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THE NECESSITY OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN EPISTEMOLOGY FOR EDUCATIONAL THEORY AND PRACTICE[1]

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The 21st century will be marked by the struggles of people of color for position, credibility, and respect within Western societies; and the struggles will have global implications. The greatest battle will be for control over who educates minorities within Western societies and the nature of that education. Whose vision of the role of African-Americans, other people of color, and the disenfranchised will prevail? For what purposes might people of color be educated? How might education assist people of color in challenging the societal structures that maintain and reproduce inequality?

There are many formidable challenges in unpacking and critiquing one's cultural baggage to understand how one has come to see the world as one does. This is why actually to grasp hegemony as a cultural construct is so power-conferring yet also so elusive. For example, inservice teachers can seemingly understand, identify with issues, critique articles, and engage in graduate course dialogue yet be stymied when trying to assess what they are or are not doing in their own classrooms. They hold tenaciously to their assumptions about segments of the student population.[2] They internalized their beliefs over a period of time, not from one singular incident; 20 or 30 years of socialization will not be altered simply by preservice or inservice teacher education and professional development courses. Critiquing your own assumptions about the world—especially if you believe the world works for you—is a formidable task. Actualizing a new knowledge in classrooms is even more difficult because it requires connecting with a different reality.

We know that by the year 2000, one-third of the public school population will be children of color. On the average, these children seem to have less success than their Anglo counterparts; and as this population continues to grow, the blame continues to fall on the shoulders of the victims. There are popular discussions on the worsening educational preparation for African-American students and ways of responding to it. Meanwhile, the

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shrinking pool of African-American school teachers and staff is also recognized as a problem: the struggle to ensure future generations of Black public school educators will be an uphill battle. Even with the Holmes and Carnegie reports pointing to the need to attract more minorities into the profession (Gordon, 1988), realistically speaking, most children of color who attend American public schools now and in the foreseeable future will be taught by Anglo teachers. There have been few reforms in the fundamental paradigms used in teacher education programs. The knowledge base generated from theoretical frameworks of the dominant literature seems to ignore or downplay a key question. What are the *results* of the "new" teacher education programs? Have these ideas, agendas, reforms produced any significant results in the academic achievements of Black and other disenfranchised students?

Allegedly, there is a scarcity of cross-cultural studies to give guidance to teachers. But the fact is that the ideas, agendas, perspectives, and programs produced by African-American scholars and writers have been marginalized. While there are well-respected Black educational scholars whose works are being published and reviewed in mainstream (Anglo) journals, their ideas, theories, and experience have not significantly affected the prevailing paradigms and ideology within the scholarly community. Although African-American scholarship is given lip service under the broad rubric of minority, multicultural, and/or cross-cultural studies, dominant Anglo scholarship seems to be directing the field, with little overall improvement in the academic preparation of African-American and other at-risk groups of children. In this essay, I will argue that there is no absence of discourse and literature produced by African-American scholars. Among the strengths of this work is its epistemology: it takes the actual experience of the African-American community as its starting point. It has much to offer to those of us in the field of educational research and pedagogy.

The Marginalized Discourse of an African-American Perspective in Dominant Literature

The majority of cross-cultural/multicultural research seems to emphasize problems or pathology—cultural deprivation, adjustments, pluralism, interpersonal relationships, and tensions—associated with Black people. Focusing primarily on problems distracts and detracts from the cultural knowledge, theories, paradigms, and so on of the group under study. Another marginalization of African-American scholarship is evident in the preparation of teachers. The number of Black Studies libraries at universities and at private and public collections around the country bears witness to an enormous body of literature written by African-American scholars, while the

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academy gives little credence or visibility to this work in preservice and inservice discussions. Teachers and administrators can complete their programs without ever reading classics by Horace Mann Bond (1969 [1937]), W. E. B. Du Bois (1990 [1903]), and Carter G. Woodson (1977 [1933]), or critically discussing such contemporary scholars as Asa Hilliard (1989), Carl Grant (1986), A. Wade Boykin (1979), Joseph L. White & Thomas A. Parham (1990), Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot (1988), James Comer (1980, 1988), Vincent Harding (1974), James Anderson (1978, 1988), Jawanza Kunjufu (1985–1986, 1987), and countless others. This curricular gap says as much about the theories and paradigms embraced and disseminated by university faculty as do the resulting pedagogical practices and worldviews of teachers, principals, and school districts.

