Laura Laderman
Black Liberation 1969

Unpacking Diversity at Swarthmore College, 1964 to 1970

The 1960s marked the beginning of a widespread conversation about diversity at elite liberal arts colleges across the country. It is almost difficult to imagine a time when the idea of a diverse community was not a part of Swarthmore's core ideals, given the prominence of the word 'diversity' on campus today. However, prior to the mid-1940s, no Black students were enrolled at the College. According to a piece of College lore, around 1905, a student was admitted who the admissions committee had not realized was Black during the application process. After he arrived on campus and a representative of the College observed his race, "the boy and his parents were told that an error had been made. The college was very sorry but he could not be permitted to enter."[1] The outcome was similar when a qualified Black student from Philadelphia applied in 1932. The admissions committee deferred the matter to the Board of Managers, who decided that admitting a Black male student to a coeducational school "would raise too many problems and create too many difficulties." Instead, a dean arranged for him to be admitted to Dartmouth: "A men's college seemed just the place for him."[2] Throughout the 1940s, students pushed the administration to admit Black students to little avail until near the end of World War II when President John Nason decided to bring a student memorandum on the issue to the Board of Managers. The Board "by a very substantial majority passed a resolution changing the admission policy to permit the admission of students regardless of race, color, or creed." [3] But throughout the following decades, there remained very little racial diversity in the student body.

Thus, in the mid-1960s, when the College began a more serious effort to enroll Black students, many questions came to the surface surrounding the College's purpose and its responsibilities to society. Dean of Admissions Fred Hargadon summarized the issue in a presentation at the October 31, 1968 faculty meeting as the "extent to which the college wishes to and/or is able to increase the social diversity of the student body."[4] The "wishes to and/or is able" phrasing points directly to the types of questions the faculty and administration were

[1] Richard J. Walton. Swarthmore College, An Informal History (Swarthmore, PA: Swarthmore College, 1986), 84.
[2] Everett Lee Hunt. The Revolt of the College Intellectual (New York, NY: Human Relations Aids, 1963), 101.
[3] Hunt, 102.
[4] Faculty Minutes, October 31, 1968.

grappling with as Black student activism forced them to examine how diversity fit into the core tenets of the college's mission. Questions such as 'Who is a Swarthmore education for?' and 'What is the purpose of diversity in the student body?' or as Hargadon put it, "How many Negro students should we seek, and what effect would their enrollment have on the various departments?" underlay all discussions about the College's policies relating to Black students in that era.[5] Particularly central to this conversation were questions about qualifications: locating and enrolling qualified Black students, estimating the ability of 'less traditionally qualified' applicants to succeed, and debating the apparent contradiction between Swarthmore's mission as a selective, highly academic institution and the desire to enroll larger numbers of assumedly less-qualified Black students. Administrators, the Board, and the faculty were asking and addressing these questions because Black student activism was forcing the College to reconsider its long held ways of operating as a white elite institution. In debating and pushing for greater numbers of Black students, more viable and supported Black student life on campus, and a curriculum that reflected their histories and cultures, Black students were struggling with the questions of 'What is the purpose of higher education for "diverse students"?', and more specifically, 'What is the purpose at an elite historically white college?'.

These questions seem very similar to ones underlying discussions about diversity on campus today. The College behaves as though it has addressed these questions for itself satisfactorily and identifies the diversity of its student body as a source of pride. Diversity provides a multitude of viewpoints and ideas, and the discussion of ideas from many viewpoints is a hallmark of the Swarthmore educational experience. The late 1960s was the moment in which that definition started to emerge, as Swarthmore began to shift from an entirely white institution to one that attempted to enroll students from a broader swath of society. As this shift occurred though, students of color, specifically black students who embodied "diversity," did not feel welcomed or as if they belonged on campus. They wondered why they had been brought to the College to increase its diversity numbers if they were not supported to succeed; contemporary students of color raise the same questions about the purpose of a Swarthmore education today as were raised 45 years ago. Despite the significantly higher numbers of 'diverse students' enrolled today, these concerns continue to exist because they are fundamental to the ways that diversity was originally constructed at Swarthmore, and the ways that regardless

[5] Faculty Minutes, October 31, 1968.

of the number of people of color in the student body, Swarthmore continues to operate as a white institution. As long as the institution perceives of diversity as a benefit students of color bring to the College and touts the righteousness of supporting their presence without fully addressing their needs, African American and other students of color will continue to ask questions and push Swarthmore College to change.

In some ways, Black student activism at Swarthmore in 1968 and 1969 boils down to a question of admissions policy and who was being admitted to Swarthmore. In the months leading up to January 1969, when roughly 20 Black students took over the admissions office in Parrish and staged a week-long sit-in, Black admissions policy was a much debated topic amongst students and administrators alike. This point was reached as a result of the College's concerted effort over the previous four years to enroll more Black students. Between 1942 and 1964, there were a couple of black students in each class.[6] Then, in November 1963, Swarthmore applied for a Rockefeller Foundation grant in conjunction with four other liberal arts colleges – Antioch, Grinnell, Occidental, and Reed – to support a coordinated program for the increased enrollment of Black students. The colleges hoped that by paying the tuition of these students, the grant would allow them to recruit more than the very limited number of Black students they could previously afford to admit. The Rockefeller Foundation decided that the programs would be less costly and easier to administer if each college operated independently, and thus in April 1964 awarded Swarthmore a $275,000 grant.[7]

Swarthmore's decision to make a more concerted effort at enrolling Black students came as the tide of integration was beginning to turn at historically white colleges and universities (HWCUs), across the nation in response to the Civil Rights Movement and the Black student movement. Swarthmore was somewhat late in beginning to admit Black students – when it did in the 1940s many of its peer institutions had been doing so for fifty years or more. Oberlin began to admit Black students in 1835, the first Black students graduated from Wesleyan in the 1860s, and while by 1910 fewer than 700 Black students had graduated HWCUs, Brown, Cornell, Penn, and many others regularly enrolled Black students.[8] The number of Black students at these colleges and universities was very low, and many colleges had explicit or

