

“A Discourse Analysis of the Centered and Critical Scholar-Activism of Martin Luther King Jr.”

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Abstract

The purpose of this project is to investigate the often neglected research concerning the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his scholar-activism. This project is intended to look for evidence of intellectual leadership within King’s writings in an effort to classify King within the Scholar-Activist paradigm in Africana Studies. Further, the aim is to examine Martin Luther King, Jr. from the critical and centered Scholar-Activist paradigm of Africana Studies based on an analysis of his writings to determine whether his works should be included in or excluded from the canon of Africana Studies.

Molefi Asante, Maulana Karenga, and Terry Kershaw, three of the most respected scholars in the field of Africana Studies, seemingly ascribe differing levels of status to King’s accomplishments and value within African American history (Asante, 1990; Karenga, 2002). Such a debate grounds this project. Does King measure up to the Scholar-Activist paradigm? Whether he does or does not, should the paradigm be expanded and redefined to include King, or is it acceptable as is? King’s six book length writings demonstrate a consistency of themes, which include eight major foci: (1) Economic Justice; (2) Racial Equality/Integration; (3) Existentialism; (4) Social Activism/Service; (5) Theology/Activism; (6) Revolution/Leadership; (7) Black Ideology/Liberation/Black Theology; and (8) Anti-Militarism/Anti-Poverty. This author concludes that diversity of methodological approaches within Africana Studies is normal and that King’s writings should be considered for inclusion into its canons. King meets all of Terry Kershaw’s requirements for inclusion in the scholar-activist paradigm.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The purpose of this project is to investigate the often neglected research concerning the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his scholar-activism. Though it is an often held view that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. can be classified as a “prophet” or a prophetic leader (in terms of his function and influence), such a claim is often respected in religious circles, but requires more convincing for academic audiences. Most academicians and church goers will likely think that such an investigation is futile and want to dismiss any such research as a self-fulfilling prophecy because his prophetic nature is often taken as a given, whereas scholarship is open to investigation and deeper critique. This project is intended to look for evidence of intellectual leadership within King’s writings in an effort to classify King within the Scholar-Activist paradigm in Africana Studies.¹

This project attempts to examine Martin Luther King, Jr. from the critical and centered Scholar-Activist paradigm of Africana Studies based on an analysis of his writings to determine whether his works should be included in or excluded from the canon of Africana Studies. Molefi Asante and Maulana Karenga, two of the most respected scholars in the field of Africana Studies, seemingly ascribe differing levels of status to King’s accomplishments and value within African American history (Asante, 1990; Karenga, 2002). Such a debate grounds this project. Does King measure up to the Scholar-Activist paradigm? Whether he does or does not, should the paradigm be expanded and redefined to include King or is it acceptable in its current state?

Afrocentricity and Scholar-Activism are the two major paradigms in the Africana Studies. Africana Studies emphasizes how the researcher looks at the data. One does not always

¹ Africana Studies is also referred to as Black Studies or African American Studies, as the terms are used interchangeably. See Maulana Karenga's article “Black Studies and the Problematic of Paradigm” and book *Introduction to Black Studies, Third Edition*.

have to look at the same thing the same way. “Afrocentricity” suggests “African-centered.” The whole notion of Africana Studies deals with African-descended people in the center.

A paradigm has at least two essential characteristics. First, the achievements are generally unprecedented to attract adherents away from competing perspectives while simultaneously it is “sufficiently open-ended to leave all sorts of problems for the redefined group of practitioners to resolve” (Kuhn, 1996: 10). When discussing how a paradigm affects the structure of the group that practices within a field, Kuhn (1996: 18, 19) wrote:

When, in the development of a natural science, an individual or group first produces a synthesis able to attract most of the next generation's practitioners, the older schools gradually disappear. In part their disappearance is caused by their members' conversion to the new paradigm. But there are always some men who cling to one or another of the older views, and they are simply read out of the profession, which thereafter ignores their work. The new paradigm implies a new and more rigid definition of the field. Those unwilling or unable to accommodate their work to it must proceed in isolation or attach themselves to some other group. Historically, they have often simply stayed in the departments of philosophy from which so many of the special sciences have been spawned. As these indications hint, it is sometimes just its reception of a paradigm that transforms a group previously interested merely in the study of nature into a profession or, at least, a discipline.

Kuhn (1996: 23) went on to argue that “paradigms gain their status because they are more successful than their competitors in solving a few problems that the group of practitioners has come to recognize as acute.” Biko Agozino (2010) points out that paradigms develop through the tension of the thesis-antithesis-synthesis interaction. The problem is that Kuhn’s conclusion was based on the natural science of physics where one paradigm exists at a time. In social sciences such as sociology and Africana Studies competing paradigms coexist.

To the adherent, often times there is no challenge to the paradigm because people see it as a given. A paradigm brings scholars together and they discuss how things are and how one might change those things. Theory explains these paradigms. Theories look a certain way

depending on the paradigm, therefore paradigms produce theories. Paradigms are kinds of research or questions that cannot be answered. People who are victimized or placed in a lower position in society tend to be the ones who develop these paradigms. Minorities tend to develop paradigms that challenge the status quo and answer questions. At the outset of this project, the underlying inquiry is whether King's works fit within an existing Africana Studies paradigm, whether they represent a different and evolving paradigm within Africana Studies, or whether he even belongs within the discussion of Africana Studies paradigms.

The purpose of Scholar-Activism is to get to social action or social change. It tends to be more pragmatic in approach and aims to bring about some kind of change. W. E. B. Du Bois is probably the most famous person and earliest scholar to talk about Black scholar-activism. Also included would be Carter G. Woodson. Three main foci for Scholar-Activism are: (1) centeredness (how people see their lives as "what is" and "what ought to be"); (2) problem-posing (Terry Kershaw initially called this "critical analysis"); (3) problem-solving (empowerment) (Kershaw, 2010).

In this project I have analyzed King's six books for content. This project will examine: (1) whether these six books contain relevant and significant contributions to Scholar-Activism; and (2) the similarities and differences between King's six major writings. The project is designed to examine these six major books: *Stride Toward Freedom* (1958), *The Measure of a Man* (1959), *The Strength to Love* (1963), *Why We Can't Wait* (1964), *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (1967), and *The Trumpet of Conscience* (1967).

STATEMENT OF RELEVANCE

The African American Church² is central to African American history and life. Throughout their history African Americans have looked to the Church as their source of education, enrichment, and empowerment. At the heart of the African American Church has been the preacher/pastor/prophet, a spiritual leader who gives vision and direction to congregations (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990). Much of African American life has been affected directly or indirectly by the African American Church. As W.E.B. Du Bois discovered in his seminal work *The Philadelphia Negro*, the African experience is intertwined with, and maintained by, the Black Church. Robert Wortham (2005: 436) argues that Du Bois asserted that the Church was “the center of religious and political activity” and became the center of social life. Du Bois further points out that as a social group on American soil the African American Church may have preceded the African American family (Du Bois, 2007: 201).

To support Du Bois’ claim, consider the African American experience during the middle part of the twentieth century. The American Civil Rights Movement is one of the most significant social movements of the twentieth century, possibly in all of history (Morris, 1999). The movement certainly holds value for African Americans because it marked a dramatic improvement in their life chances and life experiences, including, but not limited, to voting rights, educational and employment opportunities, desegregation of public facilities, and a more equitable (though by no means completely equitable) system of justice. It was the struggle of the 1950’s and 1960’s and the Civil Rights Movement that “provided a historical moment when a statement had to be made.” African Americans were finally speaking to the whole of America and declaring that they would not accept an inferior position, despite the oppressive system in place. Gunnar Myrdal (1962) referred to the “Negro problem” in the post-Civil War era. He

² For clarity, the African American Church deals specifically with African-descended Christians in the Americas. The Black Church speaks to the Christian experience of Africans on the continent and in the entire Diaspora, though at times the two may be used interchangeable as done in this paper and reviewed literature.

suggested that prejudice was detrimental to America and that equal opportunity policies were urgently needed to resolve the American conflict (Agozino, 2010). The Black Consciousness Movement of the 1960's developed a desire and a need for a systematic study of the African American experience, which facilitated the development of Africana Studies and Black Studies programs (Aldridge and Young, 2000: 4, 5).

Union between the African American Church and the Civil Rights Movement becomes really easy to see: the Civil Rights Movement provides one of, if not the most, memorable, distinct, and influential interactions of the social and religious dimensions of African American life. This provided African Americans with the opportunity to use their institution (the *Black Church*) as a vehicle to initiate change. The Civil Rights Movement allowed the African American Church to put into practice its prophetic calling (West, 1999; 2002; 2003).

If nothing else, what linked the African American Church and the Civil Rights Movement was the leadership. In both cases, the leadership, more often than not, tended to be religious leadership that was generated from the Church. Even more specifically, the leadership in both areas tended to be charismatic and prophetic. Charismatic leadership generally focuses on the personality and the style of the leader. Prophetic leadership highlights such variables as the "calling", the authority, the vision, and the intentions of the leader.

Martin Luther King, Jr. has become synonymous with African American social transformation in the twentieth century. In the popular imagination, he remains the single most recognizable figure of the Civil Rights Movement (Kershaw, 2001). For many who lived during and after the Civil Rights Movement, King has been the model of African Americans and the Movement. He was a man who modeled sacrificial leadership, espoused moral principles, and became a martyr for his beliefs. As a pastor and a civil rights leader, King was an ideal type to

lead a successful social movement. Undoubtedly, King was a religious leader and he became arguably the greatest and most recognized figure in United States race relations. He stands on the shoulders of other scholars such as W.E.B. Du Bois as a commentator on race relations in America, particularly as it relates to the Black experience and empowerment. Du Bois was far more radical than King, but served as a forerunner in race relations for King and the Scholar-Activist paradigm.

