or how rational their frame may be. For instance, an informant summarized this shared sentiment when she lamented that

The business case for them is not made. They don’t see it. It still feels like someone’s just telling me that this is the right thing to do, and it is definitely much more than that. It’s more than the right thing to do. There is a business case for recruiting a diverse workforce, but it’s just not – we’re still having trouble making that
connection. And that’s not just the Park Service, it’s not just [our state]. *That’s a national problem.* And I don’t know what the answer to that is. I have been doing this kind of work for ten years, and I still feel like I have got my back up against a really huge boulder, pushing it up a really steep hill, and I don’t feel like I’m hitting a plateau or where I’ve reached my mark. It doesn’t feel like I’ve gotten very far at all. [black female, EEO manager]

Along the same line, another interviewee described how the new diversity logic was more inclusive, motivating a larger group of NPS employees to share the diversity work:

…and now it’s not just people of color talking about this. You’ve got many white people working on this too; here in headquarters and in the field. You’ve met many of them that, maybe all of them, we’ve flown to Washington for our meetings. And we were told we needed to be strategic. And we did that. You’ve seen the business case, right? – it doesn’t get more strategic than that. We have done a lot of work on this, and we’re saying the right things, we’re being careful, we’re listening to the advice, bringing people in to look at what we’re doing…Frankly, though, this might take longer than I thought because we now have to convince four hundred plus sites this is also their business case. And they need to get behind that – which is going to be tough I think. [Asian female, program manager]

While the business frame was seemingly popular across the organization, as the quotes above suggest, it was not left unchallenged. Particularly outside of headquarters and among some lower level white employees I interviewed, there was a sense that the business frame to justify diversity was just a façade. A façade meant to mask what some argued was a repackaged quotas-hiring scheme. As a white male employee shared:

…and I agree in principle. I think they’re trying to do the right thing. But I’ve been in this organization for years as a seasonal employee, I don’t work year round, I want to but there’re no jobs. And then they keep talking about diversity, diversity and inclusion, and that doesn’t seem to include me. I don’t think they’re talking about people like me. And I’m sorry I’m being blunt, I’m not sure
this is what you want to hear [chuckle]. So they’re really talking about minorities.

Researcher: what do you think about the benefits of diversity? Do you think there’s a problem to focus on minorities the way you think they are?

Interviewee: Absolutely! I can agree you do need different perspectives and all that. I think it does make this place better. Now, but when you focus only on race and say ‘we need to hire more of this, more of that,’ that’s where I see the problem. And I’m not sure they are taking that into account – you have to go back to qualifications. I have been doing this for years, and I’d love to convert to permanent, but there’re no jobs. So if a permanent job opens, I honestly doubt there’re that many folks out there as qualified as I am. I don’t think so. And that has nothing to do with their race. I’ve been doing the work, it’s that simple. So it wouldn’t be fair if you hired someone just because that person is a minority. [white male, park level employee]

A white female interviewee explained:

You just have to be careful it doesn’t turn into a program to advantage certain groups. And the risk is there. A lot of people here in my park feel we are now going out of our way to hire minorities, that we are lowering the standards, that to be an intern you have to be a minority. And I get it – it breaks my heart I get both sides. This organization is extremely white male dominated, go around the parks, see what they look like, how they talk. This is my fourth park, I know what I’m talking about. I get we need to change that. I do. But I don’t know how to argue with the other rangers who don’t get it. And then you have the seasonals [seasonal employees]. People who have been quote unquote waiting in line to get a permanent job. How do you tell them we’re going to hire the diverse candidate because we need more diversity? They feel you’re taking their jobs away. And it’s the same thing at every park I’ve been to. [white female, program manager]

As another interviewee more directly put it:

To be honest, I don’t think a lot of people out here are ever going to get it. I mean, the kinds of things you hear from our white colleagues it’s just unbelievable.

Researcher: what kinds of things do you hear?
Interviewee: All kinds of things. Because I’m white, they probably feel comfortable saying all kinds of crazy stuff. The main thing is I don’t think they see the need to bring diversity. And you’d hear things like ‘if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it,’ or use words like ‘quota’ to talk behind people’s back. Or make insensitive jokes about how minorities don’t hike or go camping. They think that’s the real issue. If minorities are not out here in the woods, coming to our parks to hike – that they don’t like the outdoors. So they feel minorities aren’t applying because this is not their thing; that they’re not interested in this kind of work. And they look at minority employees as if they’re out of their element […] So they see the diversity work coming out of Washington forcing a non-issue […] One thing I’m noticing, though, is that when you look at the younger folks coming in, they don’t seem to think the way older employees do, at least in my opinion. But they’re not the majority yet [laughter]. [white male, park-level supervisor]

The quotes above reflect the negative views held by some white informants of the new emphasis on diversity. They internalized the program as an attempt to benefit minorities, while neglecting whites. The limited number of jobs for which they had to compete, triggered the scarcity lens through which they made sense of the new logic. As a result, words like “qualification,” “quota,” “benefit,” and “favoritism” were used to challenge the business frame proponents of diversity had put forth. They also served to delegitimize diversity on its face by providing an alternate narrative that would highlight the values of neutrality, objectivism, and fairness.

Ironically, proponents of the new logic found in the business frame a way to overcome the racial undertone of their work. A focus on the organization, its success and wellbeing, depersonalized a logic of management that some saw as providing unwarranted benefits to members of minority groups. The business approach was meant, in large part, to curtail that notion and refocus attention back on the organization, rather than on minority groups.
De-racialization of Racial Discourse

The business frame explained above helped cast the new logic as different from previous logics. Such a difference was in large measure related to its seemingly non-racial essence – as opposed to the inherently racial nature of the frames of previous phases. However, the corporate frame alone does not address the internal conflict about the role race plays in their framing strategy – nor does it address the gravamen many white employees raised, as shown above. Many of my interviewees struggled with the implicit, but present, ambivalence of discussing racial dynamics in non-racial terms – or more specifically, erasing race from their framing discourse.

De-racializing the new logic was seen as an important element – and even as a precondition – for success or logic adoption. The majority of interview transcripts registered this notion. To many interviewees, race was a source of division, conflict, rancor, and historical baggage; the latter was the most commonly used descriptor. Illustrating this dynamic, some interviewees put it:

“… but the thing is that inclusion is about all of us, and diversity is not just race. But some folks think all we’re doing is going back to race or minorities. They can’t get pass that ‘us versus them’ mentality – and that’s on both sides [whites and minorities alike]. I think it’s the baggage, there’s a lot of baggage, and we have to deal with that…you know, we have to get people to see beyond the racial stuff.” [black male, manager in HQs]

“You’re going to have the people who’ll never get it. Or they don’t want to get it. For them diversity equals race, and then we are back to the issues, all the problems we are hoping to overcome. We are looking at a broader definition not limited to one thing. Think about it, you know, you have personalities, diversity of thought, where you come from, your perspectives, etcetera, etcetera. When you make this about race, you’re calling for trouble – it’s divisive,
unproductive, I mean, it can get nasty.” [white female, park ranger]

De-racialization, then, was a framing tactic adopted to overcome those challenges and, therefore, present their logic in post-racial terms, as transcending the confines of race.

Historically, the affirmative action paradigm of racial categorization, discussed in the previous chapter, tended to emphasize rather heavily how race intersected organizational life – particularly from a discrimination and stereotyping standpoint. The de-racialization tactic was also an attempt to cast the new logic separate from the traditional, heavily racial, EEO framework. Simultaneously, de-racialization rendered the EEO approach as belonging to the past, while the diversity logic, with its business air, to the future. Emphasizing this theme, a black male manager explained:

*Interviewee:* “…and that business case has to be front and center. But I think we used to go about it the wrong way. If we are going to go, and we’re going to say, ‘Well, you white man, you’re racist, you’re a bad guy.’ If we use that approach, that’s not going to win, in my opinion.”

*Researcher:* “But why do you have that opinion? Do you have reasons to think that?”

*Interviewee:* “Yes I do. Because [the EEO Office has] had the same paradigm for all these years, and it hasn’t worked. So maybe it might be time to try something *new*, and try to bring people in. Because the bottom line is that people who work for this organization – they tend to be attracted to this organization because of its mission. And if we can sell people on the fact that diversity will help us with our mission, and help us meet our mission.”