[6] List of Black alumni, provided by Swarthmore College Alumni Relations Office
[7] "Rockefeller Foundation Gives College $275,000 to Find, Aid Negro Applicants," *The Phoenix* [Swarthmore, PA], April 14, 1964.
[8] Ibram H. Rogers. *The Black Campus Movement* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 18.

implicit quotas for the number of Black students they would enroll. After World War II, Black veterans who returned to the US seeking education and less willing to endure segregation fueled the increasing desegregation of higher education. In the 1940s and 50s, "some northern HWCUs drop[ped] (or increase[d]) their quotas, and border-state HWCUs were voluntarily, court ordered, or community pressured to desegregate. As the New York Times reported in 1950, 'greater progress has been made in the last two years toward breaking down segregation in higher education than at any time since the Civil War.'" Some HWCUs even began to hire Black professors, and by 1948 there were 60 at white institutions nationwide.[9] Then in the late 50s and early 60s, the civil rights movement accelerated, with news of sit-ins, boycotts, and violence against protestors publicized across the country. Historically white colleges began to take note of issues facing Black Americans and also began to recognize both how predominantly white their own student bodies were and their role in maintaining racial segregation. In 1963, nearly ten years after Brown vs. Board of Education officially desegregated schools, less than ten percent of Black students in the South attended integrated schools, and a critique of token integration was growing amongst Black people.[10] Even by 1969, when programs like those funded by the Rockefeller foundation had been in effect for about five years, white universities in the East had an average Black enrollment of only 1.84 percent.[11]

In the face of this shifting public opinion and increased awareness of economic and social inequality, Black enrollment became a pertinent issue at Swarthmore. Underlying the College's decision to more fully integrate was an ethic of social responsibility that compelled it to address this issue of national prominence. In a memorandum on "Social Diversity" that Hargadon submitted to the Commission on Educational Policy in February 1967, he hypothesized that Swarthmore may be more invested in enrolling students from a diverse array of backgrounds than its peer institutions because of a strong responsibility to society:

> I think it safe to say that the majority of colleges and universities in the country, certainly all of the prestigious ones, presently seek socially diverse student bodies…. Swarthmore, with its emphasis on – and reputation for – social consciousness, may bring to the problem of social diversity a commitment which exceeds that of the simple desire to reinforce the educational process by bringing students of different

[9] Rogers, 25.
[10] Martha Biondi. *Black Revolution on Campus* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2012), 16.
[11] Biondi, 17.

> backgrounds together. The desirability of social diversity from an educational viewpoint may be reinforced by an institutional feeling of social responsibility. [12]

The exact nature of the social problem the College felt responsibility toward is visible in its interpretation and description of the purpose of the Rockefeller grant and Black recruitment policies, as well as other programs such as Upward Bound. First, from the perspective of the Rockefeller Foundation, the national economic impact of poverty in Black communities was a main concern. The Rockefeller Foundation Annual Report for 1965 introduced the project with financial rhetoric:

> Increasingly, thoughtful men, assessing the cost to the nation of untapped human resources, are hastening to the accession of deprived minorities, in particular Negroes, to the mainstream of economic and social advance. The Rockefeller Foundation is concentrating its efforts on projects designed to demonstrate how greater educational opportunities for Negroes and others might be achieved, in the belief that for the long run higher education appears as the most pressing need toward the realization of true equality.[13]

Swarthmore was similarly concerned about, as Hargadon referred to it, "the plight of the Negro with respect to higher education."[14] Looking at some other materials less related to admissions helps to better contextualize how the College viewed itself and its role in relation to Black communities. In a letter to President Courtney Smith about the College's Upward Bound program, Gilmore Stott, assistant to the president, wrote about "these plain poor kids on our own doorstep…from a place nearly without hope (we all drive through Chester every now and then, and 'nearly without hope' does not seem like an exaggeration) that is 'neighbor' to us in the Good Samaritan sense."[15] This quote illustrates that the College saw Black communities primarily through a deficit lens and believed itself compassionate, talented, and powerful enough to fix the problems it defined as present in these communities.

In particular, the College was most concerned with the number of Black men attaining a college education because of its interpretation of the cause of problems in Black communities.

---

[12] Frederick Hargadon, "Social Diversity," *Black Liberation 1969 Archive*, http://blacklib1969.swarthmore.edu/items/show/7 (accessed December 10, 2014).
[13] "The Rockefeller Foundation, Annual Report for 1965" (New York, NY: Rockefeller Foundation, 1965), 61, http://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/uploads/files/f9e77cdb-038b-4320-b8ec-077c2503f7d8-1965.pdf (accessed December10, 2014).
[14] Frederick Hargadon. "Admissions Report," *Black Liberation 1969 Archive*, http://blacklib1969.swarthmore.edu/items/show/9 (accessed December 10, 2014).
[15] Gilmore Stott, "[Letter from Gilmore Stott to Courtney Smith, 11/26/1968, re Upward Bound]," *Black Liberation 1969 Archive*, http://blacklib1969.swarthmore.edu/items/show/762 (accessed December 10, 2014).

In a report on the amount of financial aid provided to Black freshmen during the first year of the grant, a note beneath the table implies that the College interpreted the Rockefeller Foundation as stipulating that it should concentrate its efforts on recruiting male students.[16] This requirement did not appear in the Rockefeller Foundation's annual reports explaining their work, indicating that this emphasis may have come from Swarthmore administrators' own judgments about the most pressing concerns about Black higher education.[17] According to a history of Black education at Oberlin College, which applied for a grant at the same time as the five college group proposal but did so separately, "On the basis of the April 1, 1964, resolutions, the foundation expected the colleges to give special emphasis to increasing the 'discovery of talented Negro and other minority group students,' to address the issue of gender, and to further focus on the education of black males 'to help overcome the comparatively low proportion of Negro boys who seek college education.'"[18] Because Oberlin did not ultimately apply for the grant with the other five colleges, it is unclear whether Swarthmore was subject to this particular guideline, but it likely was and at the least this quote indicates that the Rockefeller Foundation in some cases indicated a preference for male students. The theoretical backing for a concern about Black male educational attainment came from contemporary sociological research tying poverty in Black communities to a lack of male heads of household and the deterioration of Black nuclear families. In particular, Daniel Patrick Moynihan's 1965 report "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action" was an incredibly influential study which has been used to pathologize Black men and defend the superiority of white culture.[19] There is a direct connection between Swarthmore's Black admissions policy and the theories represented in the Moynihan report. During the summer of 1968, after the first Rockefeller class had graduated, President Courtney Smith charged Hargadon with conducting a review of the College's efforts to enroll Black students and the degree of academic success attained by these students at Swarthmore. In a section of the report in which he presented summary information about the 61 Black students who had been enrolled at Swarthmore since 1964, Hargadon gave statistics on their family

