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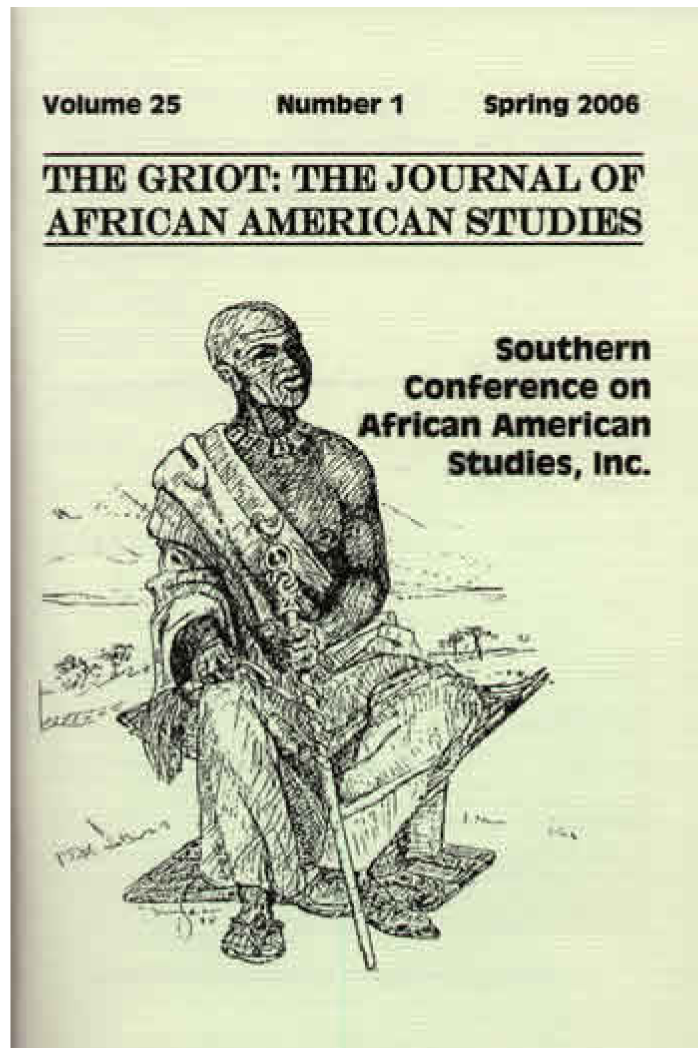

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Stephanie Y. Evans, Ph.D.

In 1969, amidst national and campus movements for racial justice, the W.E.B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst (hereafter UMass) was founded. Among the original faculty were Michael Thelwell, William Julius Wilson, Sidney Kaplan, Bernard Bell, and Esther Terry, who were soon joined by scholar-activists including John Bracey, Bill Strickland, Ernest Allen, Johnnetta Cole, James Baldwin, John Edgar Wideman, Robert Paul Wolff and others. Unlike many programs of the day that struggled to secure a permanent place in the academy, the founding faculty of UMass were successful at building a sustainable program with departmental status with a sound curriculum. The program has provided much guidance for other programs nationwide. Simultaneous happenings took place at Harvard University (Harvard), Temple University (Temple), University of California Berkeley (Berkeley), and Northwestern University (Northwestern) and these undergraduate programs of the late 1960s have developed to provide leadership in Black graduate studies in the millennium.

Dr. Molefe Asante, who arrived at Temple in 1984, proposed the first autonomous doctoral program in 1987 and overcame significant resistance (even from low-level Black administrators), to develop graduate status for the emerging field. In an oral history interview, Dr. Asante recalled his transition from training in a traditional field (communications at UCLA) to his advancing the field at the graduate level. The first Ph.D. graduate in Black Studies, Dr. Adeniyi Coker (Temple, 1991), is now advancing the field as director of African American Studies and associate professor of theater at the University of Alabama, Birmingham. At UMass, a doctoral program in Afro-American Studies was founded in 1996, almost a decade after Temple's doctoral program and now leads the field in the number of doctoral students enrolled. To date, at all six autonomous doctoral granting programs combined, more than 150 scholars have graduated with a Ph.D. in Black Studies. Despite initial growing pains, quietly and methodically, these six departments are training and preparing the next generation of scholars to explore and advance scholarship on Black history, politics, and culture (see Appendix A for program names and contact information).[1]

In Fall 2005, Northwestern began accepting applications for their doctoral program which signals a continual growth of graduate studies in the field. With this growth comes many questions about the state and future of Black graduate studies. Thus, the purpose of this paper is twofold. First, this paper reports survey findings of the six stand-alone doctoral programs in African American Studies. Second, this paper reveals a portion of the authors' own comprehensive exam answers as a starting point for the collective discussion of scholarly expectations of doctoral programs. Both of these objectives seek to increase communication between scholars about graduate studies in the discipline. There are now six stand-alone doctoral programs in African American Studies in the nation; "stand-alone" refers to programs that are not joint degrees, minors, specializations, or certificates. Though there are numerous master's degree programs and several successful doctoral programs that have a joint degree or certificate, this survey focused on Temple, Massachusetts, Berkeley, Harvard, Michigan State University

(Michigan State), and Northwestern. Important questions must be asked of these leaders in the field.