[black male, manager in HQs]

Fleshing out this point, another interviewee stated:

…but it has to be more than race. Diversity is more than race, and we tend to go back to race, and I get why, but we really need to be broader than that. Every single one of our employees should see themselves from a diversity standpoint, including white men. And
some groups in the past made it about themselves, and we shot ourselves in the foot. It wasn’t inclusive. It was this us versus them type of deal. And I hope we don’t make the same mistakes this time around, so it isn’t about race, or boxing ourselves into categories. [black female, EEO manager]

A high-level manager put it as follows:

The other piece that goes hand in hand with diversity is inclusion. And you can’t be inclusive if you define diversity narrowly, so it has to be broader than that. If you define it to mean race, whites will go: ‘how about me?’ And I think we’ve been stuck in that phase for a long time. The way you get out of there is by thinking more broadly. So we’re now saying this is not about race, this is much more than that. And we have slowly begun to push people along in that direction. [white male, senior HR manager]

These interviewees, like many of them, saw race as almost having no space in their current organizational discursive repertoire. The goal, as the interviewee puts it, is “to bring people in,” to be inclusive, and, therefore, enhance logic adoption.

In sum, de-racializing their framing tactics was part of a program to escape the constraints of race and to open new spaces and possibilities with the diversity logic of management. As the interviewee above explained, it was imperative for white employees to identify with the new logic and embrace it. A heavily – or even superficially – racial frame would have seemingly foreclosed the very possibility a wider audience identified with the logic and, therefore, would have limited its attractiveness or appeal. Avoiding racial rhetoric was a strategic move to address this dilemma.

Also, such de-racialization can be understood, as Kersten (2000) argued, as a larger social process to ignore and diminish the way in which race continues to structure systems of inequality. As she explained “…diversity management offers a new ideological and mediated cultural response designed to contain, restrain, and obscure the fundamental racial inequalities that are inherent in our society” (Kersten, 2000; p. 245).
Organizational Survival: The Relevancy Frame

The last framing tactic was the *relevancy* construct. This frame was rooted in an ecological view of the organization as an organism that needs to adapt to environmental pressures. In organizational studies, the ecological perspective (Hannan & Freeman, 1977) of organizational change and adaptation influenced much of the thinking about the organization-environment interface. Similarly, in this case, organizational actors sought to frame the new institutional logic within the larger societal or environmental context – one of changing racial and ethnic demographics in the US.

The relevancy frame helped logic proponents put forth a meaning system in which the external environment acquires prominence and becomes a deterministic force of organizational survival. Therefore, adopting the diversity logic, under this frame, was a matter of long-term existence, a step toward embracing and adapting to external environmental changes.

To provide specific substance within the relevancy frame, organizational actors often cited seemingly well-known facts about the nature and extent of demographic change in the US. The majority of interviewees pointed out the “coloring” of the U.S. population as an impetus for adopting a new logic that allowed them to cope with such changes. As the Hispanic population continues to grow, interracial marriage among the younger generation becomes widely accepted and popular, the traditional cadre of white, middle-class park visitor diminishes. This dynamic, in turn, erodes NPS’ customer base, they reasoned. As a senior manager clearly summarized it:

And what’s happening, part of the reason, now, although it could have been earlier, is we have become increasingly aware that the audience for a lot of what we offer as an organization has historically been white, middle-class America. And as the demographics of the populations of America change pretty dramatically – in the last 20 years and in the next 30 years – we risk not connecting with a very large segment of the very American public that we are supposed to serve. So it’s the
relevancy issue that the Director has made one of his four pillars that I think is the more internally-driven motivation for doing that – for paying attention to diversity and inclusion. If we can’t make ourselves relevant to an American population that is no longer dominated by white middle-class people that have historically been the visitors to parks, then we risk becoming irrelevant to the decision-makers who have to decide what pledges we have, and things like that. [black male in senior leadership role]

The relevancy frame, as also depicted by the quote above, places upon the organization a significant level of agency. That is, not only is the organization custodian of those spectacular natural wonders we call national parks, as it has traditionally performed; but also, it is responsible for developing and nurturing a growing customer base of visitors and park enthusiasts, or it risks irrelevance. According to logic proponents, this cannot be accomplished without adopting a diversity logic of management, for diversity and inclusion ought to be interwoven in decision-making and the organizational culture in order to expand its reach, to become “relevant” to a diverse audience.

Further explaining the relevancy frame another employee said:

Several years ago we started to realize we hadn’t been paying attention to the world around us. We were in our own little bubble, Rick, and it burst. But it was people from NPCA [National Parks Conservation Association], the foundation [Park Foundation] that kind of put this in our radar. We had this tunnel vision that – you probably heard continuing resolutions [as opposed to Congress passing a budget] are becoming pretty common. So more and more we are depending on donors, on our visitors, friend groups. As whites reduce in number – our surveys show most of our visitors are white – who’s going to keep this going, who’s keeping the lights on? And when you put it that way, it’s a no-brainer. After all the centennial fanfare goes away, who are we going to rely on? And we use this issue of relevancy, as Johnny likes to say – I like the term, it gets to the core of the issue, to really underscore the need for diversity. [Hispanic male in senior leadership role]

65 At the time of the interview, the NPS was preparing to celebrate its 100-year anniversary.
In a more personal note, another employee explained:

I’m actually very concerned when I look at my kids and their friends. The want to be connected to the freaking phone all the time. They’re more indoor creatures, and it’s becoming more and more common. Is that how things are going to be? Because if that’s the case we need to figure out a way to appeal to them. And I know folks in Harpers Ferry are developing apps and things like that, it has to be a broader strategy. And what we are saying is diversity gets you that. You wanted an example, and there you go. If we don’t appeal to kids who want to be on the internet all day long, they’re not going to come. And they’re not going to show their kids there’s this thing called national park. And on and on, you get the idea. [white female, park ranger]

The relevancy frame could also be understood as a fatalistic extension of the business frame. As the quotes above show, organizational members argued that, absent diversity, the NPS would cease to exist. It helped them locate the organization within a larger social schema from which they were increasingly disconnecting. This frame pointed at diversity as a remedy – as a way to bring harmony between the NPS and its outer environment.

The three framing strategies discussed above served to simultaneously define and broker the new diversity logic. De-racialization was the foundation of this endeavor. They also provided a system of meaning (Weick, 1995) through which organizational members made sense of and gave sense about their institutional reality and proposed change in the logic of action.

While the frames on the surface were mutually reinforcing and interdependent, a more nuanced relationship emerged. De-racialization, for instance, was deployed more implicitly when the other frames were being used; it was sort of omnipresent throughout. The business and relevancy frames tended to feed off of each other. For example, while the business frame called for rationality and strategizing, the relevancy frame pointed to a strategic risk. Perhaps without the business frame, relevancy would not have emerged as a frame; but, at the same time, without the relevancy frame, the business frame lacked the environmental context. In other words, the
de-racialization frame was foundational, it made possible the business and relevancy framing tactics. Figure 4 depicts this relationship, but it is not intended to convey that de-racialization leads to the other frames, but rather that it supersedes them.

![Diagram](image)

*Figure 4: Relationship between framing tactics.*

**The Culture of Resistance: From Framing to Action**

Having devised a framing apparatus that effectively rendered the proposed institutional logic racially neutral, proponents of the new logic began to navigate the “wavy waters” of institutionalizing the diversity logic. The “wavy waters” metaphor was shared with me by one interviewee who had been engaged in the “push” for change for quite some time – a Park Service veteran who had been devoting his latter days in the organization to brokering the diversity logic. The metaphor is intended to expose the political, conflictive, and, at times, inconsistent nature of organizational change. Indeed, as Besharov and Smith (2014) pointed out, logic multiplicity among groups with varying levels of power in an organization can lead to severe contestation. In this case, two seemingly intractable aspects of the organization that did not align with the new diversity logic predominantly drove contestation: *culture* and *praxis.*
Change in Institutional Logic as Culture Making

My very first day in the National Park Service’s office, at the intersection of I and 12th streets, one of my informants was waiting for me in the lobby. It was my first day as both employee and researcher – as they had already agreed on me wearing both hats. Being new to the Washington metropolitan area, I had no idea how difficult it was to negotiate your way through the Metro train system during the peak of rush hour, and thus I was running a few minutes late. As I arrive, my informant greets me with warmth and exasperation at the same time, for he had already planned what he wanted me to accomplish that day.

