

# **AFRO SCHOLAR**

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17.

BLACK STUDIES CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT  
IN THE 1980s: PATTERNS OF CONSENSUS,  
CONFLICT, AND CHANGE

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## INTRODUCTION

Black Studies is in its second stage, in a Renaissance, a rebirth of energy, a focus on intellectual productivity, professional unity, and scholarly research as the basis for ideological and political progress of the Black Liberation Movement.<sup>1</sup> The continued development of Black Studies is currently dependent on the extent to which each significant aspect of Black Studies is consciously developed as a force of unity. This requires an analysis of the historical development of each aspect of Black Studies, clarity with regard to the empirical measurement of the current state of affairs, and clarity of how alternative ideological positions explain each phenomena.

One of the key aspects of Black Studies is curriculum. Curriculum is the intellectual content and method that serves as a basic tool, the central activity of the Black Studies enterprise. The major breakthrough was a national report adopted by the National Council for Black Studies in 1981.<sup>2</sup> Since then, over the last three years, four major national curriculum projects have been developed at these institutions:

1. Institute of the Black World,
2. Chicago Center for Afro-American Studies,
3. Five College Black Studies Program, and
4. The University of Illinois.

Each of these projects received public funding.<sup>3</sup> We have been intimately involved in the NCBS report, in running two of these projects, and in actively participating in one other. Each project is distinct. The Five Colleges project brings together activists from two movements of innovation, Black Studies and Women Studies, and it attempts to identify areas for cooperative

destruction (the liquidation of things). Much of Black people's struggle, in virtually every sector of society, is focused on protecting social innovations from the 60s and very early 70s, and providing resistance to the destructive change characteristic of the current period. It is this dialectical tension between innovative construction and destruction that provides the framework for understanding the development and current state of resistance in Black Studies.

Table 1 lists the important historical modes, experiences, of the Black Studies Movement. Rooted in the mid 60s, the origin of Black Studies must be seen as an academic extension of the Black Liberation Movement. While a definitive history of Black Studies has yet to be written,<sup>6</sup> in this context it will suffice to say that as a result of the Civil Rights Movement, and the reaction of the higher education establishment after the assassination of Martin Luther King, there was a significant increase in Black student enrollment in the late 1960s. However, the University was unprepared for this large quantitative increase in Black students, particularly because it resulted in a qualitative change in political movement within the campus. Indeed, not only had individuals come from the Black community to the campus, but they brought their political movement with them. In this way, historians must understand how the external force of the Black Liberation Movement outside the University, became manifest as an internal force within the University. It is important to point out that the external factor was relevant to the extent that it was able to become an internal factor.<sup>7</sup>

And as the Black Studies Movement moved into its first substantial stage, it bore the birthmarks of its turbulent origins. What was universally true, is that there were few Black faculty, and even fewer Black

faculty prepared to teach what knowledge did exist then about the Black experience. The white campus was by and large divorced or separated from Black intellectual traditions. Black students were involved in the current popular tendencies (rhetorical style, fashion, etc.) of the Black Liberation Movement with little grasp of the theoretical basis for differences (and similarities) between the tendencies. Beyond these things, of course, there was a great deal of diversity.

The University basically had given a "green light," money was available, and students were available as well. During this period a great deal of experimentation occurred. Not only did the experimentation come from the desires of students, but, by and large, these desires were manipulated by campus factors, publishing houses, and political forces. Each campus incorporated the Black Studies activists into a local campus administrative and cultural style. Therefore, what developed were departments, centers, programs, and committees.

The publishing houses manipulated the material to print, and therefore controlled the material basis for Black Studies curriculum. This is particularly true of the reprint type publication which quickly flooded the market and provided a spontaneous, eclectic, ahistorical, and weak framework for Black Studies. And, last, the Black Liberation Movement (of course) recruited student activists, won them over to a "doctrine" and used them as instruments of short run political objectives on and off the campus. Out of this process, while inherently chaotic and manipulative, there developed a growing critique of both the established disciplines in their treatment of the Black experience, as well as what was becoming clear as a historically evolved Black intellectual tradition.

TABLE 1

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT OF BLACK STUDIES:  
PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE (1960s, 70s, 80s)

1. ORIGIN - This represented social innovation in the University based on student activists using social disruption as an extension of the Black Power oriented Black Liberation Movement. The main demand was to establish a Black Studies program.
2. STAGE 1 - The first stage was a Black Studies movement in which various patterns emerged. This was a period of experimentation on campus, state, and regional levels; money and students were available but staff, program, and scholarship required development.
3. CRISIS - With a cutback in money and a new student pragmatism, survival emerged as the major question; further, this survival is against the attack on Liberal Arts Education, and a general societal resurgence of racism.
4. STAGE 2 - The consolidation of Black Studies as an academic profession based on an emerging paradigm of unity which can be the basis of standardization, professionalization, and institutionalization.

And, of course, precisely when the process of developing a collective, intentional self-consciousness was reaching a new threshold, crisis began to redefine the rules of the academic game being played. What made the crisis so devastating is that it was not a crisis special to Black Studies, but rather was more generally a crisis facing the campus and the community in general. The economic and political crisis facing the U.S. has fundamentally reversed the progressive trend in this country. Rather than expansion, there is cutback, rather than surplus, there is now scarcity.

Within this general economic crisis there has been a resurgence of racism, now moving beyond the institutional level back to the societal level.<sup>8</sup> Further, there is a technical and vocational attack being made against liberal arts education in which the value of the "soft" areas is being questioned by

the hard mathematically-oriented sciences. And, of course, this not only impacts upon policymakers in the University, there is a vocational-oriented pragmatism now dominating student values, so that in some places the utility of Black Studies has been seriously called into question. In other words, most students want to know, "Can the course you want me to take in Black Studies help me get a job?"

But as the crisis of unemployment deepens, it has become fairly obvious that the United States, indeed, all western capitalist countries, are in a deep depression in which jobs are simply hard to come by. This is having an interesting impact upon the vocational-orientation of students which might very well lead to a new interest in non-vocationally-related areas, especially the liberal arts, because people are forced to figure out the meaning of life outside of a job context.

#### Current Level of Unity

The current stage of Black Studies is focused on the consolidation of Black Studies as a concrete and definite set of activities. No longer is Black Studies simply a movement of ad hoc ambiguously interrelated individuals, programs, and practices, but now must be organized as a coherent and stable community of people, organizations, and activities.

TABLE 2

STAGE 2: FOUR ASPECTS OF INSTITUTIONAL UNITY IN BLACK STUDIES  
(MAJOR EXAMPLES FROM 1982)

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1. BLACK STUDIES PRACTITIONERS

- A. Primary: Faculty and students in higher education formally engaged in production, distribution, and consumption of Black Studies knowledge (approximately 1 1/2 million people).
- B. Secondary: General Black intellectual (non-academic) activity in the media, the arts and culture, politics and Black Liberation movements, etc., (approximately 4 million people).

2. PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION

- A. National - The National Council of Black Studies (founded 1976).
- B. Regional - The New England Council for Black Studies (founded 1977).
- C. State - The Illinois Council for Black Studies (founded 1979).

3. JOURNAL LITERATURE

- A. Primary - The main 26 journals are described in Guide to Scholarly Journals in Black Studies (1981).
- B. Secondary - Material on the Afro-American experience published in all sources is listed in The Afro-American Studies Index including over 2,000 author entries and 6,000 subject entries for 1979.

4. STANDARDIZATION

- A. NCBS, Black Studies Core Curriculum (adopted 1981).
- B. NCBS, National Conference Handbook (under review 1982).
- C. Institute of the Black World, Black Studies Curriculum Development Course Evaluations (3 volumes, forthcoming, 1983).

As Table 2 indicates, there are four aspects of institutional unity. The current period can best be described as Black Studies in transition from Stage 1 to Stage 2 in the midst of crisis (see Table 1). In fact, the crisis makes Stage 2 a necessity because in no other way will Black Studies survive as an academic unit in higher education. First, it is important to identify the constituency, the constituency of people who make up Black Studies. While some might argue for the continued use of the movement definition, "Black Studies is all Black people who are interested in learning about themselves and fighting for Black Liberation," we believe that the past 15 years of practice in the "field" enables us to identify more precisely a group of faculty and students associated with higher education who are identified with Black Studies activities as the primary practitioners. It is necessary, however, to go on and specify that there is a broader category of secondary constituents constituting general Black intellectual workers, people concerned with the production, distribution and consumption of knowledge regarding the Black experience particularly as manifested in an applied context (journalists, librarians, bookstores, writers, cultural workers, artists, etc.) In general, Black Studies is the practice of Black intellectuals, especially those formally connected to Black Studies.

The organization of Black Studies practitioners has followed the general historical development of Black Studies as a whole. The way the Black Studies movement started and developed initially, through social disruption and a period of experimentation, is nowhere better represented than in the history of the African Heritage Studies Association.<sup>9</sup> This organization played the leading role in the early stages of the Black Studies movement, and more than any other organization reflects the early experiences.



AHSA was created by Blacks rejecting the white racist and imperialist collaboration of the African Studies Association, because it was felt that the ASA represented U.S. imperialism's interest in subordinating Africa, while Black intellectuals, scholars, and activists were interested in using their scholarly abilities to further the cause of African liberation. This conflict resulted in Blacks disrupting a meeting of the ASA in Canada and forming an independent Black organization, the African Heritage Studies Association. During the early days this organization captured the imagination and the energy of the Black Studies movement, and held very large and successful national conferences.