In accordance with Melvin Williams' conclusion in "The Power and Powerlessness of Academe" (Griot, Fall 2004), decoding institutional systems and dismantling power-hording in the Academy is imperative. In the name of tradition, academic bureaucrats at all levels withhold power by blocking open communication and collaboration between students, faculty, and administrators. Worse yet, scholarship of White supremacy, in the name of "objectivity" or "excellence" reifies academic hierarchies that challenge the existence of Black Studies programs. By questioning leading programs, we gain an opportunity to locate areas of convergence and divergence in vision and practice. Presenting my own work as a case study examination surely makes me vulnerable (this is very raw work; "raw," of course, being a euphemism for unedited, simplistic, disheveled, and, in some areas, shortsighted). Yet, comparing programs and sharing one answer to basic questions about major works in Black Studies contributes to an ongoing and much needed dialogue as the field expands and as the numbers of Ph.D. candidates increase.

The willingness of programs to share insights about expectations of graduate students can increase support for Black Studies in higher education. Regardless of varying ideologies or program names (Africana, Afro-American, African American, or Black Studies), the field is vital because the activist-scholarship helps to address ongoing crises around equitable distribution of resources, and the critical race consciousness deepens human knowledge by offering alternative academic perspectives. Black Studies scholarship offers corrective interpretations of history, politics, and culture in the United States. Academically marginalized programs like ethnic and gender studies provide much needed guidance in problem-solving research and pedagogies. Without advanced scholarship in Africana Studies, American academies will continue to face intellectual and social problems through a myopic, and therefore ineffective, lens.

Survey of Six Doctoral Programs

In October 2005, a survey was sent to the six stand-alone Ph.D. programs in African American Studies (see Appendix B for an excerpt of the survey and respondent names). The first part of the survey asked five questions about the demographics of the program including program founding dates (undergraduate and graduate), number of students admitted and enrolled, and the number of Ph.D.s awarded thus far. The results for the quantitative questions were as follows:

	Dept founded	PhD founded	Annual admits	Currently enrolled	PhDs awarded
Temple	1971	1988	10	5	135
Mass	1969	1996	5	36	10
Berkeley	1970	1997	5-10	31	8
Harvard	1969	2001	ca. 4	19	0
Michigan State	2002	2002	4	15	0
Northwestern	1971	2006	4-5	0	0

The fact that 153 doctorates have been earned since the inception of Black Studies is promising.

Clearly, Temple has provided the vast majority of those degrees, but with the growing numbers at Massachusetts, Michigan State, Berkeley, and the pending numbers enrolled at Harvard and Northwestern, doctoral earners will increase at a steady pace and come from a diverse number of programs. Five of the six programs were founded in the last decade, which also points toward an anticipated stability in future degrees awarded. With inevitable attrition and organizational difficulties associated with program startup, the productivity of the next decade will far outpace that of the past. The 91 graduate students currently enrolled will surely be joined by others as doctoral programs, hopefully in the South, begin to develop. That there are no Ph.D. programs in the South is telling, but not surprising; historic access for Black graduate students happened first in the North, Midwest, and West. The southern region's historical lag in granting access to Black students has clearly translated into a lag of development of Black Studies. With increasing academic validation, this should change in the decades to come.

The second part of the survey submitted to the graduate advisors asked two questions about the qualitative aspects of the doctoral programs' comprehensive or qualifying exams. Specifically, the questions were: "What is the exam content and structure? (i.e. Is the focus on a general reading list, specialization of the student, or both? Is the exam written, oral, or both? How many questions are given and what are the categories/themes? What is the exam setting and time allotment to complete the exam?)" and "What are the evaluation criteria of your comprehensive exam? (i.e. How is the exam evaluated? What determines an excellent, passing, or failing answer? What advice would you offer to students preparing for your exam?" The answers varied in specificity and they revealed a range of approaches to the graduate exam. However, they displayed striking concerns with identifying students' competency in both a general area and area of specialization.

Survey findings reveal that some graduate programs focus on African Diaspora, some on major authors and texts in the field, and some concentrate on schools of thought. The structure of the tests include the following: (Temple) a two-day test, including four sets of questions, with two three-hour sittings per day in a designated classroom; (UMass) a three day written take-home general exam after the "Major Works" courses and a three day written exam on the student's area of specialization before construction of the dissertation prospectus; (Berkeley) two written papers, one on theories and methodologies in the field and one on the students area of specialization along with a two hour oral exam which measures familiarity with literature, critical engagement from a disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspective, and mastery of major issues; (Harvard) a two hour oral exam no later than the third year, then development and defense of a prospectus; (Michigan State) a three-day take-take home exam with three questions measuring knowledge of content and theory in both a general area and specialization, then the answers evaluated by two full professors in the program and one professor from the advisory board; and (Northwestern) oral general exam that includes questions tailored to the students' specialization accompanied by a take home exam of three questions with a one-week allotment for completion. Though the schools vary greatly on form and function of exam, the gist is the same: to test students' mastery of the program's content and to measure readiness for the student to move forward with independent research.

Most answers to the survey show programmatic standards of requiring the student to demonstrate an understanding of the various approaches to Black Studies scholarship. Additionally, most

programs require the student to choose a focus, either through traditional discipline or group of disciplines, for example: "History and Politics or Literature and Culture" at UMass ; "Cultural Aesthetics or Socio-Behavioral Track" at Temple; "Expressive Arts, History, or Politics and Public Policy" at Northwestern; or eleven specific areas at Berkeley which include "Politics and Culture, Critical Theory, Political Economy, Comparative Literatures and Cultures, Urban Sociology, Popular Culture, Women's Studies or Performance, Film and Visual Arts" as choices. Students in each program must cover broad and specific approaches to the scholarship presented. What is not so clear by the answers provided is each programs' theoretical grounding. Though one can easily see foci inspired by Afrocientric, Diasporic, or Socialist approaches based on program wording, this does not account for the range of texts in required seminars nor does wording reflect individual faculty members' divergent reading of those texts. This is very important because each programs' faculty evaluates the student exams and decides who to pass, fail, pass with distinction, or provisional pass. That each student must present a convincing argument to faculty who may not agree on approach or interpretation of materials is par for the course in graduate school. However, graduate student in Black Studies must answer questions in-line with the approach and focus of their particular departments, but also foster an awareness of the very different academic cultures of Black Studies programs that faculty may represent.