Another distinction between Du Bois and King is that the former was highly critical of the Black Church while the latter offered more of a challenge to the Church in seeking to make significant change. Bradley Hertel (2010) points out that the times in which they lived were vastly different. King rose to leadership on the heels of World War II, where he had the support of Black veterans insisting on their “piece of the American pie.” For example, The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) launched a post-World War II legal attack on restrictive covenants, which placed limitations on property ownership and usage (Davis and Graham, 1995: 66). The postwar economy created upheavals in the labor force because the demand for cheap Black labor was no longer there (Asante, 2003:19). Hertel (2010) argues that in many ways Du Bois’ writing in the early part of the twentieth century may have been ahead of his time when compared to King’s writing in the late 1950’s and 1960’s. Much like King, Du Bois is criticized by Asante for studying Africans from a European perspective and utilizing European methods (Asante, 2003: 23).

Du Bois was not shy about his disappointment with the Church’s leaders, the preachers, and for the failure to do anything of note to create better conditions for Black people (Du Bois, 1994). As he so eloquently puts it, there are few positions in which a young man can do as much damage as in church leadership. Likewise, there are few positions where a young man can do as

much good as in the position of pastor, where his unselfish service can be exemplified (Du Bois, 1903: 206, 207). Incidentally, Booker T. Washington in *Up from Slavery* (2004: 41, 42), made a similar speech condemning the poor education of a lot of ignorant people who suddenly declare in a fit of a trance that they had received the calling to be ministers, but without the trouble to get adequate education to prepare them for that role. Many of these men were immoral and they claimed the calling just days after learning to read. He was condemned widely by the black clergy for this, but eventually they agreed that his call for the education of the black clergy was in order and Tuskegee Institute established a department for this purpose.

This study is vital to the past, present, and the future of Africana Studies. As generations pass, the number of those who were active in the Civil Rights Movement continues to dwindle and the number of those who were not grows. No other leader than King gives a better perspective of how the Movement contributed to Africana Studies. King was centered, and because of this, “he will offer a better lens through which to see the movement” (Huggins, 1987: 369). Further, King may be seen as a predecessor to the Scholar-Activist paradigm.

Many scholars have taken King's prophetic leadership as a given, typecasting him in such a role for his religious and social accomplishments, while glossing over his scholarship and academic contributions. His actions, his influence, and the accompanying results can be argued with little threat of successful contradiction to be anything other than prophetic. However, all prophets (at least from biblical and Western perspectives) have a message. In other words, they say something. Even if it is taken as a given that King is tagged as a prophet or prophetic leader, there still must be some evidence that supports such a claim. Situating King within the prophetic paradigm is far too easy and accepted; situating him in the discipline of Africana Studies, and

more specifically the scholar-activist paradigm, is another discussion altogether that will challenge my ability as a student of society.

This research is important because of the implications for Africana Studies programs and literature. King is often included in “Black” history and Civil Rights Movement discussions, but he rarely gets any reputable mention in Africana Studies, as persons like Asante only mention him in passing or to use as an example of what field of Africana Studies should or should not entail (Asante, 2003). This research is needed because situating King as a scholar-activist, or even within Africana Studies, has been neglected. He is relevant, but his work is too often neglected. King’s body of work belongs in the conversation for the foundation of Africana Studies programs. Kershaw (2001: 213) points out that King was “admired and respected by most black Americans and some white Americans” and the mantle of leadership was given to him by “both white and black America.” Because King is such an imposing historical figure in African American, European American, and global circles, including him and his works in the paradigm of Africana Studies is an added asset to the discipline.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Martin Luther King, Jr. is historically received as a social reformer and civil rights leader, and in a religious context, a preacher and prophet. But he rarely gets included in scholarly discussions. And this neglect is not uncommon. Samuel DeWitt Proctor, another twentieth century prominent Black minister, had his contributions ignored by the scholarly community (Bond, 2006). Considering the Asante-Karenga debate, it may be in the best interest of the scholarly community and the Africana Studies discipline to include King in their discussions.

What went into the making and the influence of the person and the public figure is anything but simple. King was influenced by the Church and the academy. He was influenced by persons whom he read, but also by people he encountered. King was as complex and complicated as those individuals and ideologies that influenced him. In the following section, I examine how the effects of these influences on King's life, legacy, and leadership matter for Africana Studies paradigm.

BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND AND INFLUENCES ON MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

There was no greater influence for King than Jesus Christ (we can view Jesus both as a historical, sociological figure, and the theological God incarnate). *The Sermon on the Mount* was for him "the classic statement of the Christian ethic" (Smith, 1970: 92) Jesus was King's model for social action (Bond, 2006: 285). King's agenda for civil rights and his Christian conviction were in direct relationship and formed an effective partnership (Mannath, 1997). The son, the grandson, and great grandson of a Baptist preacher, King's training in theology and homiletics must have come as second nature (Warren, 2001).

Martin Luther King, Sr. (who is often referred to as “Daddy King”) was arguably the greatest individual influence on his son’s life, ministry, theology, and philosophy (Warren, 2001). Daddy King directly and indirectly formulated his son’s theology and social activism. What is even more important is that the younger King was not afraid to disagree with the elder King; as many differences developed after the younger came back from his higher educational training.

King embraced Mohandas K. Gandhi and built much of his non-violent ideology around Gandhi’s teachings (Smith, 1970). King came to learn of the activist from India while listening to the lectures of Howard University president Mordecai Johnson. Gandhi’s methodology fascinated King. Gandhi, though a Buddhist, also loved Jesus and that may have been why his teachings were so readily embraced by King. The teachings of Gandhi suggest that laws should be broken when those laws interfere with a man’s conscience and a man’s relationship with, and honor of, God (King, 1958).

However, Gandhi’s principle of non-violence was African in origin (Agozino, 2005). Gandhi himself acknowledged that he learned the philosophy from the Zulus of South Africa and that experience with the Zulus led to Gandhi’s own implementation of non-violent resistance (Gandhi, 1993). This is all the more reason that King should be included in the Africana Studies conversation. If it is agreed that his movement was grounded in a principle that is African in origin, one cannot denounce the Civil Rights Movement or its leader as being alien to the field of Africana Studies. Asante points out that Afrocentricity is less about color, but more about perspectives. Anything of African origin, however, should be centrally placed in Africana Studies (Asante, 1990; 2003).

King's introduction to social resistance came, in part, through reading Henry David Thoreau's essay "Civil Disobedience" while King was a student at Morehouse College (King, 1958). There, King learned (or was affirmed) that his allegiance should be to whatever he considered to be right. The two did not completely agree, as Thoreau was not opposed to violence to resist evil and King was a staunch proponent of non-violence. Additionally, Thoreau often protested individually, contrary to King, who understood that masses would fuel the movement (Smith, 1970).

The social gospel was really King's passion that fueled and encompassed his pastorate and social activism. He credited Walter Rauschenbusch with seeing the social gospel in action. Rauschenbusch was a Christian minister from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who is key in the Social Gospel Movement. King admits in *Stride Toward Freedom* that when he entered Crozer Theological Seminary that he was looking for an intellectual method to combat evil. From this point King was able to put into practice the principles of the social gospel. Rauschenbusch articulates the notion of prophetic ministry that King so readily embraced. King differed from Rauschenbusch in that the latter believed in inevitable progress and associated the manifestation of the Kingdom of God with a particular social and economic system (King, 1958; Smith, 1970).

After graduating from Morehouse College in Atlanta, King attended Crozer Theological Seminary. The educational experience at Crozer changed King from fundamentalist to liberalist doctrines, though he did not completely digest all of the teachings of liberalism. King did not completely accept all of neo-orthodoxy, which in many ways was too radical for his belief. His theology was more of a synthesis of styles (King, 1958; Smith, 1970). I liken it to "theology a la carte", a buffet where one takes whatever appeals to them, but it requires the person to at least

look at what they are passing over and it requires them to be ready to pay the price for what they choose. Responsible theology and social activism requires some attention and address (consciously or unconsciously) to every relevant issue.

King admits that he fell for the prophetic and passionate writing style of Reinhold Niebuhr so much that he almost accepted what Niebuhr wrote uncritically (King, 1958). Niebuhr, a twentieth century theologian and contemporary of King, disagreed with Gandhi's spiritual stance of non-violence, and argued that it was legitimate only in the case where the oppressed group was in the overwhelming minority and had no power to overcome its oppressor (Smith, 1970: 96). In 1932, he predicted that non-violent resistance as a political and social strategy for a second Negro emancipation. Niebuhr believed that violence was a useless strategy for "Negroes" and hypothesized that Whites would not willingly offer Blacks equal rights unless compelled to do so. Of course King disagreed with Niebuhr on the issue of non-violence.

King completed his Ph.D. studies at Boston University. There he had two major professors who influenced his ideology. Edgar Sheffield Brightman was one of the leading American proponents of personal idealism, or personalism. Personalism is a Christian view of life that stressed religious and ethical values, which was compatible with King's theology. L. Harold DeWolf introduced King to the writings of German philosopher Georg Hegel. After reading Hegel, King was able to understand that "growth comes through struggle" (Smith, 1970: 97).

Some claimed that King was a Marxist. King embraced some of Karl Marx's principles and recognized his intellectual debt to him and commended his critique of capitalism, but he criticized Marx for the rejection of spiritual values. In King's own words he was not a Marxist, but he did employ a Marxist methodological approach which emphasizes struggles for progress

by the conscious people and not just the struggles between ideas the way George Hegel saw dialectics. In fact, King admits to reading Marx for his understanding of the critique of societies, but disagrees with Marxism in light of his Christianity (King, 1958; King, 1963; Fairclough, 1983).

AFRICANA STUDIES AND SCHOLAR-ACTIVISM

Certain scholars within Africana Studies have neglected King, choosing to embrace such nationalists as Malcolm X and Marcus Garvey for example. Molefi Asante specifically neglects King when he mentions that we are now experiencing “the Afrocentricity that the great prophets Garvey, Du Bois, Fanon, Bethune, Nkrumah, Muhammad, Malcolm, and Karenga had predicted for us” (Asante, 2003: 3). He further directly denounces King for not being Afrocentric, saying that “Kingism” should be remembered as a philosophy, not as Afrocentric. According to Asante, “Kingism” never claimed to be Afrocentric, nor could it ever make such a claim (Asante, 2003: 19-21).