---

[16] Frank B. Williams, "[Financial Aid Report for Incoming Black Students, 1964]," *Black Liberation 1969 Archive*, http://blacklib1969.swarthmore.edu/items/show/1131 (accessed December 10, 2014).
[17] "The Rockefeller Foundation, Annual Report for 1965".
[18] Roland M. Baumann. *Constructing Black Education at Oberlin College: A Documentary History*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2010.
[19] Office of Planning and Policy Research, United States Department of Labor. "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action." 1965.

structures, indicating that 47 come from 2-parent homes and 14 from 1-parent homes. He went on to say, "It is interesting that the percentage of these students who come from families headed by a woman (21%) reflects the situation described by Patrick Moynihan in his report, The Negro Family. In 1962, the percentage of non-white families headed by a woman was 23.2 (as contrasted with a percentage of 8.6 among white families) and by 1966 had increased to 32.1 percent."[20] By offering this statistic, and particularly by highlighting its increase, Hargadon implies that this is a disturbing social phenomenon that the College should be attempting to address.

Even with this ethic of social responsibility and a concern for the situation of the Black family in America, it was not necessarily the case that the College saw the purpose of diversity as creating access to higher education for marginalized groups. In "Social Diversity", Hargadon primarily concentrated on the economic diversity of the student body, indicating his belief that one problem was that the College "attract[s] relatively few high-ability candidates from the lower end of the socio-economic scale." This was not his sole focus though – an addendum to the report was also added:

> My impression is that we have few students from families of substantial wealth and semi-aristocratic, or patrician, backgrounds. If such an impression is correct, then this too is an aspect of the problem of attaining social diversity in the student body which should be discussed. An article by Humphrey Doermann, at Harvard, suggests that the national pool of candidates bright enough to do the work at "selective-admissions" colleges and prosperous enough to pay tuition and other costs is much smaller than imagined.[21]

This addendum reinforces the need to separate two different views of the purpose of diversity in the student body that Hargadon was articulating. One way of thinking says that the purpose of having a diverse student body is to create an educational experience that allows students to learn from as many different viewpoints as possible. This view places all identities on an equal playing field, saying that it is equally important and interchangeable to seek representation of very low income and very high income students. The other view of diversity says that Swarthmore had a responsibility to address inequality in society by educating students who ordinarily might not have had the opportunity to attend a highly academic liberal arts college. These two ideas are frequently conflated or the differences between them are not fully

[20] Hargadon, "Admissions Report", 8.
[21] Hargadon, "Social Diversity", 5.

questioned and parsed out, but they result in very different institutional priorities and practices. The discussions that surrounded the enrollment of Black students at Swarthmore in the 1960s covered both of these ways of thinking and fostered the relationship to diversity the College has today.

These were the various theoretical underpinnings of diversity in existence and being developed as Black students began to arrive at Swarthmore in greater numbers starting in the fall of 1964. In the first years of the Rockefeller grant, the College considered its Black enrollment efforts quite successful.[22] The class of 1968, the first admitted under the grant, contained five Black men and nine Black women, and the class of 1969 had six men and thirteen women. However, by the time that the class of 1970 was admitted, Hargadon had begun to suggest that the competition between elite colleges for a very limited number of qualified Black students was becoming fierce. 12 men and 12 women had been admitted in the class of 1970, but only three men and seven women enrolled.[23] In a letter to alumni interviewers, Hargadon identified Negro male applicants as one of four "problem areas", saying, "As far as Negro males go, we were taken to the cleaners this year. We enrolled only 3 out of the 12 we accepted (last year we enrolled 8 of 12). Our scholarship offers were more than competitive, but the social status (in contrast to the academic status) of the Ivy League apparently clobbered us."[24] The trend of smaller and smaller numbers of Black students in each class continued over the next two years, with five of the eight men and five of the six women admitted enrolling in the class of 1971, and three of the eight men and five of the eight women in the class of 1972.[25] [See Table, reproduced below.]

This is the context in which Hargadon wrote the September 1968 Admissions Report reviewing the outcomes of the College's Black admissions policy over the past four years. The reason a campus-wide dialogue about Black admissions began in earnest and was accelerated beyond conversation to change on the part of the college, however, was not the report alone, but Black student activism in response to it. It was this report which in October 1968 set off the series of events which lead to the takeover of Parrish. The report contained very detailed

---

[22] Hargadon, "Admissions Report".
[23] Hargadon, "Admissions Report", 7.
[24] Frederick Hargadon, "[Letter from Frederick Hargadon to Alumni Interviewers 09/1966]," *Black Liberation 1969 Archive*, http://blacklib1969.swarthmore.edu/items/show/657 (accessed December 10, 2014).
[25] Hargadon, "Admissions Report", 7.

information about Black students' SAT scores, grades earned at Swarthmore, family incomes and occupations, and academic standing including probation and required withdrawal information. Hargadon wanted to solicit the input of Black students on the content of the report, and for this purpose put it on reserve in the library. While no names were mentioned in the report, the number of Black students was sufficiently small that some individuals could easily be identified, but regardless of whether the information could be connected to an individual it was of such a personal nature that students felt that their privacy was invaded. Bridget Van Gronigen Warren '70 explained her reaction to the report, "I felt horrible. I guess that's the word. I felt I was being studied like a lab rat, you know? What was this experiment going on that I was less than a human being? I didn't even know that it was going on, nobody asked for my permission."[26]