Below is an excerpt from the authors' own 2002 comprehensive examination. It demonstrates the importance of addressing the canon in a specific department, raises questions about whether one exam answer can or should be expected to cover all of the approaches to Black Studies and presents a point of departure for discussions between faculty and students about exam expectations.

A Case Study of the Comprehensive Exam in Black Studies

The core curriculum of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst doctoral program is a "Major Works" seminar of over 50 books designated by the faculty to be cornerstones of study in the field of Afro-American Studies (see Appendix C for book list). The list is revised each year, in an annual melee of the core faculty, but largely remains the same. As the faculty recognize, the difficulty of this would-be canon is that it presents a wide range of resources, but is not, and by design cannot, possibly be exhaustive or representative of all approaches to existing scholarship on Black life. However, as an introduction to scholarship on African American experiences, this reading list for the two-semester introductory seminar provides a crucial entry point from which all graduate students can launch deeper and more specialized queries after the first year. From engaging the major works booklist, students are well equipped to explore an extended ideological range of leaders in the field (perhaps toward the Afrocentrism of the Temple program or the comparative ethnic studies of Berkeley, for example).

When I enrolled as an entering graduate student in 1999, we read 2-4 books each week. Each student in our cohort wrote two 3-5 page papers per week, and endured a three hour grilling, twice a week (Mondays and Wednesdays), in a discussion seminar held by two professors (one mainstay and one rotating professor depending on the topic that week). With this structure, students in my cohort, (there were 5 of us), had a catalogue of 10 papers per week to consult in addition to lectures by professors and an assortment of articles or book reviews that we shared during long study/rant sessions between the bi-weekly classes. After the yearlong Major

Works seminar, students declared a "Literature and Culture" track or a "History and Politics" track to pursue; both were interdisciplinary and blended critical social science with a historicized consideration of humanities. Regardless of the changes that the program has experienced over the past decade, all graduate students proceed from the common stepping stone of the Major Works core curriculum.

The general comprehensive exam of the Major Works seminar precedes the dissertation proposal phase and, though the questions change each year, they are designed in some way address literature, culture, history, and politics in Black scholarship covered in the seminar. I am especially grateful to my cohort, Cathy, Adam, Miko, and Zeb, for providing a collective sprit of grim but unifying determination and for advanced colleagues in the department, who assured the neophytes that we would, by hook or crook, make it past this grueling trial of qualifying examinations.

The comprehensive exam had two parts: the general exam (question 1) and a question based on one's own area of specialization (question 2). The general exam (question 1) had two components: literature (part A) and history (part B). Below is the second part of my general exam (history), in original form, submitted after three and a half days of non-stop typing. On reflection, my essay focused mainly on categorizing and classifying the texts and less on main themes within the texts or within Black history itself. Though certain parts are now embarrassingly elementary, overall, the basic nature of the answers provide a useful base from which to launch a discussion about how a comprehensive exam should be designed, what the faculty expectations are, what constitutes an adequate or passing answer, and what students should emulate or avoid. Though I did not include the question here (for professional consideration), the answer demonstrates that the question involved basic identification of themes in scholarship about African American history.

Comprehensive Exam: Question 1, part B - History

The question of themes in Afro-American history is different from the question of themes in Afro-American historiography. Though both questions are important, I am interpreting this exam query in such a way that requires a focus more on the historiography than on the history itself. Thus, for the purpose this essay, I explore the general schools of thought that Major Works historians have written within, how they have recorded and interpreted African-American life, and what evidence they utilized in order to draw conclusions about, decipher, or challenge the mosaic historical narrative of Blacks in America.

In <u>Black History and the Historical Profession, 1915-1980</u>, August Meier and Elliott Rudwick track trends in the historiography of Black Americans and present the complex context of the personalities that have worked on constructing the body of work in Black history. Meier and Rudwick identify and present a wide spectrum of answers to the questions that are inherent in the study of Black life. By way of outlining tensions in the field, they write,

Franklin had identified not only the dilemmas facing black historians, but also the range of dilemmas experienced by all students of the Afro-American past: the tension between studying Negro history as a distinct – and separate – field and incorporating it into the larger stream of

American history; the tension between scholarship and advocacy – or more broadly stated, the tension between the canons of scholarship and the expression of one's value judgments; the tension between calm and detached scholarship and the pragmatic, instrumental use of history to reform society; the tension arising over whether Afro-American history is a specialty best done by blacks, or whether it should be open to all with a serious interest and appropriate academic training.[2]

These questions of Afro-American historiography are paramount in the quest to appreciate the disciplinary context in which the Major Works authors are operating.