Asante dismisses King for a lack of Afrocentricity because Asante has an anti-Christianity stance due to the perversion of the religion during chattel slavery. I argue that King deserves to be at least considered in the conversation of Afrocentricity and Africana Studies. King demonstrates that we can embrace certain religious traditions and still create social change. King was simultaneously grounded in and critical of the Scriptures and secular foci.

Afrocentrism is not the same as ethnocentrism. The only basic commonality between the two is the idea that reality is a process and that the discussion of normative patterns is socially contextual. But the two approaches differ greatly. Asante (1990: 28) writes:

But the principle problem with ethnomethodology is its Eurocentric bias. What is ethnomethodology conceptually but the white Western Eurocentric researcher saying to other white Western Eurocentric researchers that “we ought to study

these other people from their own contexts”? “Ethno” is derived from “ethnic” which is derived from the medieval English “ethnic” and the late Latin “ethica” which means “heathen.” Since the Eurocentric writers did not initially include white people in their conceptualization one can only speculate that ethnomethodology, like ethnomusicology, was meant to study those who were not Europeans.

The Afrocentric method calls for the researcher to examine himself or herself in the process of studying others (Asante, 2003: 27). This requires cultural immersion and centeredness.

King is not generally seen as a scholar, but as a prophet. But there is more to King than just the prophetic role. He was a scholar and an activist. At the center of his scholarship were African-centered people. My aim here is to situate him within the framework for which he has been neglected.

Junius Griffin (2001: 27) gives King credit for his voluminous notes that spotlighted a “pivotal era in American history.” He gives King a glowing commendation for not only being a great leader but also a prolific author. Griffin acknowledges King’s genius, his scholarship, and his analysis and criticism. Griffin writes, however, that though King was intelligent, he was not a scholar. I reject this notion as a superficial categorization of King. King was both intelligent and scholarly, though not necessarily a scholar in the traditional sense. Antonio Gramsci (discussed below) pointed out that the scholar is one who contributes something of intellectual value his or her field. While it may be true that King was not a college professor and did not operate in the typical scholarly sense, he was no less a scholar. He labored to earn several graduate degrees and he put his scholarship into action.

Maulana Karenga gives King credit for being in the thrust of Africana Studies and the activist-intellectual (scholar-activist) tradition, but Asante dismisses his inclusion in the field by diminishing his contributions. When addressing King's influence in the field, Asante (2003: 21) writes: “Kingism survives in a muffled form but it should be remembered as a significant action

philosophy, not as an Afrocentric statement which it never claimed nor could ever claim.”

Karenga (2002: 8) looks at things differently writing:

The activist-intellectual tradition was maintained and further developed in more modern times with activist-intellectuals such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Anna Julia Cooper, Ida B. Wells, Mary McLeod Bethune, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, et al, who used their knowledge and skills to address critical issues of their times in both discourse and social practice. This commitment to knowledge in the service of community, society, and humanity is the ground of the African activist-scholar or activist-intellectual tradition.

He presses his claim by adding:

The social struggle of the Sixties served as both a context and encouragement for the emergence of a student movement which linked itself to these larger struggles for social change both on-campus and off-campus. There were four basic thrusts in student movement, each of which aided in creating the context and support for the emergence of Black Studies as a discipline. These are: (1) The Civil Rights Movement; (2) The Free Speech Movement; (3) The Anti-Vietnam War Movement; and (4) the Black Power Movement.

Of these, the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Movement were directly related to the development of Black Studies. Therefore it is difficult for one to faithfully consider the development and longevity of the field of Africana Studies and deny the influence of King. If the Civil Rights Movement was critical for the emergence of Black Studies then it may stand to reason that King was an individual contributor to the discipline.

Fabio Rojas (2008), a professor of sociology at Indiana University, found that Africana Studies programs such as the one at Harvard, headed by Henry Louis Gates, and the one at Temple, headed by Molefi Asante, develop their programs by appealing to different audiences. For example, many Africana scholars seek publications in traditional Africana Studies journals, while others seek non-Africana journals such as economics and education. If such notable scholars as Gates and Asante take such divergent approaches in their Africana scholarship, then

it stands to reason that King too may have been different in his approach and could still be Africana in nature in his approach and application to the Scholar-Activist paradigm.

One problem I have with the conclusions of Rojas and Shaffer (2009) is the fact that they briefly trace the history of Black Studies programs, but they do not chronicle the prior events and activists who made the climate ripe for the development of the discipline. Their history starts in 1968, without giving the reader a background as to how this was made possible. Though not necessarily intentional, one could perceive that their history of Black Studies was not influenced by King (or any other civil rights leader for that matter). They do not offer a historical context for the development of Black Studies.

But Rojas' (2006) prior work cannot deny King and King's tactics and the development of Black Studies programs. For example, he found that protest in certain forms positively affects the chances that universities will create departments for African American Studies. Non-disruptive protests, such as rallies and demonstrations, have positive results and increase chances that universities will move to developing African American Studies. However, disruptive protests, such as sit-ins and vandalism have no significant effect. Rojas argues that the former is effective because it appeals to the sympathy of administrators. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a staunch advocate of rallies and demonstrations, but it is worth noting that he also advocated for sit-ins as well.

Susan George (2005) uses the term "intellectual" often to apparently be synonymous with the terms "scholar" and "academic." She raises the relevant question of whether a critical scholar can survive in academia. Her claim is that they either must be lucky or hold down an academic job. Speaking of scholars, she writes:

Whatever their field, they are mostly called upon to transmit the received wisdom, are discouraged from crossing disciplinary boundaries, must frequently please their departments before pleasing themselves, and for the increasingly large percentage without tenure, can't take too many risks or they will never benefit from job security. The best argument for tenure is that it creates space for critical enquiry, which is, of course, also the principle reason not to grant it. So the choice for most progressive intellectuals lies between taking a vow of poverty or academia. Fortunately, many still do get tenure with their creative faculties intact and their willingness to take unconventional approaches unsmothered (George, 2005: 5).

In a lot of ways, King's scholar-activism was ideal for his place outside of the academy. Being in the academy often ties the hands of scholars and activists. King embodies George's three suggestions for scholar-activists: (1) consider turning investigative attention to the poor, the powerless, and the systems that keep them that way; (2) use whatever methodology yields the best results or offers a new perspective; and (3) be rigorous and continuously striving to be more rigorous than mainstream colleagues (George, 2005).

Assata Zerai (2002: 202) writes: "Institutional constraints hinder the activist scholar who seeks to create alternative models for scholarship and social transformation." She advocates for Africana Studies to take an interdisciplinary approach. All one has to do is to consider how the discipline of sociology is a helpful tool for scholar-activists.

One could question why the vast majority of intellectuals, including scholars, choose to go into academia. Zerai (2002: 202, 203) writes:

Academia entices many of us because we desire to learn the tools that will allow us to wage ideological struggle for the hearts and minds of our people in particular, and humanity in general, in order to collectively pursue a more positive direction that will result in better lives for all. This alternative model of the intellectual who sacrifices self in service of humanity, exists in opposition to the model of the intellectual who attempts to pursue knowledge for knowledge's sake.

Africana Studies (and scholar-activism in particular) differs from the Positivist paradigm. The positivist approach is to study in effort to find causal relationships for the purpose of making

predictions and staying in power (Kershaw, 2010). Scholar-activism seeks to reject hegemony and illegitimate power regimes. To that, Zerai clarifies that the term “scholar-activist” is a person who engages in scholarly excellence and political struggle and does so within the confines of the academy.

However, as Zerai points out, many “activist/scholars” (her term) avoid formal educational institutions in order to engage in a scholarship for activism. This addresses my initial concern when first reading her article. It seems that most work on scholar-activism research looks at it only from the perspective of academia. Zerai points out that there are multiple models for scholar-activism. I suggest that though King did not work within academia, he took another approach to scholar-activism that was heavy on activism. Zerai herself points out that the demands of academia do not afford the scholar-activist the opportunity to engage in grassroots activists.

Zerai (2002: 206) conducted a survey and found that activist scholars make contributions to humanity in a multiplicity of ways, including, but not limited to: (1) infusing activist orientation in the content of classes; (2) engaging colleagues in ideological struggle by challenging conference papers and conference presentations; (3) waging ideological struggle through journal articles; (4) engaging in research that directly contributes to social policy to improve conditions of suffering people; and (5) serving as consultants to activists. It is worth noting (though not surprising) that none of the respondents suggested that they attempt to keep their academic work separate from their political work.

ORGANIC INTELLECTUALISM AND HEGEMONY

According to Antonio Gramsci (1994a; 1994b), one could make the claim that an intellectual creates knowledge or contributes just for the sake of doing so with no intent other

than self-aggrandizement. A scholar creates new knowledge or contributes for practical purposes. In other words, the scholar's knowledge, input, and contribution have practical value; the intellectual may be guilty of creating or contributing for irrelevance.

In Gramsci's view, the intellectual (or at least the Italian intellectual) contributes to nothing more than his or her own ego. The scholar on the other hand, is one who contributes something to his or her field and others. This is internal gratification versus external growth.

We must keep in mind that most of Gramsci's writings that deal with intellectuals speak to the Italian intellectual. The intellectual is portrayed as being aloof and interested in principle without practice. The intellectual resents work and appears to be too important for everyday people.

Intellectuals conceive of literature as a "profession" unto itself that should "pay" even when nothing is immediately produced and that should give them the right to a pension. Who, though, is to decide that such and such a writer is really a "literary figure" and that society can support him while waiting for his "masterpiece"? (Forgacs and Nowell-Smith, 1985: 274)

However, let us not forget that Gramsci uses the term "intellectual" while other authors use "intellectuals" in conjunction and alternating with "academics" and "scholars", as exemplified by Susan George. So we must investigate the nomenclature of each author before we draw conclusions about their intent.