It was also this organization that reflected the dominant political trends and paralleled the development of organizations in the Black Liberation Movement, notably the African Liberation Support Committee. Key intellectual activists participated in both organizations and both organizations shared very important plenary at an AHSA conference in 1974 in which the dialogue between intellectuals and activists was intensified.<sup>10</sup>

During the current phase of the Black Studies movement, a major organization that has emerged is the National Council for Black Studies.<sup>11</sup> This organization emerged in response to the crisis on the campus that threatened the existence of existing Black Studies programs in the middle 1970s. It is in the context of an organization like NCBS that the experimentation in Black Studies can be best examined for alternative models, as the Black Studies movement takes on a more permanent and long lasting character. It is important that there be a national organization in Black Studies, including a network of affiliates on regional and state levels. This development would enable Black Studies practitioners to interact with

colleagues, share experiences, and develop an organizational capacity to serve as advocates to support and protect and develop Black Studies.

At present, some level of institutional affiliation covers approximately 30 percent of the primary Black Studies practitioners. It is also important to note that Black Studies practitioners cover the entire spectrum of ideological and political positions in the Black Liberation movement. To some extent this represents the maturation of a generation, a group of people who have emerged out of the 60s and 70s with a long term commitment to struggle for unity and clarity of differences through collective scholarly research and dialogue rather than through emotional and episodic polemics.

Another critical way in which Black Studies is developing unity has to do with the professional journal literature that constitutes its primary intellectual productivity.<sup>12</sup> There are essentially 26 basic journals that make up the core of Black Studies journal literature. These journals are run by Black Studies activists and reflect scholarly trends. It is also an index to a much broader literature of journals and books that constitutes a much larger body of related materials, mainly material that focuses in some way on the Black experience though not necessarily in a Black Studies context. All of this journal literature reflects the professional marketplace of ideas in which Black Studies practitioners collectively engage in the search for truth and ideas that can be applied to the situation facing Black people such that they can struggle to make their lives better. It is the standard, methods, and values brought to the production of this literature and the evaluation of this literature that constitutes the intellectual character and the scholarly qualities of Black Studies. It is important

that every major trend in scholarly research is being evaluated in this context of Black Studies, but also the extent to which Black Studies is connected to mainstream scholarship in the world today.

A fourth area of institutional unity in Black Studies is the extent to which certain key institutional practices are being standardized. The two key activities currently being standardized have to do with the curriculum, the important codification of the journal literature into the classroom, and the national conference for professional organizations, the main activity by which NCBS facilitates the national dialogue of Black Studies practitioners.

National conferences of Black Studies organizations have long been important activities. Throughout the history of Black intellectuals, and certainly this has been true in the most recent decade, national conferences constitute high points, focal points, not only for the dialogue between Black Studies practitioners but as a reflection of broad intellectual shifts from one ideological or political position to another. It is significant that NCBS is having a national dialogue on a national conference handbook developed out of the most recent successful experience of the 6th Annual Conference held in Chicago.<sup>13</sup> This handbook specifies methods for the development of a conference plan, a mobilization of the national constituency of Black Studies practitioners, and the organizational and programmatic logistics necessary for a successful national conference.

The second aspect of standardization, and the one most relevant to the day to day work in Black Studies, has to do with the standardization of a core curriculum. NCBS took the lead in 1980 with the adoption of the report of the Curriculum Standards Committee chaired by Dr. Perry Hall of

TABLE 3

NCBS CORE CURRICULUM FOR AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES

(Adopted at 4th Annual Conference by National Council  
for Black Studies, March 26-29, 1980)

Level 1

INTRODUCTION TO AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES

	Social/Behavioral Studies	Historical Studies	Cultural Studies
Level 2	A. Basic Literature Review or Survey	A. African Pre-History through Reconstruction	A. Basic Literature Review or Survey (music, aesthetics, etc.)
Level 3	B. Current Research and Emerging Issues	B. Post-Reconstruction Current and Emerging Issues in Historical Interpretation and Evaluation	B. Current Research and Emerging Issues (contemporary cultural expression and transformation, etc.)

Level 4

Senior Seminar Course Area  
Synthesis and Application of Insights or Previous Study

Wayne State University. This report makes the singular contribution of codifying the basic parameters of a core curriculum in such a way that the diversity of ideological and academic trends in Black Studies will be able to coexist and develop within the same standardized framework.

### Aspects of Curriculum Development

The general framework of the NCBS model is widespread, but the content of each course varies from campus to campus. The current state of course content in Black Studies reflects trends in the Black Liberation movement, as well as trends in academic circles more generally. The main thing is that there have been two sources for curriculum development, library literature that deals with the Black experience and practical experience from the society, theory and practice. The test of how adequate our framework is must be based on the criteria of comprehensiveness and universality, covering all topics and being useful for all people. For this, we have developed a list of alternative foci in Black Studies courses.

TABLE 4

#### ALTERNATIVE INTELLECTUAL FOCI IN BLACK STUDIES COURSES

1. Theoretical Review of Literature
  - A. Critique of mainstream work
  - B. Review of radical thought
  - C. Black intellectual history
2. Summation of Practical Experience
  - A. Empirical data analysis
  - B. Policy and contemporary issues
  - C. Black liberation movement

The purpose of Table 3 is to identify key areas that have been central to the development of Black Studies and represent necessary aspects of a curriculum, course by course. The main point is to be able to identify trends and clearly point to areas of strength and weakness in Black Studies so we're in a better position to improve things.

### Theoretical Review of the Literature

In his insightful article called "The Failure of Negro Intellectuals," the sociologist E. Franklin Frazier stated that Black scholars "have failed to study the problems of the Negro life in America in a manner which would place the fate of the Negro in the broad framework of man's experience in the world."<sup>14</sup>

Similarly, Earl Thorpe in The Black Historians, one of the few critical summations of Black intellectual history, suggests that "the Black historian has not joined in the twentieth century search for historical laws which has been characteristic of the majority group."<sup>15</sup> Harold Cruse echoed these sentiments when he stated that "the Black American as part of an ethnic group has no definite social theory relative to his status, presence, or impact on American society . . ."<sup>16</sup>

The positing of an alternative theoretical understanding of the Black experience--its meanings and its implications--was the main underlying intellectual challenge of Black Studies as a new field of study. There are three sources of theory which were central to Black Studies in its early years which remain critically relevant in the 1980s, and should be covered in any Black Studies course: (1) mainstream scholarship, (2) radical critiques, and (3) Black intellectual history.

### Critique of Mainstream Work

In an unpublished essay, St. Clair Drake summed up the relationship of the rise of Black Studies to mainstream scholarship:<sup>17</sup>

The very use of the term Black Studies is by implication an indictment of American and Western European scholarship. It makes the

bold assertion that what we have heretofore called 'objective' intellectual activities were actually white studies in perspective and content; and that corrective bias, a shift in emphasis, is needed, even if something called 'truth' is set as a goal. To use a technical sociological term, the present body of knowledge has an ideological element in it, and a counter-ideology is needed. Black Studies supply that counter-ideology.

Thus, a critical approach to mainstream work on Black people was at the core of Black Studies.

Johnetta Coles (University of Massachusetts-Amherst), in her review of anthropology syllabi, makes this point in her opening paragraph, as does IBW in its charge to its reviewers:<sup>18</sup>

When the champions of Black Studies confronted mainstream scholarship in the 1960s, no discipline escaped criticism. In summary form, the fundamental charge of Black Studies was that the mainstream disciplines of western bourgeoisie science, arts and humanities, were pregnant with racism, as reflected in who the overwhelming majority of the disciplinaries are, where they come from, and to whom they are accountable. Many scholars and activists of Black Studies also charged that western scholarship suffered from a gender and class bias--a point that was tangential to the main charge of racism for some, but a point of equal centrality for others . . . Now, in the 1980s as I work in university administration, cooperating with faculty, staff and students in the revision of our undergraduate curriculum and the strengthening of that part which constitutes general education, I am no less convinced than I was in the 1960s that Black Studies can be an essential corrective scholarship for certain biases in mainstream academics. . . As we turn now to a consideration of the components which I suggest should be present in a Black Studies course in anthropology, it should be noted that we are in fact addressing the criticism which Black Studies scholarship has levelled against mainstream anthropology.

Lucious Outlaw (Haverford College) makes a similar claim in his review of Philosophy syllabi:<sup>19</sup>

Among all of the modes of intellectual praxis which have been institutionalized in Western academies, philosophy remains one of the most elite and ethnocentric, the Black Studies movement and the independence of African countries notwithstanding . . . The significance of this situation is understood when we take note of a basic feature and commitment of philosophical praxis: the articulation of a person's or peoples' understanding of themselves, of others, of the world and history, and of their place in them both, in the most fundamental sense. Western philosophy, along with religion and theology, continues to be the principal keeper of the self-image in its most reflective, articulate form. More than that, in its dominant tendencies and driving orientations, it seeks to define and stand guard over what it means to be 'a human being' as well. The fact that the histories of peoples of Africa continue to challenge the Western self-image, and especially, to challenge the image of ourselves the European hegonists would enforce on us, increases the urgency of sharing in the deconstruction of philosophy as the embodiment of a deficient European-American self-image as the model for human self-knowledge. At the same time, we must contribute to the construction of knowledge of and ideals for ourselves and the world's peoples that are more in keeping with the struggle to achieve a democratically just and liberated world. In doing so, we would, as scholars and intellectuals, have the appropriate grounding for our work.