As we proceeded to walk toward the elevators, he says, as if having missed something, “Wait, I want to show you something – a bit of an introduction.” Right next to the lobby, there is a room where visitors go through the metal detectors we had bypassed because I was not coming as a visitor. Besides metal detectors and screening equipment, that room is beautifully adorned with floor-to-ceiling fiberglass placards that are mounted on the walls. In the background, they have silhouettes of the most iconic national parks; they look like watercolor paintings. Imprinted on them, there were sections of the NPS’ organic act and quotes from Steven Mather and Horace Albright who helped create the organization. My informant, in a rather ritualistic way, asked me to read the excerpt from the organic act, which was actually a paraphrase that softened the legalese of the original phrasing. He wanted me to pay particular attention to what the organic act prescribed as the mission of the NPS, “to conserve the scenery and natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations” [emphasis mine].
Reading the NPS’ mission out loud not only revealed what Congress intended for the Park Service to accomplish, but also – and perhaps more importantly – one of the main features of the organizational culture: *stasis*. Interview after interview revealed the prominence of this cultural feature, which, in turn, reveals the intimacy between culture and practice.

NPS employees take the mission to heart. On a daily basis, there are employees in numerous sites recounting the past, explaining to visitors the very way our ancestors were, the battles they fought, and the country we were. Researching the past, creating narratives to bring it to life, and immersing visitors in it are core elements of the mission. The organization does not venture out into the future, for it was created to be consumed by the past, our history. Such practices that are inherently backward-looking have morphed into a culture adhered to “the way things were” as opposed to “the way things could be.”

Such a cultural feature also extends to the way in which the organization manages its natural resources. For instance, as I interviewed NPS field employees, predominantly biologists, botanists, and maintenance workers, *preservation* and *conservation* were two words never absent from their lexicon. As I explored them at a deeper level, it became clear they too shaped the contours of the organizational culture. They are unwaveringly focused on ensuring that the natural resources in their custody are kept unimpaired, and many even untouched. *Change*, therefore, is inherently at odds with their core values and the organization’s *raison d’être*.

Proponents of the new logic were remarkably aware of, and unanimously in agreement with, the fact that the preservationist culture had sewn in place, so to speak, the prevailing logic. Thus, for a change in logic to take place, a change in culture had to antecede. This finding points to the inextricable interrelationship between institutional logics and culture as a dynamic, mutually reinforcing, symbiotic interweaving of material practices. As discussed above,
institutional logics emerge and take form within a historical and cultural context (Besharov & Smith, 2014). That dynamic surfaced throughout my work and interview coding process. For instance, a couple of interviewees summarized this interrelationship as follows:

“…and then we also have an organization that, in its very mission, it’s about conserving and preserving the existing – and not remaking or building new stuff. So by the very nature, we like to keep things the way they are. We want to keep the trees. We don’t want to cut the trees down. We don’t think cutting trees is progress. We don’t want to tear down old buildings, we want to keep the same stuff up. By nature, that’s what we do – and it translates itself down the top organizational culture.” [black male, manager in HQs]

“People talk about the green and gray. It’s tradition. And folks like to keep that tradition. They’re not easy about changing. And so when you’re coming and talking about transforming things, people in the National Park Service are slow to accept change. Because by the very nature of what we do, we don’t like a whole lot of change. We like to keep things the way they are, and keep them looking like that for future generations. It’s in our mission statement – and it translates itself to what we do.” [white male, senior HR employee]

The interviewee above effectively theorized the very ways in which the conservationist paradigm morphs the organizational culture, which, in turn, demarcates and influences the way institutional change occurs. Relatedly, and to press the point, another interviewee put it: “All the policies, all the common practices, all of the rules and regulations, all of the assumptions, all of the informal cultural things are established to ensure the survival of the organism the way it exists. Not to introduce a foreign organism into the organization; because a foreign organism is seen as threatening.” In other words, the cultural manifestations of organizational artifacts serve to sustain and feed the prevailing institutional logic and vice versa, opposing that which threatens its existence and viability. With regards to the racial formation process, then, this cultural trait suggests that the NPS is not likely to readily experiment with new ideas of race unless mandated
either by strong and pervasive internal pressure or by law. Racial formation, given such a culture, is likely to be driven by a slow and protracted process of social stimuli. As an informant described:

The NPS culture has so long been the white male way of thinking. And it’s the white male management. This is the way we do things. And it’s very macho, and it’s very military. Because it was the military to begin with. They guarded those things – our resources. I think it’s been tough for the Park Service as a whole to change, because they have a very difficult job – to preserve and protect these things, but then to interpret these things. But then we have so many different people who use our parks and come to our parks or want to work at our parks, and maybe they have a different idea of what they want to get out of it, or maybe they have a different idea of how they want to present something. It’s a culture that doesn’t like to hear new things. Doesn’t want to change. It’s very difficult to change. Status quo is really what it should be. We’ve always done it this way. [black male, manager in HQs]

Another interviewee explained:

Well, Peter said something that I agree with. And I never thought of it this way but the culture developed on its own. It developed organically based on who founded the National Park Service. And those people tend to look like the ones who are in charge now, for the most part. But now you are taking the culture and trying to change it, force people to change it, without it changing naturally. So I think that’s really difficult to do. I think it’s really difficult, but the country has changed a lot since then. The Park Service has not – to me. So why not? Why? When I ask myself why haven’t they changed quicker? Or why are they reluctant? Or why is this so slow? Why have we gone through so many iterations of this strategy? Why aren’t there more people at the table and why don’t others have more input? It’s bureaucratic; it’s a bureaucratic process. And, I guess at the end of the day, the culture of the leadership seems to win out, and they don’t want to change it – it seems. Or perhaps at least not at a fast rate. [white female, program manager]

Proponents of the new institutional logic realized early on in their endeavor to change the prevailing logic that a “higher” force – that of culture – played an almost insurmountable role at sustaining and enabling the existing logic to thrive. As presented above, there was a duality in
the way in which culture manifested to impede logic change. On the one hand, at the organizational level, an organization formed to preserve embodied preservation or stasis as a key feature of their culture. On the other hand, the larger societal cultural traits the NPS’ constituency infused cultural artifacts at odds with the proposed institutional logic. Together, in effect, they served as a front against logic change. The evidence suggests, then, that culture change (or realignment) is a precondition to change in institutional logic.

**From Culture to Praxis: Bureaucratic Action and Logic Change**

Interviewees consistently pointed at culture as a barrier to logic change, but they too recognized another important force: that of structure. Culture and structure coexist in a mutually reinforcing relationship – always influencing each other (Smircich, 1983). Proponents of the new logic understood the importance of this relationship when analyzing how they could change the culture leveraging bureaucratic systems. Most of my interviewees saw changing institutional processes, or enforcing existing ones, as a way to trigger cultural change, and thus institutional change.

In a straightforward fashion, proponents of the new logic sought to realign existing human resources (HR) management systems according to the tenets of the diversity and inclusion logic. That is, embedding in the recruitment, retention, performance management, and reward and recognition systems the ideals of diversity and inclusion. In a practical sense, for example, they sought to enhance the racial diversity of the applicant pool by targeting recruitment efforts in urban areas or minority-serving institutions. Making this a standard practice, they reasoned, would minimize the underrepresentation of minority groups in the workforce. The same logic was applied to the other HR systems. For instance, if managers were held accountable for diversity and inclusion as a performance element, they would have to take
upon themselves to develop programs that advanced those goals. And those who did would be rewarded and recognized accordingly, producing a cascading effect that over time made diversity and inclusion their standard operating procedure.