Even when quoted, African-American knowledge has had little impact on dominant paradigms. We must look for the reason for such marginalization in the emancipatory and empowering nature of serious dialogue and debate within the scholarship produced by people of color. While not all of this work lends itself to a critique of the dominant societal structures (Hollins, 1990), most of it does tend to challenge, and call for change in, societal institutions such as schools. Scholarship that points people toward making changes and taking charge of their own destinies is antithetical and threatening to the dominant power configurations, challenging as it is to the social construction of the prevailing mode of rationality. Clearly, the Western societies (in this instance the United States) want an educated, literate workforce in order to compete in a technologically advancing and changing world economy. However, the nature of the future roles of African-Americans is in question.

Black Intellectual Discourse and Cultural Knowledge: Variations on a Theme

African educational theory goes hand in hand with African-American *epistemology:* the study or theory of the knowledge generated out of the African-American existential condition, that is, of the knowledge and cultural artifacts produced by African-Americans based on African-American cultural, social, economic, historical, and political experience. A wealth of literature and information exists that could inform educational research and have practical teaching implications. Outside of the field of education, the generation of knowledge in literature, music, and history produced by African-American men and women has powerful pedagogical implications.

Perhaps mainstream academicians have experienced difficulty with African-American intellectual thought—and its potential influence in education—because it is often both holistic and nonsynchronous. It is holis-

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tic because it is produced by scholars from a variety of fields and media, often not specifically in education or even in academia. It is nonsynchronous because it has neither the same economic and political consciousness, nor "similar needs within it at the same point in time," as the dominant culture (McCarthy, 1988, p. 185).[3]

Partly in response to the racism African-Americans have experienced in this country there emerged a body of scholarship generated and influenced by African-Americans that could inform educational theory and practice. I begin with a historical perspective and lead up to contemporary examples of this scholarship and art produced by African-Americans—which I believe represent endogenous knowledge that has thus far received little application within the academic circles of teacher education.

The Critique of the Dominant Science and the Generating of African-American Cultural Knowledge

The generation of social knowledge, science, cultural artifacts, and so on by a subjugated people is in part influenced and informed by historical, cultural, and political contexts. Such knowledge comes out of a critical examination of the paradigms the dominant society uses to understand and control them.

The need for African-Americans to critique the dominant social science paradigms as they pertain to interpreting, understanding, and controlling African-Americans is not new (Sterling, 1984; Washington, 1988). Before the turn of the century a variety of learned societies, scholars, and schooled men and women were building both scholarly and self-help institutions and generating social knowledge as well as cultural artifacts within what Hazel V. Carby calls "societies 'structured in dominance' by race, class, and gender" (1987, p. 17). These intellectuals and artists challenged the scientifically and socially constructed views of African-Americans and their European cousins (Carby, 1987; Hull, Scott, & Smith, 1982; Roman, 1911; Sterling, 1984; Washington, 1988). During the 19th century and throughout the 20th there were periods of great movement in the formation and creation of knowledge endogenous to the African-American community. Cultural and intellectual communities emerged that encouraged social theorizing and the production of culture and cultural artifacts, including literature, music, religion, and art. Elsewhere I have argued that African-Americans have a great history of building institutions—collectives of scholars and/or artists, as well as academic and nonacademic organizations and societies (Gordon, 1985).

One aspect of this generation and dissemination can be found in the elite intellectual circles. The objectives of the American Negro Academy (ANA) founded in 1897 were to promote literature, science, and art, to cultivate a

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form of intellectual taste, to foster higher education, to publish scholarly work, and to defend the rights of Black people against vicious assaults (Moss, 1981). For the duration of its existence (1897–1928), the ANA was dedicated to the development and defense of African-American people. As part of its work it produced and published 22 occasional papers on a variety of subjects. At the turn of the century, Peter Clark, Alexander Crummell, W. E. B. Du Bois, Archibald H. Grimke, Kelly Miller, Alain L. Locke, William S. Scarborough, Arthur A. Schomburg, and Carter G. Woodson (to name a few of the 99 members of ANA) actively attempted intellectually to challenge the ideas, attitudes, habits, and legal proscriptions that locked African-Americans into an inferior caste.[4] The ANA functioned with a purpose and meaning, as did the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH), a society established by Carter G. Woodson during the autumn and winter of 1915–1916 (Meier & Rudwick, 1986, p. 2).