In his essay reviewing syllabi called "The Modern Miseducation of the Negro," Manning Marable (Fisk University) makes a similar point:<sup>20</sup>

The demand for Black Studies was also a call toward the systematic reconstruction of American learning. Its most advanced advocates



understood that the study of the African Diaspora and its people could not simply be 'added' into the standard curricula, merged within the mainstream of white thought. Rather, the social science, literary and creative contributions of Blacks to the whole of human knowledge charted new and different directions of critical inquiry. First, Black Studies demanded a pedagogical approach toward learning that de-emphasized the 'banking' concept of teaching and advanced mixed methodological techniques, such as discussion, informal lecturing, debate and community studies. Black Studies theoreticians declared that interdisciplinary approaches toward learning were superior to narrow, selective teaching methods which concentrated on one single subject (e.g., history) at the exclusion of other related disciplines (sociology, political theory, political economy). Students were urged to devote some of their research activities towards the transformation and liberation of their own communities. Thus, there was a basic relationship between theory and practice in the learning process that was missing from white education. Students were urged to become active participants in their own education. For these theoretical and pedagogical reasons, therefore, Black Studies represented a basic and provocative challenge to the raison d'etre of white universities.

Tom Shick (Wisconsin), writing from the perspective of an historian states:<sup>21</sup> "The Black Studies movement raised fundamental issues related to the methodology and assumptions of scholarship that purported to address the experience of African people whether on the continent or in the diaspora."

Finally, Lloyd Hogan (Amherst College) observed a similar dynamic operative in the field of political economy:<sup>22</sup>

White scholars who dominate the social sciences have only been peripherally interested in problems of Black people. To them there are many and much more

important problems for solution. At the same time we have the anomalous situation in which most Black scholars received their graduate tutelage from the white institutions of higher learning. Black social scientists have been subjected to a perception of their disciplines which is devoid of a significant Black component. Such a perception expunges from the collective intellectual memory the major pathology of the American political economy as if it never existed. And the consequence has been a failure of ordinary social science disciplines to clarify the issues which embody the essential description and explanation of how the system of capitalist political economy works itself out in the real world. A complex system of myths, lies, distortions, and trivia has been built up to rationalize the ways in which the system operates. And social scientists--Black and white--learn how to competently spew out these vicious concoctions in the form of weighty and complex tomes under the rubric of scientific contributions to the disciplines.

The great strength of the mainstream social science practiced in the USA today is the collection of empirical data and in the operationalization and measurement of concepts and relationships. It is out of this tradition that Black Studies should gain insights and models--modifying them before taking them on as such--for empirical data analysis (collection and measurement).<sup>23</sup>

It should be clear, therefore, that a Black Studies course should make an effort to convey what the mainstream scholarship has to say by critically examining the strengths and weaknesses of its substance and methodology. It is only in this way that the particular contribution that Black Studies scholarship might make can be clarified.

## Review of Radical Thought

The surge for Black Studies was accompanied by a general surge of interest in the theory and practice of radical politics: the mass struggles for civil rights and against the Vietnam War in the U.S.; and in the international arena, China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and the student-worker uprising in France, Germany, and other European countries. A "new left" (as contrasted with the pro-Soviet "old left") emerged.<sup>24</sup>

Black Studies has reflected the same themes, perhaps in an intensified manner, over the last fifteen years. Coming as it did as a response to perceived racism in U.S. society and in the wake of King's assassination, Black Studies was aimed at institutionalizing an academic experience with "education for liberation" as a central goal. This explicit statement of its political posture was a direct challenge to the "apolitical" claims of institutions of higher education. Students questioned war-related research, and the involvement of college professors with the C.I.A., and as consultants for multi-national corporations with questionable activities abroad and at home. To them, it was proof that the university was not "neutral," but only a politically-oriented institution with its image as being "value free."<sup>25</sup>

The plight of the Black community during this period was widely popularized by the Watts rebellions and other outbursts, and then by the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (the Kerner Commission named after the former Illinois governor who was later convicted of a felony) whose pronouncements came on March 1, 1968 just one month prior to the assassination of King.<sup>26</sup>

This is our basic conclusion: Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white--separate and unequal . . . . Segregation and poverty have created in the racial ghetto a destructive environment totally unknown to most white Americans. What white Americans have never fully understood--but what the Negro can never forget--is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it.

It was precisely within this context that a new generation of Black scholars emerged and sought to shape Black Studies so that it took up "the liberation tasks," to quote Dr. Drake, that were so much on both the national and Black community agenda of that period.

Almost simultaneously, there emerged in higher education radical movements in almost all social disciplines. The Union of Radical Sociologists, the Union of Radical Political Economists, the Union of Marxist Social Scientists are representative of the trend. New radical journals also appeared: The Insurgent Sociologist, Radical America, The Review of Radical America, The Review of Radical Political Economy, Radical Criminology, Antipode (in geography), and Radical Anthropology.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, the Black Studies movement has historically been close allies with a developing radical tradition in U.S. scholarship. By radical here, we mean a critique of U.S. society which focuses on the unequal distribution of economic, political, and social power, and the resulting patterns of exploitation and oppression.

In most instances, radicals took up the study of Marxism, and introduced Marxist categories to the study of U.S. society: class and class struggle, capitalism and imperialism, revolution (versus reform) and socialism as an

avenue of fundamental social change as a step in solving such problems as racism, poverty, exploitation and male supremacy. Radicals encouraged an activist-orientation and recognized, in the words of Alkalimat, that "science is inevitably a hand servant to ideology, a tool to shape, if not create, reality."<sup>28</sup>

This brief description is illustrated in the summations of how a radical tradition emerged in established disciplines. The editors of Radical Sociology make the following points:<sup>29</sup>

Political and racial assassination, the adoption of genocide to implement foreign policy, the federal government's abandonment of the civil rights movement, military intervention in Latin America and Asia, a program of domestic pacification via the War on Poverty, the destruction of communities for commercial purposes in the name of urban renewal--these were the events which helped to destroy the illusion . . . that the Kennedy Administration/New Frontier would address . . . the more fundamental question of the allocation of power and resources in American society . . . Long neglected terms--racism, monopoly, capitalism, and imperialism--began to re-enter the language of political debate. Many argued that these terms were ill-suited to dispassionate analysis and measured discussion . . . . For those who sought to understand what America had become and where it was headed, 'rhetorical' terms such as exploitation and oppression, when elaborated and concretized, served well as basic organizing concepts, and provided new perspectives for the emerging radical analysis and practice.

Perhaps the best statement of the radical critique among the reviewers is found in Lloyd Hogan's "The Political Economy of Black Americans." He states:<sup>30</sup>

I shall argue in what follows that Black social scientists must break away from the existing traditions in their fields. The problem at

hand which needs sound scientific treatment is the problem of Black people in the U.S. Such a treatment must be guided by a comprehension of the historical forces which generated the conditions under which Black people now find themselves . . . . Of signal importance one must study the essential role of the state and all the other social institutions as controlling mechanisms for buttressing the systems under which Black labor has been exploited in the past. But these studies cannot be completed without attention being focused on the final outcome of these people and the new social order which they must inevitably create as they struggle for liberation from economic exploitation. This will be the final chapter of an all encompassing black political economy.

A similar thrust is shared by Cole in her review of Anthropology syllabi:<sup>31</sup>

Black Studies courses in Anthropology should describe the History of Anthropology, with special attention to its association with the rise of imperialism and colonialism. In an article published in 1968, Kathleen Gough described anthropology as the 'Child of Imperialism,' a point which has been developed and expanded in the works of such Black anthropologists as Diane Lewis, William Willis, and Anselme Remy.

Although the discipline of anthropology was born in the 18th century, it came of age in the 19th century, precisely during the period of imperialist penetration of the cultures of people of color in Africa, Asia and the Americas. This was no mere coincidence, for anthropology served the needs of certain European and U.S. powers to know more about the people they subjugated . . . . the better to rule them. Those who teach anthropology from a Black Studies perspective have the responsibility to present students with such information, thereby documenting, for example, how British social anthropology in Africa was tied to Britain's colonial interests; how the concentration of U.S. anthropologists among native American peoples of the U.S. directly and indirectly assisted U.S. government forces; and the extent to which sometimes knowingly, and often unknowingly, anthropologists have supplied information on the traditional cultures of Third World societies which has been used as the basis of policies which are not in the interest of these peoples.

Black Studies often had the result of encouraging mainstream scholarship to critique itself. Similarly, there is a more pronounced impact that Black Studies and the Black experience has had on developing radical critiques. For example, many young white scholars, active in the Civil Rights and later the anti-war movements, went on to develop significant radical interpretations of U.S. history that have been acknowledged by the mainstream.<sup>32</sup>

American historians interested in tracing the rise of liberty, democracy, and the common man have been challenged in the past two decades by other historians, interested in tracing the history of oppression, exploitation and racism. The challenge has been salutary, because it has made us examine more directly than historians have hitherto been willing to do, the role of slavery in our early history. Colonial historians, in particular, when writing about the origin and development of American institutions have found it possible until recently to deal with slavery as an exception to everything they had to say. I am speaking about myself but also about most of my generation. We owe a debt of gratitude to those who have insisted that slavery was something more than an exception, that one fifth of the American population at the time of the Revolution is too many people to be treated as an exception.