In order for me to proceed with answering this question, it was first necessary to grasp the concept of what exactly historiography is. I found that categorization of types of historiography can include topical history (i.e. Political history, Marxist history, Revolutionary history, Intellectual history, Economic history, Educational history, Scientific History, Social history, Labor history, Cultural history, Women's history, or Black history), epochal history (i.e. periods such as the American Colonial, Antebellum, Civil War, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, Civil Rights, or Black Power eras), or a focus on broader themes (such as studies of American historiography or cultural fluidities in the African Diaspora). Within these schools there are also sub-topics such as regional or area studies (i.e. American Southern, New England, Maryland, or South Carolina histories) or ideological approaches to history (i.e. feminist historiography). [3]

Of the numerous major themes that were apparent to me in the historiography of the Major Works seminar, for the purpose of this paper, I will focus on social, legal, women's, military, and revolutionary historiography. In the colonial, antebellum, and post-emancipation eras, authors presented fascinating, and oftentimes vastly different, perspectives of how Black people developed their social lives, navigated the politics of legal and military systems, revolted against individual, institutional, and social oppression, and how women were portrayed, or not portrayed throughout the course.[4]

Social themes, specifically those of Black culture (African folk cultural transmission, music, and religion for example) were prevalent in the Major Works studies. It makes sense that those who are attempting to record a history of a marginalized population would present social rather than institutional approaches. This is a very different approach than the top down history of wars, presidents, and governments that has dominated the field of American history in the past. For example, in Charles Joyner's Down by the Riverside, Eileen Southern's The Music of Black Americans, Gary Nash's Forging Freedom, and the Hortons' In Hope of Liberty, the reader is introduced to folk tales, performance of the oral tradition, and other evidence of a continuum of cultural transition of African inspired religious practices, artistic creation, food, dress, and labor habits, and philosophy.

The theme of legal issues in the Black American experience, addressed by Tomas Morris' Southern Slavery and the Law, and Richard Kluger's Simple Justice also represent an important strand in the seminar studies. An important similarity that existed in these two otherwise different legal texts, was the focus on the active role of Black people in the legal system. Neither Morris nor Kluger ignored how African-Americans used the legal system to make gains in their own emancipation and social liberation. However, although the subject was the same, differences

can be seen in how they went about studying the subject. While Morris spent considerable amount of time attempting to give an account of how shifting legal oppressions in different time periods and in different places impacted a vast number of people (both Black and White), Klugger's investigation revealed the legal, political, and social antecedents to one set of court cases that deal with one aspect of the law (the desegregation of educational institutions). This is but one example of the possible range in approaches to one theme within Black history.

Women's historiography is a school of study that shows the inherently political nature of all historiography. Not only has the recognition of the centrality of gender analysis to Black history been virtually ignored, representation of the topic in the seminar was also shamelessly thin. While Ira Berlin's Many Thousands Gone did incorporate the treatment of women in slavery and the role of women in social development, a reading of Angela Davis' "The Legacy of Slavery: Standards for a New Womanhood" would have been useful to bring to light how sex and gender worked in Black culture and within the larger American society.[5] This essay is especially appropriate because Davis draws on the scholarship of Aptheker (American Negro Slave Revolts) and Gutman (The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom) and illuminates blind spots in both works that would have allowed students a more complex understanding of these texts.[6]

In the broader field of history, Black women historians, and the focus on Black women as an area of study, is still a fairly recent phenomenon. In the mid-1980s, there was an explosion of texts about various aspects of Black women's lives. Although not all of these works were historical monographs, in a short five years, many women developed a base for studying gender in Afro-American history that built on the few individual efforts of earlier scholars.[7] Now the focus on various aspects of Black women's experiences are becoming more of an accepted focus and Black women historians, whether they explicitly focus on gender issues or not, are gaining more recognition as "serious" scholars by those who deem themselves worthy to judge "quality" historiography. Further, although White women, such as Gerda Lerner in the 1970s and Jacqueline Jones in the 1980s, have been involved in documenting the history of Black women, now Black men, most notably V. P. Franklin, are also beginning to publish monographs on Black women.

Two final themes that I found fascinating in the seminar were of the military participation and revolutionary action of Black people. The question of whether or not Black people should fight in America's wars is a longstanding one. In Blacks in the American Revolution (the Kaplans) and Blacks in Civil War (Benjamin Quarles) authors investigated the presence of African-Americans in America's struggle for independence from Britain and their active role in their own emancipation. The demand of an exchange of liberty for patriotism is a central question that extended through WWI, WWII, and continues to be relevant today. Further, in Herbert Aptheker's Slave Revolts, C.L.R. James' Black Jacobins, Peter Woods' Black Majority, Crawford, Rouse, and Wood's Trailblazers & Torchbearers, and Charles Payne's I've Got the Light of Freedom, it is evident that Black people were not only willing to fight for emancipation and social justice, but it is also clear that Black people's definitions of "resistance" encompassed a wide range of ideals, strategies, and actions. An interesting variation in the presentation of these resistance stories is the difference in voice of the authors. For example, although both C. L. R. James and Peter Woods deal with topics of revolt, (James in San Domingo and Woods in South Carolina), their approach and interpretation are extremely different. On the one hand,

James' work is clearly polemical. In his work, Toussaint L'Ouverture was the godfather of revolution whom Africans in general and West Indians in particular should follow in order to rise up and shake off European oppression for once and for all. On the other hand, while Woods does chronicle the climate of revolt in South Carolina and surrounding areas, he does not valorize Nat Turner, Gabriel Prossor, or the Charleston Blacks of the Stono Rebellion. This example is one that elicits major debates around racial influence and methodology – as explored in Meier and Rudwcik's "On the Dilemmas of Scholarship" – that looms large within the field of Black historiography.

