

Africana Studies
*A Disciplinary Quest
for Both Theory and Method*

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9. Reaching for Higher Ground: Toward an Understanding of Black/Africana Studies

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Introduction

This chapter explores two issues that are central to assessing the current developmental trajectory of Black/Africana Studies. The issues of particular concern are (a) the nature of the linkage between traditional disciplines/approaches to inquiry and Africana Studies, and (b) the concept of Afrocentricity and its impact on the current status and future development of the field.

The first issue has been discussed and debated extensively over the last two decades. The debate has intensified recently, in part due to the visibility afforded to writings by literary critics and historians who, although they identify primarily with traditional disciplines, assert connections to Black Studies [Baker (1984); Gates (1988); Harris, Hine, and McKay (1990); Huggins (1985)]. This turf battle has re-energized discussions about the nature of Black Studies, i.e., is it a self-contained and distinct body of knowledge or simply an adjunct to traditional disciplines?

The second issue is of more recent origin. The work of Asante (1980, 1987, 1990) and other prominent figures who employ complementary approaches, e.g., Maulana Karenga (1982, 1988, 1990), have popularized the concept of Afrocentricity both within and outside academe. Their contributions and those of an older generation of "scholarly/community griots" (John Henrik Clarke and Josef Ben-Jochannon) have spurred commentators outside of academe to develop popularized "Afrocentric" analyses. These popular treatments

have been integrated into various media, including music and film. Unfortunately, the analytical precision of the academic conceptions is typically lacking, with accuracy sometimes sacrificed for the sake of art.

"Popular Afrocentrism" is being confused increasingly with systematic intellectual approaches in the field. This confusion has contributed to a distorted view of the state of the field and is fueling uneasiness in some circles about the intellectual credibility of Black/Africana Studies.

The context outlined above grounds the present discussion. First, an overview of evolving conceptions of the field over the last two decades and the rationales used to support those conceptions is presented. That discussion serves to explicate why the disjunction persists between discipline-linked and stand-alone models. It also attempts to establish the general limitations of traditional disciplines to inform modern Black/Africana Studies. The focus is on the general linkage between traditional disciplines in the aggregate and Black/Africana Studies. The third section examines the field's specific linkages to the subject areas of history, literature/literary criticism, and psychology.

The significance of the concept of Afrocentricity for Black/Africana Studies is explored in the fourth section. The concept is first defined and critiqued. Its use in three systems of thought identified with the field is then examined.

The final section suggests possible directions for future development that can address the problems identified in the preceding sections. A synthesis of elements of the field's three major systems of thought is proposed as a foundation for future efforts.

In Search of a Philosophical Base

Conceptions of Black/Africana Studies. The general academic and non-academic conceptions of the field are first discussed. Attention is then focused specifically on academic conceptions of Africana Studies. Five distinct rationales used to support various academic conceptions of the field are explored.

Allen (1974) provides a useful classification of modern conceptions of Black Studies that emerged during the formative stage of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Three conceptions were identified: (1) an *academic conception* that treats the mission of Black Studies as researching black history and illuminating the contributions of blacks; (2) an *ideological conception* that identifies Black Studies as an instrument of cultural nationalism; and (3) an *instrumental conception* whereby the role of Black Studies is to serve as a vehicle for social change within black communities.

Allen's scheme is a useful reminder that discussion of the relationship

between Black/Africana Studies and traditional disciplines cannot ignore the historical symbiotic relationship between academic and political conceptions of Black Studies. However, throughout the formative period and subsequently there have been efforts to de-emphasize the linkage between scholarship and social activism. As a consequence, care must be taken in discussing the relationship between Black/Africana Studies and traditional disciplines to avoid misrepresentation of the multifaceted character of the enterprise.

These concepts require modifications to accommodate both the Marxist school of thought and the emergent Africana Women's Studies movement. The Marxist approach rejects cultural nationalism as the appropriate ideological orientation and simultaneously denies the usefulness of traditional disciplinary demarcations. This approach is consistent with the view of Karl Marx (1971, p. 44) who wrote, "we know only of a single science, the science of history." Marxist scholars, of course, have advocated aggressively for strong linkages between academic inquiry and political struggle. They are, in fact, responsible for institutionalizing this value by coining the slogan, "Academic Excellence and Social Responsibility." This phrase has been adopted as the official motto of the National Council for Black Studies.

The Africana Women's Studies movement is challenging traditional patterns of male chauvinism in the field. Two intellectual tendencies exist within this movement. One school of thought embraces the field's long standing cultural nationalist ideology. It urges the forging of a new partnership between Africana men and women in pursuit of previously articulated intellectual and political objectives (see Henry and Foster, 1982). The second school of thought elevates feminism to a higher ideological status than cultural nationalism (see Hull, Scott, and Smith, 1982). Advocates of the second approach tend to be more directly connected to traditional academic disciplines than are their counterparts and, more specifically, they are clustered in the areas of literary criticism and creative writing. The specific disciplinary linkages and the visibility afforded those advocating priority to feminist perspectives have reinforced the misperception that the principal bases of activity in Black/Africana Studies are in the humanities or outside academe.