Such an approach to logic change rested upon the assumption that individuals, particularly managers, did not have the structural incentives to, or enforcement mechanism for, change. Addressing this misalignment seemed obvious and insurmountable at once – at least during the timeframe of this study. Top management was not moved to action. As an interviewee put it:

This accountability stuff is scary [expletive]! Because it affects careers, it affects income, it affects a whole lot of things. So one thing that has to happen is that the people in authority and everybody else has to see this diversity as an asset. And that this organization is smarter. And that this organization is more effective. And that this organization gives better customer service. And that this organization develops products and services. They have to be convinced that this is a result of doing this, but they’re not convinced. They still think that we’re doing this because of compliance. [black male in senior leadership role]

During interviews with top managers, particularly managers in the human resources and EEO departments, it became clear, as the interviewee above explained, that remnants of the EEO-Affirmative Action logic still dominate most of their thinking and action. The informant above employed the same business language used to frame diversity as a business imperative. While the new diversity logic is largely strategic in nature, important and relevant stakeholders adhered to the sense of compliance and legalistic approach that dominated the affirmative action years. The diversity institutional logic, then, emerged as a new discursive entity that coexisted within a structure formed based on the principles of the previous logic.

Putting the diversity logic at odds with other considerations, an employee shared with me that:
What a lot of people working on diversity don’t get is that we still have to comply with the laws we have on the books. It’s not like we can just go ahead and loosey-goosey hire people off the street. I agree – the argument – I get that we have to move the needle, we have to work on it. But we are still in reactive mode. Most of the people I have are investigating discrimination complaints, or reviewing investigation reports that contractors submit. And I think if we do more work on the diversity side, the number of complaints should go down, the whole thing is connected. But what I’ve been telling people pushing for diversity is that we need to update the systems. You know no one is working on diversity full-time, and why is that? They keep talking about coming up with an FTE [a full-time position], as a matter of fact, Arthur mentioned it the other day in the staff meeting. But what I’m saying – the – the bottom line is we are not there yet. We need to put money and resources where our mouth is. [black female, senior HR manager]

Further developing the idea that organizational systems were not set up to deal with diversity, another employee confessed:

It’s a bit sad, frustrating, because you feel like a cog in the wheel working EEO these days. Peter, Rosanna, Jessica are all trying to make us work a bit more strategically. They have the positions and titles where they can make a difference, but I just get this feeling they are like a square peg in a round hole, everyone else just want to keep things the way they’ve always been. They keep saying HR has to change, EEO has to change – but we don’t. For example, take Anna; people like her grew up in this adversarial system, where it’s one side against the other. That’s all they know. Or actually, that’s all we know. So, at what point do you tell them the system is obsolete? And even if you do, you don’t have the law behind you. If we dismantled the whole EEO program and built a diversity program tomorrow, the EEOC would take us to court – they’d have a heart attack. You can’t do that. And I know Peter would love to do that, but he can’t.

Researcher: am I hearing you correctly? Do you feel the current system is like a straitjacket? Or do you think there’s room for diversity work within the current system?

Interviewee: I think it is a straitjacket, that’s a good way to describe it. There’s so much you can do, you know. When a small allegation of discrimination takes up a lot of resources, as an EEO
manager you don’t have a lot of wiggle room to work on the culture, the inclusivity, the relations, the outreach, and on and on and on. And Peter wants us to focus on that, but how?...when will I have time to ask my staff to drop all the other things to work on that? I know what you’re going to say, it’s entangled, I know, but the processes we have to follow are stipulated by regulation. And those are the things that need to change so we can evolve and be more strategic…and the irony here is that the more we process complaints the more we get. [black female, EEO employee]

Providing an interesting take on the issue, another employee said:

…I’m starting to think that for this to work, it has to come from way above, and I mean Congress. In the Service we can say all we want, but ultimately in HR we have to follow the law. And the law tells you what you can and cannot do. There’re a lot of things I know we can’t do that a lot of people wished we could ignore. So when we look at quals [qualifications], we are not looking at the race of the person – the, the thing is – we actually don’t even have access to that, that’s EEO. We don’t look at that. And that system got us where we are today. Did it work? [laughter]. Because in my humble opinion, the system is strict with certain people, but not with all. It’s always been about who you know. But if you talk about diversity you’re reminded there’s a process.

Researcher: Like a double standard?

Interviewee: Oh yeah! I mean, it is true that [the HR management] system is not supposed to be subjective. That’s why HR doesn’t have access to a lot of information that could taint the process [i.e., hiring, promotion, disciplinary actions], like race, national origin, all that. But people talk. And what I’m saying is that the [HR management] system assumes we’re being neutral across the board, but that’s not how it works – don’t get me wrong, this is not always the case, but it happens more than you’d think. So unless we change the process or the [HR management] system we are not going to solve the diversity problem…you hear us talk about all the great things we could be doing, but I think we’re barking up the wrong tree. You need a radical change in HR and EEO, we’ve got too many rules that keep us chasing our tails. [black female, HR employee]

The interviews above with employees and managers in the HR and EEO departments revealed a sense of disconnect between the principles and assumptions of the new logic and the
foundational apparatus that exists to carry out HR and EEO processes, systems, and strategies. Indeed, there was a consensus throughout my interviews that in order to fully institutionalize the new logic, extant processes, systems, and strategies needed to be aligned accordingly. For instance, many pointed out how the various merit system principles that govern the hiring process might be at odds with some of the premises of the new logic. To highlight this point, a manager observed that the diversity and inclusion logic may conflict with the principle of neutrality that ought to prevail throughout the various human resource systems (e.g., hiring, performance management, and adverse action) when she said “we have a system based on merit. So, however we decide to move forward, we need to make sure we don’t violate that.” While on the one hand logic proponents attempted to make the NPS more racially diverse, on the other, racial considerations were off limits. As shown before, some even argued that diversity and inclusion meant “moving beyond race.” These contradictions served, in large measure, as a barricade that prevented the new logic from advancing, for it needed to penetrate the very systems that would guarantee logic adoption and viability (hiring, performance management, etc.).
Figure 5: Demographic makeup of the National Park Service’s workforce, 2006-2016

Figure 6: Demographic makeup of the NPS’ workforce excluding whites, 2006-2016

66 Figures 5 and 6 data were obtained from the Office of Personnel Management Fed Scope tool. Data are as of September of each year.
To further contextualize the sentiments expressed above, figures 5 and 6 show the demographic makeup of the NPS for a ten-year period. Figure 5 shows how constant the organization has remained with regards to minority representation since 2006. During that period, whites consistently accounted for slightly over 80 percent of the workforce.

In order to better discern the trend among minorities, figure 6 excludes whites. While the lines for Asians and Hispanics remain mostly steady, ~2% and ~5% respectively, the line depicting African Americans is on a downward trend during the same period. In 2006, African Americans accounted for 7.7% of the workforce, but their representation declined to 5.5% in 2016. Even though these data do not help us reach any conclusion with regards to the effectiveness of the new logic and do not imply causality, they help us better explore and understand part of the organizational context. They shed light on the larger dynamic of racial representation during this time period, which largely served as impetus for proponents of the diversity logic.

To summarize the frustration of logic proponents with their lack of progress brokering the new logic, an interviewee lamented:

> I thought it’s just intuitive – [the need for change]. And they would read this business case or they must have read other documents at this point showing that. It’s not very diverse; it’s not inclusive. They see the results of the surveys. So I thought there would be more of an urgency at this point. I thought it would be more obvious to them. But I don’t understand. I guess the way I see it now, you have to tell them: this is an urgency, here’s why. It’s not going to work with just the leadership. You need bottom-up approaches too. But I think it’s just discouraging at this level that you don’t have that alignment and support guaranteed. It doesn’t seem guaranteed to me yet. [white male, park ranger]

Like the interviewee above, the sense of frustration among logic proponents was rather unanimous. While they were well aware their push for change was meant at dismantling the
prevailing institutional logic, they assumed adopting the new logic was going to occur much simpler. It was obvious to them, but they underestimated the extent to which the dominant logic influenced systems, structures, and culture. Infusing diversity and inclusion into those three domains was not attainable during the timeframe of this study, although that has been the goal since the advent of the new logic in the late 1990s. Thus, the two institutional logics have coexisted, for well over a decade, in a contested dynamic. That is, existing human resources management systems, as required by current laws and regulations, are designed around the affirmative action and equal employment opportunity logic. Their principles are entrenched in how the organization hires, promotes, rewards, and manages its people. Conversely, the diversity logic emerged, among other things, in response to the perceived failure of affirmative action at diversifying the workforce and fostering a culture of inclusion.