Black women also made contributions to the generation of endogenous knowledge through social and political action and through literary works celebrating Black life and vindicating and defending African-Americans, both men and women. Not only was Mary McLeod Bethune influential in education, but she was also the president of the National Council of Negro Women and a member of President Theodore Roosevelt's Black Cabinet (Hine, 1989, p. 168). Ida B. Wells made a contribution as a journalist and activist pioneering the anti-lynching crusade (Lowenberg & Bogin, 1976). Other studies, such as Mary Helen Washington's (1988) portrayal of 10 African-American women and Dorothy Sterling's (1984) study of Black women from 1800 to 1880, provide new, informative perspectives on the literary contributions of African-American women. Such less well known authors as Nella Larsen and Ann Petry as well as such familiar authors as Zora Neale Hurston and Gwendolyn Brooks provided theoretical frameworks in their works for understanding the lived African-American experience (Washington, 1988). Through the letters, correspondence, and other documents that Dorothy Sterling meticulously researched and edited, we learned of Fanny Jackson Coppin's commitment to Black youth as school principal of the Institute for Colored Youth from 1869 to 1902. During her life she established various educational and community-based institutions to help youth acquire job skills (Sterling, 1984, p. 407). Sterling's volume chronicles almost a century of institution building and knowledge production generated by African-American women in extremely dangerous circumstances: historically speaking, this is a salient example of knowledge produced in what could be called a *situated* dominance.

Of course, many famous, infamous, and little-known African-American educators and leaders during this early period adamantly insisted that the African-American community needed to be more cognizant of, and take a

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strong position on, the forms of knowledge and consciousness that permeated every aspect of American life and culture. While not necessarily a coordinated effort, the knowledge produced displayed currents of thoughts based on an ideology of emancipation (freedom from domination), self-help and self-reliance, economic autonomy (independence), nationalism, and political power (Gordon, 1985).

Paralleling this (as James Anderson's historical research reveals) was the emergence of a young Black radical intelligentsia in the early 1900s. It was encouraged and mentored by the Black educational elite, who called on this "educated black vanguard to articulate the political and economic interests of the black masses and to keep the masses aware of points where their interests were at variance with those of the dominant society" (Anderson, 1978, p. 97). This radical vanguard was seen to be in defiance of—and a threat to—southern racism. One consequence was that many Black missionary colleges lost their financial endowments, without which they could not operate. In turn, the industrial philanthropies through their financial support gained control of, and consequently political influence over, the historically Black colleges that were producing this critical mass of intellectuals during the period 1910–1920. They thereby achieved a kind of "intellectual hegemony" over the Black scholarly community (Anderson, 1978, p. 107).

During the decade 1926–1936, more African-American students graduated from college and continued on to graduate school than in the entire previous century (Fontaine, 1940). The nature of graduate work—particularly the paradigms disseminated to the students—becomes critical in understanding the shift in African-American social theory from the nationalist perspective to the ecological assimilationist/integrationist perspectives that still greatly influence contemporary social science. The University of Chicago School of Sociology produced an influential second generation of African-American sociologists and established some of the prevailing paradigms and conceptual frameworks that "explain" the societal context and conditions of African-Americans (Gordon, 1985). Some African-American scholars, however, challenged these paradigms. One of the more famous was Carter G. Woodson (Meier & Rudwick, 1986). Woodson sought to base social theory on the cultural, social, and economic dimensions of the Black experience in America.

The period during which Woodson emerged (1916–1920s) was a time of major change, marked by the cultural and intellectual fervor of the great migration—the African-American diaspora when African-Americans were moving from the South to the North. This was also the age of the Harlem Renaissance, when a significant cultural flowering took place. This was the age of Du Bois when the NAACP and the National Urban League, as well as a number of other modern organizations, were taking shape. This was a time

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that evidenced a great concentration of literary and intellectual contributions of African-American men and women (Carby, 1987; Locke, 1980 [1925]; Washington, 1988).[5] This was also the period when overt hostile racist terrorism (lynchings, race riots, etc.) reached its monumental peak.

Believing that racism was due to ignorance and that educating the white population in the African experience in America would dispel it, Carter G. Woodson took the first step by establishing an institution to research and write African-American history, the Association of the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH), and an accompanying publication, the *Journal of Negro History (JNH).* In addition, Woodson would raise money to sponsor research and writings of other scholars and through the *JNH* was able to disseminate this information widely. Woodson was always struggling for money, and was not comfortable relying on foundations, philanthropic organizations, and other groups for support. Eventually in his efforts to raise funds in the late 1920s Woodson took his organizational structure to another level by getting public school Negro teachers involved with his association. Having inaugurated Negro History Week in 1926, Woodson instituted local branches of the ASNLH and established the *Negro History Bulletin* in 1937, to be disseminated in public schools specifically geared toward school-age children and their teachers. This enterprise was "sustained even though it was run at a large deficit that absorbed much of the money raised in nickels, dimes, and quarters from the black community" (Meier & Rudwick, 1986, p. 280). By involving himself in the preparation of public school textbooks for border states and upper Southern states Woodson managed to sustain the ASNLH through its economic crisis.[6]