Although the historical precedents of the field were clearly forged outside of academe, the locus of development during the modern era has been and remains solidly inside the academy. Moreover, as emphasized in the next section, within the academic arena the social sciences, rather than the arts and humanities, have come to provide the major models that have shaped conceptions of the field.

Disentangling Academic Conceptions. The extreme version of Allen's academic conception is exemplified by the comments of Blassingame (1969), who argued that Black Studies programs were inappropriate vehicles for promoting development in black communities. Ford (1974, p. 224) defines the field almost exclusively as an academic venture: "The term Black Studies

refers to educational courses concerned with the study of research in various aspects of the experience, attitudes, and cultural artifacts of peoples of African origin.... Black Studies is concerned primarily with the history, literature, art, music, religion, cultural patterns and lifestyles developed in America by a race of people cut off completely from all contact with the land of their origin." Russell (1975, p. 185) takes a similar approach arguing that Black Studies "...has a respectable body of knowledge and researchable content with the Black humanities and social sciences comprising its core curriculum...."

General descriptions of this type spawned five more specific approaches to justifying the existence of a distinct body of knowledge: (1) the value-added rationale, (2) rationale by negation, (3) multidisciplinary rationales, (4) rationales based on applications of Western philosophies of science, and (5) rationales based on historical precedent.

Value-Added Rationales: The language used by Allen in describing the academic conception of Black Studies and the specifications of Ford and Russell are useful for establishing a baseline position regarding the linkages between Black/Africana Studies and traditional disciplines. All three statements ascribe a special status to the humanities and the social and behavioral sciences. In addition, all three implicitly employ what can be described as a "value added" rationale for the existence of the field. In other words, Black Studies has a legitimate role in academe because it extends the explanatory power of traditional disciplines. Significantly, the issue of whether the theories and methods utilized in traditional disciplines are directly applicable without modification to the study of the experiences of peoples of African descent is not addressed. As a consequence, this line of argument can support either a model of "black studies" as a subset of the knowledge base of traditional disciplines or a model identifying "Black Studies" as a self-contained and distinct body of knowledge.

In recognition of this problem, another strategy used to differentiate between Black/Africana Studies and traditional disciplines is rationale by negation.

Rationale by Negation: This approach both critiques the limitations of traditional theories and methods and defines the distinct nature of Black/Africana Studies analyses. This unique aspect of the field is said to emanate from the synthesis of either the academic and ideological or the academic and instrumental sub-missions. To illustrate, Alkalimat (1973, pp. 187-188) argues that "the conceptual approach of white social science is only useful on the analytical level of classification since for each term the social content must be specified.

The concepts presented for a Black social science clearly suggest a specific socio-political content to be understood as the race problem." In a complementary vein, McCleendon (1974, p. 18) asserts that "Black Studies will insist that students examine and comprehend a multitude of theories and teachings. The relevance of each body of knowledge to black liberation can be determined only through obtaining an understanding of the substantive content."

Jackson (1970, p. 132) claims that Black Studies scholarship should be geared toward improving life in the black community, an approach that would be accomplished by creating a closer symbiosis "between pure and applied roles of science with a greater stress on application of knowledge."

These approaches to synthesis do not introduce any particular conceptual difficulty in linking social-scientific and humanistic approaches in a self-contained model of Black/Africana Studies. This is true, in part, because the concept of a "black aesthetic" provides a parallel in the humanities and the arts to the idea of a unique "black" value orientation and observational language in the social sciences of the type suggested by Alkalimat (1973) and McCleendon (1974). Potential problems do arise, however, in reconciling an "arts for arts" sake philosophy with the notion of instrumental knowledge. In addition, the disjunction between social scientific and humanistic approaches has contributed to a gradual decline in the frequency of formal statements about the role of humanistic scholarship and the creative arts as integral components of Black/Africana Studies.

The social sciences increasingly have become the senior partner in the social science/humanities/creative arts nexus of Black/Africana Studies. It is from that vantage point that Karenga (1982, p. 32) asserts that "Black Studies, as both an investigative and applied social science, poses the paradigm of theory and practice merging into active self-knowledge which leads to positive social change. In a word, it is a discipline dedicated not only to understanding self, society and the world but also to them in a positive developmental way in the interest of human history and advancement."

If, as Karenga argues, Black Studies is a discipline, then how does it relate to other disciplines? One approach to answering this question involves attempts to define the field as a combination of existing disciplines, i.e., articulation of a *multidisciplinary rationale*.