In order to better understand the difference between historiography and methodology, it was important for me to note that one's school of thought does not necessarily determine one's methodological approach, methods, or evidence. For example, a "Marxist history" can be taken to mean either a study of Marxist influences on particular labor practices, as seen in Robin Kelly's Hammer and Hoe, or it can mean that the historian has taken on the epistemological assumptions of Marxism, as exemplified by E. Franklin Frazier in his Black Bourgeoisie: The Rise of a New Middle Class. It was an important step for me to be able to separate the historical structure of a text from the historical content.

There are many types of methodologies that influence how a historian approaches a body of work. Whether one is seeking to draw conclusions (positivist), decipher complexities (interpretive), or challenge conventions (critical social science) will make a large impact on what type of history is produced.[8] Is the author looking to delineate the cause and effect of a certain event? Is he seeking to investigate the fascinating complexities of a certain historical phenomenon? Is she seeking to dismantle a conventional, or "traditional" approach or interpretation? Does the author employ a mixture of these styles? The answer to these questions can give readers a clue as to what type of methodological approach a particular historian is taking.

In the Major Works seminar, there were clearly representative illustrations of how historians chose to approach their work. In Simple Justice and Impending Crisis, Klugger and Potter were attempting to make connecting statements about influences of the Brown case, and to delineate the role that the Civil War played in the advancement of U.S. nationalism. In contrast, Joyner and Berlin, wrote Down By the Riverside, and Many Thousands Gone, in order to decipher complex aspects of Black experiences in antebellum South Carolina and the first two centuries of slavery within regional contexts, while Nash and Painter in Forging Freedom and Exodusters explored the social maneuverings of free Blacks in Philadelphia and the particulars of mass movement from the Mississippi Valley to Kansas after Reconstruction. Finally, there were authors who were not only writing to make a statement or explore characteristics of an event or a particular population. Many were clearly writing to challenge established narratives. For example, Du Bois wrote to refute Booker T. Washington's assertion of the necessity of economic over political gain and to challenge apologists for American governments' failure to adequately provide for freedman after emancipation and Gutman wrote to refute the "deterioration of the Negro Family" that Daniel P. Moynihan asserted in his 1965 report "The Negro Family in America: A Case for National Action."[9]

While it is important to contemplate the various approaches that historians favor, it is also interesting to note the combination of methodologies that some employ. For example, in Capitalism and Slavery, Williams explored the ways in which slavery contributed to the development of British capitalism (interpretive history) but he was also clearly writing against the thesis that racism spawned capitalism, not the other way around (critical social history).

I have found that methodology should not be confused with methods. For example, one can employ statistics as method of data collection and analysis, but can choose to do either a quantitative or a qualitative methodological analysis. For example, statistical analysis is present in both The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom (Gutman) and Time on the Cross (Fogel and Engerman); however, Black Family is more of a sociological study (qualitative) while Time is much more concerned with using clinometrics to approach Black history (quantitative). A clear understanding of methodology and methods provides the necessary context for considering the varied use of evidence that the Major Works authors worked with.

In the introduction to The African-American Mosaic: A Library of Congress Resource Guide for the Study of Black History and Culture, the authors state that the collection covers “the nearly 500 years of the black experience in the Western hemisphere…the Mosaic surveys the full range size, and variety of the Library's collections, including books, periodicals, prints, photographs, music, film, and recorded sound.” These types of evidence have not always been considered to be credible evidence – in fact, some of these forms are still heavily refuted when included in historical studies. Benjamin Quarles, in Black Mosaic: Essays in Afro-American History and Historiography, wrote on the controversy surrounding what kind of evidence qualifies as “credible” or “valuable” in traditional American history and how historians in the field of Black Studies have challenged that criterion. In “The Problem of Materials” he writes on the scarcity of materials in Black families where illiteracy or record keeping were forbidden as well as the limitations of written materials as seen in the National Archives.

The issue of where to find records of Black American experiences despite limited materials is paramount in the historiography of the colonial and antebellum eras. In “Generating Change,” Meier and Rudwick present efforts to document the African-American oral tradition in order that it be introduced into the record. They write that although slave narratives and autobiographies have been challenged, historians have attempted use this type of evidence to broaden the knowledge base about these time periods. Interviews of ex-slaves were collected by Charles S Johnson, at the Fisk University Social Science Department (1929 –1934) interviews in Tennessee, Kentucky, and Alabama), and John C. Cade (at Southern University), L. D. Reddick at Kentucky State College (Federal Emergency Relief Administration). The most extensive collection of oral history can be seen in the Federal Writers Project in the WPA (1936-1938). Oral histories, like autobiographies, are challenged because they are biased. However, the claimed objectivity of the written text requires scrutiny as well.

Some historians see written records as the only credible type of material.[10] However, records like government documents, census records, tax documents, estate inventories, voting records, and legislative roll calls, are inherently biased and incomplete because of the paramount role that racism has played in the institutional development of this country. Thus, it is my opinion that methods – whether qualitative or quantitative – which incorporate a range of materials and

sources are more likely to offer a more complete picture. In this way, I am very much a synthesis historian. By using a combination of methods and a multitude of different classes of material evidence, it seems that historians are able to provide a more accurate telling of the story, but it also allows researchers to get at the complexities within the Black experience.