Aside from being the instigator of activism, though, the report shed significant light on how the admissions office viewed the purpose of Black admissions, particularly regarding the role of gender balancing, and opened for questioning the current thought about qualifications. The report presented the following table, with the note that the applied column indicated the number who initiated applications, not the number who completed them – for the class of 1972 the number of complete applications was 22 men and 43 women. It then included a note of

	Applied		Admitted		Enrolled	
	M	W	M	W	M	W
Class of 1968:	17	26	9	15	5	9
Class of 1969:	49	73	9	18	6	13
Class of 1970:	38	50	12	12	3	7
Class of 1971:	31	34	8	6	5	5
Class of 1972:	31	52	8	8	3	5

caution:

> The number 'admitted' as a percentage of the number 'applied' should not be considered an indication of 'high selectivity.' In addition to the fact that many of the candidates did not complete their applications, a significant number of those who did complete them were 'unrealistic' candidates. We have in fact accepted all qualified Negro men who made complete applications. While the selectivity among the women applicants has been greater, because of an attempt to correct for the present great imbalance in the ratio of Negro men to Negro women in our student body we have not accepted all of the qualified women who have applied (we had 12 Negro women on the waiting list for the Class of 1972, but because of an over-acceptance by

[26] Bridget Van Gronigen Warren, personal interview, October 19, 2014.

> all women applicants of our offers of admission on the one hand, and only a small return on the Negro men to whom we offered admission on the other hand, we were unable to take any of them off the waiting list).[27]

Earlier in the report Hargadon noted that the admissions office had been unable to "ensure that our Negro student group would be predominantly male" and that the ramifications included that "it does not appear that we have made much of a contribution toward righting the imbalance in educational achievement which presently weighs heavily in favor of the Negro female," and "we have no doubt (unintentionally) created a social context much more limited than our Negro students would desire."[28] At various places throughout the report, Hargadon referenced the desire of Black students to have a more balanced gender ratio to improve the social situation and the prospects for dating. To execute this desire by admitting fewer women greatly misconstrues and trivializes the motivations of the students – while a balanced gender ratio might have been preferable, primarily students were concerned with increasing the total number of Black students.

Hargadon used a simplified and one-sided understanding of the experience of Black students on campus and their views about integration as a justification of some of the problems the admissions office was facing in enrolling Black students. He expressed his understanding that the College was always operating under an integrationist ethic – Black students would engage socially with white students in all aspects of college life. He saw the "militant" and "separatist" attitudes of Black students as turning off potential applicants who were looking for an integrated college. He explained, "Needless to say, the integrationist ethic itself has come under considerable fire from many quarters, not the least of which is a group of our own Swarthmore Negro students. (This has created no little consternation and complication in our admissions efforts.)"[29] He later went on to bring the conversation back to dating, saying, "While interracial dating occurs, the militant separatism of many of the Negro students leans against it, and a number of the SAAS [sic] students have expressed their concern over a social situation which they consider quite limited."[30] This attitude shows a disconnect with the experience of being one of about 60 Black students on an otherwise entirely white campus in that he expects Black students will spontaneously integrate without any difficulty. In many ways it

[27] Hargadon, "Admissions Report", 7.
[28] Hargadon, "Admissions Report", 5.
[29] Hargadon, "Admissions Report", 3.
[30] Hargadon, "Admissions Report", 23.

seems that the College had an ideal image of what integration was in theory, but had not undertaken a serious examination of what it looked like in practice, creating a contradiction in which College policies undermined the ideal vision. For example, as late as 1965, white students were asked if they were comfortable rooming with a Negro.[31] And although it may appear that times had changed since 1932 when the prospect of a Black man at Swarthmore caused so much consternation because it was feared he might date white students, it's unclear that they really had. Writing in 1963, Dean Hunt shared his observations:

> There has been no attempt to limit the social activities of the colored students, and colored and white students have mingled freely at dances; inevitably, students have been drawn together across race lines, perhaps in the beginning by their idealism and their desire to show a complete absence of racial prejudice. It does not seem to be true, as has been some times alleged, that the attraction of the races for each other is entirely on the lower social levels. The colored males seem to have a decided attraction for the white girls, and a few white boys have selected colored girls as their partners, temporarily or permanently.[32]

Despite Hunt's pride at pointing out the egalitarianism of Swarthmore students, which certainly is only one limited perspective on Black student experience, he still uses the qualifier "a few", indicating that interracial dating likely was fairly uncommon. Alumni from a decade later indicate that it just wasn't done. Aundrea White (Kelley), who entered Swarthmore with the class of 1970 reflected, "And then you have this tiny number of students that you could even perceive possibly to even have a date with – in those days you couldn't date across races."[33] Regardless of the exact details of attitudes toward interracial dating, blaming enrollment issues on Black students' failure to integrate properly certainly does not tell the whole story, and indicates a lack of critical thought about what was necessary for integration to function ideally. In his report, Hargadon also focused entirely on the negative effects of a Black student organization, relegating the positive effects to one sentence: "It of course helps to have Negro students already enrolled at the College when it comes to recruiting Negro students for admission. It is not an unmixed blessing, however."[34] This position turns Black students into the scapegoats for the College's enrollment difficulties instead of recognizing all the work Black

[31] Marilyn Allman Maye, personal interview, October 31, 2014.
[32] Hunt, 104.
[33] Aundrea White (Kelley), personal interview, October 31, 2014.
[34] Hargadon, "Admissions Report", 22.

students were doing to recruit students from their hometowns, hold visit weekends, and generally push for the enrollment of more Black students.