**Conclusion**

Chapter IV and V explored and analyzed how racial formation influenced the organization’s institutional logic in the form of social norms (e.g., racial segregation) and the law (anti-discrimination laws and affirmative action) respectively. This chapter explored a different approach to racial formation in the organization: how organizational actors adopted and brokered a new institutional logic derived from new societal paradigm of diversity and inclusion to counter the prevailing logic dominated by the affirmative action framework.

Proponents of the new logic first crafted a discursive apparatus framed by a business lens aimed at de-racializing their logic. Armed with a compelling and seemingly convincing narrative, they sought to broker the new logic in order to ultimately embed it in existing systems and processes, particularly those of HR and EEO. However, during the span of this research, logic proponents were unable to successfully accomplish their strategic goal – their logic
remained marginal, with little to no influence on core organizational components. Accordingly, this chapter sheds important light on, and builds upon Besharov and Smith’s (2014) framework of logic multiplicity. Using their model, the dynamic described in this chapter seems to fit the definition of an estranged organization where the institutional logics are low in both centrality (i.e., “the degree to which multiple logics are each treated as equally valid and relevant to organizational functioning” [Besharov & Smith, 2014, p. 369]) and compatibility (i.e., “the extent to which the instantiations of logics imply consistent and reinforcing organizational actions” [Besharov & Smith, 2014, p. 367]). Low centrality leads one logic to “exert primary influence over organizational functioning” (Besharov & Smith, 2014, p. 372). In this case, the diversity logic remains peripheral to affirmative action, which continues to dominate processes and systems. Low compatibility means that the “logics offer inconsistent implications for organizational action, leading actors to grapple with divergent goals and divergent means of achieving these goals” (Besharov & Smith, 2014, p. 372). The diversity logic directly questioned many of the premises upon which affirmation action was founded and, therefore, each provided contradictory prescriptions for action. Over time, should diversity be infused in core organizational functioning centrality may increase, thereby creating a contested environment dominated by conflict in a contest to become the prevailing institutional logic.

Furthermore, this chapter shows how the process of racial formation is driven by a constant push and pull between the outer social environment and the organization. Proponents of the new logic sought to institutionalize a new way of understanding and making sense of race – one that went beyond the traditional racial categories stipulated by law. It was as if, while recognizing the importance of race, race was no longer seen as a master category, but rather part of a complex palette comprised of intertwined identities and ways of being. This is not to say
that, from their perspective, race in its traditional sense was erased or diminished, but that other identities and categories, that have been seemingly hidden (e.g., sexual orientation), were brought out to the forefront. However, their attempt to push for this new logic failed. The traditional, clear cut affirmative action and equal employment logic remained dominant.

The next chapter explores the three phases taken together and the theoretical insights that could be derived from them. It then sets forth the foundation for developing a theory of race in organizations that incorporates the institutional logics perspective to underscore the interrelationship of multiple levels (i.e., social, organizational, individual).
Chapter VII:

Racial Formation as Institutional Logic: Toward an Institutional Theory of Race in Organizations

Most of the theorizing of race in organizations occurs at the micro individual level (Nkomo, 1992). Researchers who subscribe to this level of analysis are often concerned with constructs like discrimination, bias, and other relational variables mediated by race. They are focused on interactions at the individual level. Others, pursuing a more macro approach, have studied how race influences larger social or institutional programs. This line of research seeks to uncover how race, or racial bias in many instances, manifests through and within broader institutional domains, like education (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004), housing (Huttman, 1991) and banking (Morris, 2008) to name a few. Theorists of this approach employ the term institutional racism to refer to those systematic practices of a sector or institution that disadvantage members of a racial group (Better, 2008).

This study builds upon prior approaches and seeks to extend them by emphasizing the macro, societal processes that form and shape how race manifests through and within organizations. Building on these approaches in relation to the NPS provides a nuanced tactic for studying race as a multilevel social construct that profoundly influences organizational practices, actions, processes, and systems. This research framework combines the theory of racial formation to describe the operating process in society and the institutional logics perspective to operationalize how that societal process of racial formation penetrates organizations at various levels, using the National Park Service’s case to illustrate this theoretical approach.
Racial Formation as Societal-Level Institutional Logics

Omi and Winant (1992) theorize race and racial formation as a social endeavor that takes place within a historical context that changes over time due to conflict, negotiation, and accommodation among social movements. Under this perspective, race is not only a social construct, but also one in constant renegotiation and transformation because it is shaped by the changing social context. For this analysis, racial formation is, then, the socio-historical process that imprints upon race its meaning and cultural symbols.

Using the National Park Service as a case, and the analysis of previous chapters, Figure 7 shows the key features of racial formation by their respective critical moments. The boxes contain some of the meanings and cultural artifacts that are characteristic of each period. For instance, the first critical moment was characterized by a racial context of segregation, overt discrimination, and bias. During this period, race was used to determine one’s place in society and worthiness.

The second period, affirmative action, begins with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, shifting toward a new sense of racial equality. Under this new paradigm, society began to re-define the role race once had determining social order and shifted toward a new set of meaning. Also, this phase developed a set of programs and institutions aimed at repairing the profound and pervasive harm that slavery and racial discrimination had caused.
Finally, the third period is characterized by renewed ideals of inclusion and diversity. In this phase, race and racial differences are to be embraced and celebrated. The tone of this period and the language employed de-emphasize race – as if to erase the major role it once played in society. I refer to this latter process as de-racialization, because it seeks to relegate race to the background or transcend it.

As a process, racial formation does not occur discretely from one critical moment to the next. Rather, each critical moment possesses remnants of previous moments, as new developments emerge and old ones restructure or retire altogether. For this reason, while the boxes in the figure above may give the visual impression there are defined boundaries, they overlap to more properly depict how racial formation takes place in society as an overlapping process. For example, the history of racial segregation, its cultural symbols, continues to be
passed down from generation to generation (Jones, 1997) shaping current and future operationalization of race and racial relations.

The key features (e.g., segregation, reparation, and inclusion) of racial formation of each critical moment can also be theorized as societal level, macro institutional logics. As such, racial formation provides the raw components that make up the varying institutional logics that prescribe and shape how race interjects and influences organizational life. These logics allow organizational actors to make sense of their racialized environment, drawing at times from multiple logics within and across social domains. To illustrate this dynamic, using the NPS as a case, Figure 8 depicts the multi-level interplay between racial formation, macro level institutional logics, intra-organizational dynamics, and individual-level effects.

Applying this model (see Figure 8) to the data, Chapter IV documented how the local community and NPS employees who adhered to a logic of racial segregation, effectively implemented that racial order within the organization. However, such an arrangement did not last too long, for it produced significant conflict with bureaucrats in Washington. Over time, the Office of Negro Affairs successfully dismantled segregationist practices that had been institutionalized. This highlights an important theoretical feature – institutional logics do not operate as straitjacket. Organizations too, as in the case of the Park Service, shape the very contours of existing, or draw from conflicting, intuitional logics.
At the organizational level, institutional logics influence various organizational phenomena – from culture to processes to organizational discourse to interactions. As documented in Chapter VI, for example, the diversity and inclusion logic led to an organizational discourse that adopted key elements from the world of business and management. In Chapter V, on the other hand, quantification was the key discursive approach to managing race and racial relations.
Figure 8 further identifies the various organizational and individual processes that played a role in the racial formation process at NPS. At the organizational level, *social interaction* is the conduit through which actors develop a collective notion of race and racializing. It is through that inter-subjective exchange that racial meaning is developed, shared, and transformed. *Agency and representation* refer to the process by which actors actively engage in the promotion of their own racial meaning system – often to favor members of their racial group or those who aligned with their conceptions of race. As discussed in chapter IV, the public administration literature refers to this process as active representation within the larger representative bureaucracy literature. This form of active representation may facilitate changes in the meaning of race, as discussed in the case of the Office of Negro Affairs. *Ritualization* is the process of normalizing and legitimizing racial meaning by incorporating it into organizational rituals and routines. Chapter V, for instance, described how actors developed reporting schemes and data collection protocols that further reinforced the prescribed categorization and quantification arrangement set forth by affirmative action. *Process and system building* refer to the ways in which the organization embeds and institutionalizes race into its functioning. In chapter IV Shenandoah National Park adopted and implemented the racial ordering of the state of Virginia by segregating its facilities. In chapter V affirmative action altered the way in which the NPS conducted hiring – adding a racial dimension to the process. Lastly, *acculturation* is the process of translating racial meaning into cultural traits that over time become tacit. In chapter VI proponents of the diversity logic faced an organizational culture somewhat obdurate – shaped by decades of affirmative action and equal employment opportunity.