Iram Siraj-Blatchford (1995: 213) calls upon the Gramscian concept of organic intellectualism and expounds upon it for the purposes of modernity. There is a distinction between a "traditional intellectual" and an "organic intellectual." The former tends to be part of the dominant group and only understands circumstances, while the latter is committed to an oppressed group, and "will simultaneously feel and act accordingly." They are "actively

involved in society, constantly struggling to change minds and to expand the power and control of the group to which they are committed.” Siraj-Blatchford (1995: 213) writes:

Organic intellectuals have a dual role to play, to provide social groups with “homogeneity” and an awareness of their economic, social, and political position and also to assimilate and defeat ideologically the traditional intellectuals. Organic intellectuals have a crucial role in influencing "traditional intellectuals" epistemologies.

The traditional intellectual is tied to the past and to intellectuals and traditions of the past. The organic intellectual, on the other hand, is very in tune with and identifies more with the dominant group (Ramos, 1982). Organic intellectuals challenge the status quo, but this is usually done within formal educational settings (Fischman and McLaren: 2005).

Gramsci argues that true hegemony was exercised by a group that had some sort of economic dominance (Bellamy, 1994). Gramsci argues that all societies have two classes: a ruling class and a class that is ruled. The former performs all of the political functions, monopolizes power, and enjoys all of the benefits that power brings. The latter is controlled by the former (Buttigieg, 2007: 561).

VALUE-FREE SCIENCE

Anything of material or intellectual nature of interest is a value. A statement or proposition through which values are affirmed or negated constitutes a value judgment. Subjectivity in natural sciences is inevitable, but Max Weber suggests that social science should be value-free, as his theory addressing ethical neutrality says there is no place for values in science. However, social sciences are subjective and laden with value-judgments, terms, and assumptions (Rugina, 1984:2).

Weber did not seem to say that humans should not have value, motives, goals, and ideals because the mere fact that we have these makes us human. What he did seem to advocate is an

assessment of the values that we esteem over others as these are the hierarchically ranked by free choice (Nwala, 1974:30). In his lecture, “Science as a Vocation” (1922), Weber made the distinction between the career in academia in Germany and in the United States. In the German system, politics and favoritism took on primary importance and one's financial compensation was correlated to his or her lecture classes. Weber (1922: 4) said:

Now, matters are such that German universities, especially the small universities, are engaged in a most ridiculous competition for enrollments. The landlords of rooming houses in university cities celebrate the advent of the thousandth student by a festival, and they would love to celebrate Number Two Thousand by a torchlight procession. The interest in fees--and one should openly admit it--is affected by appointments in the neighboring fields that “draw crowds.” And quite apart from this, the number of students enrolled is a test of qualification, which may be grasped in terms of numbers, whereas the qualification for scholarship is imponderable and, precisely with audacious innovators, often debatable—that is only natural. Almost everybody thus is affected by the suggestion of the immeasurable blessing and value of large enrollments. To say of a docent that he is a poor teacher is usually to pronounce an academic sentence of death, even if he is the foremost scholar in the world. And the question whether he is a good or a poor teacher is answered by the enrollments with which the students condescendingly honor him.

Weber was advocating for academicians to not play the game for the sole purpose of increasing their classroom enrollment. Similarly, Biko Agozino (1999: 408) wrote about objectivity and asserts: “Those who doubt that objectivity is possible in the social sciences do so because they define objectivity in the natural science terms of complete detachment.” However, even in cases with purposeful objectivity, values still arise. For example, Agozino (1999: 408) advocates for research that identifies with oppressed people everywhere.

SYNTHESIS OF LITERATURE

Leadership personality is critical to leadership success. It is an insult to the other participants in the Civil Rights Movement to place too great of an emphasis on the

accomplishments of King; however, to assume that someone else could have been transplanted into King's place and produced the same results is insulting to King (Huggins, 1987).

One of the glaring problems with the leadership literature is the fact that leadership tends to focus on individual leaders and not collective leaders. Ironically, and probably necessarily, leadership studies do focus on collective followership. Future research could fill such a gap, including within the Africana Studies paradigm. Do leadership studies look at leaders solely as individuals, which may be a more Eurocentric perspective while neglecting a communal leadership approach, which may be more Afrocentric?

Roger Friedland (2001) suggests that sociology must be factored into the American religious context, as the emergence and formation of the Western nation-state has everything to do with Christianity. In other words, religion and sociology are inextricably linked (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990: 2). It stands to reason then, that social revolutions (both past and present) could have some direct or indirect relationship to religion. Prophetic leadership, in streamlined terms, can be seen as leadership that is grounded in a particular religious tradition with the clear intention of creating social change, with justice at the core of the message.

It appears that charismatic leadership and prophetic leadership are either born out of or at least exist under the same conditions (Thomas and Thomas, 2004). Clearly the literature suggests that King demonstrated the qualities of charismatic leadership. Few scholars argue against this point. However, it has often been implied or taken for a given that King was a modern-day prophet. Though he may have demonstrated what could pass as prophetic leadership, and though the results of his leadership may support such claim, this project is concerned more with the language of his writings and scholarly contributions. If it is taken as a given that King acted like a prophet, this research project is concerned more with whether he

wrote like a scholar-activist. Whether as a preacher, a sociologist, or scholar-activist, King's research and writings consistently identified with oppressed people throughout the world, as advocated by Agozino (1999).

During the early to mid 1960's, American society went through dramatic changes (Morris, 1999). During this period, the Civil Rights Movement mobilized and began a very aggressive and successful attack on Jim Crow. Out of these sociopolitical transformations of the 1960's came new information, beliefs, and the development of knowledge (Hall, 2000: 36) It was around this time that King delivered his "I Have a Dream Speech" and the March on Washington. Something happened after that. One could speculate whether progress satisfied some members of the movement; if the slow progression disheartened some participants; or if King evolved into a more inclusive messenger.

There is tension between prophecy and scholar-activism. The former is religious and spiritual while the latter produces concrete and empirical evidence. Prophecy is about religious faith while scholar-activism is about academic facts. It may be that prophecy in the Church and scholar-activism in the academy have strong similarities.

King's books allowed him to quietly and deliberately take time to think about his words and his communication. Much of what he wrote were private musings that allowed him to reflect in a way that he could communicate his thoughts and feelings to his public. His work was radical and revolutionary, it was centered and empowering, all of which make him and his work excellent candidates to be categorized into the Africana Studies paradigm. But these were King's ideas that were written down for the purposes of being read. As we know, King was an excellent orator and at his core, he was a Baptist preacher. And as King so eloquently pointed out, sermons (and similarly speeches) are meant to be heard and not read. Sermons and speeches

are designed for “the listening ear rather than the reading eye” (King, 1963: 11-12). However, King’s books were meant to be read, and if we do so within the Africana Studies paradigm for the purposes of determining whether he is more than a preacher/prophet/civil rights leader—we can determine whether King was a scholar activist.

Both the charismatic leader and the prophetic leader must be centered in the experiences of their audience and those for whom they lead and advocate. This is the first requirement of Kershaw's scholar-activist approach (1990; 2001; 2010). However, just because a researcher is centered in the experiences of the subject does not qualify them as a scholar-activist, where the nomenclature clearly requires one to simultaneously be a “scholar” and an “activist.” Further a scholar-activist must identify an issue for research or to be addressed (problem-posing) and seeks to create some sort of answer (problem-solving).

How does this scholar-activism relate to leadership? We have discovered that King was a leader who was charismatic, religious, and arguably prophetic. Scholar-activists, in a sense, are leaders, though the inverse does not necessarily hold true. Africana Studies suggests that research must be centered in the experiences of the subjects, empowering, and create new knowledge. Scholar-activism is an approach under the Africana Studies paradigm. As Terry Kershaw (1990; 2001; 2010) suggests, scholar-activists must be centered, problem-posing, and problem-solving. When we hold King to these criteria can we categorize him as a scholar-activist?

Chapter 3: Methods

This is a content-focused project. This project is concerned primarily with the contents of King's six books: *Stride Toward Freedom* (1958), *The Measure of a Man* (1959), *The Strength to Love* (1963), *Why We Can't Wait* (1964), *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (1967), and *The Trumpet of Conscience* (1967). There is also some concern with his actions and personality (though these aspects are just side notes), as these two factors are important as background for the “sitz-im-leben” (this is a German word meaning “setting in life, or life situation”) (Soulen and Soulen, 2001: 173, 174). The context of communication grounds the content of communication. This research is designed to determine whether the book-length writings of Martin Luther King, Jr. allow him to be situated within the Scholar-Activist paradigm of Africana Studies.

The content of King's books should offer evidence to what King and his followers were experiencing and what was deemed vitally important. More specifically, the texts may actually serve to create new knowledge. What King writes in his books is what he desired to communicate through his leadership paradigm. The content and the context are evidence to what is valuable to the communicator, as texts acquire their significance primarily from context. Klaus Krippendorff writes: “Context analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use.” He further argues that the methods of this approach should be replicable, across time and cultures. Results should also be valid, meaning that they can stand up under scrutiny (Krippendorff, 2004: 18).

The texts are the sources of data, upon which I drew out themes for analysis. The search was for overarching meaning and clear ideas. In analyzing these books, I attempted to attach value to King's statements. Using the literature, I sought to contextualize and situate King

within the field of Africana Studies, but more specifically within the paradigm of Scholar-Activist paradigm.

I proposed a two-stage process. In the first section I attempted to draw meaning from the texts (books) using exegetical tools of analysis. To each text I asked the following primary questions: (1) Is it centered? (If so, then how much is it centered?) (2) What is the problem? (3) What is the solution? On a deeper, secondary level, I investigated the following question: (1) What is the political implicit or explicit activism of the text? (2) How critical is the text? (3) What will “centered” look like? Admittedly, answers to these questions may be subjective and open for interpretation.