The Swarthmore experienced by Black students from 1964 to 1969 was very different than the integrated, prestigious higher education opportunity the admissions office thought it was providing. Or perhaps, more accurately, because the College treated integration primarily as a matter of enrolling Black students, it put little effort into considering that the needs and desires of those students might differ from White students. Therefore, when students arrived, they found themselves on the margins of the school and felt rather alone. In interviews, many alumni spoke of searching for a place at Swarthmore and the ways that they did not feel the environment was supportive. Marilyn Holifield a member of the class of 1969 who was involved in founding SASS, the College's first Black student group, reflected on her experience:

> I think SASS (Swarthmore African-American Student Society, or Afro-American Student Society) came together more because of that search for a sense of belonging, perhaps, and that sense of bonding with people who were not challenging you at every level. It created a space where you could just be yourself without having to prove yourself, and that your worth was, by definition, already established, and your value by definition was already established.[35]

Aside from overt acts of racism, of which there were plenty though detailing them is outside the scope of this paper, students were frustrated by the ways Black people and Black culture were ignored or misrepresented by the College. At one level, Black students found themselves at an entirely white college, only seeing Black people employed in service sector jobs at the elite institution that was supposed to provide their academic and professional training. Aundrea White (Kelley) recollected her experience:

> We just really wanted to have a place where we could feel more a part of the fabric, have a presence at the college. You didn't see any people of color in administration or in the faculty, Asmarom Legesse [professor of Sociology and Anthropology from Eritrea] came …But there was no one you felt you could go to if you had an issue or a problem, there was no one. … So we could only go to each other. …The only Black folks that you saw really on campus that I really interacted with on campus were the maids and the folks that worked in the cafeteria. They were the only ones. And they would talk with us, they'd say 'oh how are you doing' when you went through the cafeteria line.[36]

[35] Marilyn Holifield, personal interview, October 31, 2014.
[36] Aundrea White (Kelley).

The situation reinforced that despite the College's rhetoric about giving highly capable Black students the academic opportunities they had the potential for, it still primarily saw Black people as fit for labor-focused jobs. In this way, Black Swarthmore students were seen as the exception, not the rule, an understanding in line with the extensive debate about qualifications that followed Hargadon's report and will be covered in more detail later in this paper. The way the College and White students treated the Black staff was also indicative of this imbalance of power and a subtle yet powerful example of the ways Black students did not feel they were respected equally at Swarthmore. Marilyn Allman Maye, class of 1969, remembered her frustration:

> One thing that was very offensive to us – and to me personally – was that these cleaning women who were cleaning our dorms and everything were being called by their first names. And these women were old enough to be my mother or my grandmother and I was accustomed to referring to people of that age by their first name. I called them Mr. and Mrs. And that was annoying you know that these young teenagers are calling these adults by their first names and no other people are called by their first names; everybody else is Mr. and Mrs. and the black people are Bessie and Marion and Harold.[37]

At another level, Swarthmore was also an intellectually and philosophically white college. Non-white perspectives were rarely included in the curriculum, and there were few courses offered on Black history or literature. Those that did attempt to cover such topics often based their content on stereotypes and information only from an outside, White perspective. As a result, students both sought out the classes they desired at other universities such as nearby HBCUs Lincoln and Cheyney, and pushed for Black Studies courses and a concentration in Black Studies at Swarthmore. In addition to deficiencies in the academic curriculum, students found that there was little recognition of Black culture at Swarthmore. To address this, SASS began to pursue money from the College to invite speakers to campus, host performances and celebrations, and attend off-campus events. The first documented event hosted by SASS was Negro History Week in February of 1967, which included Gospel, Jazz, and Dance performances, and a lecture about political struggles in Rhodesia. [38]

In this context, the bonding together of Black students and the creation of SASS was not a rejection of the theoretical ideal of integration, as Hargadon understood it, but rather was a survival mechanism. As one member of SASS stated, "SASS is not so much a 'militant

---

[37] Marilyn Allman Maye.

[38] Swarthmore Afro-American Students' Society, "Negro History Week," *Black Liberation 1969 Archive*, http://blacklib1969.swarthmore.edu/items/show/650 (accessed December 10, 2014).

separatist' thing as a need for a Black student to retain his identity in an all-white college."[39] During the takeover of the admissions office, when SASS was portrayed as militant and separatist as a means of delegitimizing their actions and demands, Asmarom Legesse, the only Black faculty member – a Sociology and Anthropology professor from Eritrea, spoke up for the students at a January 29th faculty meeting, saying "SASS has chosen to be a separatist body because it has been disappointed with the results of the integrationist approach."[40] When some faculty objected to SASS' separatism, "it was urged that their separatist techniques were a means of achieving an ultimately integrated position."[41] In questioning the results of the integrationist ethic espoused by the College, students were responding to how they felt the College viewed their presence and the project of diversity at Swarthmore. In an op-ed published in November 1968 – after Hargadon's report was released in the library, Clinton Etheridge, the chairman of SASS, wrote, "When you talk to White students and administrators about the rationale for Blacks at Swarthmore, they only give variations on the same two related themes: the 'integrationist ethic' and social diversity. Put simply this means something like, 'the white majority can best understand and appreciate the heterogeneous society in which they live if they are exposed to students from varied backgrounds…. SASS sees the 'integrationist ethic' as Swarthmore saying, 'We want Black students so that we can see how the other half lives. The College hopes that social contact with Blacks will abate the racism and prejudice of the White students.'"[42]

The tension between having diverse students at Swarthmore for the benefit of the students themselves as opposed to for the purpose of enriching the college experience of other students is one that continues to be incredibly prevalent today. It is a line of thinking that appears whenever students do not feel the College is meeting their needs or taking enough steps to address the issues they raise. When it does not feel as though Swarthmore is helping them get the education they desire, while they see the College continuing to tout the benefits of a diverse student body, students of color express their belief that the College's motivation for having them here is some variation of 'educating other students' or 'displaying their culture'. This is a direct result of the interpretation that the purpose of diversity is to have many different viewpoints as a

---

[39] "SASS Makes Recommendations; Admissions Dispute Continues," *The Phoenix* [Swarthmore, PA], November 5, 1968: 4.
[40] Faculty Minutes, January 29, 1969.
[41] Faculty Minutes, January 29, 1969.
[42] Clinton Etheridge, "Etheridge Advocates Black Pride, Condemns "Integrationist Ethic"," *The Phoenix* [Swarthmore, PA], April 14, 1964: 3.