With the increase in the attendance of African-Americans at prestigious graduate institutions during the 1920s and 1930s, Woodson and other African-American scholars became concerned with knowledge dissemination at those institutions. The critical issues for African-American scholars became in whose interest was ideology and knowledge disseminated? What images of African-Americans were being promoted in the paradigms and theories? Their social critique became a struggle between competing paradigms. Social theorizing became the ideological battleground, as it were, between the adherents of assimilationist and nationalist positions. While social theory sympathetic to the assimilationist/integrationist perspective was (and still is) the dominant ideology, African-American scholars critiqued dominant social theory and generated alternative paradigms and analyses to explain, understand, and theorize about African-Americans in other than pejorative ways.

The main thesis of Carter G. Woodson's *The Mis-Education Of The Negro (1933)* spoke to the crisis he saw in the emergence of the "New Negro."[7] The education (knowledge and accompanying skills training) that African-

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Americans received crippled and greatly prohibited their development or advancement because it reinforced cultural self-hate and cognitive inferiority. Said Woodson, "[W]hen you control a man's thinking, you do not have to worry about his actions. . . . He will find his proper place and will stay in it" (p. xiii). As a consequence the miseducated Negroes, according to Woodson, for the most part dissociated themselves with the masses, acquiescing to the dominant interpretations of ineptitude and inferiority instead of joining the masses in a collective effort with a unified front. By rationalizing that the masses would be incapable of coalescing their economic resources, the "educated" African-Americans alienated themselves from their own power base. In essence, this isolation was a denial of the masses as well as their own negritude.

Woodson envisioned the African-American community shifting from a position of dependency and assimilation to one of self-reliance and self-actualized power in which the polity actively took charge of their situations and were engaged, on a variety of levels, in a liberation struggle. Moreover, the critical and emancipatory spirit would emanate from the community itself. His analysis of the miseducation of African-Americans echoed the currents of thought found in the earlier scholarship, namely, self-reliance, service, and the necessity for generating social theory from the needs and realities of the community. In summary, Woodson challenged dominant theorizing through his understanding of how social science paradigms and assumptions shaped reality and influenced societal policy. He added to the critique of social science paradigms by African-American scholars, who in turn generated their own alternative paradigms and theories.

From the currents of thought in these exemplary writings of African-American scholars, at least two recurrent themes emerge: the struggle against American hegemony in sciences and policies and the necessity to articulate or identify a social theory endogenous to the community. African-American scholars realized the necessity of generating paradigms, values, meanings, and interpretive schemes in the interest of the African-American community and endeavored to disseminate such knowledge, with mixed results. From their works an epistemological position based on self-help, self-reliance, service, economic autonomy, political power, and nationalism can be discerned.

If during these early decades African-American scholars needed to institutionalize the development of Black history, by the 1940s and 1950s they badly needed even more urgently to synthesize this knowledge—plus a critique of the past half century—into an *epistemology to guide and develop the African-American community.* Such a synthesis, however, was not forthcoming. Harold Cruse in his seminal work *Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (1967) lamented that the Black intelligentsia had defaulted on its obligation to provide guidance and directions for African-American participation in all

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levels of society (philosophical, economic, political, etc.). Cruse believed that the lack of participation of Black intellectuals resulted from a variety of difficulties ranging from lack of ownership of cultural apparatus or forums (such as book publishers, theaters, halls) to the Black community's naive understanding of its role and tasks in supporting intellectuals. These difficulties, coupled with the inability of the African-American intelligentsia to influence the social criticism of the larger society that was already being voiced by the emerging radical intelligentsia of the 1960s (Marcuse, 1979), pointed to the necessity of generating a *mode of rationality* that would bring together the fragmented pieces. Cruse saw the function of the African-American intelligentsia as cultural. They would have to critique the Black experience in America and present counter arguments to dispel misguided and inaccurate perceptions in research and in society. This would be accomplished by placing the Black experience into its appropriate historical, racial, and capitalist context within American society. Cruse believed that the weakness of the Black movement during this period was its lack of a "corps of intellectuals" to lead it.