Multidisciplinary Rationales: Distinctions can be drawn between weak and strong multidisciplinary rationales. *Weak multi/interdisciplinary rationales* take the existing disciplinary structure as given but argue that Black/Africana Studies provides unique added value

because it develops knowledge that represents disciplinary syntheses. Most advocates of this position simply assume that because Black/Africana Studies examines aspects of life experience that cut across traditional disciplinary boundaries, the resultant analyses are by definition interdisciplinary. However, virtually no attention is devoted to the examination of the underlying theoretical constructs necessary for "interdisciplinarity" or "multidisciplinary" to be manifested.

The weak multidisciplinary rationale can be contrasted to what can be described as the *strong multidisciplinary rationale*. The principal distinctions between the two are (a) the efforts of advocates of the strong rationale to ground their arguments in the philosophy of science, and (b) the emphasis on subject areas rather than disciplines as the unit analysis. One important statement of this position is found in Karenga (1982, pp. 35-36): "Black Studies ... as an interdisciplinary discipline has seven basic subject areas. These interdisciplinary foci which at first seem to be disciplines themselves are, in fact, separate disciplines when they are outside the discipline of Black Studies, but inside, they become and are essentially 'subject areas' which contribute to a holistic picture and approach to the Black Experience. Moreover, the qualifier Black, attached to each area in an explicit or implicit way, suggests a more specialized and delimited focus which of necessity transforms a broad discipline into a particular subject area. The seven basic subject areas of Black Studies then are: Black History; Black Religion; Black Social Organization; Black Politics; Black Economics; Black Creative Production (Black Art, Music and Literature); and Black Psychology."

In particular, several critical questions can be raised regarding Karenga's assertions, including (1) does the transformation from discipline to subject area involve the transformation of the underlying disciplinary constructs, (2) how can affixing the prefix "black" produce the hypothesized transformation, and (3) if Black/Africana Studies is a social science how exactly are the subject areas of black history, black religion, and black creative production integrated into the enterprise?

Questions of the type proposed above are typically within the province of the philosophy of science. And, in fact, some proponents have turned to this field to generate a fourth approach to establishing the case for the intellectual legitimacy of Black/Africana Studies.

Western Philosophy of Science-Based Rationales: Various scholars including Karenga (1988); Stewart (1979, 1982a, 1982b); and Turner (1984) have used this approach to clarify the intellectual project of

Black/Africana Studies. The most popular framework used is that of Kuhn (1970), although selected analyses draw upon the writings of other philosophers including, Lehrer (1975) and Toulmin (1972) [see Stewart (1982a)]. Even members of the Marxist school of thought have adapted Kuhn's basic constructs to explicate their approach to the field [see Alkaimat (1990)].

In contrast to the use of Western philosophies of science as a means to generate analogies, Asante (1987) has used the work of critical theorists as a foil to differentiate their project from that which he ascribes to "Africalogy." This thrust is understandable given the neo-Marxist overlay associated with the constructs of most critical theorists. Asante's commitment to cultural nationalism thus engenders an approach to critical theory that is a variant of the rationale of negation.

In general, the use of Western philosophies of science to define Black/Africana Studies has further removed the humanities and the arts from center stage. Philosophies of science are just that—philosophies designed to examine intellectual processes in scientific disciplines, not intellectual processes associated with other areas of inquiry. In fact, even the range of applicability across different scientific fields is restricted. Generally, philosophy of science models have been fashioned to examine intellectual processes in the physical and natural sciences. Thus, even the extension of the models to the social and behavioral sciences requires relaxation of some critical assumptions. The role of the humanities and the arts in Black/Africana Studies further complicates matters. Moreover, as described in Stewart (1982a), there remains the problem of how to handle the activist mission of Black/Africana Studies within a philosophy of science framework.

Toulmin's (1972) specification of the necessary conditions for disciplinary status highlights the nature of the problem. For Toulmin (1972, p. 133) an area of inquiry develops into a scientific discipline when it has "one and only one set of well-defined goals at a time (that is explanation of phenomena falling within the scope of the disciplinary inquiry), and one set of selection-criteria." Reconciling this notion of discipline with Karanga's specification of Black Studies as a discipline presented previously is a major intellectual task.

While acknowledging these caveats regarding the applicability of philosophy of science models to describe Black/Africana Studies, experimentation with such models has added substantial precision to the discussion of many important topics. As a means of illustration, Kuhn (1970) introduces the use of the term "research paradigm"

to characterize the specific application of the scientific method within an area of inquiry. The term "disciplinary matrix" was later offered as an alternative to "paradigm." Disciplinary matrices are said to be comprised of four components: (a) a metaphysical component; (b) values shared by practitioners; (c) symbolic generalizations, observational language, and research methods, and (d) exemplars (concrete examples of the application of the theoretical and empirical framework).