means of augmenting the educational environment of the College – the interpretation Hargadon took as universally accepted at prestigious colleges and universities. Diversity thus becomes "instrumental in some unspecific way, a general good manifested as a means to educate citizens and produce leaders."[43] It is treated somewhat as a skill – something necessary to be exposed to in order to succeed in the world. This way of thinking commodifies diversity, and thus it becomes a "strategy used by recruiters who believe that smart white students will choose a place with, as they put it, 'a lot of diversity' because that reflects how they see themselves as good citizens. Diversity becomes something an individual can possess to get ahead in the world, and therefore it is something the school can sell."[44] When the product being sold is provided by students who attend the school, questions are raised such as "Are the students who 'have' it really part of the school or not? Is diversity a useful add-on? Who is 'us' here?"[45] And then, when students of color are frustrated with the educational product they are receiving, these questions, which are always simmering under the surface, come to a boil. As expressed by a senior in Spring 2013, a more recent moment in which questions about the purpose of diversity were raised, "You used us as a diversity tool but then you don't take care of us, you don't support us in the way we need support and so I want to call on the administrators and the Board of Managers that when you celebrate your 150th anniversary that you also recognize that we have been at the heart of why this College has changed."[46]

1968 to 1972 was a key period in which this process was enacted – students recognized that deficiencies in their educational experience were linked to the College's operation as an inherently White institution, and pushed for change. Hargadon's Admissions Report was the final straw that galvanized students and caused them to take action. On October 18, 1968, SASS issued a set of four demands: first, that the report be removed from reserve and that a joint SASS-college committee be formed to re-work it; second, that the College form a Black Interest Committee to communicate with SASS and insure that in the future Swarthmore would be sensitive to Black people; third, that the College recruit, subject to SASS's review, a Black

---

[43] Bonnie Urciuoli, "Excellence, leadership, skills, diversity: marketing liberal arts education", Language & Communication 23 (2003): 400.
[44] Urciuoli, 400.
[45] Urciuoli, 400.
[46] Jusselia Molina, quoted in Andrew Karas and Cristina Abellan-Matamoros, "Student Protesters Take Over Open Board Meeting, State Wide Array of Concerns." Daily Gazette, May 6, 2013, http://daily.swarthmore.edu/2013/05/06/student-protestors-take-over-open-board-meeting-state-wide-array-of-concerns/ (accessed December 10, 2014).

administrator; and fourth, that SASS work with Hargadon and the Admissions Policy Committee to establish and execute means of recruiting Black students.[47] One major thread running through the demands made by SASS, both in October and the clarified version presented in December 1968, was the need for Black perspective and decision making power in matters relating to Black people at Swarthmore. This became a major sticking point during the negotiations between SASS and the faculty in January – the faculty was fairly amenable to the more concrete, actionable items of the SASS demands such as hiring a Black admissions officer and Black counselor, but did not take much action on changing decision making structures to include more than surface-level input from Black students. Because it saw itself as engaged in a socially responsible project of providing higher education to Black people, Swarthmore had a tendency to act as though it knew what was best for Black communities. This was reflected both in the rhetoric it used in describing the plight of Blacks in society, as well as its reluctance to consult Black students about matters relevant to them. Students were aware of this, and SASS's insistence on Black people being included on policy making levels was its attempt to improve the way decisions were made and require them to reflect more than the College's one-sided perspective. In the op-ed referenced earlier, Etheridge wrote about this singular, White elite outlook:

> A Swarthmore education however may come at a heavy price; for while the college is cultivating the young Black's mind it may also be subverting it. Swarthmore subverts Black minds by bringing them to the college for a White oriented objective rather than a Black one. …By contrast Swarthmore should place top priority on giving talented young Blacks both the competence and the race pride with which to fill the service and leadership vacuums in their own Black communities. [48]

Students in SASS worked hard to create their education for themselves as they wanted it to be, in a way that both developed their Black identity and actively involved them in nearby Black communities in order to supplement and counteract the white oriented educational objective. As has already been mentioned, they sought out classes that covered Black perspectives, including creating a student run course, "Black Philosophies of Liberation". For many students, college was the first time they had learned anything about Black history or read any Black scholars, so

---

[47] Swarthmore Afro-American Students' Society, "[SASS' Statement, 10/18/1968]," *Black Liberation 1969 Archive*, http://blacklib1969.swarthmore.edu/items/show/440 (accessed December 2, 2014).

[48] Clinton Etheridge, "Etheridge Advocates Black Pride, Condemns "Integrationist Ethic"," *The Phoenix* [Swarthmore, PA], April 14, 1964: 3.

this education was a key part of the development of racial and political identity. Students also worked hard to oppose the idea that coming to this white elite college meant leaving Black communities behind. They interacted regularly with Black people in Media, Chester, and Philadelphia, attending events, working with high school students through Upward Bound (which was founded and operated by students and alumni fairly autonomously from the College,) and participating in organizing and activism based in these communities. Thus, while on the surface there seem to be obvious similarities between Etheridge's and the College's view of Black communities as economically depressed and lacking in leadership, the differences in their perspectives are crucial. Although both the College and Etheridge were pointing out deficiencies in Black communities, Swarthmore was doing so from an outside, elite, savior-type position that primarily saw deficiency, while SASS was doing so from an inside, community-based-leadership position that saw potential. This difference in perspective also aligns well with how each group understood the role of Swarthmore in educating Black people. Many members of the Swarthmore administration and faculty, in keeping with the language and philosophies of the Rockefeller Foundation grant, generally believed that the College should select the most academically talented students because they were the few who would lead the race in upward social mobility. SASS, meanwhile, pushed strongly for the admission of 'risk students', believing that there were plenty of students in Black communities who might not have SAT scores in Swarthmore's range but regardless were bright and capable of succeeding at the College.