Secondly, I applied the scholar-activist approach as proposed by Terry Kershaw (1990) to King’s texts. Not only did I seek to determine whether King fits in the scholar-activist paradigm, but additionally I sought to answer to what extent he belongs. Kershaw’s proposed Black Studies method includes the following five steps: (1) identify the problematic relationships through studying past empirical works between groups involved; (2) develop measures and methods of collecting data based on empirical interpretations of reality; (3) compare conditions and critically evaluate relationships to determine whether fundamental contradictions exist; (4) participate in educational programs that help to develop tools that identify contradictions between conditions and understandings; and (5) change and alter theory in light of present findings for the purpose of unifying theory and praxis (Kershaw, 1990: 23). It is by these standards and by Kershaw’s Scholar-Activist approach of centeredness, problem-posing, and problem-solving that I will examine King’s six book-length manuscripts.

This project takes a deductive approach where the data is situated and classified first according to general scholar-activist paradigms to more specific paradigms. Data is drawn from

King's six book-length manuscripts. The sample is drawn from the entire population of King's books. This is intentional and meant to be exhaustive in order to preemptively circumvent any criticisms about a limited sample population.

I initially coded the pieces based on broad themes in Kershaw's scholar-activist approach, which yielded three categories: problem-posing, problem-solving, and empowering. As I read each book I highlighted passes that I felt could be categorized according to these broad themes or codes. I then further divided these categories into subcategories or sub-codes that seemingly addressed the specific foci of King's writings.

Sub-codes are not necessarily clearly distinctive or mutually exclusive. Admittedly, sub-codes could be further divided and combined based on researcher subjectivity. The following eight sub-codes seem to be the most prevalent in King's six books: Economic Justice; Racial Equality/Integration (which is not clearly and consistently distinguished from desegregation); Existentialism; Social Activism/Service; Theology/Activism (that which is strongly Christian in nature); Revolution/Leadership; Black Ideology/Liberation/Black Theology; and Anti-Militarism/Anti-Poverty (which King repeatedly seemed to suggest were intertwined).

Barney G. Glaser (1992: 11) defines qualitative analysis as one that produces findings, concepts, and hypotheses that are not reached based on statistical methods. Qualitative analysis in this project focuses mainly upon the sub-codes. The analysis examines content and relevance of King's six books. Some books, particularly *Why We Can't Wait* (1964) and *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (1967), appear to offer more useful data and appear exceedingly more relevant for research within Africana Studies, more specifically, the Scholar-Activist paradigm. The analysis includes an introductory discussion of the relevance and categorization of each piece as a whole and then their individual components.

In Chapter 4, I present my findings from King's sampled works. The summary of findings should give clear evidence of what King brings (or fails to bring) to Africana Studies. In Chapter 5, I interrogate these findings presented in the prior chapter. King's work is evaluated mostly by comparison of theories and works of other scholars and authors in the field of Africana Studies. In Chapter 6, I draw my conclusions about whether or not the case can be made to include King in the field of Africana Studies. As I present my findings in Chapter 4, I am mindful of the works of Karenga (1988; 2002) and his use transitional nomenclature within the field. When quoting or referencing King or his context I used the term "Negro", but frequently in the modern context I opt for the terms "African American" or "Black", depending upon the context.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

I began this project mindful that content of communication speaks volumes about the context. The texts will help to understand why this is important and how it contributes to scholarship. Leadership success depends heavily upon effective communication. Context makes communication relevant. What is said is arguably just as important as where it is situated. Therefore, upon researching the context and the communication of a leader (Martin Luther King, Jr.) I hope to be able to say something about leadership that will speak to future scholarship in leadership, which is relevant for Africana Studies. In the end, I hope to be able to offer a critique of King's leadership and his writings through the lens of scholar activism, and to be able to draw conclusions for what this means for the twenty-first century African American Church and its leadership, and then offer some suggestions for future research.

Chapter 4: Summary of Findings

Stride Toward Freedom is King's personal account of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the events that led up to it, and the effects that it created. King went into great lengths to recall the most intricate details that made a significant change for Montgomery race relations in the 1950's. In this book, King documents the successes, the setbacks, and the long periods of patience and perseverance needed to reach the desired ends that the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) had laid out. This book is an account of King's activism.

The Measure of a Man is not a traditional manuscript of book length. It contains approximately 55 total pages, only 23 pages of text, and much of the remaining pages are pictures. The term "man" can be translated to apply to "humanity." This has more of a sermonic tone than sociological, Afrocentric, or in many ways, scholarly tone. It takes a theological and religious tone, with some sociological, psychological, and philosophical elements. Further, it can be viewed as scholarly in a non-traditional sense, in that it does contribute to new knowledge and offers King's musings.

Many of King's sermons in *Strength to Love* are more Bible, Christian-focused for his church audiences (more than for secular settings). He used the dialectic method, more often than any other method. This allows us to see his problem-posing and problem-solving thought processes. He took a centered approach in that he knows and lives in the African American Church experience, and he uses a biblical text to use a hermeneutic to raise a relevant question for consideration, and he attempts to fuse his sociological training and liberal arts education into the Black Church tradition.

With that fact established, I focus more on King's social and scholar-activism versus his pastoral, theological, and primarily biblical leanings, except in instances where the correlation is

obvious and relevant. In instances where King's sermon ideas were redundant and were found in several sermons, I try to limit the analysis to appearing as few times as possible. Because many of King's primary ideas appear in multiple sermons, it would be repetitive and pointless to continue to address and analyze recurring themes.

Why We Can't Wait opens up with King's vivid detail of what it meant to be Black in America during his time, not just in the South, but across the nation. What he presented in the introduction of the book attempts to answer to the "why" as it pertains to the lack of patience in the Black community. There appears to be an immediacy and urgency for Black economic uplift from King's perspective.

He painted two hypothetical, albeit probably real, scenarios of a boy and a girl in different parts of the country who suffer from the same ailment: misery that appears to persistently haunt the African American. King's use of imagery makes the scenarios come to life for all, even those who do not live in those conditions but who can empathize with the plight of fellow Americans, Black or White.

The introduction to *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?*, written by King's colleague and scholar Vincent Harding, cautions the reader that the book must be read contextually within King's experiences in Watts and Chicago, both of which seemed to be more representative of the nation's economic disparities than that of the South (King, 1967: xii). Harding quotes King as saying that he chose to identify with the underprivileged and poor and to give his life for the hungry. Though he himself grew up in a relative middle class comfort, King felt called and compelled to do something for others (King, 1967: xvii).

Harding suggests that King combined various roles: activist, social analyst, pastor, and prophet. This blend, Harding notes, allowed King to speak to Whites, the Black poor, and the

expanding Black middle class. It is here that Harding believes that King gave a clear purpose and definition for integration, which was not “to integrate the Negro into all the existing values of American society”, but rather he wanted integration to be social transformative for all (King, 1967: xviii).

The Trumpet of Conscience is a collection of speeches (or sermonic lectures) that King gave in his post-Riverside Church speech on the Vietnam War. The book is contained within *A Testament of Hope* and is curiously missing a first chapter. *Trumpet of Conscience* resembles *Strength to Love* in that both are King’s words that were spoken and are in written format. The difference is that with *Trumpet of Conscience* we do not know if King ever intended to have these words penned to paper. The majority of King's focus in these speeches deals with the Vietnam War and foreign policy and how the two interact with King's other frequently addressed issues: justice and poverty.

Each of these six books is unique and serves a different purpose. Distinct themes arise out of each text; however, as is the case with many authors with multiple works, themes do overlap. The following section analyzes the major themes that were found in the texts. Though some themes may seem analogous (i.e. economic justice and anti-poverty), at times King approaches the topics differently, which offers at least some distinction.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

King recounted his journey to the pastorate and civil rights leadership. He wrote that, against his father’s wishes, he spent two summers working in a factory that hired both Blacks and Whites. He posited that those experiences allowed him to see how economic injustices cross racial lines.

King went on to discuss how his trek to seminary and reading Walter Rauschenbusch helped him to articulate what he had been feeling in his desire to blend sociology and theology. Further, King read Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* and *The Communist Manifesto*. Many have debated whether King was a Marxist or a Communist (Fairclough, 1983), which reading this chapter undoubtedly rejects. He opposed communism's materialistic interpretation of history, its ethical relativism, and its political totalitarianism (King, 1958: 79-82).

RACIAL EQUALITY/INTEGRATION (DESEGREGATION)

King deeply contemplated returning to a society (the South) that condoned a system (segregation) that he detested. After he and his wife Coretta discussed their options, they decided that despite the "disadvantages and inevitable sacrifices" that service was calling them to return home. King (1958: 7, 8) wrote:

Since racial discrimination was most intense in the South, we felt that some of the Negroes who received a portion of their training in other sections of the country should return to share their broader contacts and educational experience in its solution.

King knew that he could later satisfy his passion for scholarship if he so chose.

The MIA executive board appointed twelve members to a negotiating committee with King as the spokesperson. At this stage King and the MIA were preparing for negotiations with city officials. The MIA was seeking to make three proposals: (1) the guarantee of courteous treatment by bus drivers toward Black passengers; (2) passengers being seated on a first-come, first served basis with Blacks being seated from the back; and finally (3) employment of Black bus drivers on predominantly Black bus routes (King, 1958: 97).

Ultimately the bus boycott led to the change of segregation laws. King came to see that his activism and his devotion to Jesus were in no way conflicting. He wrote: "In fact I see a

necessary relationship. If one is truly devoted to the religion of Jesus he will seek to rid the earth of social evils” (King, 1958: 106).

Once the buses of Montgomery were “integrated” (or “desegregated” which will be discussed further in Chapter 6) King thought that it would be a good gesture to have ministers riding the bus during the busiest hours of the first few days. King himself felt that it was his duty not just to lead the people in the quest for justice but to literally lead them onto the bus. In many ways the MIA led an even bigger movement that stretched across the South: the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). The SCLC took some of its cues from the MIA in developing a similar focus against bus segregation through non-violence for the entire South (King, 1958: 168).

EXISTENTIALISM

The Measure of a Man deals with three basic elements: (1) the constitution of man; (2) the capacity of man, and (3) the corruptibility of man. The first chapter is organized much the same way that King organizes most of his sermons (see discussion below on *Strength to Love*). He set out to answer the critical questions about humanity. The first point is that man has a physical body, and teaches that physical body is not evil as Greek philosophy teaches; the will of man is evil as espoused by the doctrine of Christianity. Man is a physical being with physical needs, expressed partly in chemical and biological terms.