Along with the lack of participation by African-American scholars in social debate and criticism, the question of transposing theory from one social context to another reappears in African-American thought. This was an issue with which Woodson grappled when he argued that social knowledge and action had to be generated out of the context of the African-American community itself. The Euro-American radical (Marxist) theories many African-Americans used to frame their own political and ideological stances became problematic because they were dogmatically applied without regard to their idiosyncratic nature or the uniqueness of the African-American culture (Marable, 1981; West, 1985). The challenge now is for educators and the field of teacher education to employ epistemological stances in philosophy, politics, and social theory generated by African-Americans.

Toward the Next Generation: Future Directions of African-American Epistemology

The struggle to employ social theorizing based on the epistemology generated within African-American intellectual, artistic, and literary cultural knowledge and social theorizing is an ideological and psychological struggle—a battle for the hearts and minds of African-Americans. Sekou Toure, the Guinean writer and theoretician, is most helpful in revealing the role of cultural knowledge in the shaping and transformation of the community (Toure, 1969). For Toure, although culture has been used as a weapon of domination, it has the potential to be a weapon of liberation. While the dominant society—"the imperialists," as Toure calls them—used its culture,

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science, art, technology, and so on to justify and perpetuate its domination, the oppressed can also use cultural values to fight more effectively against ideological domination. Contemporary scholars have come to similar conclusions. The framework Hazel Carby (1987) employs to interpret the contexts and meanings of the works of early African-American female authors offers a valuable perspective for understanding contemporary educational scholarship of African-Americans. Carby argues that language provides a shared context through which different groups express their specific group interests and that the terrain of language is a terrain of power relations. Carby's critical analysis of African-American female novelists operates "within the theoretical premises of societies structured in dominance by class, race, and gender and is a materialist account of the cultural production of black women intellectuals within the social relations that inscribed them" (Carby, 1987, p. 17). Such scholarship informs the community with a kind of reeducation for understanding itself and makes the dominant majority's social configurations and assemblages problematic. As Apple and Weis state, "Because hegemony requires the 'consent' of the dominated majority, it can never be permanent, universal or simply given. It needs to be won continually" (Apple & Weis, 1983, p. 19). Resistance to cultural hegemony begins in the cultural field. The dominated (the colonized) must "reconquer" themselves, and "decolonize" their minds by demystifying the manifestations of the systems that justify domination and their inferiority complexes. Toure writes:

> One cannot extirpate from the mind of the colonized man the culture which has been imposed upon him and which has poisoned him, except by offering him a substitute culture, namely his own culture, which implies an action to restore to life, re-valorize and popularize that culture.
>
> However, this action is possible only in a larger framework of the struggle for national liberation and social promotion. . . .The cult of authenticity by activating the awareness of popular masses and their mobilization, activates the process of political and social liberation as well as forging the nation through the creation of a melting pot in which the simple citizen is formed without any consideration of tribe or race.
>
> This free man within a free people who has rediscovered his physical and mental balance thence forward assumes the entire responsibility for his own destiny. (1969, p. 19)

Reclaiming one's culture (cultural history and knowledge) is an essential aspect of an authentic being. Like the colonized in Africa, African-Americans have preserved many of their cultural institutions and organizations to varying degrees in spite of the yoke of domination. Collections such as the present one are needed to demonstrate the interconnection between African-American literary, cultural, and intellectual work and give a coherent raison

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d'etre to form political, scientific, aesthetic, and philosophical cultural coalitions. The intellectual and cultural communities must set the stage for the debates to follow, unearthing and studying the cultural artifacts and historic traditions that have become obscure. They must analyze this cultural knowledge and situate it in the struggle against domination and the struggle for authentic being.

For the curriculum field, such cultural knowledge provides a salient example of an emancipatory pedagogy. Such endogenous social theorizing and institution building accomplishes at least two tasks. First, it helps us better understand that institutions come into being as a response to a communal call or need. Second, it unveils new research paradigms, conceptual frameworks, and interpretive schemas that could be employed in curriculum theorizing and development in our own interests.

There is an indication in contemporary African-American scholarship that such frameworks are becoming the foundation for praxis in the Black movement (Marable, 1981). The emergence of alternative and endogenous scientific and philosophical paradigms for systematically analyzing African-American culture is an articulation of social theorizing and philosophical reasoning, grounded in the life of African-Americans. Examples can be found in history, psychology, sociology, philosophy, and literature.