Swarthmore's mission places intellectualism and academic rigor above all other institutional priorities. It is, as the Commission on Educational Policy defined it in *Critique of a College*, the 460 page report published in 1967 evaluating all aspects of the educational mission, a "(1) small, (2) private, (3) coeducational, (4) selective, (5) scholarly, (6) liberal-arts, (7) college."[49] Thus, it was very controversial when Hargadon began to explain that the admissions office was having difficulty finding and enrolling enough Black students whose academic records fell within the range considered acceptable, and contemplating admitting students outside of these numerical boundaries, commonly referred to as 'risk students'. This act seemed to some to come as a challenge to numbers 4 and 5 of this core definition of Swarthmore, selective

[49] The Commission on Educational Policy, and The Special Committee on Library Policy, and The Special Committee on Student Life. *Critique of a College*. (Swarthmore: Swarthmore College, 1967), 44.

and scholarly. As a result, the debates that arose pitted Swarthmore's mission as an academic institution against the desire to admit Black students without critically examining either the ways Black students could and did fit into that mission or how the College's view of 'academic' was limited. In the Admissions Report, Hargadon raised a variety of arguments on both sides of the debate about risk students, simultaneously pompously expressing the difficulty of finding qualified students and questioning the need to do so. He started by referring to the process of determining which students might be potential Swarthmore-level candidates at an on-campus recruitment weekend, writing, "(Anyone who thinks they are expert at selecting 'diamonds in the rough' should spend a week end thusly, and I guarantee greater modesty on their part.)"[50] This holds strongly to conventional views of qualification, implying that he considered the majority of potential applicants far inferior to the few that he might accept to Swarthmore, but then he went on to question the response provided by the Commission on Educational Policy to his February 1967 memo on social diversity. The CEP wrote a traditionalist response:

> a certain uniformity of background is the price of a high level of academic performance…Students who are very bright but poorly educated are difficult to assimilate into a high pressure system like Swarthmore's. We regretfully conclude that for many such students Swarthmore is the wrong college, and that this important social function can be better performed at institutions with greater resources and facilities, though we hope the Admissions Office will continue to seek the sort of disadvantaged students who do seem capable of succeeding at Swarthmore.[51]

Hargadon's response questioned the assumption "that a high level of academic performance by the College must rest on a uniformly high level of previous preparation on the part of its students."[52] He also commented on the CEP's assumption that the admissions office was capable of distinguishing which students would be successful at Swarthmore – one purpose of the report was to analyze the available data (in the form of student information from the past four years) in an attempt to gain insight about this question. But Swarthmore's enrollment up until this point had been nearly entirely non-risk, in that students admitted had scores within the range usually accepted by the College. The accepted premise underlying discussions of risk students was that the primary and secondary educations of many Black students had provided far inferior academic preparation for college, but that there were nonetheless smart students graduating from

[50] Hargadon, "Admissions Report", 22.
[51] Hargadon, "Admissions Report", 27.
[52] Hargadon, "Admissions Report", 28.

these schools who might be able to succeed at Swarthmore. Determining how to identify these students was a major point of conversation, and the conversation was based in standardized test scores and the prospect of using SAT scores to estimate "the level of educational achievement of a Negro student from a poor high school."[53] In a faculty meeting on October 31, 1968, Hargadon gave a presentation addressing his review of the "complex and sensitive problem of the recruitment and admission of Negro students" in which a member of the audience asked about "whether we can adequately distinguish high-risk from low-risk students." Hargadon replied that "scholastic aptitude and College Board scores do reflect the skills needed at Swarthmore…. In the case of Negro applicants, it is important to evaluate the quality of their high schools as well as their Board scores."[54] In the report he also noted that amongst the Black students enrolled, there had not been a clear correlation between SAT score and level of success at Swarthmore, but that many of the students who had done better than their SAT scores would have predicted came from public-selective high schools. He concluded that "a high-ability student from a poor high school probably has a more substantial gap to close at this College than a less able student from a very good high school."[55] The premise of enrolling risk students however was that many Black students did not have access to high-quality high schools, so only admitting risk students from the best secondary schools would not fulfill the College's social responsibility. Thus the students from the lower quality schools would need to be evaluated, and that evaluation was via a definition of 'able' based in SAT scores. Somewhat contradictorily, despite concluding that SAT scores did not predict success at Swarthmore, Hargadon continued to describe them as the means of evaluating ability. What of the less-able students from the poor high schools? Were they to be discounted entirely? This situation could have been used as an opportunity to question the types of knowledge and traits the College valued in students, but it was not. Nowhere in the analysis of risk students was there a critical conversation about the qualities the College hoped students would embody besides high 'academic achievement.'

In meetings during the takeover, the faculty quickly approved a statement agreeing with SASS's demand for more black students including risk students. The public announcement from the January 7th faculty meeting included a statement from Smith in which he spoke for the faculty on the matters at hand:

---

[53] Hargadon, "Admissions Report", 2.
[54] Faculty Minutes, October 31, 1968.
[55] Hargadon, "Admissions Report", 15.

> He said he was sure there was no disagreement about increasing the number of black students, faculty members, and administrators. A judgment about numbers of high risk students does involve a basic issue to be resolved by the faculty. Swarthmore College has historically defined itself as a college with a highly selected student body and a challenging academic program. In the light of current social urgencies, should the College re-define itself, and if so, to what extent and in what direction?[56]

Thus, while the College supported enrolling risk students, this was seen simultaneously and somewhat contradictorily as a limited, special program, and a massive challenge to the historical mission of the College. Although self-evaluation was suggested, the College did not undertake an assessment of how it fundamentally thought about the tenets of 'challenging' and 'prepared' and what intelligences it was valuing and the ways it was evaluating them. Instead, it admitted a small number of students outside of its usual range of qualifications, initiated some programs to augment these students' preparation in the summer before their freshman year, and then considered itself satisfied with the socially responsible contribution it had made to society. This is not said to minimize the importance of admitting these 'risk students,' and indeed the speed with which the College did so, and with which it implemented a summer bridge program was rather remarkable (and attributable to the pressure and the disruption of normal decision-making practices provided by SASS's direct action.) Instead, it is mainly to note that despite the rhetoric about this period of tumult forcing the College to redefine itself, it did not break from its existing philosophies and practices very far. As greater numbers of Black students from more varied backgrounds began to arrive on campus in the classes of 1973 and 1974, no major redefinition had occurred. Instead there was bitterness toward Black students because of the common rhetoric about risk students and qualifications. Cynthia Jetter, class of 1974 explained, "People made you feel like you were bringing the institution down by being here," referring to people on campus as well as in the Ville.[57]

