

Departmental conditions and the emergence of new disciplines: Two cases in the legitimation of African-American Studies

MARIO L. SMALL

Harvard University

The issue

One of the central concerns of the sociology of science and knowledge has been to understand how social, political, and institutional factors affect the construction and definition of scientific knowledge. Recent literature in this field suggests that how scientists in disciplines such as sociology, economics, and psychology define the tasks, method, and subject matter of their disciplines is affected by the institutional conditions of the early *departments* in which the disciplines emerged.¹ Responding to analyses of the emergence of the American social sciences that over-emphasize the role of the growth of nation-wide intellectual communities, this literature has emphasized that the “local” conditions in key departments at several universities were equally important in how these disciplines took shape.² Thus, Camic³ argues that we cannot understand the emergence of three main approaches within modern sociology – inductive observation, statistical generalization, and analytical abstraction – without understanding the local conditions of the early sociology departments at, respectively, Chicago (Small and Park), Columbia (Giddings), and Harvard (Parsons). As a whole, this literature suggests, without disregarding the larger macro-social factors affecting the development of new disciplines,⁴ that much of what affects how newly emerging disciplines are defined may be found in the early departments in which they emerged.

In this article, I address three unexplored issues in this growing body of work. First, within the literature – which consists largely, and justifiably, of independent case studies – there has been little effort to develop *systematic frameworks* from which to understand how these local conditions affect the intellectual development of new disciplines.

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Nor has there been much effort to examine systematically how these institutional conditions are, indeed, affected by macrosocial factors.

Second, although the literature has examined the early development of the established social sciences, it has not addressed the substantive issues faced by the new fields of knowledge to emerge after World War II, and especially after the sixties – many of which came into existence, as sociology did previously,⁵ as a result of political mobilization and societal demand.⁶ The social and political environment surrounding the emergence of these fields, such as Afro-American Studies, Women's Studies, and Environmental Studies, undoubtedly produced effects on how they were defined and what methods or approaches they employed. These dynamics, nonetheless, have been largely ignored. Indeed, even in studies of early social science departments, the influence of their political origins has not been properly examined. Thus, although Camic and Xie acknowledge that “the advance of sociology was closely tied to demands from urban reformers, settlement house workers, and the like,” they do not address what effects these origins had on the discipline, other than to suggest it produced “widespread confusion over the ‘scope and method’ of sociology.”⁷ In the case of the aforementioned fields, the influence of social or political factors cannot be disregarded so easily. Furthermore, these fields are fertile ground to explore, test, and develop theories on the relationship between departments and disciplines, as well as, more generally, on the societal factors affecting the production of knowledge.

A third, related issue is that by focusing only on the study of emerging social science *disciplines*, the literature has failed to explain the development of *interdisciplinary fields*, which may be subject to similar local mechanisms. A discipline, such as economics or psychology, may be defined for our purposes as having, according to its practitioners, an independent topic of study, methodological approach, and perspective; an interdisciplinary field, such as Environmental Studies or Women's Studies, may be defined as having a specific or unique topic of study but borrowing the methods or approaches of several disciplines, and making no claims to being an independent discipline.⁸ To focus only on the early history of already established disciplines is problematic, because during the formative years of a new intellectual enterprise,⁹ the issue of whether it is (or should be) a discipline or an interdisciplinary field is intellectually ambiguous and generally subject to much debate among its practitioners.¹⁰ The key is that the practitioners do not always resolve this ambiguity by developing an independent

discipline, as the cases of Environmental Studies, social psychology, and the sociology of organizations attest. To be sure, during the historical boom of the social sciences at the end of the nineteenth century, this ambiguity tended to be resolved in the development of specialized methodologies, approaches, and perspectives, leading to independent disciplines; nonetheless, after the plethora of fields of knowledge that emerged in academia since the second half of the twentieth century, it is unlikely that a plethora of new disciplines will emerge. The missing analysis, then, is one that studies an emerging intellectual enterprise during its ambiguous period, in order to uncover those factors that affect whether the practitioners in particular departments seek to develop independent disciplines, or whether they seek to develop interdisciplinary fields of knowledge. (A further analysis, touched on in this article only briefly, would then consider how these local dynamics develop into nation-wide tendencies toward discipline- or interdisciplinary status.)

In the analysis that follows, I address these three issues by conducting a theoretically informed case study of two departments in Afro-American Studies¹¹ with explicitly different definitions of the scope, key methods, and substantive areas of study of Afro-American Studies. In one department, the Afro-Americanists conceive of and seek to establish an independent discipline; in the other, they conceive of and seek to develop an interdisciplinary field. First, I describe the utility of African-American Studies in general and the two cases in particular to address the issues at hand. Then, relying on recent developments in the sociology of the professions¹² and of science,¹³ I outline a set of inter-related concepts or ideal types to examine how the scope, method, and subject matter of departments in emerging intellectual enterprises may be affected by institutional, academic, and larger political factors. Next, relying on the outlined framework, I examine in detail why the two departments hold different conceptions of the new intellectual enterprise. Finally, I use the cases to elaborate abstractly on the explanation, developing a theoretical framework that articulates the key constraints facing new intellectual enterprises in general while allowing for historically-sensitive considerations of particular cases. I argue that the definition and conception of an emerging intellectual enterprise in a department will result largely from the efforts of its practitioners to secure resources to institutionalize the department and legitimize its work; they must obtain these resources (which include material capital, political support, and academic recognition) from specific constituencies, which, in turn, place expectations about

how the new enterprise should be defined. Thus, the relationship is best conceived as an interactive process between the practitioners who attempt to institutionalize their new enterprise and the constituencies that are potentially willing to support it.

The cases

Several characteristics of African-American Studies make it ideal for study. First, it is sufficiently institutionalized in the academic system to characterize it as an emerging discipline.¹⁴ It is institutionalized independently in roughly 200 programs and 45 departments in colleges and universities. At least 146¹⁵ institutions offer a B.A. in Afro-American Studies, 15 offer M.A.s, and 5 offer Ph.D.s, including Temple, Cornell, and Yale.¹⁶ There exists an independent network of scholars with a permanent interest in developing it, as well as a professional association, the National Council of Black Studies (f. 1977). Furthermore, several African-American Studies journals are in print, such as the *Journal of Black Studies*, the *Journal of Negro Education*, the *Western Journal of Black Studies*, and *The Black Scholar*.

Second, despite this degree of institutionalization, there is widespread debate and ambiguity about the inherent nature and future development of Afro-American Studies.¹⁷ In some institutions, its practitioners designate it as an *interdisciplinary field* of knowledge (with no claims to discipline status); in others they designate it as an independent *discipline*, with an independent methodology, approach, perspective, and discourse, and independent courses and faculty.¹⁸ While in the history of the creation of disciplines this ambiguity, by definition, has been resolved in the emphasis of the disciplinary rather than interdisciplinary form, in the case of African-American Studies a prediction either way is impossible. In an early study, Ford found that roughly 75 percent of Afro-American Studies programs followed an organizationally interdisciplinary pattern, whereby the program relied on faculty of other departments and all appointments were done jointly.¹⁹ A decade later, Huggins suggests that the pattern remained the same, and, though no precise data are available, there is little reason to believe that percentage has changed significantly.²⁰ Where such a pattern has been institutionalized, the conception of the program can be assumed to be interdisciplinary, for it relies entirely on faculty of established disciplines in established departments, who are unlikely to defend independent Black Studies methodology, perspectives, and approaches.

Conversely, however, many of the leading volumes of the field support the status of independent discipline, as a means of intellectual coherence and institutional independence.²¹ Furthermore, several works have been devoted to developing an independent methodology, perspective, and set of questions for Black Studies.²² Finally, the departments at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and Temple University have recently changed their names from African-American Studies to Africology,²³ evidence of a clear move toward the status of independent disciplines. This ambiguity in the discursive definition of Black Studies provides a unique opportunity to analyze the extent to which, as much of the literature suggests, institutional contexts affect the shape and definition of newly emerging knowledge forms.

Finally, the case of African-American Studies is exemplary of a number of programs, departments, and research institutes in the humanities and social sciences that flooded academia from the sixties on.²⁴ Black Studies departments (including the two cases at hand) were instituted in direct response to the strong political demands of college and university students during the 1960s, which were part of the broader civil rights mobilization.²⁵ Black activist students demanded “relevant” curricula that would recognize their history and prepare them to address the needs of the black communities of the nation. From the first institution to establish a Black Studies department, San Francisco State College in 1968, administrators in institutions around the nation assembled Black Studies departments often haphazardly, largely in fear of student confrontation.²⁶ Thus, an enduring dilemma for these departments would be how to sustain themselves organizationally. Yet, after the institution of these departments, many student groups used Black Studies as a model for the institution of ethnic and women’s studies.²⁷

By conducting a case study of two departments with *different* conceptions of African-American Studies, I hope to shed light on how the ambiguity characteristic of emerging intellectual enterprises manifests itself in different institutions, and, especially, to examine why its practitioners would conceive of the intellectual enterprise one way or the other. The two cases at hand are the African-American Studies departments at Temple and Harvard universities. At Temple, the practitioners of Black Studies conceive it as an independent discipline of knowledge (Africology):

African American Studies or Africology is not merely an aggregation of courses about African peoples but rather a definite point-of-view derived from the culture of African peoples [which] ... constitutes the critical difference between Africology and other disciplines....²⁸

At Harvard, the practitioners conceived it as an interdisciplinary field of knowledge with no claims to discipline status: "Afro-American Studies is interdisciplinary, allowing students to employ and combine the methods of the traditional disciplines.... This approach assumes the need for interdisciplinary study to comprehend [artistic and social phenomena]."²⁹ The departments, in line with their philosophies of African-American Studies, also differ in methodological approach: while Temple aims to follow an Afrocentric approach (to be discussed below), largely independent of the methods of traditional disciplines, Harvard follows a multi-disciplinary approach, arguing for the necessity of established methodology in the humanities and social sciences. Finally, they differ in their conception of the relationship between theory and practice. At Temple, the discipline is conceived as inherently geared toward social change, as "liberating,"³⁰ and the department is engaged in community improvement; at Harvard, there is no community orientation, and no conception that Black Studies, as a field of study, is any more "liberating" than traditional disciplines, although the department itself aims to have broad impact on racial policy (see Table 1).

The two departments, however, share important characteristics that make them ideal for comparison. Like the early departments in sociology, psychology, and other disciplines,³¹ the two departments struggled early on to attain institutional stability. Having emerged as a result of student political demands in 1969, both departments were instituted with no clear intellectual program and with non-scholars as their early chairs, creating interesting and complex dilemmas for

Table 1. African-American studies at Temple and Harvard universities

	Temple	Harvard
Status	Discipline	Interdisciplinary field
Methodological	Afrocentric	Multiple
Theory/practice	Scholarship and practice/ community centred	Scholarship only/ policy-centered

their institutional survival. Indeed, this was a principal result of their political origin. After decades of struggle, both departments found themselves equally near the point of termination, with either administrators or review committees at both institutions recommending the elimination of the departments. Nonetheless, both departments enjoyed an impressive resurgence after the hiring, in 1984 at Temple and in 1990 at Harvard, of innovative scholars to chair the departments for extended terms. Since then, both departments have been labeled, in different circles, the best in the nation. Poignantly, the history of both departments has been the history of their struggles to attain institutional legitimacy. Given the similar struggles and institutional histories of their departments, why do Afro-Americanists at Temple seek to develop an independent discipline, Africology, while those at Harvard seek to develop an interdisciplinary field?³²

Theoretical framework

To examine the relationship between the two forms of African-American Studies and the departments in which they emerged, I rely here on recent literature in the sociology of professions. Abbot³³ has suggested that all existing professions can be conceived in terms of a single system. Within this system, the extent of the jurisdiction of one profession depends on the extent of the jurisdiction of others that practice similar or adjacent tasks. Thus, the emergence of a profession can be understood not by investigating the inherent occupational characteristics of the profession itself, but by uncovering what contests between itself and other professions led to its monopolization of the legitimate practice of the tasks it performs.³⁴ One goal of an emerging profession, then, is to demarcate itself from existing ones by attributing certain characteristics to itself and others, and thus to carve a legitimate space for itself. The emergence of obstetrics is a case in point: "in order to persuade potential clients, and in order to persuade government officials to 'close' the market through licensing, obstetricians demarcated themselves from midwives by presenting their techniques and training as distinctively superior."³⁵ The term "boundary-work," coined by Gieryn,³⁶ has been used to designate this demarcation.³⁷ As new professions emerge, they either erect or eliminate boundaries between themselves and others to legitimize their endeavors. A growing literature in the sociology of science has used the notion of boundary-work to address how scientists differentiate themselves from non-scientists for specific purposes.³⁸

Abbot elaborates further on *where* these jurisdictional contests may occur. He suggests they generally take place in three different “arenas”: the legal arena, where practitioners attempt to obtain a legal license; in the media or public arena, where they attempt to convince the public of their authority over the practice; and in the work site itself, where practices are actually carried out. Boundary-work takes place in all arenas. Consequently, it takes place before different sets of *audiences* – judges, policy-makers, journalists – and in the interest of securing different resources.³⁹ Thus, when obstetricians attempt to obtain legal licenses (one resource) from law-makers (one audience) in the legal arena, they are required to perform different boundary-work from that required when they attempt to obtain political support (another resource) from journalists (a different audience) in the public arena.