The metaphysical component of disciplinary matrices consists, in part, of beliefs about the explanatory power of particular models.

One metaphysical component that could be used to differentiate Black/Africana Studies analyses from other investigations is the model of peoples of African descent as actors continuously striving to achieve sufficient power to maintain their cultural identity and define their collective destiny. This model contrasts with alternative "metaphysical" orientations that either treat blacks as perpetual victims or as a population of individuals in the process of assimilating Euro-American culture. Other beliefs that differentiate Black/Africana Studies from competing orientations include the preference for collectives rather than individuals as the unit of analysis and the emphasis on modeling social processes as cyclical rather than linear phenomena.

In Kuhn's model, the second component of the disciplinary matrix values actually has two sub-categories: macro- and micro-order values. Kuhn (1970) uses the example of beliefs in whether or not "science should or need not be socially useful" as an example of a macro-order value, and indicates that scientists in a field may disagree about this issue. This observation has clear relevance for the earlier discussion of the disagreement between those committed to a more detached academic conception of Black/Africana Studies and those advocating for a more applied research focus. The operative point is that Kuhn's framework provides a means for incorporating such discussions in a way that reaffirms the "scientific" character of Black/Africana Studies. Micro-order values are beliefs about the nature of the scientific enterprise that guide the behaviors and judgments of practitioners. For example, some micro-order values specify how the relative merit of competing theories is to be judged. Again, the relevance to the earlier discussions about differences among the academic conceptions of Black/Africana Studies Occasional Papers are obvious. Black/Africana Studies analysts/activists who support a stand-alone conception of the field place more weight on the applicability of knowledge to guide social change than on esoteric explanatory power, measured, for example, by statistical robustness. In addition,

there are potential tradeoffs among judging criteria. In Black/Africana Studies, theories and applied analyses are judged on the bases of "beauty," "functionality," "rhythm," and "compatibility with folk wisdom," in addition to "precision." Consequently, precision could be self-consciously sacrificed to achieve other objectives in some cases.

Micro-order values also address how information generated by practitioners in the discipline is to be disseminated. In traditional disciplines, there is typically a stated preference between articles in referred journals and monographs. In the case of Black/Africana Studies, the multiple missions have led to emphasis on monographs and on another mode of dissemination, i.e., public speeches. The controversy surrounding a speech given by Leonard Jeffries in July 1991 is instructive regarding the strengths and weaknesses associated with this medium.

Rationale by Exemplar: The generation of a body of exemplars to support the documentation of an intellectual history of Black/Africana Studies is consistent with the metaphysical belief in cyclical social processes. Intellectual production is also a social process. This means that historical theory and praxis can serve as a means of gauging the degree of compatibility between contemporary scholarship/activism and long term cultural trends in these arenas.

Since many traditional disciplines are largely products of the twentieth century, Black/Africana Studies predecessors were not saddled with the ideological baggage associated with twentieth century disciplines. In addition, prior to the affirmation of the social values of disciplinary specialization and detachment of academics from the public sphere, it was much more likely that scholars would be engaged in a wide range of activities in addition to intellectual inquiry.

The multiple missions of Black/Africana Studies necessitate the generation of a much wider variety of exemplars than envisioned by Kuhn. In particular, the expectation that practitioners will not be simply scholars but scholar/activists suggests the importance of examples of historical figures who combined scholarly activity and social activism in ways comparable to that advocated for contemporary Black/Africana Studies scholar/activists. Thus, there is a need for a collection of biographies of figures whose value orientation mirrors that of the contemporary Black/Africana Studies community. Strengthening the instrumental and nationalist dimensions of the field will require examples of how quasi-autonomous African and African American societies organized social relations. Conversely,

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examples of failed attempts would facilitate identification of ineffective strategies that should not be replicated.

In the cases of both individual "intellectual/activist autobiographies" and "community development models," "pure" cases of unambiguous correspondence to contemporary values will not be found. The reality of the historical experiences of peoples of African descent and the pattern of domination of the intellectual landscape by traditional disciplines will cause most case studies to exhibit significant ambiguity. Consequently, the most useful exemplars are likely to be composites of several examples rather than distinct individual cases.

In some cases, the generation of exemplars involves the wresting of "heroes" and "heroines" from the clutches of other fields. To illustrate, Stewart (1984) has provided an interpretation of the life, career, and writings of W.E.B. DuBois that clearly defines him as a predecessor of modern Black/Africana Studies. Earlier interpretations either linked DuBois' writings to specific disciplines or subject areas, or examined his political movements in isolation from his scholarly activity. These approaches necessitated the use of edited volumes in an attempt to capture the complexity of his life and writings [See, for example, Clarke, Jackson, Kaiser, and O'Dell, eds., (1970)]. This "shotgun" approach mirrors the attempt through individual traditional disciplines to capture the complexity of the experiences of peoples of African descent.