Mary Berry and John Blassingame, for example, present a provocative and illuminating historical interpretation of the Black experience in America (Berry & Blassingame, 1982). James Anderson has written a compelling history about the education of southern Blacks and refutes the idea that B. T. Washington worked in the interest of Black liberation to the best of his ability in extremely difficult circumstances (Anderson, 1988). In the field of psychology, African-American psychologists now argue for revisionist approaches to the study of culture, arguing that Western cultural domination (specifically American culture) ignores ethnic and cultural differences. For example, psychologist A. Wade Boykin argues that African-American children possess greater "psychological/behavioral 'verve' than do their white counterparts in more placid [white and middle-class] suburban settings" (Boykin, 1979, p. 354). James Jones, another African-American psychologist, offers his own analytical paradigm as a tool to bring aspects of Black culture into focus. His paradigm is a cultural quintet of time, rhythm, improvisation, oral expression, and spirituality, or "TROIS" (Jones, 1979). Joseph L. White and Thomas A. Parham's (1990) *The Psychology of Blacks: an African-American Perspective* is still another example.

Although not as clearly as Jones, Aime Cesaire (1972) and William T. Fontaine (1983 [1944]) both generated conceptual/analytic paradigms through which to view the African experience in America, France, and the West Indies. Cesaire used aesthetics, ethics, religion, philosophy, history, psy-

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chology, and science as subjects that constitute culture. Fontaine, on the other hand, conceptualized the Black experience in terms of space, time, community, and culture. Cheik Anta Diop (1974) also challenges Western hegemony by arguing that Africa and not ancient Greece is the origin of civilization.

The conceptual frameworks of Boykin, Jones, Cesaire, and Diop have universal African features that could be viewed as categories within a cultural mode of rationality that is essentially African. This "cultural capital" represents the cultural source of the fibers of the African-American essence. I believe that such capital will illuminate a shared cultural context of Africans throughout the world. It has implications for African liberation pedagogy. To one who has read Ivan Van Sertima's *They Came before Columbus* (1976) such a cultural unity appears quite reasonable, particularly in light of John Mbiti's (1970) discussion of philosophy, ethics, religion, history (especially oral history), science, psychology, and human nature as components of African philosophy.

Joyce Ladner, along with other African-American sociologists in her edited volume *The Death of White Sociology* (1973), moved beyond the accepted paradigms of mainstream sociology. In this anthology she, Robert Staples, Abd-l Hakimu Ibn Alkalimat (Gerald McWorter), James Turner, Kenneth B. Clark, and many others reconceptualized scientific paradigms, frames of references, and assumptions generated from African-American thought. The overall goal of the volume was for African-American sociologists to critique the dominant sociological tenets of the field, illuminate the myth of value-free research, call attention to the political and ideological interests in the field, and address "a conciliation between culture (theory) and politics (practice), or, as Nathan Hare has described it, the 'uniting of the Black academy and the street' " (Ladner, 1973, p. xxvii).

I, too, along with others, have been grappling in print with these notions of African-American epistemology (Gordon, 1985). But to catch the attention of the dominant culture within the academy, I also need to consider some contemporary work. A selection of papers given in a 1990 American Educational Research Association symposium[10] on African-American teachers, wisdom, and pedagogical practice, for which I served as a discussant, served for me as exemplars to clarify my concept of African-American epistemology. The reported research represented knowledge generated from the perspective of African-American teachers to give the African-American experiences in America and Canada meaning and a social and political context, situated within a society " 'structured in dominance' by class, race and gender." The works of Michèle Foster (1990), Annette Henry (1990), Etta Ruth Hollins (1990), and Gloria Ladson-Billings (1990) presented at the symposium provided me with alternative examples to the works of Ira Shor, Sylvia

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Ashton Warner, and Chris Searle (Gordon, 1986). In the truest sense, as Ladson-Billings pointed out, the talk of Black teachers is the "missing voice" in teacher education programs. The works of Foster, Henry, Hollins, and Ladson-Billings are indicative of the current endogenous knowledge that is being generated about and within African-American intellectual circles. While these works are specific to education, intellectual, literary, and artistic knowledge (as it has been historically) generated across the disciplines has great potential to inform the future education of African-Americans, and indeed, all of us.

In the field of philosophy, we see that some African-American scholars have called for a revised critical theory of society. Again, the role of epistemology is crucial. In response to what they see as the bankruptcy of dominant social science paradigms, they pursue models of meaning generated from the "life-world," and in the interest, of their constituency. For Lucius Outlaw, for example, the modes of rationality that hold the most promise for emancipation will be found in the life-world of African-Americans.