In a 1967 speech before the American Psychological Association, Martin Luther King provides a glimpse to how the civil rights movement posed questions about the Black condition to social scientists. The pursuit of answers to these questions led many scholars toward radical alternatives outside the bounds of conventional solutions, many never to return. After summing up the importance of urban riots, the Vietnam War, high unemployment and civil disobedience, King cites "political action" as one key area that could benefit from social science inquiry.<sup>33</sup>

In the past two decades, Negroes have expended more effort in quest of the franchise than they have in all other campaigns combined. Demonstrations, sit-ins and marches, though more spectacular, are dwarfed by the enormous number of manhours expended to register millions, particularly in the South . . . . A recent major work by social scientists Matthews and Prothro (Negroes and the New Southern Politics) concludes that 'the concrete benefits to be derived from the franchise-- under conditions that prevail in the South--have often been exaggerated,' . . . . that voting is not the key that will unlock the door to racial equality because 'the concrete measurable payoffs from Negro voting in the South will not be revolutionary.'

James Q. Wilson supports this view, arguing, 'Because of the structure of American politics as well as the nature of the Negro community, Negro politics will accomplish only limited objectives.'

If their conclusion can be supported, then the major effort Negroes have invested in the past twenty years has been in the wrong direction and the major effort of their hope is a pillar of sand.

Ralph Bunche once observed: "The study of the political status of the Negro is, in itself, a partial record of the shortcomings of American democracy. I think that we should at least raise some questions concerning the seeming inability of American democracy to "democ" and the essential reasons for this failure."<sup>34</sup> Almost a response to Dr. King's concern, it was in studying the persistence of exploitation and racist oppression which characterized the Black experience that led many social scientists to develop this radical critique, and makes this body of theoretical work a key component to cover in Black Studies courses.

The radical tradition of social science in its recent and older manifestations has its strength in exposing the political essence of current and prevailing trends. It points one's analysis toward class forces, and



anchors all analysis in the very structure of the capitalist system of imperialism. It serves to politically re-orient scholarship and provide a working class basis for a partisan social science. Black Studies approaches these matters on a moral and expressive basis; the radical tradition can help it develop a set of concepts that is in synchronization with universal tools of a progressive social science and focused on the particularity of the Black experience.

### Black Intellectual History

The issue of Black intellectual history and the intellectual heritage of Black Studies is key. Prior to the 1960s, only a handful of Black scholars taught at predominantly white institutions of higher education.<sup>35</sup> Because Black Studies was mainly a movement on these campuses, often lacking was a thorough appreciation of the outstanding work that had been done by Black scholars, who were most often based at predominantly Black institutions. This lack of knowledge created a situation where a substantial number of younger scholars developed without a thorough grounding in these important works of these pioneering generations of Black scholars. We often ended up polemicizing against what we considered biased, racist treatments of the Black experience, but without the ability to stand on the shoulders of our intellectual and academic forerunners, seeing the terrain that they had traveled, and being able to chart more carefully an agenda for further intellectual work.

This is unfortunate since it is precisely in the work of older Black scholars that we find the clearest expressions of the themes and issues which Black Studies was attempting to introduce.<sup>36</sup> For example, Black

scholars have historically adopted the "scholar-activist" stance central to Black Studies. DuBois launched the Atlanta University studies "not only to make the truth known but to present it in such shape as will encourage reform."<sup>37</sup> Woodson endeavored to "turn his historical training to the best racial account."<sup>38</sup>

In reviewing the life and work of Allison Davis, St. Clair Drake suggests that Davis saw the role of the Black scholar on three levels:<sup>39</sup>

- (1) make some contribution to the general theoretical work in his discipline;
- (2) decide upon some aspect of the social structure in which to become expert at the empirical level, and
- (3) select a problem that contributed to "racial advancement, as we used to call it. Today we call it Black Liberation."

Even John Hope Franklin echoed similar sentiments in a 1963 essay called "The Dilemma of the American Negro Scholar":<sup>40</sup>

I now assert that the proper choice for the American Negro scholar is to use his knowledge and ingenuity, his resources and his talents, to combat the forces that isolate him and his people, and like the true patriot that he is, to contribute to the solution of the problems that all Americans face in common.

Our point here, is that Black intellectual history gives us the best intellectual foundation for the Black Studies enterprise, but it has not been given proper attention in Black Studies courses.

It is precisely this contradiction between the importance of the work and the contributions of Black scholars to the legacy of intellectual tradition of Afro-American Studies and to all of higher education, and the negative reception that this work received in higher education that goes to the very heart of why Black Studies emerged as turbulently as it did in the late 1960s and early 1970s. While this has changed somewhat,

there is still a need for Black Studies as a field of study to "return to the classics," to develop a systematic summary and critique of the contours of Black intellectual history and the foundation of Black Studies.

It was this recognition that we were encouraging when we attempted to describe "the classical tradition" of Afro-American scholarship in developing the third edition of Introduction to Afro-American Studies (1975).<sup>41</sup>

A work of Black social analysis is considered a classic when it: (A) definitively summarizes the existing knowledge of a major Black experience; (B) represents a model of methodology and technique that serves to direct future investigation; (C) draws from the analysis theoretical concepts and oppositions that contribute to our general theoretical grasp of the socio-economic and political history of the USA and Afro-American people; (D) stands the test of time by not being proven incorrect or inadequate and replaced by a superior work; and (E) guides one to take an active role in struggle to liberate Black people and fundamentally change the nature of American society.

Our point here, is that there is a rich body of work done by Black scholars and this work represents an indispensable component of Black Studies courses. This recognition is shared by several of the reviewers of syllabi in the IBW project.

#### Summation of Practical Experience

While the first three topics focus on a theoretical review of the literature, the other three components we propose for inclusion in Black Studies courses fall under the rubric "Summations of Practical Experience."

As materialists, we "hold that man's social practice alone is the criterion of the truth of his knowledge of the external world . . . that man's knowledge is verified only when he achieves the anticipated results

in the process of social practice . . . . The dialectical-materialist theory of knowledge places practice in the primary position, that human knowledge can in no way be separated from practice and repudiating all the erroneous theories which deny the importance of practice or separate knowledge from practice."<sup>42</sup>

While such a view is identified with Marxism, the testing of theoretical propositions with empirical research is the hallmark of all mainstream trends in modern social science. In fact, we approach Marxism not simply as a political ideology, but as a great tradition of social science albeit one that is partisan: Marxism is social science for social change developed on behalf of the oppressed and exploited of the world.

There are three aspects of summing up concrete practice that we think should be component parts of Black Studies courses; empirical data analysis, policy and contemporary issues, and the Black Liberation movement.

#### Empirical Data Analysis

If history is going to be scientific, if the record of human action is going to be set down with accuracy and faithfulness of detail which will allow its use as a measuring rod and guidepost for the future of nations, there must be some set of standards of ethics in research and interpretation.

If, on the other hand, we are going to use history for pleasure and amusement, for inflating our national ego, and giving us a false but pleasurable sense of accomplishment, then we must give up the idea of history either as a science or as an art using the results of science, and admit frankly that we are using a version of historic fact in order to influence and educate the new generation along the way we wish.

In the first place, somebody in each era must make clear the facts with utter disregard to his own wish and desire and belief. What we have got to know, so far as possible, are the things that actually happened in the world. Then with that much clearer and open to every reader, the philosopher

and prophet has a chance to interpret these facts; but the historian has no right, posing as a scientist, to conceal or distort facts; and until we can distinguish between these two functions of the chronicler of human action, we are going to render it easy for a muddled world out of sheer ignorance to make the same mistake ten times over. (emphasis added) 43

This canon of rigorous attention to facts--the collection of concrete things--is an important component of Black Studies. This is the case, in part, because so much of the Black experience has been misunderstood, lied about and distorted. This "Propaganda of History"--history as "lies agreed upon" and specifically the distortions of the role of Blacks in Reconstruction--led DuBois to write Black Reconstruction.

One of the most important crisis in modern epistemology (i.e., the investigation of the nature of knowledge and knowing) that is having a profound impact on all scholars is the great wave of quantification. Modern knowledge is increasingly being reduced to the kind of numbers that are comprehensible to the modern development of computers. This is re-defining libraries, archives, publishing, and the like.<sup>44</sup> The Black Studies movement has not yet fully incorporated this new development although there are some attempts to deal with it. The most exciting attempts are the very creative development of new data bases that open up the possibility of new and creative analysis that is germane to the transdisciplinary role of Black Studies.

These new things include national survey data more representative of the Black population as a sub-set of the overall U.S. population (directed by James Jackson at the University of Michigan); the great compilation of the slave narratives (spearheaded by James Rawick and others); the collection of Black newspapers and magazines; the development of publishing

projects which make the collective works of intellectual giants like DuBois, Douglass, and Booker T. Washington available; the continued availability of trend data from the U.S. Census and, lastly our recent effort to develop The Afro-American Studies Index as an empirical data base for literature of the field of Black Studies.<sup>45</sup>

There is, however, a danger that must be guarded against in the drive toward quantification, as Alkalimat observed in 1969:<sup>46</sup>

Empirical research has resulted in progress toward having access to more incidents of social reality, but also resulted in the falsification of our understanding. The challenge of organizing vast amounts of data under manageable theory has resulted in low-level theory like concepts of prejudice and discrimination (instead of racism). We have been looking at the trees and ignoring the essential nature of the forest.