But secondly, man is a spiritual being. Man has a sinful nature that causes him to do things contrary to his divine design. King (1959: 17) argues that man's current “isness” is out of harmony with his eternal “oughtness.”

Continuing on, King gave a brief exegesis of several biblical texts in order to develop what resembles another sermon. He posited that the three dimensions of the complete life are length, breadth, and height. When life is complete it should be complete in all three aspects.

The length of life is concerned with the duration and focuses on inner power, moral and rational self-interests. Man must first concern himself with his own well being before concerning himself with the welfare of others. It is really concerned with the individual making a conscious effort to reach his/her maximum potential.

The breadth of life is the dimension in which persons are concerned with others. King (1959: 45) wrote:

All this has a great deal of bearing in our situation in the world today. So often racial groups are concerned about the length of life, their economic privileged position, their social status. So often nations of the world are concerned about the length of life, perpetuating their nationalistic concerns, and their economic ends.

He furthered his claim by suggesting that all of humanity is interdependent, and that we are all caught in “an inescapable network of mutuality.” He suggested that poverty in the world affects everyone in the world, directly or indirectly.

Height, the third dimension of a complete life, is man’s discovery of God. King claimed here that the seeking and ultimate discovery of God makes the first two dimensions relevant. He completed this by saying that the completeness of life is when man loves himself, loves his neighbor, and loves his God.

SOCIAL ACTIVISM/SERVICE

As King took the reins of the pastorate in Montgomery, he immediately commenced to making changes within the operations of the church. As the pastor, he recommended a committee to serve for religious education, social service, political action, and to raise scholarship funds (King, 1958: 12). He pointed out that because his agenda was a departure

from the traditional, he was doubtful of its acceptance. However, to King's surprise the congregation heartily accepted his recommendations.

King (1958: 14-16) wrote that many African Americans went into domestic service because of the lack of industry in Montgomery. To support his claims of the lifestyle discrepancy between Whites and Blacks ("Negroes" as King most often referred to them), he presented the following data:

- In 1950, the median income for the approximately 70,000 Whites in Montgomery was \$1,730 compared to \$970 for the 50,000 Negroes.
- 94% of White families in Montgomery had flush toilets inside their homes compared to 31% of Negro families.
- By 1940 there were not more than 2,000 Negro voters in the entire state of Alabama. At the time of King's writing, the number was close to 50,000. This latter number represents less than ten percent of those of eligible voting age in the state. In 1954, there were 30,000 Negroes of voting age in Montgomery County (Alabama), but only a few more than 2,000 were registered to vote.

King himself joined the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and made it the mission of his church's Social and Political Action Committee to continuously remind the congregation of the importance of the NAACP and being registered voters. King's membership in both the NAACP and the Alabama Council on Human Relations led some to question his allegiance to two organizations whose methodologies were so contrary. He answered these criticisms by saying that he felt both organizations met a need in the community.

Before any real social progress could take place, King (1958: 21-24) identified some glaring problems within the Black community: lack of unity among Black community leaders; indifference by the educated group; apathy on behalf of Black ministers; and passivity on behalf of the uneducated. He argued that the indifference of the educated group and the passivity of the uneducated group could be attributed in part to the fear of economic retaliation. Addressing how such fear can paralyze one into inactivity, King (1958: 24) wrote:

Dependent on the white community, they dared not protest against unjust racial conditions for fear of losing their jobs. But perhaps an even more basic force at work was their corroding sense of inferiority, which often expressed itself in a lack of self-respect. Many unconsciously wondered whether they actually deserved any better conditions. Their minds and souls were so conditioned to the system of segregation that they submissively adjusted themselves to things as they were. This is the ultimate tragedy of segregation. It not only harms one physically but injures one spiritually. It scars the soul and degrades the personality. It inflicts the segregated with a false sense of inferiority, while confirming the segregator in a false estimate of his own superiority. It is a system which forever stares the segregated in the face, saying: "You are less than..." "You are not equal to..." The system of segregation itself was responsible for much of the passivity of the Negroes of Montgomery.

King was adamant that the movement was not one of passivity; it was massive non-cooperation with evil and the systematic dehumanization of Americans of African descent.

Rosa Parks' arrest for refusing to surrender her seat on a Montgomery bus to a White passenger served as a catalytic element or maybe "the last straw" for African American mistreatment in Montgomery (King and others made it clear that Parks was not "planted" by the NAACP or any other group). Regardless of what was the tipping point, King argued that Blacks' disgust with the disrespectful treatment that they received on a daily basis had reached its breaking point. To gain the attention of the oppressor, King chose the boycott method. He argued that this method was designed to bring about justice and freedom.

Expounding upon his boycott methodological approach, King admitted that he initially accepted the method uncritically. But then after contemplating it, he affirmed his initial thoughts. He wrote:

I reasoned, therefore, that the word “boycott” was really a misnomer for our proposed action. A boycott suggests an economic squeeze, leaving one bogged down in a negative. But we were concerned with the positive. Our concern would not be to put the bus company out of business, but to put justice in business (King, 1958: 39).

The boycott method allowed King to maintain his nonviolent stance while continuing his activist aims.

King (1958: 43) interpreted Rosa Parks’ arrest as having a two-fold impact: it aroused African Americans to positive action “and it was a test to the validity of the segregation law itself.” The movement, the formation of the MIA, and King's election to the organization’s presidency could be viewed as King’s introduction to political activism. As the leader of the movement, in his first speech, King was faced with the dilemma of his speech’s content: how to be moderate and militant at the same time in the same speech.

According to King, the speech that he gave on that night was the most audience-arousing speech or sermon that he had ever delivered (at least up to the time of this writing). He further claimed that the Montgomery story would have happened even if the leaders had not been born. He posited that on that night of December 5, 1955 the Montgomery Boycott was about to gain nationwide attention (1958: 54, 55).

King offered his suggestions for future activism. He played point-counterpoint with his opponents. Here, he dealt more with “integration” than “desegregation” (which is discussed further in Chapter 6).

King argued that Montgomery is symptomatic of a larger national problem. He then used Montgomery as a model for the South and the nation. What he could have been indirectly suggesting is that the success in Montgomery could be duplicated elsewhere. Thus, the bus boycott in Montgomery created a new Negro in the South with a new dignity and destiny (King, 1958: 183).

King's suggestions for future activism address the responsibilities of the federal government, labor unions, the Church, White Northern liberals, and ministers (both Black and White). King (1958: 205) said of the need of prophecy:

Any discussion of the role of the Christian minister today must ultimately emphasize the need for prophecy. Not every minister can be a prophet, but some must be prepared for the ordeals of this high calling and be willing to suffer courageously for righteousness.

He did give a sense of hope when he suggested that the South had already followed this prophetic path.

Political power would be a key factor in Black community change. Black voter participation was increasing, but still left room for significant improvement. King cited three major problems with this. First of all, many Black politicians were selected by White leaders, elevated, and given resources by them. In a real sense, the politician becomes a figurehead for the old way of life. Secondly, Blacks had few political alliances, which often left the politician isolated in the struggle for legislative changes. And thirdly, many Blacks did not vote or engage in political activism.

King spoke directly to the "scholar-activist" perspective. He wrote:

Education without social action is a one-sided value because it has no true power potential. Social action without education is a weak expression of pure energy. Deeds uninformed by educated thought can take false directions. When we go into action and confront our adversaries, we must be as armed with knowledge as

they. Our policies should have the strength of deep analysis beneath them to be able to challenge the clever sophistries of our opponents (King, 1967: 164).

King felt that energies needed to be focused toward the creation of power. Social pressure needed to be enacted that would encourage Black people to enact their citizenship rights. If they did so, this would incite positive change for the individual as well as for the entire race.

It appears that at this point in King's career he focused on three major issues that activism needs to address: equality, poverty, and war. Racism and economic exploitation are partners in social stagnation and oppression. In fact, King argued that racism has no geographic boundaries, but has international effects (King, 1967: 183). A more sophisticated form of racism is demonstrated in neocolonialism. King pointed out that leaders in Africa, Asia, and Latin America have been educated by the West (King, 1967: 185). If King's assertion that education must work together with social action, then it stands to reason that purposely biased or slanted education can be antithetical to social action.

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY/ACTIVISM

King (1963: 13) believed that life is about a "creative synthesis of opposites in a fruitful harmony." He then added that "Jesus recognized the need for blending opposites." The sheep and the wolves, the serpents and the doves are part of everyday life. Using the Hegelian dialectic, King suggested that this text is the biblical basis for the Beloved Community.

King (1963: 18) advocated for tough mindedness as well as tender heartedness. He called the African American community to act in the same manner. The simultaneous execution of both, he believed, will move the Black community closer to freedom and justice. He further charged his listeners that passivity with an evil system is synonymous with cooperation with that system.

Jesus, in King's mind, was the world's most dedicated nonconformist. In following the model of Jesus, King (1963: 22) admonished his congregation "to be a people of conviction and not conformity; of moral nobility, not social respectability."

The Church is challenged for conformity, with King citing evidence of ecclesiastical participation in slavery, segregation, war, and economic exploitation. At this point he challenged the Church to be the moral guardian of the community and to combat social evils.

In working with the familiar biblical text of the Good Samaritan, King questioned the notion of universal altruism. He further questioned the notions of both racial and economic justice. King (1963: 35) wrote: "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."

King (1963: 40) argued that one of the greatest tragedies is that men rarely bridge the gap between practice and profession. As he has in so many sermons, King compared societal practices to a schizophrenic personality between what is said and what is done. For him, the life of Jesus exemplified the bridge between the two.

As he frequently did, King denounced the practice of war. He called this a true blindness (1963: 43). In many ways, the ones who are promoting war do so under the banner of patriotism.