Many Major Works historians have seemed to use this technique. Throughout his career, Du Bois moved between a mixture of qualitative and quantitative history, fiction, poetry, autobiography, polemical historiography and critical social science. As a master storyteller his flexibility shines as an example of true scholarship and his dedication to the field of history was enhanced by his willingness to engage many methods, methodologies, and means of evidence. The Souls of Black Folk is a key example of how this disciplinary fluidity can culminate in one vital text. Similarly, both in Been in the Storm so Long and Trouble in Mind, Leon Litwack combines work from Louisiana, Arkansas, and South Carolina WPA collections, newspapers, Senate and House proceedings, scholarly books and journals, discographies, church records, slave narratives, autobiographies, and fiction in order to create a rich picture of Reconstruction and Jim Crow history.

Exam Conclusion

John Hope Franklin offers a hypothesis about thematic approaches to history and although it presents many problems and imposes limitations on how to understand African-American historiography, (like all organizational tools), it does offer a useful entry point into better understanding how historians have addressed the larger schools of thought. In “On the Evolution of Scholarship in Afro-American History”, Franklin asserted that there have been four stages of writing in Black history.[11] The first stage in the late 1800s and early 1900s was a basic attempt to record and establish the *presence* of African Americans; The second stage involved recording Black “firsts” and asserting the *contribution* of African Americans to the development of the United States; The third stage, during the Jim Crow era and the onset of the Civil Rights Movement, historians began to record the long list of *oppressions* in the Black experience; Finally, during the development of Black Power consciousness in the late 1960s and early 1970s, historians began documenting the long tradition of *revolt and resistance* to American systems of oppression. Franklin does not assert that these stages were neat or static, rather he outlines the general tendency of historians to approach Black history from certain perspectives with specific assertions and assumptions based on the era they were writing in.

While it is clear that this paradigm is not entirely accurate (for example, American Negro Slave Revolts was written in the 1940s and Black women’s histories are still focusing on presence and contributions), it does present yet another type of methodology that can be considered when looking at Afro-American historiography. Initially, I adapted this outline as an approach to my work because with it I could work with a neat paradigm for categorization of messy events of Black woman’s educational history. Rather than simply record the presence, barriers, firsts, or triumphs of Black women’s American educational experience, I could use the three categories of “presence,” “oppression,” and “contribution and creative resistance” as guidelines by which to neatly record the broad history. However, after reflecting on the approaches that historians that we have been introduced to in this seminar have presented, I realize that Franklin’s theoretical

assertion and my methodological approach will only be truly useful when used in tandem with a range of other methodologies, methods, and types of material evidence.

In Black Mosaic, Quarles discusses differences in approaches to history. He distinguishes between " 'the great man' theory of history, presenting a gallery of heroic men and women pushing on to victory against greater odds" and the "revolutionary black nationalists." I anticipate that in my work as a neophyte historian, I will attempt to tell the story of my predecessors, Black women educators, in a way that is neither wholly subjective or objective, nor simply qualitative or quantitative. I do not want to point only to the heroines nor do I want to engage in "writing against" everyone to prove how smart I am (as is the habit with many an overzealous graduate student). I imagine that as I proceed in the work of recording and interpreting the thoughts and actions of Black women educators that have come before me, I shall find a way to make some contribution that will add to the color and texture of the mosaic of human history. Studying how others have approached history will make my contribution richer. Thank you for teaching me; thank you for this experience.

Lessons from the Comprehensive Exam: Graduate Studies Reflection and Projection

The above case study reveals strengths and weaknesses of the exam process. The exam answer points to central questions about what students in the field should be able to demonstrate. For example: 1) should students use "I" in exams or scholarly writing? 2) Should students make the process of answering the question transparent or should they simply answer the question and leave their process up for interpretation? 3) Should answers focus only on texts presented in the programs' bibliography or should students be required/encouraged to consult outside texts? 4) Should exam content cover thematic and substantive areas of the question or can the student choose one focus? 5) To what extent should students reference how the general question contextualizes their area of specialization? 6) Who is the primary audience that students are addressing in their exam? 7) What is the use of the general exam answer after the test is given?

In addition, there are important logistical questions regarding the exam: 1) To what extent should the questions change annually? 2) Should students have access to former exams? The questions about the comprehensive exam are as infinite as the possible answers students can give. On one hand, programs should keep some areas open to broad interpretation to account for faculty disagreements and necessary program flexibility to meet needs of the students; on the other hand, some areas need to be specifically addressed in order to give students guidance and faculty guidelines to ensure increased student success, faculty satisfaction, and programmatic consistency. If neither students nor faculty are clear on roles, expectations, and evaluation criteria, the results can be discouraging. Students cannot be faulted for not meeting criteria that are ill defined. The six doctoral programs in the field can provide guidelines to address these questions. Though there will surely not be a unified approach to the exam, standardization of expectations can be obtained through continued discussions.

At the October 2005 meeting of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History in Buffalo New York, a plenary session was held titled, "W.E.B. Du Bois, the Development of Black Studies, and the Future of the Discipline." Two speakers of the session, Valerie Grim of University of Indiana and Abdul Akalimat of University of Toledo, provided

valuable insight into aspects of the discipline that graduate studies programs must contend with. Dr. Akalimat, who has long led the digitization of Black Studies, argued that the future of the field must advance Black Studies in three distinct areas: 1) as a social movement; 2) as an academic profession; and 3) as a knowledge network that shares production and dissemination of information. Dr. Akalimat argued that while professional academic preparation is a vital part of the field, it is not the sole purview of the discipline. Black Studies originated from activism and must remain rooted as a social movement rather than simply another wing of the Ivory Tower. In tandem with the imperative for community engagement, Akalimat argued that all scholars must diligently work to digitize information to make Black Studies more of a democracy of knowledge rather than isolated property of a few experts. In her ASALH panel contribution, Dr. Grim offered her assessment. Grim argued the Black experience, in all the Diaspora, has been largely agricultural and that Black Studies scholars have not paid due attention to Black rural life. Further, she argued that scholars must address the digital divide by race, but also address the stark contrasts in major issues that Black people in the rural south confront. In a final point, she challenged researchers in all areas to go beyond the humanities and social science to contribute research in science and math in understudied areas of Black history and contemporary life.