At the individual level three main processes influence racial formation. *Identity construction* is the process of developing a racialized sense of selfhood that helps us demarcate
self and others along racial lines. Race is not only collectively manifested. At the individual level, it shapes our own schemata and way of being. This level in the racial formation process provides individuals with the lens through which social racial meaning is processed. Discrimination refers to the process of acting against, or in favor of, members of other racial groups. This process influences the way racial relations take place and evolve over time. Categorization is the process of setting boundaries along racial lines and giving meaning to emerging racial categories. This process helps individuals develop assessments and judgements about the various racial categories. It also brings a sense of mental stability and order as we navigate our lives in organizations; for instance, to what group does one belong and how does one relate to out-group members are questions this process helps address.

Even though this study was not designed to explore micro or individual processes, extant literature suggests that institutional logics also influence identity construction at the individual level (Lok, 2010). Institutional logics provide the discursive apparatus actors use to enact everyday practices, which in turn helps them constitute an evolving sense of self (Lok, 2010). However, actors are not mere consumers or victims of the dominant institutional logic; rather, they also engage in active identity construction work. New or shifting identities could lead to changes in institutional logics (Lok, 2010). As shown in this study — particularly in chapters IV and VI — actors in positions of power (i.e., institutional entrepreneurs), such as Ickes and Stanton, can draw from their own identity to change organizational practices. As these practices are institutionalized, shifts in institutional logics become possible.

Changing Institutional Logics: Exploring the Impetus for Change

The impetus for change, or emergence of a new logic, varies from period to period. However, in all instances the impetus originates outside the National Park Service, either through
its subordinate position in relation to other organizations (i.e., Department of the Interior and Congress), legal mandate, or by political appointees exerting their influence. This phenomenon supports the findings of other studies on institutional change and logic emergence (Dacin, Goodstein & Scott, 2002).

In the first critical moment, the NPS did not motu proprio question the legitimacy of racial segregation as an acceptable practice and form of organizing. It was the Secretary of Interior at the time, along with other politically appointed leaders, who took upon themselves the challenge of bringing racial equality to organizational functioning. The creation of the Office of Negro Affairs as well as Trent’s appointment were crucial first steps. Under their leadership, they exerted constant and increasing pressure on NPS’ leadership to challenge what had already been institutionalized. Perhaps, the fact that they were from the North, and Trent, an African-American, made this not just a bureaucratic conflict over policy preferences, but a moral imperative. Also, having positions of power at the Department-level gave them the ex-officiary status to successfully effect change.

The second critical moment is triggered by forces further removed from the NPS – Congress in this case who, in turn, acted in response to the civil rights movement, when it passed the Civil Right Act (CRA) in 1964. Even though social movements have been documented to bring about institutional change (Clemens, 1993), the civil rights movement did not appeal to the NPS directly demanding change. Rather, it did gain sufficient momentum in their quest to fight employment discrimination, among other things, that Congress followed suit by enacting the CRA and later the EEOA in 1972. It was the passage of those acts that reformed the way in which the NPS was to manage race and racial relations within its ranks. The enforcement apparatus that these laws installed was another external factor that pressed the NPS to adopt new
in institutional practices. Changes to the regulatory regime within which organizations are embedded inevitably triggers an adaptive response (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996), including the adoption of new logics of action as in this case.

Finally, analogous to the first critical moment, the last episode in which a new logic emerged was instigated by the newly appointed Director of the organization. During Stanton’s tenure, the first African-American appointed to the Director post, diversity emerged as an organizational strategic imperative. As a political appointee, Stanton had sufficient latitude – perhaps within parameters established by the White House – to set the direction of the organization, its priorities and practices. As Wood and Waterman (1991) found, political appointees at the highest level have enough power to determine, or at a minimum influence, organizational outcomes in the federal government. In five of the seven agencies they studied, outcomes (e.g., inspections, cases processed, orders issued, etc.) shifted immediately after a change in agency leadership. In relation to institutional change and logic formation, “the influx of elites bearing different skills, values, assumptions, understandings, and commitments appears to promote and facilitate the adoption of illegitimate, contranormative changes” (Kraatz & Moore, 2002, p. 139). Therefore, Stanton’s own values and worldviews, coupled with his ex-officiary status, by virtue of being Director, enabled him to formulate and broker a new institutional logic – although upon concluding my fieldwork it remained peripheral.

**Conclusion**

Drawing from racial formation theory and the institutional logics perspectives allowed me to put forth a theoretical model of how racial ideology changes over time and intersects organizational life. This approach sheds light on the intra-, extra-, and inter-organizational racial dynamics by theorizing race as a social process that is influenced by the institutional logic of the
state, which prescribes and shapes organizational action, practices, systems, processes, and culture.

This approach extends theory in several ways. Firstly, it refocuses the locus of race from the individual to the institutional. Secondly, it gives racial agency at the organizational level, thereby allowing for theorizing organizations as producing racial meaning. Thirdly, it places race and its consequences in a historical context, thus enabling the analysis of race in organizations in its historical, changing context. And finally, it highlights the multi-level nature of race and racial formation, from the social-institutional to individual level.
Chapter VIII:

Conclusion

This qualitative study used three critical moments in the history of the National Park Service (NPS) to analyze, and advance a theory of, racial formation at the National Park Service. As such, racial formation is a process that takes place at multiple levels (social, organizational, individual) that are simultaneously interlocking and reinforcing. At the same time, racial formation is a process in constant evolution and transformation – as evidenced in the three distinct historical moments – which influences, and it is influenced by, the organizational and individual levels.

Organizational scholars have long been interested in furthering theories of race in the organizational domain (Nkomo, 1992), and we have seen tremendous advancement. In fact, students and researchers of race have grown to a point that we now have entire academic journals devoted to this topic and innumerable books. However, race is often theorized from an individual (i.e., impact on the individual), relational (i.e., group categorization), or structural perspective (i.e., as a construct for social stratification), and how these various approaches play out within organizations.

New developments in the theorization of race at a macro level (Omi & Winnant, 1992; Silva-Bonilla, 1997) have enhanced our understanding of how race is constructed and structured within and across the social space. Specific to organizational studies, the emerging, and quite promising, institutional logics perspective (Thornton, Ocasio & Lounsbury, 2012) provides a theoretical lens for understanding and theorizing multi-level processes that influence organizations. Coalescing these two approaches, I put forth a theory of racial formation based on
institutional logic and analyze three critical moments of the National Park Service to shed light on the organizational dynamics that each moment of racial formation enacted.

In Chapter IV, when the NPS expanded southward, it inhabited a social context in which racial segregation was the norm and legitimized by the rule of law. In this context, the Superintendent of Shenandoah National Park, adopted the customs of the state of Virginia by instituting racial segregation within the boundaries of the park. Signage was installed to institutionalize and enforce the practice. The prevailing institutional logic within the community in which Shenandoah was embedded was one of segregation, where race determined one’s place in society.

By adopting the prevailing logic of its context, Shenandoah’s new logic for managing the races within the organization was at odds with the institutional logic to which Washington bureaucrats adhered – particularly the elite of the Department of the Interior. The newly created Office of Negro Affairs, organized in essence to dismantle the vestiges of racial segregation within the Interior Department, led the effort to curb Shenandoah’s segregationist regime. Internal conflict, political maneuvering, and strategizing characterized organizational internal dynamics. I used a political approach of representative bureaucracy to analyze the process of changing institutional logic, which took place over several years.