Far from negating the necessity of empirical research using the most advanced methods, Alkalimat is criticizing the tendency for mainstream social science in the USA to let empirical data become the proverbial tail that wags the dog.

This question of empirical analysis and quantitative analysis will have even greater meaning in the future. A great myth is that Black people are unable to deal with numbers--witness the conclusions drawn by many from SAT or other standardized test scores. Even the African theorists must admit that this was not always the case, given some studies of the African origins of aspects of mathematics. But frequently Black Studies play into the hands of this myth. We must pay attention to numbers.<sup>47</sup>

### Policy and Contemporary Issues

Black Studies was deeply concerned about helping to resolve social problems that existed for Black people and the entire society. There was a great sense of immediacy because as a new field of study, it sought to help change the world, not just to understand it. There was thus an explicit policy thrust to Black Studies in its initial stages. Several universities made an explicit recognition of their policy orientation and demand for immediacy and relevancy that was a part of the thrust for Black Studies. 48

Few topics are of greater importance or more dramatic relevance than those that concern the forces that are driving our society to a recognition of the situation and the contributions of Black people in the United States, past and present. And few needs are more compelling than the need of providing for the future leaders of Black America the most comprehensive, relevant, and disciplined education possible. . . . It is instructive that a program of Black Studies was developed by purposive and intelligent Black students, who laid it before us for our consideration. That very process can itself be exemplary, for students, faculty, and administration alike. . . . Black Studies have provided a highly appropriate example of how a curriculum can be made relevant to social needs. Northwestern University lies near and in a great city, which may one day be governed by Black leaders. The University is already committed to a study of the City and to an investigation of the total environment of urban man. . . . What the Black students have proposed represents an important development, which is fully consistent with the intellectual purpose of the institution.

Although the problems of Black people are receding priorities on the national agenda, we would argue that these problems are as urgent as they ever were.

There is a real increase, not a decrease, in the significance of racism in the recent period. Even the Justice Department has issued a special report highlighting increases in racist attacks.

A "new illiteracy" is threatening with the rapid computerization of many functions in today's society, and the increased emphasis on quantitative skills.<sup>49</sup>

The recent report of the U.S. Army and the Educational Testing service regarding lower scores for Blacks on standardized tests is a recent expression of racism, perhaps more subtle, especially in light of the proven cultural/class bias of standardized tests. The Black community and social institutions continue to be torn apart by various "gentrification" or urban revival schemes. Finally, in the economic arena, there is a widening of the income gap between Blacks and Whites and within the Black community--as over twenty percent of Blacks and fifty percent of Black youth are "officially" reported as unemployed.

Thus, it is the continuing responsibility of every field within Black Studies to understand the contemporary situation of Black people and to explore the policy implications of the knowledge produced in the field of study. This is nowhere more relevant than right now when there is a major policy shift in the country that is having a big impact on Black people. We have to understand the relationships between the shifts in public policy as political changes, and also changes in the very structure and functions of the capitalist system.

#### Black Liberation Movement

The brochure from the 1982 Sixth Annual Conference of NCBS contained this statement:<sup>50</sup>



The main contradiction in the work of intellectuals is between the scientific character of research and the political context for scholarship. Black Studies must be concerned with truth (about society and nature) and power. Matters of truth must be left to science, but changing the world is a matter for the Black Liberation Movement. BLACK STUDIES deals with both.

It is this dual character that was reflected in the conference theme: Academic Excellence and Social Responsibility: Science and Politics in Black Studies.<sup>51</sup>

The oppressive and exploitative conditions of Black peoples--racism, poverty, discrimination--has had an impact on Black intellectuals. Because of this, there is a consistent emphasis and effort to contribute to the understanding of the solution of these problems among Black scholars.

James Turner makes this point in his essay reviewing syllabi of Black Sociology courses, quoting a work which is useful in summing up the Black intellectual tradition in this field:<sup>52</sup>

In examination of the intellectual attraction of sociology to Black scholars, James Blackwell and Morris Janowitz reports in their book, Black Sociologists: 'From the earliest years of the discipline in the United States, Black sociologists were not only scholars, they engaged in social and political protest against the treatment of Blacks. The pattern of scholarly endeavors on the one hand, and civic presence in the larger society on the other, was set by W.E.B. DuBois and carried forward by Charles S. Johnson and E. Franklin Frazier. To be a Black sociologist also entailed civic activity.' . . . . They saw in sociology the intellectual tools for redefinition of race relations and in turn a positive element for social change. It is from this tradition that Black Studies intellectuals inherit the legacy of activist scholarship in the present period.

The reverse is also true, that intellectual activity in the context of the Black liberation movement, by "scholars" and "non-scholars," has produced some of the most insightful and provocative analyses of the Black experience to date. For example, the current discussion of race and class as concepts basic to understanding the Black experience did not originate with the debate over Wilson's Declining Significance of Race as the New York Times would have us believe. The sharpest and most productive recent exchanges took place as polemics inside the African Liberation Support Committee, the leading organization in the Black liberation movement in the 1970s.<sup>53</sup>

Earl Thorpe in Black Historians argues that the role of the scholar-activist, often denigrated as an intrusion on scholarly activity and productivity, can have just the opposite effect:<sup>54</sup>

It is questionable whether historians produce better works in the calm atmosphere of dispassionate observation, or when fired by a zealous cause or crusade . . . . It may be that before American Negro historiography can again produce men of the stature of DuBois and Woodson, it will have to get caught up in another crusade.

There is one last vantage point for us to argue that Black Studies courses, especially but not exclusive of those in the social sciences, should include a study of the Black liberation movement. And this is the fact that the object of the Black liberation movement--that which it aims to transform--is also the object of Black social analysis--that which it aims to explain. Turner also makes this point in his essay.<sup>55</sup>

Sociology in Black Studies must look critically at the system of contemporary American capitalism and its historical roots; and ask the salient questions about the nature of the systemic

subjugation and exploitation of Black people. We need to understand the structural roots of large-scale and relatively permanent unemployment in the Black community, and the consequences for the quality of human life and social network in urban ghetto areas. What are the causes of persistent disproportionate poverty of Black families, and relegation of Black workers to secondary categories in the industrial labor markets? Black social scientists in Black Studies are challenged to develop theoretical clarity about why the American social experience has at times meant that freedom, success and prosperity for some depends upon the enslavement/oppression, failure, and impoverishment of others. Social injustices are usually imbedded in the institutionalized patterns of relations and the infrastructure of society: 'Social justice itself is a structural question.' What this means is that before sociologists can proffer a remedy to redress a given social ill there must be an explanation of the structural context in which these wrongs are generated. This will require more integrated study of the economic structures, political structures and cultural structures of society and the institutional alliances between various structures. Such an analysis will enable us to perceive, and therefore conceive, more clearly the racial, sexual, age, class and the ethnic divisions of society.

COURSE SYLLABI IN SOCIAL ANALYSIS: SOME  
EMPIRICAL FREQUENCIES AND AN ASSESSMENT

Having drawn on the history of Black Studies and the comments of reviewers to suggest these alternative intellectual foci for the field, we now ask now do the best syllabi selected under social analysis stack up? Here we will confine ourselves to making a few of the more important observations, with a suggestion that these same six categories can be applied to all syllabi selected by reviewers in the IBW project.<sup>56</sup>

Table 4 presents how we think the syllabi in each area rate along the six dimensions we have identified. We must stress that we are rating explicit treatment of these six dimensions in each syllabus, not what might be implied or interpreted given the use of edited textbooks and the like.

The strongest point in the syllabi selected by the reviewers in the field of social analysis is that most of them include a critique of mainstream scholarship (75 percent). As we have stressed above, this is quite consistent with the origins of Black Studies in reaction to the treatment of the Black experience by the mainstream. This is such a "natural" component of a Black Studies course that we are surprised that three of eight sociology courses, two of five philosophy courses, and one of two education courses would not include it.

Another strong point of these syllabi, in all areas of study except one (Psychology), is that over 70 percent of the courses included a component on Black intellectual history. This is another mainstay in the initial intentions of Black Studies. In all areas of scholarly endeavor, there exist a tradition of work by older Black scholars that

is worthy of study in current Black Studies courses.

Such work as Ladner's edited volume The Death of White Sociology, prematurely entitled perhaps, is a main work in that field. Woodson's Miseducation of the Negro, Frazier's Black Bourgeoisie and several anthologies on Black Studies would fill this gap in the field of Education. The area of Philosophy is more problematical--the work of scholars in this field are lesser known and this gap is only now being filled with such efforts as John McClendon's "Afro-American Philosophers and Philosophy: A Selected Bibliography," published in The Afro-Scholars Working Papers by the University of Illinois's Afro-American Studies and Research Program. Also important is the recent anthology edited by Leonard Harris, ed., Philosophy Born of Struggle: Anthology of Afro-American Philosophy from 1917 (1983).<sup>57</sup>

The failure of the psychology syllabi selected by the reviewers to include a review of Black intellectual history reflects a criticism that we have of the general shortcomings of recent work in this area.

Beyond a shadow of a doubt, the most glaring weakness in the social analysis syllabi was the insufficient attention devoted to the analysis of empirical data. This fact is inconsistent with DuBois' injunction that "somebody in each era must make clear the facts with utter disregard to his own wish and desire and belief. What we have yet to know . . . are the things that actually happened in the world." Only three out of twenty-eight syllabi had this focus (11 percent).