> The turn must be made to the life-world of African-American people, in all of its ambiguities, complexities, contradictions, and clarities to our concrete life-praxis, in search of our distinct orientation with regard to the matters to be addressed in a revolutionary transformation of the American order. Such orientations are given, for example, in the mediated folk tales; in religious practices; in political language and practices prevalent during various times and under various conditions. . . As these forms of expression, in their concreteness as life-praxes, are constitutive elements of the *life-world* of African-American people, then the meanings they hold, in symbolic and/or explicit form, contain fundamental orientations. Reclaiming them through acts of reflection will provide understandings of the historically conditioned concerns of Black people. Such acts of reclamation or interpretive understanding constitute the practice of philosophical hermeneutics. As such, they are fundamental, for the orientation of present and future philosophical and practical activities in the interest of African-American people. (Outlaw, 1983, p. 66)

Cultural artifacts that have implications for the education of African-American people have always been available and are continually emerging. Some of these that might be useful to the educational community may focus not specifically on educational issues but more broadly on understanding the culture of the African-American community beyond college course textbooks. Examples are biographical works such as those of Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot, (1988) and James Comer (1988), and international perspectives and issues, as well as documentaries such as the 1986 PBS documentary series *The Africans,* written and directed by Ali Mazuri.[11] In the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, the work of such writers such as Toni Morrison *(Sula),* Gloria Naylor *(The Women of Brewster Place),* and Ishmael Reed *(Mumbo Jumbo),* and such films as Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* and Euzhan Palcy's *Sugar Cane Alley*

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and *A Dry White Season* takes us on forays that are quite rewarding. They illuminate various dimensions of, and complexities in, the culture of the African communities in America, the Caribbean, and Africa and our condition of situated dominance.

Still another example of knowledge production is Cornel West's work on the impact of African-American culture on the American way of life and the dilemma of the African-American intellectual in the postmodern era (West, 1985). West has identified organic intellectual traditions in African-American life, a Black Christian tradition of preaching, and a Black tradition of performance. He urges collective intellectual work and critique and the creation of institutions that strengthen African-American scholarship by promoting discourse and "high quality critical habits." To develop these critical habits, West urges African-American scholars to embrace the Foucaultian model, which

> encourages an intense and incessant interrogation of power-laden discourses in the service of. . . revolt. And the kind of revolt enacted by intellectuals consists of *disrupting and dismantling of prevailing "regimes of truth"*—including their repressive effect—of present day societies. This model suits the critical, skeptical, and historical concerns of progressive black intellectuals. . . .The problem is the struggle over the very status of truth and the vast institutional mechanisms which account for this status. . . .The new key terms become those of "regime of truth," "power/knowledge," and "discursive practices." (1985, p. 121; emphasis mine)

We need to reconceptualize the "specificity and complexity of Afro-American oppression" throughout educational and social theorizing in general and among African-American scholars in particular. What is needed, as West puts it, is

> the creation or reactivation of institutional networks that promote high quality critical habits primarily for the purpose of black insurgency. . . .The central task of post modern black intellectuals is to stimulate, hasten, and enable alternative perceptions and practices by dislodging prevailing discourses and powers. (1985, p. 122)

Conclusions: Implications for Teacher Education

Black people have created a body of cultural knowledge that transcends disciplinary lines in science, social theory, art, philosophy, and other fields. It includes useful theoretical constructs, paradigms, and models of viewing and seeing the world, and the marginalizing of this knowledge in the dominant body of scholarship is troublesome. Perhaps such terms as *inclusion, multiculturalism,* and *pluralism* are used and defended in the United States

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because such language can assist the dominant power in maintaining its structures. When we speak of a multicultural, pluralistic, and/or inclusive system, part of the rationale is that everyone must fit in. However, in this instance the United States is neither pluralistic nor multicultural but a white-male-dominated system, coupled with the particularity/specificity of racism. Anglos have defined themselves as white in relation to African-Americans.

The knowledge generated, and products offered, by African-American scholars have far-reaching implications for teacher education; however, the current marginal use of only a few categories of thought may prove stifling and debilitating. While multicultural and cross-cultural categorizations have been useful as a way of identifying certain types, or genres, of work, it is problematic whether or not they can encompass the specific needs and purpose of Black insurgency for African-American and other African scholars around the world. Categories such as "critical, emancipatory, or liberatory pedagogy" may work as descriptors that not only expand the narrow frames of reference but also move them from a pejorative frame to one of self-reflection, critique, and social action.