From this vantage point, Stewart's Black/Africana Studies interpretation of DuBois eliminates the clumsiness and fragmentation of discipline-oriented interpretations. It can serve, then, as an exemplar for a general approach that could be usefully applied to examine a variety of historical figures, including Maria Stewart, Martin Delany, Edward Blyden, Elaine Locke, and Zora Neale Hurston. In the case of Locke and Hurston, efforts to graft simplistic discipline-oriented interpretations or topical treatments have been undertaken by scholars outside of Black/Africana Studies, comparable to those applied to DuBois (See Linneman, 1982 and Wallace, 1990).

There are a number of African American societies that would be appropriate subjects for the type of historical community studies advocated above. These include the various maroon societies—communities founded as a result of the Exoduster movement: Mound Bayou, Mississippi; Durham, North Carolina; and Promise Land, South Carolina (See Painter, 1977; Bethel, 1981; Herman, 1981; and DuBois, 1912).

Unfortunately, only limited attention is currently directed at developing the types of exemplars described above. Current attention is focused disproportionately on classical African civilizations, and in

particular on ancient Egypt or Kemet. The thrust of interest in this area in general has been to identify the African origins of Egyptian civilization and, more specifically, to document the extensive presence and impact of peoples of sub-Saharan African origin in various dynasties. This research is necessary and important for several reasons. It provides the ammunition to mount a direct attack on traditional interpretations of ancient Egyptian society as a pseudo-European civilization. The Europeanization of Egypt has facilitated the efforts of historians of Western thought to project the notion of a continuous intellectual history of strictly European lineage. Current research that debunks this interpretation can provide a foundation for reconstructing a continuous intellectual history of African thought that can connect to modern Black/Africana Studies.

The examination of value systems in classical African civilizations prior to the emergence of Western political domination can provide exemplars that can clarify the metaphysical and values components of the Black/Africana Studies disciplinary matrix. In such societies, peoples of African descent were rulers rather than subjects. As a consequence, their world views were not shaped by the history of domination that has conditioned much of the thought of peoples of African descent who were kidnapped and transplanted to the West. Studies of classical civilizations have also identified individual figures who can serve as exemplars for contemporary Black/Africana Studies scholar/activists, e.g., Imhotep.

Despite the potential benefits associated with the study of classical African civilizations, there are drawbacks to such an emphasis. Unfortunately, the vast majority of the scholarship to date is contributionist in orientation, rather than undertaking systematic investigation of the degree of applicability of classical ideas and social formations for the present and future. Most of these studies have embodied a "rationale by negation," with the goal of disputing traditional claims that ancient Egyptian civilization bore little connection to sub-Saharan Africa. Little effort has been made to shape these studies in ways that contribute to the generation of the continuous intellectual history advocated previously. Finally, the focus on Kemet studies needs to be balanced with comparable levels of scrutiny of other classical African civilizations and societies/communities in the Western Hemisphere.

Summary. In this section five general approaches to establishing the intellectual credibility of Black/Africana Studies have been explored. The discussion has examined the relationship between the field and traditional disciplines. Although no effort was made to establish a

temporal progression in the development of the various rationales, the different approaches could be loosely grouped into "early" and "contemporary" rationales. The first category would encompass the value added, negation, and multidisciplinary rationales, while the philosophy of science and exemplar rationales constitute more contemporary approaches. The intellectual ground established by the contemporary approaches is generally more solid than that associated with the earlier lines of argumentation.

Recognition of the evolutionary path of academic justifications used in promoting the field is helpful in approaching the examination of the confluence of specific disciplines or areas of inquiry with contemporary Black/Africana Studies.

Afrocentricity and the Ontology of Black/Africana Studies

The principal thrust in this section is to explicate how the concept of Afrocentricity is affecting efforts to refine the Black/Africana Studies disciplinary matrix. That discussion first requires critical examination of the concept of Afrocentricity. Some definitions or specifications of "Afrocentricity" have created the perception that the concept reflects a closed and homogeneous ideology. However, as emphasized in the introduction to this chapter, there are critical distinctions between academic and popular conceptions. Further, there are also subtle but important differences among various academic conceptions.

Afrocentricity. Two distinct claims are generally identified with the concept of Afrocentricity. What will be termed the "strong claim" is the assertion that the liberation of peoples of African descent requires a psychological reorientation that focuses on reconstructing selected aspects of traditional African psychology, values and behaviors in the present. The "weak claim" entails the position that liberation requires that top priority be assigned to the interests of peoples of African descent in social and political intercourse with other collectives.