The result of this shortcoming is that there is no objective picture of the Black experience--even as viewed through the lens of each discipline--that can be the backdrop for assessing the various theoretical formulations advanced in the course.

TABLE 5

## DISTRIBUTION OF INTELLECTUAL FOCI IN COURSE SYLLABI OF CULTURE AND SOCIAL ANALYSIS

	Sociology (N = 8)	Family (N = 3)	Anthropology (N = 5)	Psychology (N = 5)	Philosophy (N = 5)	Education (N = 2)	TOTAL (N = 23)
1A Critique of Mainstream Work	5	3	5	4	3	1	21
B Review of Radical Thought	4	1	1	0	1	2	9
C Black Intellectual History	5	3	3	2	5	2	20
2A Empirical Data Analysis	0	2	1	0	0	0	3
B Policy and Contemporary Issues	8	3	3	2	1	2	19
C Black Liberation Movement	5	0	1	2	3	1	12

That courses in philosophy could explain not including the analysis of empirical data is conceivable. But how courses in the sociology of the Black experience can neglect such analysis escapes us.

In line with this only one reviewer stressed this dimension in a review of syllabi. As Delores Aldridge of Emory stated:<sup>58</sup>

Yet another factor is important in evaluating Black family courses--gaps in available data. The area of the 'Black family' has been seriously fragmented in substantive empirical data and theoretical frameworks which give a balanced view of this area of study.

The study of radical critiques of established disciplines is not as developed as we anticipated. In most disciplines there is a growing body of Marxist and other radical literature which seeks to assess the relationship of problems and issues in the discipline to the development and operation of the capitalist system. We are thus surprised that only nine of the twenty-eight courses include such a component.

Finally, the treatment of the Black Liberation Movement is relatively weak, dealt with in only twelve of the twenty-eight syllabi we reviewed. Transforming society, as we have argued, is the main thrust of the Black Liberation Movement, and understanding this same social reality should be the main thrust of courses in social analysis. We think that there is substantial room for treatment of issues from the Black Liberation Movement in these courses.

#### DEVELOP A PARADIGM FOR THE STUDY OF THE BLACK EXPERIENCE

In summary, there is a great need for a clearer delineation of the theory and methodology of Black Studies.

The development of a theory of the Black experience--grand theory, to use the language of Robert Merton--has a high priority in the field. It is absolutely critical if Black Studies is to consolidate and claim a more permanent and productive place in higher education, one that can impact and cross-fertilize all other fields of study as well, that intellectual coherence be established.

Concretely, this goal of contributing to a theory of the Black experience is currently taking the form of a paradigm for Black Studies as a field of study. Somewhat differently stated, our aim is to encourage a more conscious formulation and exploration of alternative theories within a paradigmatic framework which can guide the systematic search and ordering of knowledge about the Black experience.

Paradigms, as defined in the often quoted work of Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, are "universally recognized as scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners." Kuhn elaborates the concept as being closely related to "normal science" which means "research firmly based upon one or more past scientific achievements, achievements that some particular scientific community acknowledges for a time as supplying the foundation for its further practice."<sup>59</sup>

Effective research scarcely begins before a scientific community thinks it has acquired firm answers to questions like the following: What are the fundamental entities of which the universe is composed? How do these interact with each other and with the senses? What questions may legitimately be asked about such entities and what techniques employed in seeking solutions?



"Acquisition of a paradigm," he states, "is a sign of maturity in the development of any given scientific field."

This is quite suggestive and provides an analytical framework for understanding much of what has happened in Black Studies, although practitioners have not always been conscious and systematic in approaching their field in paradigmatic terms. This is unfortunate since most areas of intellectual inquiry--the social sciences and the humanities, and the hard sciences--have engaged in and are continuing to undergo intense discussions along these same lines.

Similar discussions have been more frequent within various disciplines among scholars who study the Black experience: Joyce Ladner's The Death of White Sociology or Even the Rat Was White (1976) by Robert E. Guthrie, focused on psychology.<sup>60</sup> Dr. Diana T. Slaughter of Northwestern's School of Education has produced two outstanding examples of such work: "Social Origins and Early Features of the Scientific Study of Black American Children and Families" (co-authored with Gerald A. McWorter) and "Perspectives on the Development of Afro-American Children and Families" (both published in the Afro-Scholar Working Papers at the University of Illinois-Urbana).

More recently, an explicit treatment of paradigms has emerged in the field of Black literature with Houston Baker's critical essay in Black American Literature Forum on the approach to the interpretation of Black literature coming from the Yale school of Black literary criticism.<sup>61</sup> But such discussions have been rare for the field of Black Studies as a whole. We would argue that it is during this current period of transition from crisis to consolidation that

discussion toward a paradigm for Black Studies is needed for the continued maturing of the field.

The textbook Introduction to Afro-American Studies is one aspect of our work which reflects this concern about developing a paradigm or general theory of the Black experience. As we state in a preface to the volume:<sup>62</sup>

. . . . Secondly, we have put forward a major theoretical concept on which this entire text is based--the periodization of Afro-American history. The thesis is that Black people's history in the United States has developed in a dialectical (i.e., dynamic) fashion--moving from one period of relative social cohesion to another, separated by periods of transition and social disruption. The main periods of the Afro-American experience are the slave period, the (rural) agricultural period, and the (urban) industrial period. The periods of transition are the Reconstruction period between the slave and rural periods; and the period of migrations between the rural and urban periods. When these periods are used in studying economy, politics, society, culture, and other aspects, we thus have the analytical framework for studying the Black experience. As you will note, this framework is employed throughout INTRODUCTION TO AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES.

Drawing on Kuhn, there are two issues which a Black Studies paradigm must address that are reflected in this statement: (1) What are the major components of the Black experience that should form the core of consideration of that experience, both the chronological dimension and the components of society dimension? (2) What methods, facts, and theoretical explanations are provided by the activities of the various disciplines in explicating these several aspects of the paradigm--each component and the relationships between and among the various components?

During the NEH workshop on Black Studies Curriculum Development (sponsored by the Chicago Center for Afro-American Studies) Abdul Alkalimat, who has spearheaded the collective effort to redefine the theory and practice of paradigmatic unity for Black Studies, made a presentation which refined the statement from Introduction to Afro-American Studies.<sup>63</sup> He suggested four levels of analysis in the paradigm, and identified key concepts characterizing their concrete manifestation in the Black experience.

TABLE 6  
CONCEPTUAL TOOLS FOR ANALYSIS IN BLACK STUDIES

<u>General Level of Social Reality</u>	<u>Primary Referent/Concept in the Black Experience</u>
Consciousness	Ideology
Society/Culture	Nationality
Economy	Class
Biology	Race (secondary: gender, age)

Those familiar with the raging controversies over the interpretation of various aspects of the Black experience will immediately see the utility of this conception. The key issue is not which is the most important, but that all must be explained by whatever theory is being used or examined. The theory for the entire Black experience is its capacity to explain the other aspects.

The next question has to do with the logic of change in Black history. In general, the easy a-historical approach of chronology,

or some ad hoc approach to dividing up time periods, is the way things are normally done. Our approach is based on political economy with the "mode of production" being the most inclusive material reality of a peoples experience. However, this is not intended as a simplistic form of economic reductionism, because it is also necessary to evaluate all other aspects of society as well. On a theoretical level we posit historical stages of development in terms of the existing modes of production and the stages between them as periods of change. (Note: that cohesion is the unity of opposites here and not homogeneity of social and economic reality.) This dialectical change sets the historical framework for research. One's basic research hypothesis will always have to account for this basic logic, even if it is to point out that the pattern is different for that aspect of the Black experience being studied.

For example, what is the difference between the use of race, a biological category, as a basis for systematic oppression which a different race is deemed "inferior" (racism as an ideology)? Does this differ from oppression based on "nationality," a form of oppression which is exhibited more in the operation of social institutions (society) and culture and often related to racism? To introduce the historical dimension of the paradigm, do these and other phenomena change qualitatively during different historical periods of the Black experience (slave, rural, urban)? The manifold implications of this conception for all aspects of Black Studies should be obvious.

This effort is a response to the need to consciously establish a base framework for the field, to stake out the arena of methodology

and knowledge for Black Studies. This body of insights could best be summed up in the most general terms in introductory textbooks. The creation of a textbook is an effective way to initiate more conscious discussion of paradigms.

A key consideration here regards what we were attempting to do with Introduction to Afro-American Studies. It was not aimed at making the definitive statement on all aspects of the Black experience.

Rather, we were attempting: (1) to indicate what we viewed as the main components of the Black experience, (2) to point to some of the main scholars in Black intellectual history, and to some central intellectual controversies; (3) to make some broad theoretical statements that would sum up main relationships and meaning of the facts of the Black experience and provoke greater consciousness of the need for theory; and (4) to explicitly treat the contending ideological positions among Black people as laying a basis for critical, scientific assessment.

Given this broad range of focusing within the single field of study called Black Studies, what is it that unites it as a single field? This question and the answer to it are especially important in this current period of budgetary retrenchment.