By conceiving the practitioners of a new intellectual enterprise as Abbot conceives the practitioners in an emerging profession, we can develop a framework to assess why the different departments constructed African-American Studies in different forms. The point is not that African-American Studies is a profession; it is, rather, that its emergence may be understood by borrowing the tools used to understand how professions emerge. The basic assumption is that African-American Studies scholars are seeking to legitimize their new enterprise and institutionalize their new departments. In doing so, they need the support, recognition, and resources of different audiences or *constituencies*. These resources – especially, but not exclusively, material capital, political support, and academic recognition – are crucial for the institutionalization of their new enterprise. As professionals do, they try to obtain these resources by defining their work in ways acceptable to those constituencies, and thus demonstrate why the new enterprise is necessary, legitimate, or important. One important form of doing this is engaging in boundary work; that is, either erecting or eliminating social boundaries between themselves and others who practice similar or adjacent tasks – specifically, scholars in other departments and disciplines who study blacks, non-scholars who study the problems of blacks, and political activists who are seeking to improve the black condition. By drawing boundaries one way or another, they can differentiate themselves from either undesirable or already existing entities, or they can associate themselves with desirable entities.

As the professional case is, this process can be conceived as taking place in different *arenas*, which can be thought of as being composed of different sets of potential constituencies. In particular, the process,

as it regards Afro-Americanists, appears to take place in three, increasingly larger arenas: (1) a local institutional arena, involving local university administrators, students, and faculty of different departments, from which they gain institutional support and capital resources; (2) a wider academic arena, involving scholars in African-American Studies and other disciplines, from which they gain academic recognition and intellectual legitimacy; (3) and a much wider public arena, involving both politically active black communities and larger constituencies of journalists, philanthropists, and politicians, from which they gain political support, as well as capital. Less than arenas in Abbot's strict sense, these represent different and increasingly larger circles of influence and support where the legitimation of Black Studies appears crucial for its survival. The practitioners would have to find *specific constituencies* within each, consecutively larger circle, and convince those particular constituencies of the legitimacy of Black Studies. Furthermore, they would have to respond to the local, academic, and public environment or context in which Black Studies is embedded (I discuss this further below). While the current literature does not frame itself in these terms, it can be thought of as focusing only on either the first or the second arenas. The work of Camic and others, described previously, has tended to focus largely on the local institutional arena. Recent work in the emergence of disciplines, such as Gaziano's,⁴⁰ focus almost exclusively on the academic arena. In his study of the emergence of human ecology, Gaziano attributes the latter's development to Robert Park's uses of "ecology" as a theoretical metaphor and his association of biology to sociology – processes taking place exclusively within the theoretical plane – ignoring by and large the reform ethic in the city of Chicago and the sociology department, or Park's relationship to political activists and reformists, all of which affected his conception of "the city."⁴¹ I suggest that constituencies in all three arenas – not only local institutional and academic arenas but also the wider public arena – are, in varying degrees, potential sources of support for the new enterprise, and as such, important factors in the development of the latter. The specific extent to which factors in each arena affect the conception of the new intellectual enterprise can only be determined empirically.

It is important to note that the case at hand differs from the professional case in three crucial forms: (1) The primary aim of the practitioners' efforts is not to create a new profession but to develop a new intellectual enterprise. In this task, the institutionalization and stabilization of the department in which they are located is crucial. As a result,

whether the practitioners aim to develop a discipline or an interdisciplinary field will depend on which strategy will help ensure the stability and permanence of the department. (This issue is especially important in African-American Studies [as in other fields], which emerged as a result of political mobilization. Such origins resulted in much organizational instability and uncertainty for Black Studies departments; in effect, after the political fervor of the sixties died down, students lost interest, and budgets tightened, many institutions eliminated Black Studies departments and redistributed its courses among departments in established disciplines.⁴²) (2) Consequently, the analysis must focus either on the chair of the department or on the practitioners who decide the department's strategy for legitimizing its work. The intellectual focus of the department will be determined in the decisions of whom to hire, how to chart the intellectual work of the department, and where to seek political and intellectual support. These decisions, in turn, are shaped by the expectations of particular constituencies, as well as the constraints imposed within the context of each arena. (3) The drawing of boundaries – a largely rhetorical process – will be accompanied by specific *institutional strategies* at the local level to ensure the stability of the department, which, in turn, will solidify the permanence of the boundaries drawn. Furthermore, boundary-work should not be seen in this case as the only strategy for obtaining resources. It is, however, an important one, for it establishes the relationship between the new enterprise and existing disciplines or fields.

In the following, I argue that the definition of African-American Studies in each department resulted from the practitioners' – especially the chairs' – efforts to legitimize the new enterprise before constituencies in local institutional, wider academic, and public arenas in order to institutionalize their departments. Thus, I attribute the different conceptions of the field to (a) the differences in both the contexts and the expectations of the specific constituencies in each arena, and (b) the decisions of the practitioners to seek one constituency rather than another. Because the bulk these processes took place in the period of resurgence of both departments, after the hiring of Molefi Kete Asante at Temple and Henry Louis Gates at Harvard, my discussion centers largely on this period of resurgence.⁴³

The Temple Department of Africology

The local institutional arena

Temple University had practical and political incentive to support its African-American Studies department. A high 17.6 percent of its student body is African-American.⁴⁴ The university campus, a state institution, is located in a predominantly black neighborhood in Philadelphia, and is highly integrated into the community.⁴⁵ In the late sixties, during a projected large-scale expansion of the university, all plans for expansion, upon prompts by local leaders and black students, were discussed with the surrounding community; and the university also opened its facilities for use by members of the community.⁴⁶ During its history, both the student body and the surrounding community have demonstrated strong interest in the African-American Studies department.⁴⁷

Established by the administration in 1969 as a response to intense demands of the black students on campus, the Black Studies department began as a semi-political, semi-academic institute, unaffiliated with the College of Liberal Arts (CLA). In 1974, as then director/chair Odeyo Ayaga (c. 1971–1981) attempted successfully to change the institute into a proper department of the CLA, he fired six faculty for not having either B.A.s or M.A.s.⁴⁸ By the late seventies, after aggressive efforts to transform it into a research department, Ayaga had accumulated fifteen full- and part-time faculty members, forty-two courses, and five-hundred students to the department's classes. Ayaga's allowable term ended in 1981, however, and by 1983, after dwindling state funding and massive university retrenchment, the department was reduced to three full-time faculty, and enrollment in its courses had dropped by over 50 percent. The department, at that point, had no clear mission statement and espoused no particular position on whether Black Studies was a field or a discipline. That year, the acting dean of the College of Arts and Sciences finally questioned seriously "whether it makes sense to have black studies in one department or should it be a wider, interdisciplinary program," effectively suggesting its downgrade from an autonomous department to a program.⁴⁹

In 1984, as a last effort supported by President Peter J. Liacouras, who wished for the survival of the department, the university hired Molefi Kete Asante, a successful communications scholar who had gained a prominent reputation for building a strong Black Studies department

at UCLA.⁵⁰ During his tenure as chair from 1985 to 1997, the department became a stable and growing institution. In the efforts to attain the stability, the department's specific conception of Black Studies took shape.

In the first year of Asante's tenure, the department did not insist on strict boundaries between Black Studies and other disciplines, arguing that the former was best conceived as an interdisciplinary field: "[W]e're a Department devoted to sustaining a full critical and analytical discussion of subjects and themes that are related to people in the African world. We attempt to do this, as far as possible, from an *interdisciplinary standpoint*."⁵¹ Asante emphasized the need and utility of incorporating the work of professors in other disciplines into the work of the African-American Studies department: "[W]e are interested in volunteers from other departments in the College who could teach interdisciplinary courses. We already have four or five faculty from without who have agreed, with the consent of their departments, to teach a course for us every year, every other year."⁵² This would change, nonetheless.

Asante rightly saw the M.A. program as the key to increasing the stability of the department, for it attracted students, increased its research potential, and assured it a larger budget to attract faculty.⁵³ Furthermore, it gave Temple the leading edge in Afro-American Studies research.⁵⁴ Believing an interdisciplinary program to be the best route, he proposed an M.A. program of such nature in 1985. The proposal, however, was rejected by the Graduate Committee of the College of Arts and Sciences (GCCAS), for it was not conceived as providing sufficiently unique services. As Asante commented, "[the GCCAS wanted to know] 'why did this discipline need a terminal degree? Why couldn't you get a terminal degree in sociology or history and not African-American Studies – what was the difference?'"⁵⁵ Black Studies had not earned the status of existing disciplines to award a higher degree; it had neither a specific scope nor a particular approach that a student could not obtain in sociology, history, literature, or political science. At this juncture, it became clear to Asante that the conception of Black Studies had to be sharpened if he was to obtain institutional stability and independence, and that strict boundaries had to be drawn between the work of the department and the work of other departments: "that's what sharpened for me the disciplinary focus." "It was the CASGC that gave me the impetus to build a discipline. I knew ... that if we were not a discipline, we would step on the toes of history, sociology, and so forth."⁵⁶

Thus, he revised the proposal: he included a Ph.D. program, and he argued that African-American Studies was *not* interdisciplinary but a legitimate, independent entity. The key to the uniqueness of the program lay in its Afrocentric focus, and in its emphasis on the cultural continuity between Africans and black persons in the diaspora – that is, in what he argued was the inherent interconnectedness of all persons of African ancestry. Ph.D. students would be required to learn two languages, of which one should be Swahili, Yoruba, Housa, Linaglia, Shona, Zulu, or Sotho; and they would be required to take a core course on “African Civilizations.” The methods course, AAS 402 (Research Methods), required students to learn “afrocentric ideas,” and to read several of the texts Asante himself had begun to write on Afrocentricity (as discussed further below). The program had a cultural/aesthetic track and a social/behavioral track, both of which required courses in Afrocentric methodology, and all required courses were offered independently of other departments.⁵⁷ After strong lobbying, inquiring letters from students both nationally and internationally, formal letters of support from leading scholars in the field, and a review by a panel of outside scholars, the program was accepted.

In the effort to obtain the license to award Ph.D.s, the intellectual focus of the department began to take shape, while the department itself gained a measure of legitimacy. With Ph.D.-granting status, the department could legitimately request and expect greater resources to attract faculty and grow. The department’s effort to attract faculty was further aided by the immense publicity Temple gained in being the first university to offer a Ph.D. in Black Studies, and by the large number of students who applied to the program – even before it was fully approved.⁵⁸ Over the next decade, the number of faculty in the department increased from four to twelve. It was in the process of bringing in new faculty and stabilizing the department that the boundaries between Black Studies and existing disciplines were solidified. These scholars were largely at early stages in their careers or else willing to enter the development of a new discipline. All faculty appointments were exclusive to the department; that is, Asante made no joint appointments with sociology, history, literature, economics, or political science, which would help stabilize the department and add permanence to the boundaries drawn. By doing so, he ensured allegiance to the African-American Studies department, and, thus, by implication, to the new discipline. At the time of tenure or reappointment, faculty were expected to have published not in economics or sociology journals, but in African-American Studies journals: “We would certainly want to

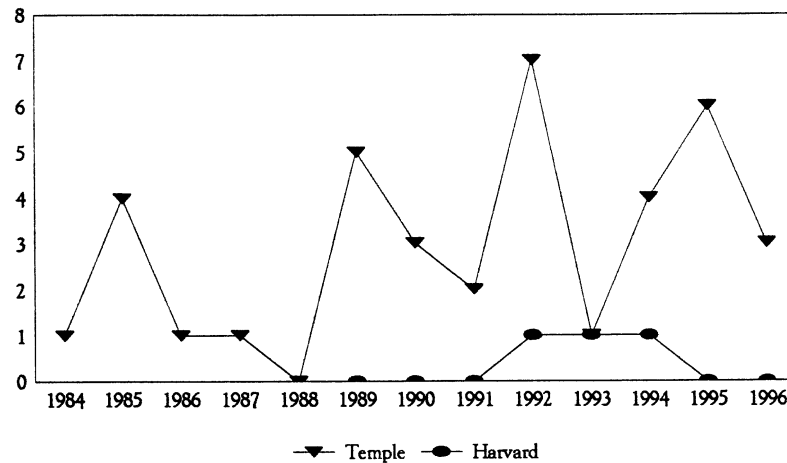


Figure 1. Articles published by faculty in major Black Studies journals, by department.

know: had you published or had you tried to publish in *Black Scholar*, *The Journal of Black Studies* ... or some of the other journals in our field?"⁵⁹ Indeed, they did. Figure I shows the number of publications in journal articles of the Black Studies discipline by all faculty in the African-American Studies departments of Temple and Harvard, beginning with the tenures, respectively, of Asante and Gates. While, at Harvard, publishing in African-American Studies per se is largely inconsequential to the promotion and hiring of faculty in the department (an issue discussed below), at Temple it is the driving force of their careers and the department itself. As Asante stated elsewhere, "People in the discipline are those who practice in the discipline, write for the journals in the discipline, engage in dialogue in the discipline, who accept the discipline as their primary focus, both personally and professionally."⁶⁰ Finally, within a few years, the faculty voted to change the name of the department from "African-American Studies" to "Africology."