Most of the criticisms directed at Afrocentricity have relevance only with respect to the strong claim. Three specific criticisms will be considered for clarification. One criticism suggests that predetermined models of society and individual behavior are attached to the concept that adherents seek to impose on all peoples of African descent. A related criticism alleges that the models of society and individual behavior celebrated by Afrocentrists are drawn from epochs long past and are largely irrelevant to the modern world. A third criticism suggests that the concept encourages racial chauvinism and inter-group conflict by asserting the superiority of peoples of African descent relative to other populations.

There is no question that the most "radical" formulations of Afrocentricity are vulnerable to the criticisms cited above. However, as implied above, these radical formulations are grounded in the strong rather than the weak claim. Some formulations, for example, reject the possibility that non-Africans can generate authentically Afrocentric analyses through application of some type of biological notion of race and culture. One line of reasoning identifies the chemical melanin as the source of unique powers inherent in African peoples. Another position makes the case for racial/cultural distinctiveness among groups using evolutionary models. As an example, Nichols (1990) uses a quasi-geographical/biological evolutionary model to argue that different survival imperatives in diverse climates generated systematic and continuing variation in the world views, axiologies, epistemologies, and logics employed by different groups.

This latter approach establishes a foundation for the existence of multiple and parallel centrisms. However, some Afrocentrists who acknowledge plural centrisms generally also aggressively attempt to distinguish Afrocentricism from Eurocentricism. Advocates of this view argue that Eurocentricism is plagued by an inherent predisposition toward control and domination that produces attempts to create hierarchical rather than cooperative relationships with other peoples. It is argued that this predisposition is absent in other centrisms.

There are obviously a number of critical issues that require further discussion in respect of the nature of, and relationship among, centrisms. Space does not permit such a discussion. For present purposes, however, the most critical question is the extent to which specific groups have maintained culturally conditioned or biologically determined privileged access to certain types of knowledge or ways of knowing over time. This question is problematic because, as noted previously, the treatment of the phenomenon of "race consciousness" among African Americans in the historical scholarship focuses on the problem of "psychic duality" or "double consciousness." This concept invokes imagery of the bifurcation of the African American psyche. The general conclusion reached by historical writers is that the optimal solution to this dichotomy is achieving a balance between the two components of the psyche with the African/African American component providing the core structure. In contrast, as discussed earlier, the radical school of African American psychologists generally argues that it is necessary to eradicate totally all non-African constructs from the psyche for Africans and African Americans to attain mental health and pursue liberation effectively.

One of the implications of psychic duality is that it will (a) generally increase the degree of disjunction between expressed ideology and observed behavior, and (b) reduce self-efficacy. To illustrate, DuBois (1979) argued that "incessant self-questioning and the hesitation that arises from it ... is making the present period a time of vacillation and contradiction for the American

Negro; combined race action is stifled, race responsibility is shirked, race enters languish, and the best blood, the best talent, the best energy of the Negro people cannot be marshalled to do the bidding of the race."

Further clarification can result from examining a specific form of the strong claim that reflects the type of psychological dynamics implied above. For the sake of argument, let Afrocentricity refer to the degree of overlap between an idealized model of thought and behavior generated from an interpretation of traditional African thought and practice and an individual's actual thought and behavior. The process of becoming Afrocentric, then, can be disaggregated into three components: (a) increasing the causal connection between an individual's expressed ideology and observed behavior; (b) increasing the degree of overlap between an individual's expressed ideology and observed behavior and the modal thought and behavior of African Americans (or Africans depending on the selected reference group); and (c) increasing the degree of overlap between an individual's current expressed ideology and behavior and the ideology and behavioral patterns advocated by "strong claim" Afrocentrists.

The foregoing suggests that systematic intervention strategies will be required to facilitate the Afrocentric transformation of individuals. But this is a project that is more compatible with the mission of those trained in psychology than that of Black/Africana Studies grand theorists. The normal inquiry of the field's generalists is not likely to affect individual psyches directly.

Asante (1987, p. 6) suggests that Afrocentricity entails "placing African ideals at the center of any analysis that involves African culture and behavior." Karenga (1990, p. 1) suggests that Afrocentricity entails thought and practice "in the cultural image and human interests of African Americans." Within the context of these "weak claim" specifications, two general guidelines can be offered regarding the praxis of Black/Africana Studies scholar/activists. First, the field's disciplinary matrix must incorporate provisions for a collective process to determine "the cultural image and human interests of African Americans" rather than allowing special interests to dominate dialogue and impose a set of artificial strictures. Second, the intellectual leaders in the field must advocate simultaneously for the necessity of "placing African ideals at the center of analyses involving African culture and behavior" and the right of individuals and collectives to determine the course of their own intellectual production and personal development.