The data and analysis in Chapter IV clearly show the interplay among the multiple levels of racial formation as institutional logic. For one, institutional logics do not operate like a straitjacket fully prescribing organizational action. Instead, members of the organization draw from various institutional logics to inform behavior within organizations, and logics may be at odds with one another. Such interaction among conflicting logics produces a contest over
dominance in order to determine which logic will prevail and influence core organizational functioning (see Besharov and Smith, 2014 for an analysis).

Chapter V takes place in the 1960s, when the U.S. adopted a new approach of racial equality and antidiscrimination, which led to a second critical moment of racial formation as institutional logic. In this context, the new institutional logic is prescribed by law and enforced by a Federal apparatus (i.e., Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the judiciary) created to guarantee its proper implementation throughout the Federal government. A key feature of this critical moment was the policy emphasis on affirmative action – a strategic approach to managing race and racial relation within the organization. This institutional logic centered on adopting social science to repair the decades of racial segregation and discriminatory practices in which the Federal government had engaged.

The logic of the second critical moment prescribed elements such as quantification and tabulation as means to devising strategic actions to increase representation of racial minorities within the organization. At the same time, it also instituted neutrality and merit-based approaches for decision-making. I refer to this logic as one of reparation, for it had a reparatory aura in that it sought to amend the harm that had been inflicted onto racial minorities.

The last critical moment, discussed in Chapter VI, documents the emergence of a new institutional logic (i.e., diversity and inclusion) brokered by several organizational members. Drawing from broader ideals of inclusion and diversity – emanating from the business literature and triggered by the changing demographics in the U.S.– for managing race and racial relations within the organization, these organizational actors sought to push the organization into adopting this logic for informing organizational performance and management. One of the core
components of this logic was de-emphasizing race and instead focusing on inclusion and multiculturalism as organizational tenets.

Even though there are a few comparable qualitative research on diversity and inclusion, some scholars have ventured to propose ideas about why it de-emphasizes race within organizations. Kersten (2000) provides the most lucid thesis on this phenomenon when she argued that diversity management is a reflection of the larger social evolution toward obscuring, containing, and restraining existing racial inequalities inherent in our society. As she further maintained:

“Diversity management's ‘inclusiveness strategy’ that incorporates white males as one of the many groups to be considered is very telling in this regard. Instead of recognizing and dealing with the reality of racism, this strategy accommodates the dominant group by using the rationale that ‘dealing exclusively with race and gender often causes disengagement on the part of those who most need to face race and gender issues’ (Hayles and Russell, 1997, p. 13). This parallels the social-political shift in recent American history that seeks to portray everybody equally as ‘minorities’, evident most clearly in the ‘white ethnic’ movement. It also, and similarly, minimizes and denies the real differences in historical and contemporary experiences, and the extent to which ‘color blindness’ is not and never has been a reality in this society.” (Kersten, 2000, p. 244).

De-racialization, then, could be understood as the continuation of a larger social effort at insisting in a post-racial society and, by doing so, the systems of inequality remain intact and operational, at times more subtly.

The data and analysis in Chapter VI are ideal for understanding how various institutional logics can be simultaneously adopted within an organization and brokered to varying levels of success. Such a process of brokering involves many organizational dynamics explored in this chapter, such as framing, narrative construction, and the role culture may play hindering or enabling logic adoption. In this context, actors engage in brokering to introduce a logic, persuade
their colleagues, and build consensus around, or develop a coalition to advocate for, logic adoption.

**Implications**

This study advances knowledge and theory on race in organizations in many ways and it attempts to address Nkomo’s (1992) critique when she argued that “…when management researchers have studied race, much of the research is narrowly focused, ahistorical, and decontextualized; in this research, race is mainly treated as a demographic variable” (p. 497). Firstly, to my knowledge, this is the only study that uses a longitudinal, almost historical, perspective to investigating organizational dynamics in response to changes in the broader conceptualization of race. This methodological approach helps us refine theory about the impetus for, and process of, institutional change.

Secondly, this study puts forth a theory of race in organizations as a multi-level, socio-historical, phenomenon that changes over time. While most research on race in the management literature uses minorities as proxies for “race” (Nkomo, 1992), this study is less concerned about minorities. Rather, it seeks to advance knowledge about the interplay between the various levels at which race acquires meaning and significance. Although Omi and Winant (1986) studied the micro (how race impacts the individual, e.g., identity formation) and the macro (how race forms social structures) levels, they conspicuously omit the organizational level. Organizations in this study become a site that both influences, and is influenced by, the micro and macro levels.

Thirdly, most studies in public administration, and management in general, study diversity and inclusion from a quantitative perspective, as a proxy for organizational performance (Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2010). For instance, Pitt’s (2005, 2006, 2009) work
epitomizes that approach in public administration scholarship. This study, on the other hand, shows that rather than being a cohesive set of ideas or management philosophy to which organizations adhere, diversity and inclusion could be theorized as a nascent logic in a contest for primacy within the organization. This contest mimic larger societal changes towards valuing and celebrating differences of being. As a result, rather than stability, diversity and inclusion is characterized by contestation.

Finally, in this study representative bureaucracy, particularly active representation, is understood and theorized as a political process. Given that most studies on representative bureaucracy seek to make correlative linkages between representation and policy outcomes, we know very little about how those outcomes are achieved. Watkins-Hayes (2011) presented the only qualitative account on this process when she studied street-level bureaucrats. This research complements her analysis by studying the political dynamics and strategic actions bureaucratic elites employ in the pursuit of active representation. It also emphasizes the role context plays at influencing representation and its resulting bureaucratic action. That is, active representation is influenced by the socio-historical context of race in which the organization is embedded.

Implications for practice

Practitioners in organizations often face a complex organizational context of which to make sense, in which to engage in decision-making and prescribe action. The various levels in which organizations exist and operate are what make organizations complex, inter-dependent systems (Ocasio, 2011). Our cognitive limitations often bias our decision-making toward simplicity and cognitive shortcuts (Weick, 1995). The theoretical model I developed brings to
In the forefront the inescapable fact that organizations exist within micro-, meso-, and macro-level substructures that are intertwined and mutually reinforcing.

I use the racial formation process to illustrate the multi-level dynamic institutional logics produce. Thus, an important point for the world of practice is to identify the interrelationships and dependencies of subsystems within which organizations are nested. Managing these webs of interdependencies is crucial for effective management. For instance, legislative action constantly shapes or modifies organizational behavior – prescribing programs, new processes, or ways of organizing. As I illustrated in chapter IV, for example, the conflict between leaders in Shenandoah and those in Washington D.C. was largely driven by differences over the implementation of Jim Crow laws.

An institutional logics perspective also brings culture, structure and process as interlocking constructs, as opposed to theories that separate them as distinct factors. These three elements influence, and are influenced by, institutional logics. Therefore, change efforts ought to take the organizational culture, structure (i.e., its design and functional areas), and processes (i.e., how work gets accomplished) into account. An organizational culture that does not support a new process will destine the new process to fail, and vice versa. Thus, it is important to identify, early in the change management process, the overarching institutional logics, and their underlying assumptions, that produce the resulting organizational culture, structure, and processes. For example, when affirmative action was enacted the culture around racial relations emphasized equality and fairness, the EEO department and function were reinvigorated, and HR processes were adjusted (e.g., the hiring process emphasized minority representation).

In terms of race and racial relations in organizations, there are several implications. Firstly, this study, particularly the theoretical model, helps practitioners contextualize the history
of racial formation in the U.S. and its profound impact in organizations. At a basic level, this understanding allows practitioners to conceptualize race as fluid and changing, as opposed to static and fixed. At a higher level, it shows that while racial formation takes place at the macro social level, organizations do not relinquish their agency, for they can also influence the way macro forces shape the organization.

This study has implications for the growing interest in organizations on diversity and inclusion programs. These programs, similar to the NPS, are often brokered by a segment of the organization that seeks to transform the prevailing institutional logics. Critical moments I and II show that top leadership support is paramount to logic change. Besharov and Smith’s (2014) review of the literature supports this contention when they argue that the relative power of logic proponents mediates the extent to which the new logic is adopted and instituted.