In a similar vein, reflecting on the Dred Scott Decision of 1857, King (1963: 45) examined the court justices in a positive light. He penned:

The Court affirmed that the Negro had no rights which the white man was bound to respect. The justices who rendered this decision were not wicked men. On the contrary, they were decent and dedicated men. But they were victims of spiritual and intellectual blindness. They knew not what they did. The whole system of slavery was largely perpetuated by sincere though spiritually ignorant persons.

King argued that this “tragic blindness” was part of an ideology that was so entrenched in White society that the African American was considered inferior and slavery was considered ordained by God.

King challenged the Black community to a new sense of urgency. He charged the Church to understand the meaning of “love your enemies.” He defined forgiveness as an act that does not hinder relationship bonds.

As with many of his sermons, King criticized and challenged the Church toward social action in “A Knock At Midnight” [Luke 11:5-6]. He called the Church neither the master nor the servant of the state, rather the conscience of the state. King (1963: 64) called the Church the “guide and the critic of the state, and never its tool.”

The major idea of “The Man Who Was A Fool” [Luke 12:20] is interrelatedness. He used this sermon to expound upon theme of community which he initially talked about in *The Measure of a Man*. In fact the theme of man’s dependency upon community and the dependency upon Creator are almost mirror reflections of his previous work.

King (1963: 79) interpreted this text as symbolic of “the death of evil and of inhuman oppression and unjust exploitation.” He posited that the text [Exodus 14:30] had relevance to the struggle for freedom and justice during his time. The exploitation and colonization of people of color is addressed in detail.

Possibly the most relevant contribution in “Shattered Dreams” [Romans 15:24] is King’s redefining of peace. Peace, according to King, is not about calm weather, wealth, and health. He wrote that “true peace, a calm that exceeds all description and all explanation, is peace amid storm and tranquility amid disaster” (1963: 95).

King juxtaposed Christianity and Communism, claiming that “Communism is Christianity's most formidable rival” (1963: 97). He furthered his claim by saying that the two are incompatible and that a Christian cannot be a Communist. True to King’s form, he created a contrast between the two with a Hegelian dialectic. Communism, according to King, has both a materialist and humanistic view of life and history. He viewed Communism as being based on ethical relativism and not accepting stable moral absolutes (1963: 98). However, King did give Communism credit for giving the Church a model for activism toward social justice.

King’s (1963: 117) problem-posing approach is clear in “Antidotes For Fear” [I John 4:18] when he wrote:

“Normal fear motivates us to improve our individual and collective welfare; abnormal fear constantly poisons and distorts our inner lives. Our problem is not to be rid of fear but rather to harness and master it. How may it be mastered?”

Once again King recalled his Montgomery experience as an example of faith in God being able to conquer fear.

The relevant question in “The Answer to a Perplexing Question” [Matthew 17:19] is a question that King (1963: 128) could have probably been raised in any sermon: “How can evil be cast out?” King suggested that first this is done through man's ingenuity and inner will. Through a fair and decent education, man may redeem himself. Secondly, through man’s submission God will eventually eradicate evil. But finally, King asserts that neither God nor man alone will accomplish; evil will be eradicated through collective action on the part of humanity and divinity.

“Paul’s Letter to American Christians” is unique because King did not take a biblical text to ground it. He challenged the Church on three levels: to resist segregation; to move into an arena of social action; and to engage in sacrifice. By sacrifice, King suggested that true Christian

action could mean the loss of employment, social status, or even life. However, King interpreted such suffering as redemptive and making one even more authentically Christian because of it.

Training sessions for the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (the Birmingham affiliate of the SCLC) were stringent. The group was adamant about training demonstrators to follow the non-violent tenets of the movement, and those who could not do so were not allowed to participate.

In challenging ministers, King stressed the employment of the social gospel. Religion that is only concerned with the glories of Heaven while ignoring the conditions of an earthly hell is not much of a religion, according to King. King advocated for the strong leadership of the African American minister because “he is freer, more independent, than any other person in the community. I asked how the African American would ever gain his freedom without the guidance, support and inspiration of his spiritual leaders” (King 1964: 54, 55). King’s challenge for Birmingham ministers was virtually the same challenge that he gave to ministers in Montgomery and in other places where he traveled.

While incarcerated in Birmingham, King wrote a letter directed to the members of the White clergy in Birmingham. King was clear, deliberate, and articulate in addressing his colleagues. Calling upon all of his resources, King used religion, reason, and rationalism as tools to appeal to the conscience of the Birmingham ministers.

King first penned that his purpose for writing was to respond to the statement of these ministers regarding African American patience. He then moved on to justifying his right to be there, as he asserted that he and his staff were in Birmingham because of an invitation. Then he clarified that he was in Birmingham as the result of more than an invitation but because of the presence of injustice.

A proponent of peace, King painstakingly admitted that the African American community was divided and he was in the middle. One force, King wrote, is complacent, and in some ways, benefits from segregation. These are accommodationalists with a pacifist approach that King criticizes. On the other end of the spectrum stands another force full of bitterness and hatred, exemplified by Black nationalist groups. He said that this group had been nurtured by Negro frustration and absolutely rejected Christianity (King 1964: 75).

The latter part of the letter King criticized the Church (universal) and particularly the White minister. He argues that the White minister was more concerned with the law than with love. The lack of social justice and complacency on the part of the White minister in light of religious profession proved to be problematic for King.

REVOLUTION/LEADERSHIP

King referred to the summer of 1963 as America's third revolution, specifically the Negro Revolution. Comparing this new revolution to its predecessors, King (1964: 2) wrote:

As in these two revolutions, a submerged social group, propelled by a burning need for justice, lifting itself with sudden swiftness, moving with determination and a majestic scorn for risk and danger, created an uprising so powerful that it shook a huge society from its comfortable base.

This Negro Revolution, according to King (1964: 2), approached quietly, but powerfully, and with fervor and intensity. This was the result of three hundred years of humiliation, and when the unfetter frustration was released it did not do so gently.

King offered reasons why this revolution took place in 1963. First this was due to the fact that Blacks were disappointed with the slow pace of school desegregation. Part of the reason for this was the stall tactics of federal legislators which gave power and discretion concerning desegregation to states that were already reserved and rejecting the mandate.

Secondly, King argued that African Americans became disappointed with both political parties. The African American felt that neither party was interested in the issue of civil rights. To this, King and his colleagues felt that one of the best responses was to stage a voting campaign.

The year 1963 was further important because it marked the one hundred year celebration of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. This represented something significant for the Black Americans. Blacks knew that they had moved forward but had not moved very far. King (1964: 11) wrote:

In 1963, the Negro, who had realized for many years that he was not truly free, awoke from a stupor of inaction with the cold dash of realization that 1963 meant one hundred years after Lincoln gave his autograph to the cause of freedom.

The centennial mark became the measure of progress, or lack thereof, and was a reason to act (King, 1964: 11).

Expanding upon this idea of a Negro Revolution, King examined the psychological and social conditions that facilitated such change. King (1964: 13) clarified his position from the previous chapter when he wrote:

It is important to understand, first of all, that the Revolution is not indicative of a sudden loss of patience within the Negro. The Negro had never really been patient in the pure sense of the word. The posture of silent waiting was forced upon him psychologically because he was shackled physically.

The African Americans in the South did not just finally become uncomfortable, but became *unbearably* uncomfortable with their treatment. After years of compromising manhood and receiving injustice, the African American had finally decided that he had taken all that he could, or was willing, to take.

King then turned his attention to the idea of “tokenism.” He believed that this was a method used to frustrate the African American’s dreams and aspirations. This is sort of a bait

and switch to get the African American off his desired goal by chasing after some achievement that offers immediacy, but with little redeeming value. King further explained that the token is designed to end the processes of pressure and protest.

The African American in the South, in an effort to enact change, turned his attention to higher goals. As King pointed out, the Negro began to see that it was not the individual who oppressed him but the evil system that permitted the individual to do so (King, 1964: 24). King noted that it becomes in a movement's best interest to attack institutions instead of individuals.

BLACK POWER IDEOLOGY/LIBERATION/BLACK THEOLOGY

King admitted to having conversations and collaboration with Stokely Carmichael, a leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). While willing to work together with King and other civil rights leaders, Carmichael was expressing disappointment and frustration with the progress being made in the Black community. Reluctantly, and after much persuasion on the part of King, Carmichael finally agreed to continue with the march under the premise of a non-violent message.

Another difficult question that the movement had to wrestle with was whether Whites should be allowed to participate. King and Carmichael differed on the subject as well, with the former open for White participation and the latter resisting White inclusion. King felt that the ability to make White and Blacks work together must be created through contact.

Black Power developed during the festering tensions between Black moderates and Black militants. Stokely Carmichael and Willie Ricks initiated the Black Power (at least the phraseology but the ideology likely already existed) in Greenwood, Mississippi. According to King, this was Black Power's birthplace (King, 1967: 29, 30).

Immediately King rejected this ideology. He advocated for the “Freedom Now” slogan. The problem for King was semantics, because King felt that “Black Power” as a slogan “carried the wrong connotations” (King, 1967: 30). In the end both factions agreed to not use their slogans. King (1967: 31) wrote:

I conceded the fact that we must have slogans. But why have one that would confuse our allies, isolate the Negro community and give many prejudiced whites, who might otherwise be ashamed of their anti-Negro feeling, a ready excuse for self-justification?

This shows that the movement had factions that agreed on such great things as the need, but differed on such small things as nomenclature.

Black Power means something different for various individuals. King called Black Power a cry of disappointment. He further added that Black Power is a result of the failure of White power (King, 1967: 33). A myriad of disappointing factors led to Black Power development. Disappointment with the government and White moderates also led to Black Power formation. King (1967: 37) defined “power” as the ability to achieve purpose. Power then, is needed to enact social, political, and economic changes. He said that “in a sense power is not only desirable but necessary in order to implement the demands of love and justice.” Power, when legitimate and selfless, creates positive social change.

Further King posited that Black Power is the result of psychological damage that traces its roots back to slavery. He argued that “Black Power is a psychological reaction to the psychological indoctrination that led to the creation of the perfect slave” (King, 1967: 41). Black Power, in essence, seeks to reinforce Black manhood.