These suggested guidelines are designed to recognize that individual and collective psychology are both developmental and cyclical in character. They seek to minimize unproductive labeling and conflicts over ascriptive status rather than intellectual coherency. Although these definitions allow for cultural exchange, they do not specifically define the boundaries of race and culture as they relate to scholarly inquiry. To illustrate, Asante (1990, p. 40)

suggests that as a theory, Afrocentricity "is not, nor can it be, based on biological determinism. Anyone willing to submit to the discipline of learning the concepts and methods may acquire the knowledge necessary for analysis." The specifics of the linkage between Afrocentricity and selected stand-alone paradigms are examined in more detail below.

Afrocentricity and the Black/Africana Studies Disciplinary Matrix. The focus of this discussion is how the concept of Afrocentricity is linked to the disciplinary matrix of Black/Africana Studies. A comparison of the use of the concept in different systems of thought is undertaken. The frameworks examined are those of Asante, Karenga, and a collective of Marxist-oriented scholars (*See* Alkalimat and Associates, 1986).

Figure 1 presents a classification scheme that clarifies the conceptions of the field discussed to this point. The contributions of Asante and Karenga are identified with a conception of the field as a "Disciplinary Matrix Driven Enterprise." The Marxist collective's "Paradigm of Unity" is identified with a view of the field as an "Adjunct to Traditional Metatheories." Figure 1 characterizes various other conceptions including syntheses of traditional disciplinary perspectives, adjuncts to traditional disciplines, and selective Afrocentric foci. These other conceptions are peripheral to efforts to generate a fully developed disciplinary matrix.

Specific components of the systems of thought developed by Asante, Karenga, and the Marxist collective are compared in Figure 2.

Focusing first on the function concept of Afrocentricity, per se, it is critical to note that in Karenga's system, the concept is derived from a model of culture based on the Nguzo Saba. From this vantage point, the term "Afrocentricity" simply renames a focus that was inherent in the values expressed by the Nguzo Saba. These values constitute a synthesis of various African traditions rather than being culled from the examination of classical African civilizations per se, although the usefulness of the value framework has been reinforced by Karenga's research examining classical African civilizations [*See*, for example, Karenga (1990)].

Figure 1
Categorization of Alternative Conceptions
of Black/Africana Studies

1. Black/Africana Studies as a Disciplinary Matrix Driven Enterprise
 Kawaida Theory (Karenga)
 Africalogy (Asante)
2. Black/Africana Studies as a Discipline constituting syntheses of Traditional Disciplines

Multidisciplinists
Non-disciplinists

3. Black/Africana Studies as an adjunct to Eurocentric Metatheories
 Marxism—Paradigm of Unity (Alkalimat and Associates)
 Feminism

4. Black/Africana Studies as a sub-component of Individual Disciplines
 History
 Literature
 Sociology

5. Black/Africana Studies as a Component of Non-Disciplinary Aggregates
 African Studies
 American Studies
 Ethnic Studies
 Multi-Cultural Studies

6. Black/Africana Studies as expressions of selective emphases
 Kemerologists
 Melanists
 Generalized Folk Approaches

Asante's contribution is a theory of inquiry for the discipline of Africalogy built upon the concept of Afrocentricity. Africalogy is defined as "the Afrocentric study of African concepts, issues, and behaviors" [Asante (1987, p. 16)]. Asante (1990, p. 141) asserts, in the spirit of Karenga (1982), that "Africalogy is a separate and distinct field of study from the composite sum of its initial founding disciplines," i.e., seven subject fields comparable to those specified by Karenga [Asante (1990, p. 12)]. In addition, the geographical locus of the field is defined as the African world, i.e. "Wherever people declare themselves as African, despite the distance from the continent or the recentness of their outmigration" a concept that "includes Africa, the Americas, the Caribbean, various regions of Asia and the Pacific" [Asante (1990, p. 15)].

Asante's concept of Afrocentricity is generated from the general concept of centism. According to Asante (1990, p. 12) "Centism, the groundedness of observation and behavior in one's own historical experiences, shapes the concepts, paradigms, theories, and methods of Africalogy." Africalogy is said to incorporate three paradigmatic approaches: functional, categorical, and etymological [Asante (1990, pp. 12–13)]. According to Asante (1990, p. 6) "The Afrocentrist seeks to uncover and use codes, paradigms, symbols, motifs,