Our answer is simple. Black Studies, as a field of study, should be defined by a widely endorsed and adopted paradigm of unity which identifies the key periods of historical time (e.g., slavery), and the key aspects of society (e.g., social institutions like the church) and other general aspects of the Black experience which should be consciously addressed--in some form or fashion, wholly or partially--

TABLE 7

DIALECTICAL OUTLINE OF BLACK HISTORY

Periods of Social Cohesion

Periods of Social Description

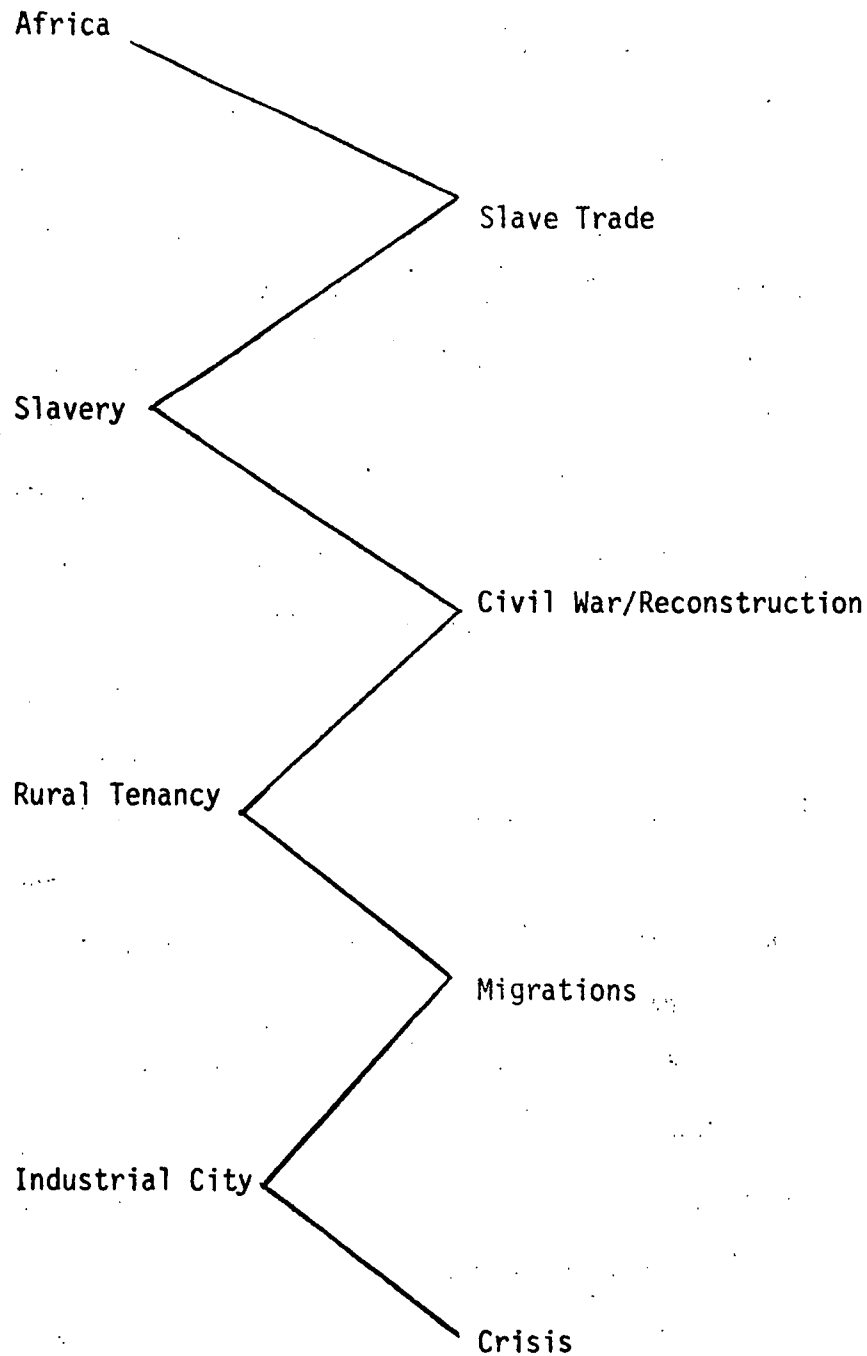


TABLE 8

## TOWARD A PARADIGM OF UNITY IN BLACK STUDIES

LOGIC OF CHANGE	SOCIAL COHESION	Traditional Africa		Slavery		Rural Tenancy		Urban Industrial
	SOCIAL DISRUPTION		Slave Trade		Civil War/Reconstruction		Migrations	
UNITS OF ANALYSIS	Ideology	A1	B1	C1	D1	E1	F1	G1
	Nationality	A2	B2	C2	D2	E2	F2	G2
	Class	A3	B3	C3	D3	E3	F3	G3
	Race	A4	B4	C4	D4	E4	F4	G4

NEH Curriculum Development Workshop in Black Studies Chicago Center for Afro-American Studies and Research, Inc. University of Chicago - Center for Continuing Education, July 6-17, 1982.

by all Black Studies courses, programs, and practitioners.

In other words, a total and rigorous approach to studying the Black experience would be expected to treat each aspect or component of the Black experience paradigm. Thus, the paradigm provides a framework that various academic and liberation ideologies within can contribute to and build on a common core of knowledge about the Black experience. This framework would also facilitate the comparative analysis of how different perspectives or "schools" within Black Studies treat various aspects of the Black experience, and the relationships between the aspects.

Far from rigidly standardizing the content of any particular program or course, this approach would facilitate "unities within diversity," or as it was put in an earlier period, "unity without uniformity."



## **APPENDIX A**

### **A MODEL FOR COURSE SYLLABI IN BLACK STUDIES**

One of the obvious characteristics of a coherent curriculum is the standard information included in a course syllabus. We think that variation on this aspect of each course is attributable to the stage of experimentation in which Black Studies professionals were more likely to tailor their syllabi to the requirements and format of their institution, especially since there were no general guidelines developed.

Because of this variability, we would like to suggest a Model Structure for Black Studies Course Syllabi.

**TABLE 9**

#### **MODEL STRUCTURE OF COURSE SYLLABUS**

##### **1. Administrative**

- a. Title and course identification number
- b. Name, office, and availability of instructor
- c. Time and location of course sections

##### **2. Pedagogy**

- a. Course requirements
- b. Method of grading
- c. Method of instruction

##### **3. Intellectual Content**

- a. Course objectives, orientation, rationale, etc.
- b. Topical outline and course calendar
- c. Course bibliography (required, recommended, supplementary)

While much of this appears routine, especially the points under administrative information, many syllabi omit one or more of these items

as a matter of standard practice. For example, we cannot emphasize enough the importance of Black Studies instructors being accessible to students. This is best handled through routine, well-posted and well-adhered to office hours.

On the other hand, a special case may need to be made for the pedagogical and intellectual content of the syllabus. For example, a clear statement of the requirements, grading, and method of instruction can help provide a good orientation to the course and avoid difficulties that often surface late in the quarter or semester, particularly in grading. Firm grading policies included in the syllabus, reviewed and discussed in the opening class periods (and reiterated at various times) will enable the instructor to state in no uncertain terms: "I didn't give you a grade; I simply recorded the grade your efforts (or lack of effort) earned." Parenthetically, it also enables an instructor to encourage such activity as extra credit assignments and the like for the class as a whole.

Similarly, students should be well aware of how the class is to be conducted. If class discussion is to weigh heavily, then students should know and be encouraged to take notes from their readings so that these notes can be readily utilized in class discussions.

"Intellectual content" is the category most often excluded from many syllabi--course objectives, orientation, and rationale; and a topical outline, course calendar and a course bibliography. Especially is this important in Black Studies as a means of introducing and reinforcing a still relatively new field of study. We know that most of our students in the 1980s were not participant observers in the

creation of Black Studies, and we should assume that they have not been informed about its historical development. Further, the approach in a Black Studies course is often different from the approaches of courses in traditional departments (as we will spell out below). Thus, our syllabus should present, in summary fashion, "where we are coming from" in a way that will help students properly situate the course on the academic landscape.

The preparation of a Black Studies syllabus, in our opinion, should be viewed as a significant academic and intellectual responsibility.

It should be approached not as a mundane task, but as a task on which the future of this field of study rests. Because many students come to Black Studies courses based on reading syllabi, putting our best foot forward is essential. Many of the syllabi in the two volumes from IBW's curriculum project are excellent in this regard.

## FOOTNOTES

1. This is our assumption. Further, we think there is more evidence for optimism than the annual doom and gloom found in summary articles in the popular media. In general the activities of the current Black Studies movement is best reflected in newsletters. The key one is the Afro-Scholar Newsletter (available from Afro-American Studies and Research Program, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois 61801).
2. The report is titled "Report of the Curriculum Standards Committee to the National Council for Black Studies," March, 1980.
3. The three grants were from FIPSE (Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education) and NEH (National Endowment for the Humanities).
4. This publication while in its 4th experimental edition, is currently being revised for its first permanent edition. The 3rd and 4th experimental editions are still available from Peoples College Press (P.O. Box 7696, Chicago, Illinois 60650).
5. The editorial collective of Peoples College is currently gathering research materials on the 1967-1982 years of Black Studies history. Our research files are organized by school, organization, publications and states. We will accept all material and pay for xeroxing if the originals can't be sent.
6. Some of the texts that currently serve a historical function are Armstead Robinson, ed., Black Studies in the University: A Symposium (1969), John Blassingame, ed., New Perspectives in Black Studies (1971), and Nick Aaron Ford, Black Studies: Threat or Challenge (1973).
7. Of course, one major body of literature that speaks to this is on the student movement. Recent references are useful: Harry Edwards, Black Students (1970), Patricia Gurin and Edgar Epps, Black Consciousness, Identity, and Achievement (1975), Gail E. Thomas, ed., Black Students in Higher Education (1981).