The result of this combination of factors was, internally, the conception of African-American Studies as an independent discipline, as strict boundaries between itself and other humanities and social-science disciplines were drawn. I have argued that this was a product not merely of Asante's intellectual beliefs, but of the efforts to stabilize the department, specifically, as he tried to obtain the license to award higher degrees, and later, to build a base of scholars committed to the department. A passage from his first major work *The Afrocentric Idea*

bears evidence to this contention. In 1987, Asante argued the following, “Black Studies is *interdisciplinary*,” which “should present no more difficulty for it than such nature presents for sociology, political science, economics or geography; all are essentially interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary.”⁶¹ In the 1998 edition of the work he revised the same passage: “Black Studies is *undisciplinary* but has multiple emphases or areas of interest. The creation of a paradigm or the codification of substantive theories and procedures suggests a discipline. Therefore, the fact that Black Studies deals with many subjects is no hindrance to the flowering of an Afrocentric paradigm.”⁶²

This local process, taking place within the university, was accompanied by efforts in the wider academic landscape to legitimize the activities of the department. In those efforts, the defense of Afrocentricity as a legitimate intellectual enterprise became crucial.

The wider academic arena

Important to the stability of the department was to gain academic recognition from a broader constituency of scholars in other universities that would legitimize the work taking place at Temple. In this broader academic arena, the department sought the support of two key constituencies: a constituency of African-American Studies scholars associated with the National Council of Black Studies (NCBS), who shared the common interest in the growth of the discipline; and a wider constituency of scholars sympathetic to the importance of multiple voices and perspectives in scholarly discourse. The support of this broader group was important in shifting Afrocentric work from its marginal status to a more prominent position among disciplines in the academic community, and in attracting potential recruits to join the Black Studies enterprise. Lamont has written, “the legitimation of a theory depends on both the producer’s definition of his own work as important and the institutionalization of its importance by peers and the general intellectual public.”⁶³ Asante obtained this standing as an important theorist, and, thus, academic support for his work at Temple, by engaging in two, interrelated strategies: (1) critiquing existing analysis of blacks *within* the framework of existing critical discourse; (2) creating a space for Black Studies by distinguishing sharply between Afrocentric and Eurocentric perspectives.

To obtain academic support for Black Studies as a discipline, Asante joined the creation of a “conceptual vacancy”⁶⁴ for the discipline; he critiqued existing discourse on the basis that a critically missing gap existed in the analysis of Afro-American life and culture, thus carving an intellectual space for Black Studies. To do so, he built on and exploited the declining faith in objectivity that had ensued in academia from the 1960s on, and on the critiques of positivism, objectivity, rationality, and universalism that had already been engendered in different academic venues. He joined the discourse in disciplines and inter-disciplinary fields in academia that celebrates the plurality of voices and perspectives.⁶⁵ Contrary to the traditional path for new disciplines, where scholars cease publishing in the journals of their previous disciplines and begin publishing in the new ones,⁶⁶ Asante, after beginning to publish in Afro-American Studies journals, *continued* to publish in the journals of other disciplines. Table 2 shows his publications between 1969 and 1998 in Black Studies and other fields, by year; Table 3 shows his published articles by subject. (His books, as expected, moved away from the concerns of his former discipline of communications and focused increasingly on the concerns of Black Studies.) By speaking with and to existing discourse in other disciplines, he could construct the vacancy to give legitimacy to his own, while attracting potential allies to incorporate his work into their work in other disciplines.

Explicitly, Asante framed his work within the existing discourse in three forms: (1) He contributed to the existing critiques of the “myth of objectivity” – the notion that any explanation of social phenomena can be unbiased, independent of the prejudices or predilections of the analyst. As he stated, “[I] do not accept the European concept of objectivity because it is invalid operationally.... [W]hat often passes for objectivity is a sort of collective European subjectivity.”⁶⁷ (2) He contributed to the existing critiques of universalism – the doctrine that social explanations should be applicable to all societies at all times. He wrote, “‘Universal’ is ... [a] Eurocentric [term] that has little meaning in the real world. People live in societies and operate within cultures. The aim of the descriptive researcher has to be the in-depth knowledge of a social/human context....”⁶⁸ (3) He contributed to the existing defense of centered epistemology – the notion that any perception of the social world is contingent on one’s position in it. Thus, in line with current discourse, he introduced early on in his most important book the following argument, “All analysis is culturally centered and flows from ideological assumptions; this is the fundamental revelation of modern intellectual history.”⁶⁹

Table 2. Total publications by Asante, by subject

	Articles		Books	
	BS	OD	BS	OD
1969	–	2	–	–
1970	1	5	–	1
1971	1	5	–	2
1972	–	4	–	1
1973	1	2	–	1
1974	1	1	–	–
1975	–	1	–	1
1976	–	1	–	2
1977	–	–	–	1
1978	1	–	1	–
1979	2	1	–	2
1980	3	4	2	–
1981	3	2	–	–
1982	1	3	1	3
1983	3	4	–	–
1984	1	3	–	–
1985	4	–	1	–
1986	2	2	–	–
1987	1	1	2	–
1988	–	–	–	–
1989	–	1	1	1
1990	–	1	1	–
1991	5	2	3	–
1992	–	2	–	–
1993	–	–	–	–
1994	–	–	1	–
1995	–	–	1	–
1996	–	2	1	–
1997	1	–	1	–
1998	–	–	2	–

Note: BS – Black Studies or Afrocentric books and journals; OD – books and journals in other disciplines. Articles include book chapters; books include both authored and edited works. All of the books in other disciplines, except for one, are in the field of communications, Asante’s discipline of training. Source: <http://www.asante.net>.

However, while framing his work within current discourse, he simultaneously drew boundaries between his work and such discourse, thus attracting the attention of Black Studies scholars. He wrote, “I am inclined to think that the critical theorists, particularly those of the Frankfurt School, are engaged in a somewhat similar enterprise in re-orienting thinking.”⁷⁰ Yet, “[a]lthough the fundamental purpose of the

Table 3. Total articles and book chapters published by Asante, by subject of journal or book

Communication/speech	29
Black Studies	17
Education	5
Black, special interest	4
Race/gender/cultural studies	4
Policy/politics	3
Technical/general science	2
Psychology/counseling	1
Other	14

Source: <http://www.asante.net>. Excludes book reviews.

Frankfurt School seems to be a sustained criticism of positivism, its emphasis on advancing a Eurocentric tradition is wedded to the same spirit that gave birth to positivism.”⁷¹ He argued the main problem with existing analyses of blacks and black culture is that, inherently, they are undertaken from a Eurocentric perspective. However, he emphasized, the issue was not that such a perspective was invalid; merely, it was insufficient. “I am not questioning the validity of the Eurocentric tradition within its context,” he stated, “I am simply stating that such a view must not seek an ungrounded aggrandizement by claiming a universal hegemony.”⁷² Clearly missing, he contended, were Afrocentric analyses of blacks and black culture. In doing so, he contributed to a long, though at the time, less prominent, tradition of Afrocentric scholarship.⁷³ Such analyses, he elaborated, could not be undertaken in traditional departments, which were bound by the (Eurocentric) traditions of their methods, theories, and perspectives. Such Afrocentric analyses could only take place in Afrocentric Black Studies departments:

A person who studies the economics of Tanzania in an economics department and then completes a dissertation of the Tanzanian economy cannot automatically be considered an Africanist. In fact, such a person is essentially an economist albeit an economist who employs the assumptions, predispositions and methods of economics to the Tanzanian economic sector. Application of the protocols of the economic discipline to an African nation is a matter of selection not philosophical outlook, it is a matter of temperament not of methodological discipline, a matter of fancy not of perspective.⁷⁴

Thus, Asante defined Black Studies at Temple, or Africology (sometimes Afrology), “as the Afrocentric study of the phenomena, events,

ideas, and personalities related to Africa.”⁷⁵ This study includes all persons of African descent, including especially those in America. Africology, moreover,

must begin analysis from the primary of the classical African civilizations, namely Kemet (Egypt), Nubia, Axum, and Meroe, [which] means that adequate understanding of African phenomena cannot occur without a reference point in the classic and most documented African culture.⁷⁶

On the basis that the relationship between Egypt and Africa was identical to that between Europe and Greece, Asante argued that the new discipline of Black Studies would and should document the continuity of early African tradition in the contemporary African diaspora. Asante was by no means alone in this endeavor, for a tradition of Afrocentric scholarship had already been established by the time he became a prominent scholar.⁷⁷ But by framing Afrocentric work as part of but distinct from current critical discourse in academia, he helped forge a research program that was both familiar and distinct.

The key to this analysis, and the difference between itself and Eurocentric perspectives, lay in what he termed the “centrality of Africa.”⁷⁸ By differentiating these two perspectives, he contributed to carving the required conceptual vacancy for the new discipline, opening what he argued was an abundance of unexplored scholarship. Naturally, his efforts met with opposition and criticism in various circles. But to the network of NCBS scholars, Asante, his colleagues, and the work of his department became cited, discussed, and debated, for they provided a point of entry into full legitimacy as an independent discipline. This source of academic support was crucial to increasing the status and intellectual visibility of the department, bolstering the efforts that were taking place in the local arena. The leading volumes in the new discipline bear evidence to the impact of Asante and his colleagues’ work. In *Introduction to Black Studies*, Karenga writes,

[c]learly one of the most important recent developments in Black Studies is the emergence of Afrocentricity as a major conceptual framework within the discipline. As an intellectual category, Afrocentricity is relatively new, emerging in the late 70’s and finding its most definitive treatment then in a work by Molefi Asante titled *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change* and published in 1980. In this initial work Asante ... described Afrocentricity as the indispensable perspective of the Black Studies project and he has continuously maintained this position.⁷⁹

In Nikongo BaNikongo's edited volume *Leading Issues in African-American Studies*, four chapters are dedicated exclusively to Afrocentricity and Asante's work. In James Conyers's edited *Africana Studies: A Disciplinary Quest for both Theory and Method*, Asante contributes one of three key theoretical pieces in the section "Disciplinary Matrix and Analysis," which charts the main theoretical paradigms of the discipline.⁸⁰ In the same work, Conyers considers the three key theoretical frameworks of the discipline to be Black Marxism, Black Feminism, and Afrocentricity – of which only the latter is unique to Black Studies. In *On Race and Philosophy*, philosopher and proponent of Black Studies Lucius Outlaw writes, "‘Afrocentricity,’ then, may be viewed as a covering term for the *rules of construction* for the disciplinary field of Black Studies – or ‘Afrology’ – guiding the formation of enunciative modalities (statements and ways of speaking about objects and practices in the field) and inclusive of foreconceptions that provide the field's boundary conditions and platform."⁸¹ An edited volume, entitled *Molefi Kete Asante and Afrocentricity: In Praise and Criticism*, has been devoted exclusively to the expansion and development of the Afrocentric paradigm.⁸²

Furthermore, the Temple department became a sort of repository of not only Black Studies but also new Afrocentric thought. The faculty of the department has published extensively in the major African-American Studies journals, unlike the faculty in other departments, who may publish extensively or exclusively in journals of traditional disciplines (see Figure 1). The department also serves as home to several Afro-American Studies/Afrocentric journals: *The Journal of Black Studies*, edited by Asante, and arguably the top journal in the discipline, *The Afrocentric Scholar*,⁸³ *International Journal of African Dance*, *International Journal of Black Drama*, *Imhotep Journal: An Afrocentric Review*.⁸⁴ It is also the first home of the Afrocentric Institute, and it is the first program to offer Ph.D.s in the discipline.