Figure 2
Comparison of Systems of Thought
Associated with Black/Africana Studies

Comparative Criteria	Kwaidia Theory	Systematic Africology	Paradigm of Unity
Concept of Afrocentricity	"In the cultural image and human interests of African Americans"	"placing African ideals at the center of any analysis that involves African culture and behavior"	Unspecified
Treatment of Gender	In the context of male/female relationships	Unspecified	As a biological category
Theoretical Focus	Theory of Culture	Theory of Inquiry	Theory of Social Change
Theoretical Emphasis	Social Organization Cultural Authenticity	Authenticity of Knowledge and Culture	Social Dynamics Class Relations
Key Constructs	Nguzo Saba	Afrocentricity Nommo	Social Cohesion Social Disruption
Treatment of Race	Cultural (Emphasis on Consciousness)	Cultural (Emphasis on Language and Symbols)	Biological
Observational Language (Degree of Transformation)	Partial	Complete	Standard Marxist)
Subject Areas	History, Religion, Social Organization, Economic Organization, Political Organization, Creative Production, Ethos	Society, Communication, Historical, Culture, Politics, Economics, Psychology	Consciousness, Society, Economy, Biology
Periodization Scheme	Unspecified	Unspecified	Two-stage cycle
African Emphasis	Classical Civilizations	Classical Civilizations	Traditional Pre-slave trade
General Methodology for Assessing Research	Determine if a study can be incorporated into a theoretical	Locate study in an Africologi-Grid synthesis	Locate study in a Temporal/Structural Grid
Special Data Sources	Classical Texts	Oral and Visual Data	Collections of Primary Source Materials
Central Crises Threatening Africana Peoples	Cultural Amnesia Eurocentrism	Dislocation Eurocentrism	Capitalism Racism
Resistance Strategies	Creation of a National Culture	Centering	Class Consciousness

myths, and circles of discussion that reinforce the centrality of African ideals and values as a valid frame of reference for acquiring and examining data."

Although Asante's definitional grounding appears at first glance to be holistic and comprehensive, more detailed scrutiny reveals the continuing influence of his earlier training in the field of communication. He asserts that the effort is to "bring the consciousness of rhetorical structure to the study of African communication" and "set a conceptual field for exploring the Afrocentric perspective on discourse where *nommo* as word-force is a central concept [Asante (1987, p. 17)]. This focus on language undergirds a notion of social dynamics whereby "social or political change is nothing more than the transmitting of information as an act of power" [Asante (1987, p. 35)]. It is from this value framework that Asante (1987, p. 16) defines Africology as "systematic exploration of relationships, social codes, cultural and commercial customs, and oral traditions and proverbs, although interpretation of communicative behaviors, as expressed in discourse, spoken or written, and techniques found in jazz studies and urban street-vernacular signifying, is also included."

One of the interesting characteristics of Asante's formulations is that it overlaps significantly with the perspective advanced by Gates (1988) discussed previously. Specifically, both scholars focus on communication and language as the foundational frame of reference. For Gates, "signifying" becomes the dominant mode of discourse because it reflects cultural powers in conflict. This notion is similar to the imagery invoked by Asante in discussing the concept of "Nommo." The point is that Asante's concepts are very much discipline-tied and area specific and that in many respects he and Gates stand on the same ground. The question is whether the field can reach higher ground by synthesizing multiple foci. As noted previously, the contributions of Karenga and the Marxist collective provide alternative foci.

Focusing again on Figure 2, it is critical to understand that the extent to which a system of thought is Afrocentric is only one of many criteria that are relevant for judging the overall usefulness of a conceptual framework. A comparative examination can facilitate refinement of the field's composite disciplinary matrix by identifying the collective strengths and weaknesses of its major systems of thought. As an example, none of the frameworks address the issue of gender adequately and the collective treatment of history is weak.

Ameliorating the collective weaknesses in the self-contained systems of thought under discussion is a strategy that can guide efforts to refine the collective disciplinary matrix in a manner that can help Black/Africana Studies scholar/activists to reach higher ground. This requires a foundation in the form of a synthesis that reflects the strengths of each system of thought, i.e., a theory of history (Marxists), a theory of society (Karenga), and a theory of inquiry (Asante). The beginnings of such a synthesis are outlined below.

Reaching for Higher Ground

Several directions for the continuing development of the Black/Africana Studies disciplinary matrix can be gleaned from the preceding discussions. In particular, seven developmental thrusts can contribute significantly to the project: (1) generation of a theory of history, (2) articulation of a theory of knowledge and social change, (3) delineation of a theory of race and culture, (4) expansion of the scope of inquiry encompassed by the disciplinary matrix, (5) expanded examination of the historical precedents to modern Black/Africana Studies, (6) increased emphasis on applications of theoretical work, and (7) strengthened linkages to interests outside academe to minimize misappropriation of knowledge and improve information dissemination. Space does not permit a detailed discussion of each point, but an effort is made below to suggest possible directions in each area.

DuBois (1953) warned that "there is ... on the part of the overwhelming majority of the people in the world, a feeling that the Anglo-Saxon type of cultural organization has failed and that new cultural patterns should be tried, and that for the trial of these new cultural patterns there is demand for cultural democracy and intercultural tolerance. That without this, civilization in its present form is doomed." In this spirit, the refinement of the Black/Africana disciplinary matrix is critical for the salvation of human civilization and for ushering in the multicultural world that DuBois envisioned. This chapter has attempted to establish the ground upon which Black/Africana Studies scholar/activists can stand to meet this challenge.

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