8. Racism can be understood as being individual, institutional, and societal. Each of these types follows a logic of development and must be dealt with in its specific focus. The key level is society, because to the extent that the society is racist is the extent to which racism on the institutional and individual levels are considered legitimate. See Thomas F. Pettigrew, ed., The Sociology of Race Relations: Reflection and Reform (1980).
9. There are two articles that discuss the origin of A.A.S.A.: John Henrik Clarke, "The African Heritage Studies Association: Some Notes on the Conflict with the African Studies Association and the Fight to Reclaim African History," Issue: A Quarterly Journal of Africanist Opinion (Volume VI, Number 2/3, Summer/Fall 1976, pages 5-11) and Cyprian Lamar Rowe, "Crisis in African Studies: The Birth of the African Heritage Studies Association," Black Academy Review (Volume 1, Number 3, Fall 1970, pages 1-8).
10. The symposium was called "Imperialism and Black People." The Chairperson was Abdul Alkalimat, and the two speakers were Dawolu Gene Locke (ALSC) and James Turner (AUSA). The panelists included Owusu Sadaukai, Imamu Amiri Baraka, Ron Walters, and Leonard Jefferies.
11. The National Council for Black Studies, Inc., Memorial Hall East 129, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana 47405.
12. This journal literature is described in Gerald A. McWorter, ed., Guide to Scholarly Journals in Black Studies (1981).
13. This handbook appears to be spreading in influence, e.g., The Association for the Study of Behavioral Science (ASBS) seems to have adopted much of it.
14. G. Franklin Edwards, ed., E. Franklin Frazier on Race Relations (1968) pp. 267-282.
15. Earl E. Thorpe, Black Historians: A Critique (1958).
16. Harold Cruse, as quoted in Abdul Alkalimat, "Ideology of a Black Social Science," Black Scholar (December, 1969).
17. St. Clair Drake, "Black Studies: Toward an Intellectual Framework," Address at Brooklyn College, 1969.

18. Johnetta Coles, "Overview and Evaluation of Anthropology Syllabi," Black Studies Curriculum Development Course Evaluations, Conference II: Culture and Social Analysis (Institute of Black World, 1982).
19. Lucious Outlaw, "Africana Philosophy: Philosophy by and in the Interest of Africans and People of African Descent," Black Studies Curriculum Development Course Evaluations, Conference II: Culture and Social Analysis (Institute of Black World, 1982).
20. Manning Marable, "The Modern Miseducation of the Negro: Critiques of Black History Curricula," Black Studies Curriculum Development and Course Evaluations, Conference I: History and Political Economy (Institute of Black World, 1982), p. C5.
21. Tom Schick, "African History Course Syllabi Evaluation," Black Studies Curriculum Development and Course Evaluations, Conference I: History and Political Economy (Institute of Black World, 1982), p. A4.
22. Lloyd Hogan, "The Political Economy of Black Americans: Perspectives in Curriculum Development," Black Studies Curriculum Development and Course Evaluations, Conference I: History and Political Economy (Institute of Black World, 1982), p. E2.
23. In a series edited by Peter H. Rossi for Seminar Press, a good survey anthology representing this empirical research activity is Kent S. Miller and Ralph M. Dreger, eds., Comparative Studies of Blacks and Whites in the United States (1973).
24. See James Weinstein, Ambiguous Legacy: The Left in American Politics (1975), Milton Canton, The Divided Left: American Radicalism 1900-1975 (1978), Kirkpatrick Sale, SDS (1973).
25. See Daniel Smith, Who Rules the Universities? An Essay in Class Analysis (1974).
26. National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (The Kerner Commission), Report (March 1, 1968, p. 1).

27. See A Progressive Periodicals Directory available from P.O. Box Z-120574, Nashville, Tennessee 37212. Over 500 periodicals are listed and described for \$5.00. Also see The Alternative Press Index.
28. Abdul Alkalimat, "The Ideology of a Black Social Science," op cit.
29. J. David Colfax and Jack Roach, eds., Radical Sociology (1971). Also see Irving Horowitz, Radical Sociology: An Introduction (1971) and Charles Anderson, Toward a New Sociology (1974).
30. Lloyd Hogan, op cit.
31. Johnetta Coles, op cit.
32. Edmund S. Morgan, "Slavery and Freedom: The American Paradox," Journal of American History (June 1972).
33. Martin Luther King, "The Role of the Behavioral Scientist in the Civil Rights Movement," in Norrual Glenn and Charles Bonjean, eds., Blacks in the United States (1969).
34. Ralph Bunche, The Political Status of the Negro in the Age of FDR (1940, 1973).
35. See Lorenzo Morris, Elusive Equality, the Status of Black Americans in Higher Education (ISEP, 1979).
36. Some of this is suggested by the themes of graduate thesis and dissertation work. See Harry Green, Holders of Doctorates Among American Negroes (1946).
37. W.E.B. DuBois, Dusk of Dawn (1968), p. 64.
38. Carter G. Woodson is quoted from Kelly Miller's biographical introduction to Woodson's The Negro in Our History and cited in Thorpe's Black Historians, p. 109.
39. St. Clair Drake, "In the Mirror of Black Scholarship: Allison Davis's Deep South," Harvard Education Review, Summer 1967.
40. John Hope Franklin, "The Dilemma of the American Negro Scholar," in Herbert Hill, ed., Soon, One Morning: New Writings by American Negroes, 1940-1962 (Knopf, 1963), p. 76.

41. This early edition is still available from the authors of this paper.
42. Mao Tse-Tung, "On Practice" (1937)
43. W.E.B. DuBois, Black Reconstruction (1935). Quoted from the concluding chapter called "The Propaganda of History."
44. One of the leading agencies in this area is the Institute for Scientific Information (3501 Market Street, University City Science Center, Philadelphia, PA 19104). They have been making progress on indexing, developing the citation index, and assisting scholars in using the computer to access scientific information. Their publication Current Contents is a leader in this field.
45. For the current status of The Afro-American Studies Index, contact Peoples College Press, P.O. Box 7696, Chicago, Illinois 60680.
46. Abdul Alkalimat, "The Ideology of A Black Social Science," op cit.
47. A useful source for reviewing the varying views of Black Studies scholars and other researchers over the significance of quantification are the reviews of books which use quantitative methods. The prolific debate occurred over Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman, Time on the Cross. For examples of the kinds of work being produced on the Black experience which utilize large bodies of quantitative data and statistical methods, see Roger Ransom and Richard Sutch, One Kind of Freedom (1977), a study of sharecropping, and Stanley Engerman and Eugene Genovese, Race and Slavery in the Western Hemisphere: Quantitative Studies (1974).
48. Quoted in A Community of Scholars, a report of a Faculty Planning Committee at Northwestern University in 1968.
49. An accessible source for reviewing the impact of computers on education are recent and current issues of The Chronicle of Higher Education.
50. All of the preparatory material on this conference can be obtained from the Afro-American Studies and Research Program, University of Illinois.



51. The theme "Academic Excellence and Social Responsibility" was first used in a conference on Black Studies in 1977 at the University of California at Santa Barbara. The general acceptance of this strategic orientation is reflected by its being adopted by the Executive Board of the NCBS (Princeton, 1983) as the permanent conference theme.
52. James Turner, "Sociology in Black Studies," Black Studies Curriculum Development Course Evaluations, Conference II: Culture and Social Analysis (Institute of Black World, 1982).
53. The key document in this struggle was Abdul Alkalimat and Nelson Johnson, Toward the Ideological Unity of ALSC (1974).
54. Earl E. Thorpe, Black Historians, p. 200.
55. James Turner, op cit.
56. Our review of syllabi covered only those submitted under the rubric of "social analysis." Other categories included culture, history, and political economy.
57. Leonard Harris, ed., Philosophy Born of Struggle: Anthology of Afro-American Philosophy from 1917 (1983) and John McClendon, "The Afro-American Philosopher and the Philosophy of the Black Experience: A Bibliographical Essay on a Neglected Topic in Both Philosophy and Black Studies," Sage Race Relations Abstracts (November, 1982).
58. Delores Aldridge, "Current Approaches, Needed Directions: Teaching About Black Families," Black Studies Curriculum Development Course Evaluations, Conference II: Culture and Social Analysis (Institute of Black World, 1982).
59. Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. For a recent overview of the continuing discussion sparked by this book see Ellen Cavghlin, "Thomas Kuhn's Ideas About Science: 20 Years After The Revolution," The Chronicle of Higher Education (September 22, 1982) and Gary Gutting, Paradigms and Revolutions (1980).

60. The work of Slaughter and McWorter is available in The Afro-Scholars Working Papers from The Afro-American Studies and Research Program, University of Illinois.
61. Houston A. Baker, Jr., "Generational Shifts and the Recent Criticism of Afro-American Literature," Black American Literature Forum (Volume 15, Number 1, Spring 1981, pages 3-21).
62. Introduction to Afro-American Studies is available from Peoples College Press, P.O. Box 7696, Chicago, Illinois 60680.
63. This presentation and others from an NEH supported workshop discussing Introduction to Afro-American Studies is being edited and will appear in a forthcoming publication of The Chicago Center for Afro-American Studies and Research, P.O. Box 7610, Chicago, Illinois 60680.