In this process, Afrocentricity also gained a greater (though still modest) measure of legitimacy outside the Afro-American Studies network. By framing the Afrocentric critique as a specific spin on existing critical discourse, Asante helped make it amenable to contemporary intellectual palates in other disciplines. Thus, to the circle of scholars in communications, education, and cultural studies who believe that epistemology must be centered, and that objectivity and universalism are positivistic prejudices, the idea of Afrocentric modes of thought became a welcome contribution, to be analyzed and cited, and incorporated into

Table 4. Number of articles citing Asante's work, by subject of journal, 1988–1997

Black Studies ^a	15
Communication/speech	9
Psychology/counseling	6
Race/gender/cultural studies	6
Policy/politics	2
Law	2
Education	1
Other	6

Source: Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) and Arts & Humanities Citation Index (AHCI), as archived by the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) Database. Excludes book reviews.

^a Includes only the *Journal of Black Studies* and the *Journal of Negro Education*.

the growing discourse. A measure of the receptivity of his approach outside Afro-American Studies circles is the number of articles that cite Asante's work in various disciplines (Table 4). His work has been cited most prominently in journals of speech and communication, as well as psychology or counseling journals and in race, gender, and cultural studies journals. (His work has had little influence in sociology or political science, where the empiricist, scientific tendency of such disciplines in the United States make them less open to marginal critiques of objectivity.) Ultimately, however, it is internally, in the network of Black Studies scholars, that Asante has sought and found academic support for the theoretical work of the Temple department.

The end-result of these processes was a relatively stable network of scholars who gave legitimacy to the work being undertaken at the Temple Black Studies department, increasing its reputation, and assuring its institutional survival. I have argued that in the process of attaining support from this academic network, which was a crucial resource, Asante forged a particular, Afrocentric path for Afro-American Studies at Temple. This particular path had to fit into an already existing critical discourse – one that allowed for multiple perspectives and for expansion from within – while simultaneously differentiating itself from it. This process took place hand-in-hand with those in the local institutional arena; as the department developed outside networks to support its approach to Afrocentricity, it began devoting itself increasingly to Afrocentricity. The latter, as a theoretical notion, gave strength to the internal defense that Africology (or Black Studies) was, indeed, an independent discipline, for it was characterized by this particular theoretical perspective that was largely missing in other disciplines.

The public arena

The conception of the department's work was affected not only by the need to legitimize Afro-American Studies both locally and in the wider academic community, but also by the need to legitimize such work before a broader, public constituency: the black community. For the Black Studies department to become a legitimate enterprise before the black community was important for two reasons. First, the field of Black Studies, as well as Asante and the majority of black scholars currently in academia, came of age during the increase in upward mobility and subsequent development of the black middle class that had ensued from the 1950s on.⁸⁵ Accompanying this mobility was the expectation within the black community that those upwardly mobile blacks – especially those in academia – would use their knowledge or newly acquired skills for the improvement of the rest of community. (DuBois predicted this sentiment in his celebrated 1903 essay, “The Talented Tenth”; for text and a discussion see Gates and West.⁸⁶) Black Studies departments especially were held to this expectation, as the black students and activists who demanded them explicitly asked for “relevant” departments.⁸⁷

Second, the existence of the department of African-American Studies itself was partly the result of the support and involvement of the black community in Philadelphia. Throughout Asante's tenure as chair, the department enjoyed the support and involvement of several leaders of the community (see Table 5). “Their role,” he admitted, “was important to keep the public aware that we wanted an African-American Studies program.”⁸⁸ Asante has written of the support the department received from numerous local church leaders, as well as Councilwoman Augusta Clark, and late State Representatives for Pennsylvania Alphonso Deal and David Richardson, who were especially keen on developing a Ph.D. program at Temple.⁸⁹ When Asante first proposed the establishment of a Master's program, “community people right around Temple came to the university and spoke to the President, as a delegation from the Yorktown community, to support the program,” said Asante.⁹⁰ As supportive constituencies, however, they held particular expectations about what constitutes a legitimate path for Black Studies – namely, that it be involved in the improvement of the community.

Nevertheless, the rigid boundaries existing in academia between objective scholarship and politics or activism impeded, to some extent, an active, political involvement in the black community. And the black

community, its expectations notwithstanding, has traditionally distrusted both academia and intellectuals. The department's approach was to renegotiate, if not eliminate, the boundaries between scholarship and activism by expanding the definition of responsible scholarship to include community development. This approach had both theoretical and practical consequences. Theoretically, Asante defined Africology as a "liberating discipline." That is, Africology would be "founded on assumptions that dignify humans rather than negate them," and would, in its research, "propose concrete actions" that improve the conditions of the black community.⁹¹ Its works, furthermore, would be published by presses that cater to the black community (see Table 5). Practically, he reassociated the work of the department with the work of an institution that, during Ayaga's tenure, it had sponsored: the Pan-African Studies Community Education Program (PASCEP).

PASCEP is a "low-cost non-credit continuing education service of the African American Studies Department of Temple University."⁹² Founded in 1975, the program had been held in schools and churches until Odeyo Ayaga, director of what was then labeled the Pan-African Studies Department, offered to sponsor it as a sub-unit of the department. Since its founding, PASCEP has offered a small range of courses – from Black History to GED preparation – to the predominantly black community at either no cost or nominal fees. All courses have been taught by volunteers. In the three years between Ayaga's and Asante's chairmanship, the relationship between PASCEP and the department itself was uncertain, as the department had no permanent chair and was under threat of being downgraded to a committee. So, at his arrival, Asante reestablished ties to PASCEP, encouraging both faculty and graduate students to teach courses. By doing so, the department remained legitimate before the black community, while at the same time retaining its scholarly integrity. This assured the department continuous political support from a number of local black leaders and activists, who envisioned black academics as responsible for aiding the black community (Table 5). Since then, several faculty and graduate students of the department have taught PASCEP courses.⁹³ As one graduate student of the department commented, "Any time they say Black Studies isn't doing anything [for social change], all [the department has] to do is say, 'Look, we've got PASCEP.'"⁹⁴

I have argued that the conception of Black Studies at Temple was defined by the efforts to stabilize the department by obtaining support and resources from constituencies in local institutional, wider academic,

Table 5. Selected department affiliations^a

	Temple Africology	Harvard Afro-American Studies
In-house journals	Journal of Black Studies International Journal of African Dance International Journal of Black Drama Imhotep Journal: An Afrocentric Review The Afrocentric Scholar	Transition
Institutes	PASCEP Institute for African Dance, Research and Performance National Afrocentric Institute Institute for the Preservation of African Documents Institute for African American Affairs	W.E.B. DuBois Institute
Associated local community leaders	Lilian Green (Yorktown community leader) Father Paul Washington (Church of the Advice) Reverend Henry Nicholas (AME Church, Germantown) Reverend William Gray (Brighthold Baptist Church) Reverend L. Sheppard (Mt. Olive Baptist Church) Reverend Gerome Cooper (Berean Presbyterian Church)	
Associated state leaders	Councilwoman Augusta Clark Rep. Alphonso Deal Rep. David Richardson	

Table 5. Continued

	Temple Africology	Harvard Afro-American Studies
Associated publishing houses	Temple University Press Africa World Press	Norton Oxford University Press Harvard University Press
Scholarly projects	Historical and Cultural Atlas of Black Americans African Intellectual Heritage: A Book of Sources	Afropaedia Black Periodical Literature Project Harvard Guide to African-American History Transatlantic Slave Trade Data Project Norton Anthology of Afro-American Literature Image of Blacks in Western Art Photo Archive Impact of Minority Suburbanization African Art Database

^a As of 1997, the year Asante ended his position as chair. There have been some changes in the Temple department since then. The list is *not* exhaustive; it includes only persons or institutions relevant to the conception of Black Studies in each department. Sources vary (see Appendix). The *Afrocentric Scholar* was only briefly based in the department and is no longer in publication.

and public arenas. To acquire these resources – academic recognition, institutional legitimacy via degree-granting power, capital to attract faculty, and public, political support – the department defined the new enterprise in ways acceptable to, and thus legitimate before, such constituencies. Thus, the practitioners defined Black Studies as an independent, Afrocentric discipline with an ethos of community involvement. At Harvard, although the practitioners – particularly the chair – pursued parallel goals within each, increasingly wider arena, their relationship to the specific constituencies from which they sought support would lead to a different conception and definition of Afro-American Studies.

The Harvard Afro-American Studies Department

The local institutional arena

Before the appointment of Henry Louis Gates, the Harvard Afro-American Studies department was not in good condition. As the Temple department had been, it was established as a direct response to intense student demands in 1969.⁹⁵ It had struggled for two decades to acquire faculty. Its first chair, selected with student input, was Ewart Guinier (c. 1969–76), a lawyer-activist with no significant record of scholarship, who maintained poor relations with faculty of other departments as well as the administration.⁹⁶ Guinier sought local support from a constituency of (largely black) students, but did not seek or receive much support from faculty of other departments, an important constituency at Harvard for any emerging intellectual enterprise. Thus, even though he hired a number of junior faculty to the department, he rejected joint appointments, and was unable to attract senior scholars.⁹⁷ The next chair, Eileen Southern (c. 1976–79), maintained slightly better relations, but maintained poor relations with students and junior faculty of the department, and still was unable to attract senior scholars.⁹⁸ She resigned her position after the university, during one of her sabbatical leaves of absence, organized a committee to oversee the work of the department, effectively removing her authority as chair.⁹⁹ After Southern, Nathan Huggins (c. 1980–90), a respected historian, chaired the department; Huggins improved relations with other departments and hired two senior scholars, but the department remained stagnant through Huggins's death in 1990. At that point, the department had neither form nor purpose, and only *one* full-time faculty member, Werner Sollors. Throughout its first twenty years of existence, the

department had failed repeatedly to attract faculty, and had developed a negative reputation among faculty in other universities.¹⁰⁰

By that year, the only incentive for the administration to salvage the department was political. Previous efforts to downgrade it to an inter-departmental committee had been met with much resistance by both faculty and students.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, the lack of a department was a public-relations embarrassment, and the fact that Princeton, the University of Pennsylvania, and Cornell had developed stable, highly respected African-American Studies departments made Harvard the victim of much political attack in the press and by outside scholars as an overly-conservative institution, as one hostile to the interests of black students.¹⁰² In addition, students staged protests and a 23-hour sit-in that year demanding stronger efforts to improve the status of African-American Studies.¹⁰³ A related problem was the university's improbably low number of black and women faculty; in the early nineties, nine of the ten schools of the university reported fewer than the number of women and minority faculty considered appropriate by the administration.¹⁰⁴ Attracting minority and women faculty had to become an administrative priority. In response to the poor conditions of the department, an unprecedented nine-hour "Conversation on Afro-American Studies," organized by President Derek Bok and Acting Dean of the Faculty Henry Rosovsky, took place with over 50 Harvard faculty from the humanities and social sciences, as well as outside scholars, to develop a strategy for improving the department.¹⁰⁵

Eventually, the university attempted to persuade literary critic Henry Louis Gates, who, after some negotiation, accepted the position of chair as well as director of the W.E.B. DuBois Institute for Afro-American Research. Under Gates, and with the full support of incoming President Neil Rudenstien, the Afro-American Studies department would become arguably the top department in the nation. In the efforts to reconstitute the department, which at that point had only one faculty member, Gates molded a particular conception of Black Studies.