In addition to Dr. Akalimat and Dr. Grim's comments, I would add two statements. First, Black Studies scholars advancing graduate studies must address the regional disparity in the field. As of January 2006, there are still no Ph.D. programs in the South. This is obviously an area where growth in the field is imperative. For, as I experienced in my transition from a graduate student in Amherst to faculty member in Gainesville, reading Their Eyes Were Watching God during a Massachusetts winter is drastically different than reading the text during hurricane season in Florida. My second point is a crucial suggestion for those invested in Black graduate studies. PLEASE create an opportunity for all graduate students in Black Studies to meet in one place. I suggest a joint meeting of the Southern Conference on African American Studies (SCAASI), the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), the National Council for Black Studies (NCBS), and the National Black Graduate Student Association (NBGSA). A meeting of these crucial organizations (definitely held in the South) would enable much-needed graduate student introductions and cross-fertilization. Advanced planning would be imperative, but a collaborative effort of the stand-alone programs and the major Black Studies organizations would be well worth the effort at this juncture of development. The future of the field depends on it.

In sum, graduate programs in Black Studies must prepare scholars to use technology to advance the field, must re-focus on the rural and southern areas where African Americans have historically been concentrated, must provide for practical experiences that will allow graduate students competency in applied aspects of their work, and must create more opportunities for networking within the field. Clearly, much scholarship has yet to be produced. Graduate programs in Black Studies have much work to do and fortunately, growing interest in advanced levels of the field can meet this need. How graduate faculty decide to train and test their students for comprehensive exams will have a major impact in the direction and growth in the field. Discussions within and between the programs are vital; hopefully, this research can further current efforts toward those dialogues.

Appendix A - Program Names and Contact Information

Temple: Department of African American Studies, (215) 204-8491

http://www.temple.edu/AAS/

Massachusetts: W.E.B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies, (413) 545-2751

http://www.umass.edu/afroam/

Berkeley: Department of African American Studies, (510) 642-7084

http://ist-socrates.berkeley.edu/~africam/index.html

Harvard: Department of African and African American Studies, (617) 495-4113

http://aaas.fas.harvard.edu/index.html

Michigan State: African and African American Studies Department, (517) 432-0869

http://www.msu.edu/~aaas/welcome.html

Northwestern: African American Studies Department, (847) 491-5122

http://www.afam.northwestern.edu/

[Yale, Joint PhD Program, (203) 432-1170 http://www.yale.edu/afamstudies/]

Appendix B - Excerpt from the Graduate Advisor Survey

To Graduate Coordinators:

Temple: Dr. Abu Shardow Abarry, Graduate Director

Massachusetts: Dr. Robert Paul Wolff, Graduate Program Director

Berkeley: Dr. Robert Allen, Graduate Advisor

Harvard: Dr. Werner Sollers, Acting Director of Graduate Studies

Michigan State: Dr. Gloria Smith, Interim Director, African American and African Studies

Northwestern: Dr. Richard Iton, Director of Graduate Studies

"…Program graduates are now joining faculty ranks across the nation and this discussion of exams will take on added relevance as we begin to prepare and train our own graduate students. As I encourage my undergraduate students to pursue a doctoral degree in Black Studies, I want to offer them sound advice about expectations for graduate coursework and the requisite exams in various programs.

Your standing (as the six programs that are not joint degrees, minors, specializations, or certificates) situates you as uniquely qualified to comment on the state and future of training in the field. This journal article will reveal substantive and comparative information on the content and structure of general/comprehensive/qualifying exams. This article can inform graduate faculty and current students in doctoral programs by generating an open discussion of exam expectations and highlight relative foci for each department. The answers you provide can also assist departments in deliberations about constructing their own stand-alone Ph.D. program in Black Studies. Lastly, this research can serve as a recruitment tool for undergraduates interested in earning a terminal degree in our important--and growing--area of study.

Clearly, the theoretical frameworks, departmental identity, program structure, research methods, and areas of expertise in each institution are different. However, there is much that unites the field: each department articulates expectations of academic excellence, historical consciousness, political critique, reflection on construction and expression of culture, interrogation of race, geographic grounding, practical training for the professorate, and the centrality of social responsibility in our work. This survey will clarify these areas of intersection and shape advancement of candidates in Africana Studies as well as across disciplines…."