Swarthmore's insistence on being a college devoted to academic selectivity while also attempting to act in the name of social concern creates a paradox that encourages such views. Swarthmore is academically selective and measures academic success on numerical values, but it does not rank applicants by their numerical scores and admit from the top of the list down. Simultaneously the institution has some commitment to diversity that it claims stems from ideas

[56] Faculty Minutes, January 7, 1969.
[57] Lecture by Cynthia Jetter, October 8, 2014.

of social responsibility, yet those values are constrained within the framework of being academically selective in a set way. This paradox was expressed perfectly by Hargadon:

> How many of those places should be given over to Negro students who, while able to do the work, would gain admission largely because they are Negro? Or, if we could agree on the number of places but were unable to fill them with students who could do the work without remedial programs, what number of places could we then conscientiously set aside for such students?...The point at which the College can meet the needs of society without sacrificing its own integrity and genius is both a sensitive and difficult one to establish. [58]

And then because it is walking this line of ambiguity as to how to act on its social responsibility, Swarthmore begins to fall back on Hargadon's more basic definition of the purpose of diversity, "the simple desire to reinforce the educational process by bringing students of different backgrounds together."[59] Since the 1960s, Swarthmore has espoused this ideology of diversity for the purpose of an exchange of viewpoints, but has couched it in language of social responsibility. If Swarthmore were truly motivated by a more than a token sort of social responsibility, however, its policies for enrollment, the academic and personal support it provided students, its curricular programs, the way it responded to incidents of racism, among other things – would have been addressed more substantively in the years following the 1969 sit-in and would look wholly different today. Instead, at its core, Swarthmore is committed to academic rigor above all else. The way diversity has been constructed at Swarthmore, from its beginnings as a Rockefeller grant program for recruiting a handful of Black students to the way it was pitted against the college's academic rigor in the debate about risk students, makes clear that diversity is an added benefit within the framework of intellectualism. And in this framework, explaining the purpose of diversity as an important means of learning is convenient because it fits the core educational mission of the College. In theory, it works well: everyone is different, and everyone learns from everyone else. But we do not live in a world of equal footing; white students are in the majority at Swarthmore College, and whiteness is taken as mainstream within the United States. Thus, this construction gives white students a comfortable, secure place to dabble in diversity and experience new cultures, while students of color become the ones constantly teaching and on display. For the past five decades, students at colleges across the country have questioned, as noted by Ibram Rogers [Kendi], "Am I here to educate or gain an

[58] Hargadon, "Admissions Report", 21.
[59] Hargadon, "Social Diversity".

education? Charged by a Yale activist [in 1968], 'I came here to be a student not to educate whites about blacks. I'm tired of being an unpaid, untenured professor."[60] This place of display is neither safe nor comfortable as students are regularly confronted with the ignorance, stereotypes, and sometimes animosity from others whose behavior is frequently excused directly as a result of this model of diversity that embraces the equality of viewpoints and the sanctity of all acts conducted in the pursuit education. Touching a Black student's hair becomes an analysis of culture, asking a classmate where they are *really from* becomes investigative journalism. In order to become a place that is more inclusive of all students, it is necessary for the College to thoroughly re-envision how it talks about and acts on issues of diversity. Continuing to play the role of a tolerant, socially responsible institution and responding to incidents of racism with assurances that Swarthmore is a community that supports everyone and initiating new activities for students to get to know each other better without holding students accountable for the injury they inflict on their fellows will not achieve this.

Works Cited

Secondary Sources

Biondi, Martha. *Black Revolution on Campus*. Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2012.

Baumann, Roland M. *Constructing Black Education at Oberlin College: A Documentary History*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2010.

The Commission on Educational Policy, and The Special Committee on Library Policy, and The Special Committee on Student Life. *Critique of a College*. Swarthmore: Swarthmore College, 1967.

Hunt, Everett Lee. *The Revolt of the College Intellectual*. New York, NY: Human Relations Aids, 1963.

Rogers, Ibram H. *The Black Campus Movement*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Urciuoli, Bonnie. "Excellence, leadership, skills, diversity: marketing liberal arts education." Language & Communication 23 (2003): 385-408.

[60] Rogers, 90.

Walton, Richard J. *Swarthmore College, An Informal History*. Swarthmore, PA: Swarthmore College, 1986.

Primary Sources

Hargadon, Frederick. "Admissions Report," *Black Liberation 1969 Archive*, http://blacklib1969.swarthmore.edu/items/show/9 (accessed December 10, 2014).

Hargadon, Frederick. "[Letter from Frederick Hargadon to Alumni Interviewers 09/1966]," *Black Liberation 1969 Archive*, http://blacklib1969.swarthmore.edu/items/show/657 (accessed December 10, 2014).

Hargadon, Frederick. "Social Diversity," *Black Liberation 1969 Archive*, http://blacklib1969.swarthmore.edu/items/show/7 (accessed December 10, 2014).

Office of Planning and Policy Research, United States Department of Labor. "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action." 1965.

"The Rockefeller Foundation, Annual Report for 1965". New York, NY: Rockefeller Foundation, 1965. http://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/uploads/files/f9e77cdb-038b-4320-b8ec-077c2503f7d8-1965.pdf (accessed December10, 2014).

Stott, Gilmore. "[Letter from Gilmore Stott to Courtney Smith, 11/26/1968, re Upward Bound]," *Black Liberation 1969 Archive*, http://blacklib1969.swarthmore.edu/items/show/762 (accessed December 10, 2014).

Swarthmore Afro-American Students' Society, "Negro History Week," *Black Liberation 1969 Archive*, http://blacklib1969.swarthmore.edu/items/show/650 (accessed December 10, 2014).

Williams, Frank B. "[Financial Aid Report for Incoming Black Students, 1964]," *Black Liberation 1969 Archive*, http://blacklib1969.swarthmore.edu/items/show/1131 (accessed December 10, 2014).