When Gates arrived at Harvard, he had six full-time faculty slots to fill (this was not a special offer; Harvard simply had not been able to fill them). Nonetheless, he had the important option of splitting the appointments with other departments and appointing up to twelve new scholars.¹⁰⁶ The hiring of faculty had to take first priority. To do so, he embarked on a two-fold strategy: first, provide a highly attractive package in both teaching load and financial remuneration; second,

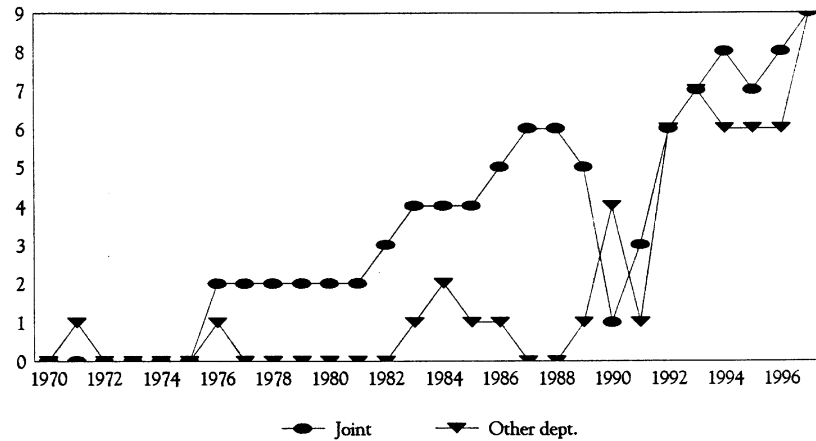


Figure 2. Total joint-appointed faculty and faculty of other departments offering courses, in the Afro-American Studies department at Harvard. Source: *Courses of Instruction* (Cambridge: Harvard University).

offer only joint appointments with other departments in established disciplines. Locally, it was key to seek the support of established departments, who would provide the prestige and stability necessary, at least early on, to attract top-notch scholars. The support of local black faculty already at Harvard was instrumental in facilitating this cooperation. Thus, while previous chairs either shunned or neglected cooperation, Gates actively sought it; as he stated, “consensus was the key.”¹⁰⁷ Figure 2 shows the number of joint-appointed faculty, as well as the number of faculty hired by other departments who offered courses in African-American Studies, in the history of the department. During Guinier’s tenure, no joint appointments were made, and virtually no faculty in other departments offered courses that counted for credit in the Afro-American Studies department. Southern, and especially Huggins, would attempt to change this trend, but it is only with the coming of Gates that the strategy was taken to its utmost, so that now *all* faculty are appointed jointly with other departments, and nine faculty appointed in other departments offer courses in the field.

Seeking the support of other departments via joint-appointments helped obtain the prestige and political leverage to attract highly sought-after black scholars, and thus bring the department to the level of other Harvard departments. The departments from whom he sought support would not only obtain sought-after scholars, but also help increase the diversity of the faculty, an issue that by now had become

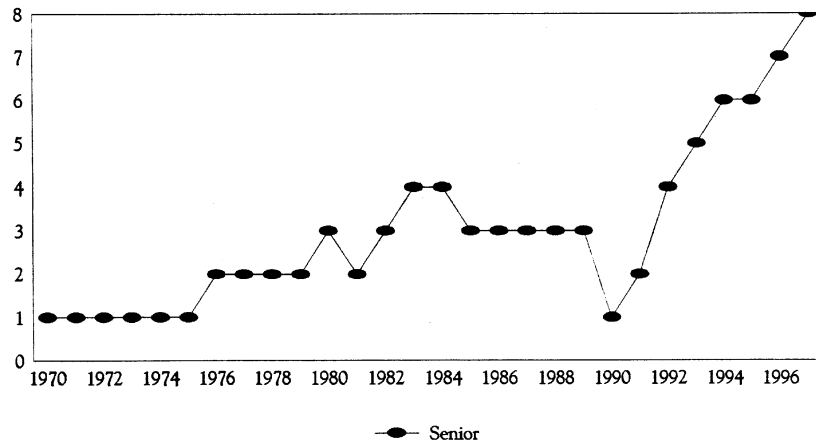


Figure 3. Total number of senior faculty in the Afro-American Studies department at Harvard. Source: *Courses of Instruction* (Cambridge: Harvard University).

an administrative priority. The black scholars, for their part, found greater security in the joint-hires with their traditional disciplines, and an opportunity to join highly prestigious departments, often with high salaries. Thus, the Afro-American Studies department prepared offers almost impossible to pass up by either other departments or the incoming faculty; as Gates admitted: "I think it's fair for me to say it's hard for me to think of a place that has better offerings than we do."¹⁰⁸ As shown in Figure 3, once the strategy was in place, the number of senior scholars of the department increased dramatically. Established departments lobbied extensively to obtain these scholars, and several scholars who had previously refused to come were now forced to reconsider. Cornel West, who had rejected an offer only a year-and-a-half earlier to chair the department, now accepted a joint appointment with the Divinity School in 1993; Anthony Appiah accepted a joint appointment with philosophy in 1992; Evelyn Higginbotham accepted a joint appointment with the Divinity School in 1993; William J. Wilson, who for years had refused to come, accepted a joint appointment with the Kennedy School of Government in 1996; Lawrence Bobo accepted a joint appointment with sociology in 1997.¹⁰⁹ Attracting these scholars, who had high reputations in their own disciplines, did much to improve the stability and status of the Afro-American Studies department.

By seeking the support of other departments and local black faculty – the key local constituencies – Gates effectively eliminated all bounda-

ries of method, approach, and perspective between Afro-American Studies and established disciplines; these were the expectations implied by their support. Black Studies at Harvard makes no claims to being an independent discipline, or even a semi-discipline, but a field at the intersection of the methods and approaches of existing departments. Whereas Asante encouraged exclusively an Afrocentric philosophy, Gates encouraged the opposite. As he said, “[w]e maintain no obligation to any particular philosophy. This is a department that’s very open to anyone’s ideas and there is no line we’ve established for professors to toe in the classroom.”¹¹⁰ The top scholars Gates wished to attract would not have come had the project program been one similar to the one at Temple: there are few incentives to join a largely marginal discipline, after having attained high status in an existing discipline.¹¹¹ Therefore, constrained by the expectations of key constituencies, the Afro-American Studies department championed itself as “interdisciplinary, allowing students to employ and combine the methods of the traditional disciplines (literature and languages, history, music, anthropology, art history, folklore, religion, economics, philosophy, political science, sociology) in analyzing the problems and questions at the center of Black American . . . thought and action.”¹¹² Because it aimed to attract the faculty it did, the department had to develop an interdisciplinary approach.¹¹³

The wider academic arena

The efforts in the local institutional arena would operate hand-in-hand with those in the academic arena, where Gates sought academic support and recognition for the work at Harvard. The academic recognition the department sought, however, was not from the network of NCBS scholars, but from prominent fractions of established intellectuals. Thus, the basic strategy differed significantly from that at Temple. Because these intellectuals are either indifferent to or suspicious of the notion of an independent discipline of Africology, there was no intellectual space to carve, and no new theory to fit into the existing scholarly discourse. Furthermore, because the faculty Gates hired were all top senior scholars, neither he nor the faculty had to legitimize their individual work, which was already published in numerous books and in the best journals of their respective disciplines. Nonetheless, the department faced two potential obstacles in this arena: (1) criticism within and outside Black Studies that the department, its top scholars notwithstanding, could not justify intellectually its existence; (2) the

negative image surrounding Black Studies departments in general as sites for research of poor quality.

While the department's top scholars had produced quality work in their own discipline, such work, by itself, offered little justification for an independent field of Afro-American Studies in the broader academic community. The department aroused suspicions that its scholars could simply be absorbed by traditional departments and the Black Studies department, in turn, be downgraded to a committee, such as the Harvard Committee on Degrees in Women's Studies. For this reason, Gates faced criticism from outside scholars:

I don't want to take anything away from [Gates], who is one of my best friends, but a strong program does not consist only of outstanding scholars. In last analysis, the value of any academic program is its ability not only to interpret scholarship but to relate that to larger social issues in contemporary life,

said Manning Marable, historian and director of the Black Studies program at Columbia.¹¹⁴ Others, such as Temple's Molefi Asante, criticized the program for being a mere agglomeration of scholars and courses with no clear focus or intellectual justification.¹¹⁵

To address these criticisms and the negative image surrounding Black Studies, and to gain a measure of academic recognition, the department pursued two strategies: (1) it closely associated its work with that of the W.E.B. DuBois Institute for Afro-American Research;¹¹⁶ (2) it differentiated its work from much of the work in other Black Studies departments. The W.E.B. DuBois Institute, directed also by Gates, was founded in 1975, and sponsors research projects, fellowships, conferences, and Working Groups. In conjunction with the department, the institute has initiated seven large-scale research projects: the Black Periodical Literature Project, which collects short stories, poems, and literary criticism in black periodicals from 1827 to 1940; the Transatlantic Slave Trade Data Project, which gathers information on 25,000 slave voyages between Africa and the Americas; the African Art Database, which has collected more than 20,000 slides of African Art; the Harvard Guide to African-American History, which will result in an 800-page book with more than 150,000 citations; the Impact of Minority Suburbanization project, which collects and examines individual data on over 250,000 primary school children in Texas; the Image of the Black in Western Art Photo Archive, which has collected and documented approximately 25,000 works of art; and the Encyclo-

pedia Africana, or Afropaedia, a comprehensive, multimedia encyclopedia of blacks in the diaspora (see Table 5).¹¹⁷ Excluding the Afropaedia, all of the projects, which are well financed, are aimed at collecting and archiving raw data for the future use of scholars conducting research on blacks. While not all of the projects are headed by members of the department, the institute's close association to it lends it legitimacy as a site where serious, important research on black life and culture is being undertaken, and averts criticism of the department as a mere collection of scholars.

Significantly, though, all of the projects are data-collecting endeavors to be analyzed by the approaches of the *existing* disciplines – history, literature, sociology. None of the projects aims to develop new methodologies or forms of thinking about black life or culture, as much of the literature would predict would happen in newly emerging fields of knowledge seeking legitimate status.¹¹⁸ (Even Parsons's social relations program at Harvard, for instance, was geared at reconceptualizing the relationship among psychology, sociology, anthropology, and economics.) And there is no Afrocentric work. This characteristic of the institute cannot be attributed to the lack of interest by the department faculty, because most of them direct none of the institute's projects. And it cannot fully be attributed to Gates's lack of interest in such issues. In his own first major work, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism*,¹¹⁹ Gates argues that there exists an inherently African-American verbal exercise – signifying – evident in Afro-American novels, the analysis of which requires a different set of literary tools from those found in canonical Anglo-European literary criticism. As Gates further admitted:

I agree with establishing an accurate historical record, starting with Egypt and Nubia. Turning to Africa and African America to center our methodological universes is very important. In *The Signifying Monkey*, I tried to derive a theory of Afro-American literature from the tradition. To me, that's what Afrocentrism is.¹²⁰

But the development of Afrocentrism, no matter how sympathetic Gates may be or may have been to it, is not pursued in the institute or the department. This is due to the difficulty of legitimizing such work among powerful and established constituencies of scholars. The prevailing sentiment in the *mainstream* academy toward Afrocentric thinking is largely negative. Pursuing such work would not only jeopardize the alliances made with other traditional departments and faculty at Harvard, which have complete faith in their methods, it would receive

virtually no support among the larger academic constituency that Gates aims to address. This constituency, for the most part, is not the collection of scholars of the NCBS. As Figure 1 shows, neither he nor his colleagues, from the time he arrived at Harvard, have contributed much work to such publications. Instead, Gates aims to attain status among the larger constituencies of prominent sociologists, political scientists, historians, and literary critics who, already influential in their respective disciplines, have an interest in the study of black culture.

In effect, not only is he forced not to pursue this work, but, more poignantly, he must to some extent explicitly, and publicly, differentiate the work of the department from it – or from the general perception of it – erecting strict boundaries between the work in the department and Africa-centered work in other departments. Statements by Gates to the *New York Times* are revealing:

Mr. Gates said that some of the work being done in the more than 200 Afro-American Studies programs around the country is intellectually “bogus” because, he contends, they are essentially inventing an African past that never was. “You would think that the most urgent issue in Afro-American studies departments today would be the causes of poverty and how they can be remedied,” he said. “But this is not the most urgent issue. The most urgent issue is whether Cleopatra was black. This is classic escapism and romanticism.” Professor Gates would like to see more rigorous scholarship, rather than what he calls “ethnic cheerleading,” to separate truth from fiction.¹²¹

He said elsewhere: “A vocal minority [of scholars in African-American Studies] seeks the deepest truths about black America in cultish, outlandish claims about the racial ancestry of Cleopatra or the genetics of ‘soul.’”¹²² And elsewhere: “It’s incumbent on those of us who care about this field to say, ‘No, the Egyptians weren’t flying around in planes.’ And, ‘No, Beethoven, much as I would love for him to be a brother, was not black.’”¹²³ Although these public statements are humorous, their intent is serious: to distance the work of Afro-American Studies at Harvard from the large body of work done by Black Studies scholars at other institutions who espouse Afrocentric notions; that is, to present the work at Harvard as traditional, serious, and centered on established modes of thought and study. This boundary-work is akin to what Gieryn calls the “exclusion of pseudo-scientists,” whereby practitioners of a field draw boundaries between themselves and others who claim to engage in the same activity in order to “monopolize professional authority over a field of knowledge.”¹²⁴ By

labeling work in other departments as “bogus,” he simultaneously elevated the work at Harvard as serious. By presenting itself in this fashion, the department paved the way not only for its stability but also for its status as the preeminent Afro-American research institution.