Appendix C - University of Massachusetts, Amherst Reading List

AFROAM 701 "MAJOR WORKS IN AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES I"

Reading list for Summer 2000

- Harding, Vincent, There is a River
- Meier, August and Elliott Rudwick, Black History and the Historical Profession, 1915-1980
- Williams, Eric, Capitalism and Slavery

Reading List for Fall 2000

- Aptheker, Herbert, American Negro Slave Revolts
- Berlin, Ira, Many Thousands Gone
- Berlin, Ira, and Barbara Fields, et al., Slaves No More
- Chesnutt, Charles W., The Conjure Woman and Other Conjure Tales
- Delany, Martin, Blake, or the Huts of America
- Du Bois, W.E.B., Black Reconstruction--selected chapters
- Foner, Eric Reconstruction
- Fields, Barbara Jeanne, Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground
- Gates, Henry Louis, Jr., ed., Classic Slave Narratives

- Gutman, Herbert, The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom
- Harper, Frances, Iola Leroy; or, Shadows Uplifted
- Horton, James O., In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860
- James, C.L.R., Black Jacobins
- Jones, Jacqueline, Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow
- Joyner, Charles, Down by the Riverside
- Kaplan, Sidney, and Emma Kaplan, The Black Presence in the Era of the American Revolution
- Litwack, Leon, Been in the Storm So Long
- Morris, Thomas, Southern Slavery and the Law
- Nash, Gary, Forging Freedom
- Painter, Nell, Exodusters
- Quarles, Benjamin, The Negro in the Civil War
- Sinha, Manisha, The Counterrevolution of Slavery
- Stowe, Harriet Beecher, Uncle Tom's Cabin
- Walker, Margaret, Jubilee
- Wood, Peter, Black Majority.

AFRO AM 702 "MAJOR WORKS IN AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES II"

Reading List for Intersession 2000-2001

- Litwack, Leon, Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow
- Meier, August, Negro Thought in America
- Southern, Eileen, The Music of Black Americans

Reading List for Spring 2001

- Baldwin, James, Go Tell It On The Mountain
- Baldwin, James, The Fire Next Time
- Crawford, Vicky (ed.,) Women in the Civil Rights Movement
- Drake, St. Clair, and Horace Cayton, Black Metropolis
- Ellison, Ralph, Invisible Man
- Franklin, John Hope, ed., Three Negro Classics
- Frazier, Franklin, Black Bourgeoisie
- Gaines, Ernest J., The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman
- Himes, Chester, If He Hollers Let Him Go
- Hurston, Zora Neale, Their Eyes Were Watching God
- Johnson, James Weldon, The Book of American Negro Poetry
- Kelley, Robin, Hammer and Hoe
- Kluger, Richard, Simple Justice
- Larsen, Nella, Quicksand / Passing (one-volume edition)
- Locke, Alain, ed., The New Negro

- Mitchell, Angelyn, (ed.), Within the Circle: An Anthology of African American Literary Criticism
- Murray, Pauli, Proud Shoes
- Payne, Charles, I Got the Light of Freedom
- The Autobiography of Malcolm X
- Toomer, Jean, Cane
- Wells, Ida B., Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells
- Woodson, Carter G., The Mis-education of the Negro
- Wright, Richard, Native Son
- Wright, Richard, Uncle Tom's Children

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[1] Diane Turner. 2002. "An Oral History Interview: Molefi Kete Asante." Journal of Black Studies. 32 (6), 711-734.

[2] August Meier and Elliot Rudwick. 1986. Black History and the Historical Profession, 1915-1980. University of Illinois, 279.

[3] Anthony Molho and Gordon S. Wood. 1998. Imagined Histories: American Historians Interpret the Past. Princeton U Press. Conal Furay and Michael J. Salevouris. 1979. The Methods and Skills of History: A Practical Guide. Harlan Davidson, 223-4, 231.

[4] I appreciate the necessary broadness of these exam questions, thus I am interpreting the “post-emancipation eras” rather liberally. I will include analysis of Major Works texts from Many Thousands Gone (1600s) to I’ve Got the Light of Freedom (1960s).

[5] In Angela Y. Davis. 1981. Women, Race and Class. Random House.

[6] I am aware that I did not respond to the call for suggestions when the department revamped the Major Works seminar. Please accept this reflection as a tardy submission. In addition, Deborah Gray White’s Too Heavy a Load would supplement texts like Crusade for Justice and Trailblazers and Torchbearers to ensure that history by and/or about Black women was integral to rather than in addition to the study of Black life.

[7] Some of these texts were: All the Women are White, All the Men are Black, But Some of Us Are Brave(Gloria Hull, Patricia Bell-Scott, and Barbara Smith 1982); “The Impact of Black Women in Education” (Bettye Collier-Thomas Journal of Negro Education special edition 1982); Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology(Barbara Smith 1983); When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America (Paula Giddings 1984); SAGE: A Scholarly Journal on Black Women (Patricia Bell-Scott and Beverly Guy-Shiftall eds. 1984); We Are Your Sisters (Dorothy Sterling 1984); “Lifting the Veil, Shattering the Silence: Black Women’s History in Slavery and Freedom” (Darlene Clark Hine The State of Afro-American History 1988); Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from

Slavery to the Present (Jacqueline Jones 1986); "The Education of Black Women in the Nineteenth Century" and " The Higher Education of Black Women in the Twentieth Century" (Linda Perkins and Jeanne Noble in Women and Higher Education in American History 1988); Afro-American Women of the South and the Advancement of the Race, 1895-1925 (Cynthia Neverdon-Morton 1989).

[8] "A summary of Differences between the Three Approaches to Research" in Chapter 3 ("The Meanings of Methodology") by William Newman in Social Research Methods. 1991. Allyn & Bacon, 63.

[9] Oftentimes, challenges take place in historian's notes; a model of this can be seen in Barbara Field's discussion of the debate over "what constitutes capitalist socialist relations" in her notes in Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground (page 248, note 7).

[10] Further some say that only work using primary documents is real history. It is interesting that I have heard some of my colleagues say that When and Where I Enter, like Howard Zinn's People's history of the United States is not real history because they do not use primary sources.

[11] In Darlene Clark Hine (Ed.). 1986. The State of Afro-American History: Past, Present, and Future. Louisiana University Press, 13-22.