At the present time, talk about a unique learning style for Black children is probably premature and less helpful than focusing our attention on separating content from pedagogy. For example, the "verve" learning style scholarship of the early 1980s suggested that highly active children were not necessarily deviant, but that they displayed high energy levels and required a pedagogical style which matched their cognitive and learning styles. The discussion of the possible vervistic learning style of African-Americans was transformed into very interesting political issues, which had to be addressed so that it would not be misconstrued to mean that African-American children could only be effectively educated using a particular learning style, or divert attention from the very clear position that the African-American community wants high-quality education for their children. While neither time nor space allows for elaboration, the larger discussion of reconstructed alternative interpretive paradigms and the reaction to such perspectives within the dominant education structure merits critical examination (Boykin, 1979; Gordon, 1982; Hale, 1982; Hillard, 1989; White & Parham, 1990).

Our research agenda must open up fields of inquiry and identify territory to be explored and data to be collected. African-American psychologists have data on a holistic view of Black culture; but so far there are few ethnographic studies on African-American/Caribbean culture, similar to Annette Henry's work (1990), indicating how teachers (and/or parents) incorporate this view in their lives and pass it on to their children. John Ogbu (1974) emphasized the homogeneous culture of African-American community in the 1960s. Where are the studies about what is happening within heterogeneous

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African-American communities of the 1980s and 1990s—middle-class suburbs and inner-city tenements, officials and professionals, working class and under classes, and gang and drug cultures, to name a few. The charge of African-American scholars is to put such issues into the mainstream research arena.

We must also study the attitudes and techniques of teachers, African-American and Anglo, who are effective with African-American children. By introducing their practices in school situations we can study and document content, process, and school interaction. Again, the call is for applied research. If there is such a thing as culturally compatible pedagogy, we must attempt to identify and apply it to see whether it can be widely transfused into public schools and teacher preparation. Additional research focusing on for example, what "regimes of truth" means for education (particularly school knowledge—its creation, production, and dissemination) and/or on challenges to disrupt and dismantle such regimes could prove a provocative litmus test for mainstream educational theory and practice from college campuses to school classrooms.

Dialogue that does not marginalize minority intellectual discourse allows for scholarly engagement. This could result in the production of school knowledge that promotes social participation for change. Such dialogue in the writings on teaching is long overdue.

Notes

1. I would like to thank the Ohio State University Office of Research and Graduate Studies for a grant which is funding a portion of ongoing research on African-American epistemology. I would also like to thank Joyce King for her comments and suggestions.
2. This is from my own teaching experiences with inservice teachers, using articles such as Anyon (1980) and Gordon (1982).
3. I am using the term "non-synchrony" as I understand McCarthy's (1988) use of the term. See also Hicks (1981).
4. American Negro Academy (1969). The American Negro Academy was a most provocative group. From its beginnings on March 5, 1897 to its demise in 1928, the ANA, with its exclusive list of 99 men who at various times were members and its collection of 22 Occasional Papers, has been described as the "voice of the talented tenth." The statement of its principles here does not begin to scratch the surface of this incredible organization. For a comprehensive study of the ANA, see Moss (1981).
5. While it is beyond the scope of this present work to discuss the literary and social contributions of African-American women, suffice it to say that the works of authors such as Marita O. Bonner, Nella Larsen, Jessie Fauset, and Zora Neale Hurston among others made a significant contribution to the cultural knowledge based within the black community. Washington (1988) provides excellent background information on the contribution of Black women. See also Carby (1987).
6. His constituency of "advanced scholars and those who were primarily schoolteachers" had divergent interests, yet he managed to satisfy both groups and

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retain the ASNLH scholarly orientation until his death. By the 1970s the constituencies that dominated the ASNLH organization had shifted to school teachers, "augmented by personnel from the black studies departments" (Meier & Rudwick, 1986, p. 281).

7. This term was also coined by Alain Locke in his edited 1925 volume *The New Negro* (Locke, 1980 [1925]). Carby argues that while the term "The New Negro" was a customary way to refer to the "literary and artistic intellectuals, this term did not include "the radical working-class meaning that was established by the group of intellectuals, leaders, organizations, and journals which were devoted to "economic Radicalism" (Carby, 1987, p. 165).

8. Woodson was referring to physical institutions. The use of institution in this paper is more broadly defined, including scholars, collections of works, activities, and particular schools of thought.

9. "To educate the negro we must find out exactly what his back[g]round is, what he is today, what his possibilities are, how to begin with him as he is and make him a better individual of the kind that he is [i]nstead of cramming the Negro's mind with what others have shown that they can do, we should develop his la[t]ent powers that he may perform in society a part of which others are not capable" (p. 151).

10. *Capturing the Black Teacher's Voice: A Research Symposium on African-American Wisdom and Pedagogical Practice* (AERA, Boston, 1990). Chair: Joyce Elaine King, Santa Clara University.

11. For a discussion on this series, please see Gordon (in press).

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