The public arena

I have described the larger political environment surrounding Black Studies in general; a Black Studies department or program became, in varying degrees, a practical necessity for any major university. But the effect of the public arena on the intellectual focus and definition of Black Studies is to be found in the specific public constituencies from which the particular departments wished to obtain resources, namely political support, and, to some extent, material capital. While at Temple the black community in Philadelphia constituted an important constituency from which to receive support, at Harvard the black community in Cambridge, small and inconsequential to the university as a whole, served no such purpose. Instead, the public constituency Gates and the department addressed was the much wider collective of journalists, philanthropists, and members of the generally educated mainstream public interested in solving what is generally termed “America’s racial problem.” It is largely irrelevant to this constituency whether or not black intellectuals involve themselves in particular black communities or neighborhoods (although they certainly would not oppose it). Rather, this (largely white) constituency is interested in informed solutions or at least enlightenment regarding the “race issue.”

To address this key source of political support, Gates attempted to make the department highly visible, and to cater its work toward cultural and policy concerns. This was not difficult, because, in part, of the faculty who joined the department in the years of its resurrection. These scholars were all prominent black academics with a relatively public profile – in effect, being a highly qualified black academic often implies, by virtue of the current political situation in the nation, being a highly public figure. Several of them have been labeled “public intellectuals” in a number of “highbrow” cultural publications for their attempts to address wider constituencies outside the academy.¹²⁵ They have participated in multiple speeches, debates, and television documentaries. In addition, the faculty of the department together have published at least 19 *non-scholarly* books, usually on contemporary topics such as race, identity, and culture; two academic

but policy-oriented works that have had a wide-ranging readership; and an autobiography. Particularly visible are Cornel West, Gates himself, and William J. Wilson, all of whom are important, well-connected figures on public debates on race. The work produced by the department/institute, moreover, is published by highly prestigious presses, and not by Afrocentric or black-owned presses that cater largely to the black community, as is the case at Temple (Table 5). Furthermore, Appiah and Gates, along with Wole Soyinka, revitalized and now edit *Transition* magazine, a serious multicultural journal of culture and politics aimed at a highly educated audience. And Gates is a staff writer for *New Yorker* magazine.

The visibility of the department, by itself, already speaks to its interest in this public constituency. But this interest also became evident in the substantive focus of the work of the department. Gates explicitly rejected any notion that Black Studies is *inherently* “liberating,” as Asante would claim. Scholarship, he insisted, is not activism, though scholars may be and often are activists. “We are scholars,” he stated. “For our field to grow, we need to encourage a true proliferation of ideologies and methodologies.”¹²⁶ But Gates also must address the concerns of public intellectualism. Substantively, then, the department focuses on contemporary cultural issues and racial policy (rather than Egyptian Africa), implicitly addressing the public call for enlightenment on the issues of race. “I believe,” he stated, “that the agenda [for Black Studies] for the 21st century must include an emphasis upon cultural studies and public policy.... In public policy matters, our involvement is crucial and urgent.”¹²⁷

The result, naturally, has been widespread media coverage, political support, and much fund-raised capital for the DuBois Institute. The support of this broad public constituency, of course, assures the stability of the department; but, more importantly, it renders the department a highly influential political organization, bolstering the efforts to stabilize it within the local institutional and academic arenas.

Legitimation and the development of a new intellectual enterprise

Before recapitulating systematically the relationship between the departmental conditions and the conception of African-American Studies in each department, I elaborate here theoretically on the mechanisms underlying this process (see Figure 4). The chairs, as early practitioners

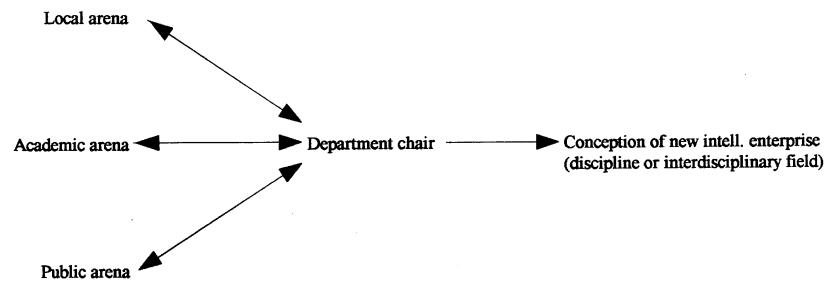


Figure 4. A framework of the relationship between early departments and their conception of the new intellectual enterprise.

in the emerging intellectual enterprise, are seeking to stabilize and institutionalize their departments. Without an autonomous or semi-autonomous organizational basis, the development of a new intellectual enterprise is largely impossible. To institutionalize their departments successfully, they must obtain specific resources – material capital, political support, intellectual recognition, and prestige – from specific constituencies. The constituencies may be conceived to be located in local institutional, wider academic, and even wider public arenas. While constituencies in the local institutional arena provide important capital, prestige-by-association, and local political support, wider academic constituencies provide the crucial academic recognition, as well as a larger network for the development of new ideas, and public constituencies provide important political support (or capital), an issue that is largely ignored in the study of new disciplines. Within each arena, there are multiple potential constituencies, and the chairs or practitioners must seek *specific* constituencies to support their endeavors and provide them resources. In order to obtain the latter, however, the practitioners must define Black Studies in such a way as to be considered legitimate by the constituencies who provide the resources. At this juncture, the notion of boundary-work is useful.

The notion of “boundary-work” serves as a general rubric to conceive one of the most significant ways the practitioners define an emerging intellectual enterprise. Boundary-work implies the differentiation of one set of practitioners, theoretical perspective, or body of work, from another; it may also imply the elimination of existing demarcations, if this helps a set of practitioners appear legitimate. In this case, by negotiating the boundaries between Black Studies and other disciplines, between scholarship and activism, and between the work in one depart-

ment and that in others, the chairs defined specific aspects of African-American Studies in a manner acceptable, and, thus, legitimate, to the key constituencies. While the chairs or practitioners exercise a measure of agency in choosing which constituency to speak to, they are circumscribed by the expectations and standards of such constituency about what constitutes a legitimate enterprise. (Thus, the double arrow between each arena and the chair in Figure 4.) As a result, the definition of new intellectual enterprise is best conceived as an interactive process.

I do not use the term “arenas” in Abbott’s strict sense. In the case of the development of a new intellectual enterprise – whether a discipline or an interdisciplinary field – arenas are best conceived as increasingly larger circles of influence where the legitimation of Black Studies is crucial for its institutional survival. Furthermore, the effects of arenas upon Black Studies, or any emerging intellectual enterprise, is twofold: (1) as stated above, the specific *constituencies* in each of them affect the conception of Black Studies by imposing expectations and standards of what is legitimate and what is not; (2) the *arenas themselves* are characterized by particular environments that facilitate or impede certain strategies the practitioners may use for presenting their work as legitimate. In the two cases at hand, the local institutional arena, or the “institutional context,” at both universities allowed the chairs a great measure of freedom in defining Black Studies, giving them long-term appointments and sizable budgets, largely because the departments until then had failed miserably, and there was a great deal of political pressure to establish them. In the academic arena, both departments benefitted from a general academic environment of acceptance of a plurality of different perspectives and world-views, wrought by the growth in varying degrees of what are generally referred to as identity politics and postmodernist thought. But they both had to fit their work, one way or another, within the existing discourse. Asante did so by framing Afrocentricity as a specific spin on post-modernist discourse; Gates did so by emphasizing interdisciplinary methodology in the study of blacks, via ambitious data-collecting projects. In the public arena at large, Black Studies had become a political or public necessity, although different segments (potential constituencies) held different expectations of what it should be; both departments had to respond, in some form, to the political origins (through student demands) of Black Studies. Undoubtedly, the effects of the local institutional arena are the most immediate, and, in that sense, slightly different from the other two.

Returning to the cases at hand, I suggest that, to understand how departmental conditions affect the way practitioners define their enterprise, we must understand their effort to become legitimate. It is always *specific constituencies* that grant an endeavor legitimate status, and different constituencies have different notions of what is legitimate. The local institutional arena at Temple was characterized by relative openness to the possibility of Black Studies as an independent discipline, for the department had failed over the years, and Asante, perceived as the key to its resurrection, was allowed a large measure of authority as chair. In that arena, in order to obtain important resources – the right to award higher degrees, and institutional independence – he was led to erect strict boundaries between Black Studies and other disciplines, even though he previously had rejected such boundaries. Thus, he developed a particular Africa-centered specialty, made no joint-appointments, and de-emphasized interdisciplinary interaction, making claims instead to the status of independent discipline. In the academic arena, he erected strict boundaries between Eurocentric and Afrocentric perspectives in order to gain legitimacy, primarily, before the constituency of NCBS scholars who, by and large, supported the creation of an independent discipline. These provided the important network of scholars to develop and explore the theoretical bases for Afro-American Studies. To gain this resource (academic recognition), however, he had to speak to the disciplinary concerns of the constituency, as well as frame Afrocentricity (in his department) as a specific spin on the current post-modernist critiques in academia, thus working within the constraints of that arena. In the public arena, there was some political pressure on the administration to support Black Studies. The Philadelphia black community in particular, an important constituency, tended to support such programs, but held the specific expectation that black academics should benefit the rest of that community. Asante responded by re-negotiating the existing boundaries between theory and practice, bolstering departmental support to PASCEP, and thus granting the endeavors of the department a measure of legitimacy within the black public. The outcome of these dynamics was the department's definition of Black Studies as an independent, Afrocentric, "liberating" discipline.

At Harvard, in the local institutional arena, Gates enjoyed a measure of institutional openness, evident in the leeway granted him as chair in making appointments. However, important constituencies in the institution, namely, influential black faculty allies and other established departments, held particular views and expectations about the

status of Black Studies. Gates gained their support by eliminating the boundaries between Black Studies and other disciplines that had been explicit and, later, implicit, in the history of the department; he did so by hiring joint-faculty, cross-listing courses, and encouraging multiple methodologies and approaches within the field. In effect, he followed a strategy opposite to what Ewart Guinier, the department's first chair, had undertaken, thus opening the path for the regeneration of the department. The wider academic arena, as mentioned earlier, was largely open to multiple perspectives; nonetheless, the constituencies from which Gates sought support were primarily important scholars in established disciplines, and not necessarily the network of NCBS scholars. Thus, Gates helped legitimate the department by tying it closely to the DuBois Institute, while at the same time erecting boundaries between the work at Harvard and what is considered, among that constituency of established scholars, more dubious, Afrocentric work in Afro-American Studies. Finally, in the public arena, though Gates erected strict boundaries between black scholarship and black activism, he allowed for and encouraged public intellectualism, in response to the expectations of highly educated mainstream journalists, policy-makers, philanthropists, and the like, who wished for informed solutions to America's race problem. As a result, the department gained much public visibility, political support, and influence. The outcome of these dynamics was the department's definition of Black Studies as a multi-disciplinary, scholarly but policy- and culturally-centered field that made no claims to discipline status.

Conclusions

The empirical question of this article has been why two departments, with similar institutional histories until the arrival of their long-term chairs, held radically different conceptions of the new intellectual enterprise. Relying on recent developments in the sociology of professions and of science, I have been arguing that each department's definition of Afro-American Studies can be traced directly to the efforts of its practitioners to attain organizational stability and legitimacy. To secure the organizational stability of their departments, the chairs sought diverse resources from constituencies in local institutional, wider academic, and even wider public arenas; to obtain these resources, they defined Black Studies according to the expectations held by those constituencies about what constitutes a legitimate endeavor.¹²⁸ Thus, it is impossible to understand the conception of Afro-American

Studies (or any emerging intellectual enterprise) in its early departments, without understanding which constituencies are supporting it, and what incentives the practitioners of the departments had in seeking those constituencies. At Temple, it was clear that the GCCAS (an important constituency) would not give the department degree-granting status (an important resource) without being convinced that the new enterprise was independent and distinct from existing disciplines. At Harvard, it was clear that potential faculty allies in other departments (an important constituency) would not support the joint-hiring of new faculty (an important resource) without being convinced that the new enterprise resonated with their methodologies and approaches. Similar situations were evident in the wider academic, and even wider public arenas, as practitioners negotiated which constituencies to seek for support and what boundaries to draw around Black Studies to obtain it.¹²⁹

Thus, whether a department claims discipline – rather than interdisciplinary-status cannot be determined *a priori*, but must be understood as the direct outcome of the interactive process of attaining legitimacy. Yet the claims to discipline-vs.-interdisciplinary-status are only one aspect of the more general issue, which is to examine systematically the factors affecting how the early practitioners of an emerging intellectual project define, construct, and focus their endeavors. The differences between the two departments were differences not only in their claims to discipline or interdisciplinary status, but also in their methodologies, perceptions of the importance of Africa, and philosophy of the relationship between theory and practice. It is to this larger issue that the framework described above should be applied.