Finally, this study sheds light on the role of framing and narrative construction in shaping new and existing institutional logics. As practitioners seek to dismantle, reform, or enhance the repertoire of institutional logics in which they operate, understanding their discursive elements is crucial in devising an effective strategic approach. For example, in attempting to dismantle racial segregation in the Park Service, the Office of Negro Affairs effectively deployed a legal frame to counter the arguments centered on norms, customs, and culture that Shenandoah officials relied on to preserve segregation. In the affirmative action context, EEO and HR professionals shaped what the program became to be as they translated the overarching legal intent into action.

**Limitations**

As with any research project, this study has several limitations. By virtue of being a case study, there is an inherent limitation to the extent these findings are generalizable to a broader
sample of organizations. The National Park Service, as a land management agency, is embedded in an institutional and bureaucratic context that is distinctive. For example, given its mission, the NPS’ workforce is occupationally diverse, bringing individuals from multiple fields (with their own professional culture and socialization), and geographic locations, together. Such diversity undoubtedly influences the organization in ways that more homogeneous organizations may not experience. Perhaps it mediates conflict or creates a less cohesive organization. Therefore, more studies are necessary in different institutional and organizational settings in order to more robustly assess whether internal dynamics in response to changes in the institutional logics of race are similar, or vary, across setting.

Similarly, in the U.S., federal land management agencies—mainly the Department of the Interior and Agriculture—have a long history of racial discrimination (Daniel, 2013; Keller & Turek, 1998; King, 1999, 2007). For instance, in the most recent FEORP report published by OPM (for fiscal year 2014, p. 15), the Department of the Interior, among all executive agencies, had the lowest level of representation of black employees—at 5.8%, whereas the Department of Energy, the second lowest, had 10.9%, slightly more than doubled. As a result, perhaps studying racial phenomena in such an organizational context may increase the saliency race exhibits in the organization. The data for this study, however, did not allow for that kind of analysis to be conducted. The lack of comparative data, through which one could explore the role differing contexts play, is a major limitation of this study.

Another shortcoming of this study is the data generating process utilized to collect data, particularly as it pertains to archival materials and interviews about events that occurred many years ago. Archival artifacts are photographic snapshots of organizational phenomena that must be pieced together in order to construct the larger story or picture, so to speak. Therefore, the
process of organizing those artifacts into sensible, comprehensible stories is prone to error. It is an arduous iterative process that requires careful attention to detail, constant testing of assumptions, and an almost detectivesque approach to filling-in the blanks. Notwithstanding all the rigor of data collection and analysis, these artifacts at times do not fully answer all the questions they present and may suggest routes that lead to dead-ends. Individuals who could clarify the written record, add context, and substance to the analysis are inaccessible or deceased. Thus, it is possible to infer different interpretations when presented with the same archival data. This limitation can only be minimized by applying rigor to analysis, but never fully eradicated. The same is true when one asks individuals to recall events that took place many years before, which is the case with the data on how affirmative action was implemented. Using multiple data sources and methods for analysis can minimize these challenges.

Finally, my role as both employee and researcher could have influenced data collected through interviews, and it is difficult to determine the extent of such an influence. Discussing race and racial issues in the workplace continues to be a sensitive matter, especially among colleagues who are neither family nor friends. It is possible that, given my role as employee in the HR Department and being a Hispanic male, interviewees applied caution to how they answered my questions, potentially withholding relevant information. I attempted to explore emerging themes with my own observations and written materials in order to minimize the impact of this kind of bias. I also employed Glaser’s (1998) technique of saturation to ensure the validity of emerging themes. However, it is difficult, if not impossible, to fully assess how my personal, professional, and ethnic background may have been a source of bias.
Future Research

This study advances our theoretical understanding of how racial formation takes the form of institutional logics to operate within and across organizations. As with most research, however, limitations with the data and research site, future research should address the limitations of this study and build upon the proposed theoretical framework. Researchers of race in organizations should build upon this study by embracing the growing institutional logics perspective. This line of research would further theorize and document how race manifests through the institutional logic of the state (Friedland & Alford, 1991). Scholarship on affirmative action in public administration, more specifically, would benefit from adopting this theoretical lens and employing more qualitative methodologies.

Future research should further explore the factors that drive racial formation at the macro institutional level. For example, I found that traditions in the local community, the law, and changes in ideology shaped racial formation in the context of my study. Future research should explore the extent to which these drivers exist in other contexts as well as identify new ones. An extension of this line of research could also focus on how change factors vary by different geographical contexts and cultures. This is important because an institutional logics perspective seeks to provide theoretical explanations that transcend contextual specificity.

Additionally, future search should build upon Besharov’s and Smith’s (2014) model of logic multiplicity by studying more transitional periods of racial formation. This line of research would further assess the organizational dynamics that take place when new logics emerge and old ones are transformed or retired. Extant research has documented the process of logic blending (i.e., when logics merge over time forming a new one) or conflict (i.e., when logics remain at odds) (Besharov & Smith, 2014) but not in the context of race or racial formation in
organizations. Filling this gap would help us refine existing theories of logic change and develop new ideas about the conditions that lead to logic blending and conflict.

In terms of representative bureaucracy scholarship, researchers should more closely explore the organizational dynamics that might be linked to active representation, but do not necessarily result in policy outcomes. I am referring to the everyday actions that, when taken as a whole, may have a non-trivial impact on citizens, service provision, policy-making or decision-making. For example, are there differences in the kinds of organizational processes (e.g., recruitment efforts, EEO complaint processing or investigation) minorities versus non-minorities engage and, if so, what is the impact of that variability? Also, more research needs to be conducted on the internal conditions that enable or hinder active representation. Perceived or actual level of discretion has been studied as an enabler of active representation, and much attention has been paid to such a factor. However, during my fieldwork—although outside the scope of my research—I observed that factors such as networks (their size and reach), professional reputation and credibility, and even personality traits (e.g., likeability) seemed relevant in the pursuit of active representation. Studies should explore whether in fact they influence the likelihood actors assume an active representative role. Finally, attention should be paid to the bureaucratic and political consequences of active representation. That is, for example, are employees who assume such a role more susceptible to disciplinary actions, to be ostracized by their peers, to face career-ending obstacles, or does it vary by organizational context? Addressing the consequences of active representation would push representative bureaucracy theory forward, because it will help us develop a broader understanding of this phenomenon (i.e., antecedents and consequences).
Appendix A:

Geographic Depiction of U.S. National Park Service Sites
Appendix B:

Interview Protocol

Hello, thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. My name is Rick Caceres and I’m conducting a study on the diversity initiatives at the National Park Service. As you may know, diversity has become an important policy concern in both public and private sectors. However, this is a unique instance in which a researcher has access to the processes that take place within an organization. The purpose of the research is, then, to create an account of the unfolding of events. I would like to remind you that participation is voluntary, though your responses will greatly contribute to the understanding of this policy domain. Let me also underline that because I am interested in the organizational level, I will not be using names or make references to particular individuals in the final document. I will record this interview solely to enhance my memory as I write up the final manuscript.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

*Turn on the recording machine*

1. What does diversity mean to the National Park Service?
   a. Is there a distinction between what it means to the NPS and what it means to you?

2. When did diversity become a concern for leadership? Why?

3. What was the process whereby diversity was identified as a concern?

4. Can you enumerate some of the factors that led to the current discussion about diversity?

5. What would your assessment be: do you think diversity is an issue? Why?

6. Please talk about some of the specific actions that have been taken at the Leadership Council level?
   Council level?

7. What is your assessment of each? And what could have been done differently?
8. What are some of the setbacks, in your view, that need to be overcome? Explain

9. One of the questions raised at one of the meetings was: Why have we been talking about this for so long and haven’t done anything?
   • What would you answer?
   • Is this time going to be different? Why?

10. Is there anything else you would like to add? or suggestions for future interviews?

    I tremendously appreciate your participation, should you have any question please do not hesitate to contact me at (989) 400-8733 or via email RC385995@albany.edu

    Thank you.
References

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