In this article, I have expanded on the existing literature in the sociology of knowledge in a number of ways, as previously proposed. First, relying on recent literature in the sociology of professions and of science, I have proposed a theoretical framework for understanding the emergence of new intellectual enterprises that provides the key conceptual categories through which to understand this process while allowing for historically sensitive considerations of particular cases. Second, I have addressed the substantive issues affecting the legitimation of African-American Studies, and, in so doing, examined the largely ignored development of recently emerging fields of knowledge, as well as the influence of public, political factors on the definition of new intellectual enterprises. Finally, I have expanded the scope of the literature on the relationship between disciplines and the departments

from which they emerged, by focusing on the intellectually ambiguous stages of their development, and thus, conceiving them more generally as new intellectual enterprises that may potentially develop into disciplines or interdisciplinary fields. Many questions about Black Studies and recently emerging disciplines remain unanswered. How do the interactions among multiple Black Studies departments affect the large-scale development of the field? How was and is this process affected by the changing political environment of both academia and the nation as a whole? To what extent are the mechanisms described here evident in the development of fields such as Women's Studies and Environmental Studies, fields with radically different political constituencies? To these questions we should direct our future work on the emergence of new intellectual enterprises.

Appendix

The bulk of the data for this study is, naturally, archival. Four sets of resources provided the basic data: (1) News reports in *The Temple News*, *The Temple University News*, *The Temple Times*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Harvard Crimson*, *The Boston Globe*, and *The New York Times*, which provided not only accounts of specific events at the time of their occurrence, but key actors' observations about the status of Afro-American Studies, revealing their perceptions of the boundaries between the field/discipline and other entities. For the campus newspapers, usually weeklies, I read through microfilms of every edition within important years in the history of the department; for the national papers, I conducted computerized searches of reports on the departments and their chairs. (2) The citation analyses were based, as indicated, on computerized archives of social sciences and humanities journals in ERIC, SSCI, and AHI. Figure 1 was supplemented with primary archival research of *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, which, though a major journal, was not fully indexed in any of the three indexes. For an understanding of the basic debates, I also reviewed issues of *The Journal of Black Studies*, *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, and *The Black Scholar*, which dealt either implicitly or explicitly with the theoretical status of the field. (3) I relied on several important documents found at the Temple Special Collections Department, which keeps files on the Pan-African Studies/Africology department, and official course catalogues, and the Harvard University Archives, which keeps several files on official course catalogues, faculty documentaries, and the Afro-American Studies department. I obtained

a copy of “A Proposal for M.A./Ph.D. Degrees Programs in African-American Studies,” the approved degree proposal at the Temple department, from Professor Molefi Asante’s personal collection. (4) Finally, I conducted three interviews (two in person, one by phone) with Molefi Asante, and two interviews with Henry L. Gates, for a total of roughly three hours; held two open-ended interviews with previous graduate students of the Temple department, and participated in numerous conversations with faculty and graduate students of the department.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

1. Charles Camic, “The Making of a Method: A Historical Reinterpretation of the Early Parsons,” *American Sociological Review* 52 (1987): 421–439; Charles Camic, “Structure after 50 Years: The Anatomy of a Charter,” *American Journal of Sociology* 95 (1989): 38–107; Charles Camic, “Three Departments in Search of a Discipline: Localism and Interdisciplinary Interaction in American Sociology, 1890–1940,” *Social Research* 62 (1995): 1003–1033; Charles Camic and Yu Xie, “The Statistical Turn in American Social Science, 1890 to 1915,” *American Sociological Review* 59 (1994): 773–805; Lawrence Nichols, “The Establishment of Sociology at Harvard,” in *Science at Harvard University*, Clark Elliott and Margaret Rossiter, editors (Bethlehem, Penn.: Lehigh University Press, 1992); Rodney Triplet, “Harvard Psychology, the Psychological Clinic, and Henry A. Murray: A Case Study in the Establishment of Disciplinary Boundaries,” in *Science at Harvard University*. See also Steven Diner, “Department and Discipline: the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago, 1892–1920,” *Minerva* 13 (1975): 514–553.
2. Camic, “Three Departments in Search of a Discipline: Localism and Interdisciplinary Interaction in American Sociology, 1890–1940.”

3. Camic, "Three Departments in Search of a Discipline: Localism and Interdisciplinary Interaction in American Sociology, 1890–1940."
4. Joseph Ben-David, *The Scientist's Role in Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Talcott Parsons and Gerard Platt, *The American University* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973).
5. Hamilton Cravens, *The Triumph of Evolution: American Scientists and the Heredity-Environment Controversy, 1900–1941* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1978); Camic and Xie, "The Statistical Turn in American Social Science, 1890 to 1915."
6. Anthony Oberschall, editor, *The Establishment of Empirical Sociology: Studies in Continuity, Discontinuity, and Institutionalization* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972). See also, Maulana Karenga, *Introduction to Black Studies* (Los Angeles: University of Sankore Press, 1993); Johnella Butler and John Walter, editors, *Transforming the Curriculum: Ethnic Studies and Women's Studies* (Albany: State University of New York, 1991).
7. "The Statistical Turn in American Social Science, 1890 to 1915," 791. But see Diner, "Department and Discipline: The Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago, 1892–1920," and Cravens, *The Triumph of Evolution: American Scientists and the Heredity-Environment Controversy, 1900–1941*.
8. One may also speak of sub-disciplines, such as social psychology or the sociology of organization, which may be defined as having a specific topic of study, but borrowing explicitly from the methods or approach of an independent discipline, and making no claims to being a separate discipline. In this article, for reasons that follow, I restrict my analysis to the distinction between the first two.
9. For convenience, I use this term as a general rubric to describe emerging disciplines, sub-disciplines, or inter-disciplinary fields.
10. See, e.g., Camic and Xie, "The Statistical Turn in American Social Science, 1890 to 1915," 791.
11. For convenience, I use the terms "Black Studies," "Afro-American Studies," and "African-American Studies" interchangeably. These terms, in addition to "Africana Studies" and "Africology" are used variously by different institutions, usually uncovering a particular ideology. For a discussion, see Dalene Clarke Hine, "Black Studies: An Overview," in *Africana Studies: A Disciplinary Quest for Both Theory and Method*, James Conyers, editor (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, 1997).
12. Andrew Abbott, *The System of Professions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).
13. Thomas Gieryn, "Boundaries of Science," in *Handbook of Science and Technology Studies*, Sheila Jasanoff, Gerald Markle, James Petersen, and Trevor Pinch, editors (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1995).
14. Joseph Ben-David and Randall Collins, "Social Factors in the Origins of a New Science: The Case of Psychology," *American Sociological Review* 31 (1966): 451–465.
15. This and subsequent figures refer only to African-American Studies, and not to degrees in African Studies. Departments that offer a joint-degree in "African and African-American Studies" are included here.
16. *Index of Majors and Graduate Degrees* (New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1998).
17. Terry Kershaw, "The Emerging Paradigm in Black Studies," in *Black Studies: Theory, Method, and Cultural Perspective*, Talmadge Anderson, editor (Pullman:

- Washington State University Press, 1990); James Conyers, editor, *Africana Studies: A Disciplinary Quest for Both Theory and Method* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1997); James Turner, editor, *The Next Decade: Theoretical and Research Issues in Africana Studies* (Ithaca: African Studies and Research Center, Cornell University, 1984).
18. Karenga, in *Introduction to Black Studies*, calls it an “interdisciplinary discipline,” though he argues that “[i]t is obvious that Black Studies cannot and should not be subsumed under a traditional discipline,” 24–25. He also writes: “Like all disciplines, Black Studies has subject areas of specialization which do not replace the discipline, but sharpen its focus in a given area,” 25, suggesting a defense of Afro-American Studies as an independent discipline.
 19. Nick Aron Ford, *Black Studies: Threat or Challenge?* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1973). See also, Elias Blake Jr. and Henry Cogg, *Black Studies: Issues in their Institutional Survival* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976).
 20. Nathan Huggins, *Afro-American Studies: A Report to the Ford Foundation* (New York: Ford Foundation, 1985). The National Council of Black Studies is currently documenting some of this information via national questionnaire surveys.
 21. Kershaw, “The Emerging Paradigm in Black Studies”; Karenga, *Introduction to Black Studies*; Nikongo BaNikongo, editor, *Leading Issues in African-American Studies* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 1997); Dyana Ziegler, editor, *Molefi Asante and Afrocentricity: In Praise and Criticism* (Nashville: Winston-Derek Publishers, 1995).
 22. Molefi Asante, *Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, Inc., 1990); Conyers, editor, *Africana Studies: A Disciplinary Quest for Theory and Method*; Talmadge Anderson, editor, *Black Studies: Theory, Method, and Cultural Perspectives* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1990).
 23. The unusualness of the term “Africology,” is reminiscent of how unusual “sociology” was in the department at the University of Chicago at the turn of the century, where several of the scholars whom Albion Small attempted to attract to it had never even heard of it (Diner, “Department and Discipline: The Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago, 1892–1920,” 541). I use the opportunity to note that this is not intended to suggest that Africology has the same claim to discipline status that sociology has, or that I believe it should. The issue is why the practitioners of the field would choose to claim the status of independent disciplines as opposed to interdisciplinary fields.
 24. Karenga, *Introduction to Black Studies*, in Butler and Walter, editors, *Transforming the Curriculum: Ethnic Studies and Women’s Studies*.
 25. This refers to the institutionalization of African-American Studies, not to its birth. Studies of the historical and social condition of Afro-Americans had been conducted by black thinkers (e.g., W. E. B. DuBois, Carter Woodson) for decades.
 26. See Robert Allen, “Politics of the Attack on Black Studies,” *Black Scholar* 6 (1974): 2–7; John Blassingame, “Black Studies: An Intellectual Crisis,” *New Perspectives in Black Studies*, John Blassingame, editor (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1971); Maulana Karenga, “The Black Community and the University: A Community Organizer’s Perspective,” in *Black Studies in the University: A Symposium*, Armstead Robinson, Craig Foster, and Donald Ogilvie, editors (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969); Alain Touraine, *The Academic System in American Society* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1974). Also, Robinson, Foster, and Ogilvie, editors, *Black Studies in the University: A Symposium*.

27. See, for example, Julie Reuben, "Transforming the University: Student Protests and the Demand for a 'Relevant' Curriculum," in *Student Protest Since 1960*, Gerald De Groot, editor (Essex: Addison Wesley Longman, 1998).
28. Temple Africology Department, <http://www.temple.edu/AAS>, 1997.
29. Harvard College, *Handbook for Students: 1997–1998* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1997).
30. Asante, *Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge*, 192.
31. See, e.g., Nichols, "The Establishment of Sociology at Harvard."
32. To suggest that Africology, being a marginal discipline, would never have emerged at Harvard is, at best, an unsatisfactory explanation. African-American Studies is now no more marginal at Harvard than sociology was during the early thirties; despite the existence of sociology departments for over three decades, many economists and political scientists at Harvard still doubted the possibility that sociology could claim itself an independent discipline (Camic, "Three Departments in Search of a Discipline: Localism and Interdisciplinary Interaction in American Sociology, 1890–1940," 1025–1027). Most existing disciplines have struggled early on with their theoretical definition, and most have been considered marginal or illegitimate by prominent factions of established scholars. This does not, of course, suggest that "Africology" will be considered a discipline by the academic community in fifty or one-hundred years; it may very well not obtain the institutional stability to attain such success. The issue is to assess why practitioners in early departments would favor one path rather than another.
33. *The System of Professions*.
34. See also, Gieryn, "Boundaries of Science," 409.
35. Thomas Gieryn, George Bevens, and Stephen Zehr, "Professionalization of American Scientists: Public Science in Creation/Evolution Trials," *American Sociological Review* 50 (1985): 392–409.
36. Thomas Gieryn, "Boundary-Work and the Demarcation of Science from Non-Science: Strains and Interests in Professional Ideologies of Scientists," *American Sociological Review* 48 (1983): 781–795. Gieryn's use, however, refers to the activities of scientists. He defines the boundary-work of scientists as "their attribution of selected characteristics to the institution of science (i.e., to its practitioners, methods, stock of knowledge, values and work organization), for purposes of constructing a social boundary that distinguishes some intellectual activities as 'non-science,'" 782.
37. See Gieryn, "Boundaries of Science," and Andrew Abbott, "Things of Boundaries," *Social Research* 62 (1995): 857–882. Social anthropologist Fredrik Barth (in Barth, editor, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* [Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969]) emphasizes the analysis of "boundaries," before Gieryn does, in the analysis of differences between ethnic groups. His use is similar to the one at hand: ethnic groups (rather than professions) are not entities with a set of unchanging characteristics; instead, the boundaries between one ethnic group and another are points of contention and subject to change. As such, it is the boundaries themselves, argues Barth, that should be the object of study.
38. Gieryn, "Boundary-Work and the Demarcation of Science from Non-Science: Strains and Interests in Professional Ideologies of Scientists"; Gieryn, "Boundaries of Science"; Emmanuel Gaziano, "Ecological Metaphors as Scientific Boundary Work: Innovation and Authority in Interwar Sociology and Biology," *American Journal of Sociology* 101 (1996): 874–907; Gieryn, Bevens, and Zeher, "Profes-

- sionalization of American Scientists: Public Science in the Creation/Evolution Trials”; Triplet, “Harvard Psychology, the Psychological Clinic, and Henry A. Murray: A Case Study in the Establishment of Disciplinary Boundaries”; Henrika Kuklick, “Boundary Maintenance in American Sociology: Limitations to Academic ‘Professionalization,’” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 16 (1980): 584–622; Steve Fuller, “Disciplinary Boundaries and the Rhetoric of the Social Sciences,” *Poetics Today* 12 (1991): 301–325.
39. *The System of Professions*, 59ff.
 40. “Ecological Metaphors as Scientific Boundary Work: Innovation and Authority in Interwar Sociology and Biology.”
 41. Diner, “Department and Discipline: The Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago, 1892–1920,” 532–534.
 42. Johnetta Cole (“Black Studies in the Liberal Arts Education,” in *Transforming the Curriculum: Ethnic Studies and Women’s Studies*, Johnella Butler and John Walter, editors) reports that “according to the National Council for Black Studies, there are approximately 375 programs and departments of Black Studies, compared with about 800 in the early 1970s,” 139.
 43. See Appendix for a discussion of methods and sources.
 44. Chronicle of Higher Education, *The Almanac of Higher Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).
 45. Nicholas Lemann, “Black Nationalism on Campus,” *Atlantic*, January (1993): 31–47.
 46. *Temple News*, April 28, 1969.
 47. Molefi Asante, interview, 1998.
 48. *Temple News*, April 17, 1974.
 49. *Temple News*, November 29, 1983.
 50. Molefi Asante was born Arthur Smith, in Georgia. He changed his name, as many Afro-Americans did, after the period of black mobilization during the sixties, to highlight and embrace his African ancestry. See <http://www.asante.net>.
 51. “Molefi Asante: New Head,” *Quid Nunc*, September (1985): 2–6. Emphasis added.
 52. “Molefi Asante: New Head,” 2.
 53. Asante commented: “we already [had] about 50 applicants just based on the rumors of a new program” (*Temple Times*, May 12, 1988). Many professionals, teachers, school administrators, and librarians had demonstrated interest in the program as a means of moving up the professional ladder, of improving their teaching of black students, or of increasing their knowledge of black culture (see Department of African American Studies, Temple University, “A Proposal for M.A./Ph.D. Degrees Programs in African-American Studies” [Philadelphia: Unpublished document, 1987]).
 54. At the time, the only departments that offered M.A.s were at Yale, Cornell, UCLA, Wisconsin-Madison, and Ohio-State.
 55. Asante, interview, 1998.
 56. Asante, interview, 1998.
 57. “A Proposal for M.A./Ph.D. Degrees Programs in African-American Studies.”
 58. See *Temple Times*, May 12, 1988, and “A Proposal for M.A./Ph.D Degrees Programs in African-American Studies.”
 59. Asante, interview, 1998.
 60. *The Village Voice*, January 17, 1995.
 61. Molefi Asante, *The Afrocentric Idea* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 174, emphasis added.

62. Molefi Asante, *The Afrocentric Idea*, revised and expanded edition (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 190, emphasis added.
63. Michele Lamont, "How to Become a Dominant French Philosopher: The Case of Jacques Derrida," *American Journal of Sociology* 93 (1987): 584–622.
64. Gaziano, "Ecological Metaphors as Scientific Boundary Work: Innovation and Authority in Interwar Sociology and Biology."
65. See Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Conyers, editor, *Africana Studies: A Disciplinary Quest for Both Theory and Method*.
66. Ben-David and Collins, "Social Factors in the Origin of a New Science: The Case of Psychology."
67. Kemet, *Afrocentricity and Knowledge*, 24.
68. Kemet, *Afrocentricity and Knowledge*, 26.
69. *The Afrocentric Idea*, 3.
70. *The Afrocentric Idea*, 4.
71. *The Afrocentric Idea*, 4.
72. *The Afrocentric Idea*, 4.
73. For an extended (and highly critical) review of such work, see Stephen Howe, *Afrocentrism: Mythical Pasts and Imagined Homes* (London: Verso, 1998).
74. Kemet, *Afrocentricity and Knowledge*, 7.
75. Kemet, *Afrocentricity and Knowledge*, 14.
76. Kemet, *Afrocentricity and Knowledge*, 14.
77. Asante claims as his own greatest intellectual mentor the Afrocentric historian Cheikh Anta Diop (*Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge*, v).
78. Kemet, *Afrocentricity and Knowledge*, 14.
79. *Introduction to Black Studies*, 34.
80. Molefi Asante, "Afrocentricity and the Quest for Method," in *Africana Studies: A Disciplinary Quest for Both Theory and Method*, James Conyers, editor.
81. Lucius Outlaw, *On Race and Philosophy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1996).
82. Ziegler, *Molefi Kete Asante: In Praise and Criticism*. After the first version of this manuscript was submitted to *Theory and Society*, Howe's *Afrocentrism: Mythical Pasts and Imagined Homes* was published. In it, Howe arrives at the same conclusion regarding Asante's immense influence, naming him "the most influential, widely quoted Afrocentric writer today," 231, but labeling this influence, critically, "hero-worship," 242 (see Chapter 18).
83. No longer in publication.
84. Temple Africology Department, <http://www.temple.edu/AAS>, 1997.
85. William Julius Wilson, *The Declining Significance of Race* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978); Michael Hout, "Occupational Mobility of Black Men, 1962–1973," *American Sociological Review* 49 (1984): 308–322.
86. Henry L. Gates and Cornel West, *The Future of the Race* (New York: Knopf, 1996).
87. Allen, "Politics of the Attack on Black Studies"; Blassingame, "Black Studies: An Intellectual Crisis"; Parsons and Platt, *The American University*; Karenga, "The Black Community and the University: A Community Organizer's Perspective."
88. Asante, interview, 1998.
89. Molefi Asante, "Letter to President Liacouras, June 30, 1997" (<http://www.asante.net/articles/termreport.htm>, 1997).
90. Asante, interview, 1997.
91. Kemet, *Afrocentricity and Knowledge*, 192.

92. PASCEP, *Pan African Studies Community Education Program: 1998 Course and Program Guide* (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1998).
93. Nathaniel Norment, conversations, 1998; Greg Carr, conversations, 1998.
94. Greg Carr, conversations, 1998.
95. Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University, *Report to the Faculty Committee on African and Afro-American Studies* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1969); Lawrence Eichel, "The Founding of the Afro-American Studies Department," in *Blacks at Harvard: A Documentary History of African-American Experience at Harvard and Radcliffe*, Werner Sollors, Caldwell Titcomb, and Thomas Underwood, editors (New York: New York University Press, 1993); Lawrence Eichel, Kenneth Jost, Robert Luskin, and Richard Neustadt, *The Harvard Strike* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1970); Sollors, Titcomb, and Underwood, editors, *Blacks at Harvard: A Documentary History of African-American Experience at Harvard and Radcliffe*.
96. *Harvard Crimson*, May 10, 1993.
97. See *Harvard Crimson*, April 20, 1979 and May 10, 1993.
98. Eileen Southern, "A Pioneer: Black and Female," in *Blacks at Harvard: A Documentary History of African-American Experience at Harvard and Radcliffe*, Sollors, Titcomb, and Underwood, editors, 1993.
99. *Harvard Crimson*, August 17, 1979 and September 14, 1979.
100. *Times-Picayune*, May 18, 1997, and *Harvard Crimson*, April 4, 1990.
101. See *Harvard Crimson*, February 12, 1979 and November 30, 1979.
102. See *Boston Globe*, November 18, 1990.
103. *Harvard Crimson*, November 16, 1990 and November 17, 1990.
104. *Harvard Crimson*, April 7, 1993.
105. *Harvard Crimson*, September 24, 1990.
106. *Boston Globe*, May 12, 1991.
107. Gates, interview, 1998.
108. *Harvard Crimson*, November 10, 1993.
109. Few institutions have the combination of prestige and resources to replicate this strategy. Nonetheless, a large number engage in the basic joint-hire, inter-departmental cooperation approach, developing similar programs with, perhaps, fewer top-rate scholars (see Huggins, *Afro-American Studies: A Report to the Ford Foundation*).
110. *Harvard Crimson*, March 22, 1994. Also Gates, interview, 1998.
111. Ben-David and Collins, "Social Factors in the Origins of a New Science: The Case of Psychology."
112. Harvard College, *Handbook for Students: 1997–1998*, 76. The quotation actually has been in place since the era of Huggins's tenure. As Figure 2 suggests, Huggins (c. 1980–1990) had attempted to pursue a similar strategy, but with less success.
113. As the boundaries between Afro-American Studies and other disciplines were eliminated, however, the department has struggled in attaining a Ph.D. or even a Master's program. Although one had been promised since the fall of 1993 (*Harvard Crimson*, March 18, 1992), the department has yet to offer an M.A. It very well may be the case that Gates will face Asante's dilemma at Temple: how is African-American Studies *different* from established disciplines?
114. *Times-Picayune*, May 18, 1997.
115. *New York Times*, November 2, 1996; *Village Voice*, January 17, 1995.
116. Gates, interview, 1998.
117. See also *Times-Picayune*, May 18, 1997.

118. For example, Camic and Xie, "The Statistical Turn in American Social Science, 1890 to 1915," have demonstrated how Franz Boas in anthropology, Franklin Giddings in sociology, and other turn-of-the century social scientists turned to the statistical analysis of social life – at the time, a rare practice – as a means to legitimize their early disciplines.
119. Henry L. Gates. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).
120. In the *Village Voice*, January 17, 1995.
121. *New York Times*, June 3, 1992.
122. *New York Times*, April 11, 1998.
123. *Boston Globe*, September 27, 1994.
124. Gieryn, "Boundaries of Science," 406.
125. Robert Boynton, "The New Intellectuals," *The Atlantic Monthly* 275 (1995): 53/13; Michael Berube, "Public Academy," *The New Yorker* 70 (1995): 73/8; Leon Wieseltier, "All and Nothing at All: The Unreal World of Cornel West," *The New Republic* 21 (1995): 31/6; John Nichols, "Cornel West," *The Progressive* 6 (1997): 26/4.
126. Henry L. Gates, "African American Studies in the 21st Century," *The Black Scholar* 22 (1991): 3–9.
127. Gates, "African American Studies in the 21st Century," 7.
128. This study makes much reference to the activities of the chairs of the departments, because in these two cases, the chairs were the key influential practitioners. One need only mention Albion Small at Chicago, Franklin Giddings at Columbia, Franz Boas at Columbia, Talcott Parsons at Harvard, and a number of other early chairs to demonstrate that the work of chairs is often significant in the emergence of early disciplines (see Camic and Xie, "The Statistical turn in American Social Science, 1890 to 1915"; Camic "Three Departments in Search of a Discipline: Localism and Interdisciplinary Interaction in American Sociology, 1890–1940"; Cravens, *The Triumph of Evolution: American Scientists and the Heredity-Environment Controversy, 1900–1941*, 127). Nonetheless, there is no inherent theoretical reason why this should always be the case. The key is to focus on the practitioner or set of practitioners with a stake and influence in the development of the emerging intellectual enterprise in a particular department. Indeed, after the department has developed some stability for a period of time, the institutionalized form that took shape early on is not likely to change dramatically, as history has shown, regardless of future chairs.
129. An issue I have addressed only implicitly is the professional incentive the practitioners may have to abandon their discipline and join what may be termed a larger disciplinary movement (Ben-David and Collins, "Social Factors in the Origins of a New Science: The Case of Psychology"). Gates, as an exceptionally successful critic, had little incentive to do so; Asante, also a highly successful and widely published communications scholar, had little incentive as well. This would suggest, as I contend in this article, that such factors must be placed within an institutional context. Regardless of whether they wished to enter an independent "discipline" or to form instead an "interdisciplinary field," they still sought to create a *new intellectual enterprise*, and, as such, were bound to constraints of an institutional nature.