King believed that Black Power is both positive and necessary for Black people. But then he gives attention to the negatives of Black Power. Black Power, according to King, is “a nihilistic philosophy born out of the conviction that the Negro can't win” (King, 1967: 45).

King (1967: 54) wrote: “The Negro is the child of two cultures—Africa and America.” He suggested that the problem is that too many Blacks embrace one side or the other. He reverted back to his Hegelian approach, attempting to create a synthesis with which the African American can live.

King offered this powerful directive: “It is time for all of us to tell each other the truth about who and what have brought the Negro to the condition of deprivation against which he struggles today” (King, 1967: 21). King believed that truth and true identity had been distorted by deception. Collective sins and passing blame had caused society to misinterpret reality.

Further dispelling myths related to Blacks’ place in society, King rejected the notions of laziness, shiftlessness, inferiority, and inattentiveness. He argued that in order to find the Black man's problem we must focus on the White man's problem. For King, the problem of the Black man’s inferior status must be blamed on White America (King, 1967: 72).

King addressed racism and succinctly referred to it as “the myth of inferior peoples” (King, 1967: 75). He believed that racism was based on disdain for life; for certain people do not deserve to exist equal to, or alongside, others. In a sense, American society has taken a step backwards. As Blacks progressed, White resistance to such progress created White backlash.

Religious practice and theology were not (and are not presently) immune from being infected by racist ideologies. As King pointed out in the biblical texts, theology works complementarily with commerce (King, 1967: 77), and since chattel slavery in America was an economic system (Genovese, 1989), it stands to reason that religion has been used (or more accurately misused) to support systems of economic growth. King (1967: 79) wrote:

The greatest blasphemy of the whole ugly process was that the white man ended up making God his partner in the exploitation of the Negro. What greater heresy has religion known? Ethical Christianity vanished and the moral nerve of religion was atrophied. This terrible distortion sullied the essential nature of Christianity.

To that extent, Christianity, as some try to portray it, is not the problem; the interpreters of Christianity became the problem.

King noted that when it comes to racial progress this nation, has a tendency to take one step forward and then take a step backward. He called this a “schizophrenic duality” (King, 1967: 85). To support this claim he cited over one hundred years of examples, including the 1868 Civil Rights Bill and the nation’s failure to enforce it; the 1964 Civil Rights Bill and the nation’s failure to enforce that; the Fifteenth Amendment, in 1870, which led to the nation’s split; and the 1965 Voting Rights Law that was only half-heartedly implemented (King, 1967: 85).

King rejected the notion of waiting and the virtue of patience when it comes to social change, a position that he echoes from *Why We Can’t Wait*. He called for the White liberal to take a leading voice in social transformation. He wrote that “a society that has done something special against the Negro for hundreds of years must now do something special for him, in order to equip him to compete on a just and equal basis” (King, 1967: 95). This makes sense to hold the implementer of violence accountable for his actions and responsible to fix them.

Ownership of the cause of Black liberation should be taken by the Negro himself, according to King. The Negro must be his own spokesperson. White liberals must be willing to move from the primary, spokesperson role to the secondary, supportive role (King, 1967: 99).

As with most of King’s writings, he suggested that the Church take the lead in social reform. Segregation could be stamped out with a cry from the Church. King admonished that if the Church does not recapture its prophetic nature, it will soon become useless (King, 1967: 102).

ANTI-MILITARISM/ANTI-POVERTY

King clearly stated his opposition to the Vietnam War and he believed that the war was connected to the war against poverty and racism that he had been waging in America. He argued that while there was a glimmer of hope in America's work against poverty, that soon dissipated with the onset of the Vietnam conflict. Funds that were (or may have been) allocated to anti-poverty programs were sacrificed for the sake of the war effort. King argued that not only was war a moral outrage but that it was also an enemy of the poor (Washington, 1986: 635). In his mind war was a contradiction: to send Blacks across the world in an effort to guarantee liberties to another people while those same liberties were not guaranteed to Blacks at home in America was absolutely unconscionable. Examining the notion that the United States was liberating Vietnam, King argued that intruding into the nation had destroyed the indigenous people's families and villages. Corruption in crushing non-Communist political forces and corrupting women and children made the American presence in Vietnam anything but liberating. King believed the Vietnam War was symptomatic of a deeper malady in the American spirit, and for a nation to spend more money on military defense than on social uplift would spur the nation toward destruction (Washington, 1986: 639, 640).

At the time of the writing, King was speaking of a generation of youth (or the past twenty five years at that time) who had lived with the effects of four wars: World War II, the "Cold War", the Korean War, and Vietnam (Washington, 1986: 641). This, he claimed, was the cause for the splintering of this group into three different groups. The first and largest group is fluid and searching in their ideas. The members really had no position for war and were not anti-military, but they reflected a sense of confusion that many Americans have (Washington, 1986: 642).

The second group was called “the radicals.” They generally rejected established ideology and “borrow from old doctrines of revolution.” Their frustration came in seeking change in the existing society is manifested in rebelliousness. They ranged in ideology from pacifists to violent revolutionaries (Washington, 1986: 642).

The third group was called the “hippies.” They rejected society and struggled to disengage from it. They did not seek change in society; rather they sought to remove themselves from the problems in the society. They demonstrated peacefully and often turned to drugs in an effort to escape reality and to turn their focus inwardly to find peace and security (Washington, 1986: 643).

King suggested that nonviolence and the fusion of these three groups can be the best course of action. He wrote:

Nonviolent active resistance to social evils, including massive civil disobedience when there is need for it, can unite in a new action-synthesis the best insights of all three groups I have pointed out among our young people (Washington, 1986: 646).

The combination of peace and urgency can lead to the integration of a new vision. King said that the conscience of an awakened activist must not focus on local problems, but recognize that local problems are connected to problems on a global scale (Washington, 1986: 647).

King was innovative in his attack on American poverty. According to King, when a man is denied a job or income, society is in essence saying that man has no right to exist. His basic human rights have been denied. He called this psychological murder (Washington, 1986: 648).

Chapter 5: Analysis of Findings

Martin Luther King, Jr. demonstrated the multi-faceted application of scholar-activism throughout his writing. For example, in *Measure of a Man* he wrote from a major sociological perspective with biblical emphasis. *Strength to Love*, by comparison, is a collection of his sermons that reflected him as a preacher-pastor with prophetic emphasis. In *Stride Toward Freedom* he wrote as a centered participant. *Why We Can't Wait* is centered in King's and Black Americans' lived experiences, with some data collected from ethnographic research, with emphasis on the activism.

King's books, in my evaluation, were never intended to be "textbooks" per se. In simple terms, he does not appear to have written for the academic community. Unlike such Africana Studies contributors as Du Bois, Karenga, Asante, and Kershaw, King was writing not so much for the academy as he was for the entire nation and, in some cases, the world. King kept Black and disadvantaged people at the core of his analyses and his writings, but the "audience" appeared to be more inclusive. In other words, though he may have been writing and talking about Black people, he was most frequently talking to all of humanity. Further, what King may appear to be lacking in scholarship is supplemented in practicality and applicability.

Before attention is turned toward an analysis of King's writings, some critical attention should be given to some of the Eurocentric scholars who helped to develop King's scholarship. In the following section an examination is offered of George Hegel, Antonio Gramsci, Max Weber, and Talcott Parsons. As mentioned in Chapter 2, all three Eurocentric scholars have either influenced King or are valuable in our discussion. This becomes important because if King's work is to even be considered for inclusion into the Africana Studies canons, King's excessive use of Eurocentric scholarship and models might raise immediate concerns for any

cynics. To answer any critics, distinctions must be made between methodologies and ideologies. Africana Studies advocates the perspective of the researcher (Asante, 1990; 2003). Good methodologies can be incorporated, but they must be separated from destructive and counterproductive ideologies. Therefore, the researcher must be able to employ effective methodological approaches while simultaneously separating their research from the ideologies and social contexts of their predecessors, if needed.

Attention is now turned to the critique of European scholars who have either directly or indirectly influenced King or whose methodological approach is useful in Africana Studies. King was unquestionably influenced by, and embraced, European scholarship. And the approach of Africana Studies is not to deny European scholarship but to apply it and approach it cautiously.

CRITIQUE OF EUROCENTRIC SCHOLARS

Hegel

Lansine Kaba (1990) excuses Hegel for his bigotry and racism, choosing rather to look at him as an ignorant ideologue. Hegel, according to Kaba, viewed history as a rational process characteristic of humankind. However, Hegel does not include Africa in his concept of humanity. Kaba (1990: 46) writes: "Hegel denied rationality, intelligibility, and history to African peoples. This denial is a serious contradiction in a system which claimed to be universal and logical." Hegel did offer some understanding of how individuals influence each other, but this perspective is limited to the master-slave relationship (Jackson, 1970: 138). For example, Hegel wrote: "A European has knowledge of himself, is an object to himself; the character of himself which he knows is freedom; he knows himself as free. Freedom is the substance of his

being” (Hegel, 1985: 76). Hegel’s idea of philosophy and history were grounded in Ancient Greece while simultaneously denying any African contributions.

Hegel was grossly uninformed about Africa and people of African descent. He wrote: “Every idea thrown into the mind of the Negro is caught up and realized with the whole energy of his will; but this realization involves wholesale destruction.” He goes on to that the “want of self-control distinguishes the character of the Negroes” and even goes so far as to credit slavery “to have been the occasion of the increase of human feeling among the Negroes” (Hegel, 1944: 98). Kaba, however, gives Hegel too much of a pass because of his ignorance. As Kaba suggests, many European writers make “self-serving generalizations and to express unsubstantiated opinions with the appearance of rigorous scientific truth.” The problem that Kaba points out refutes any justification for Hegel's racism because global domination has been legitimized by philosophers and scholars by minimizing other people's achievements and cultures (Kaba, 1990: 46).

We can see upon examination that the dialectic method (Hegelian approach which King was so fond of) can be used effectively in Africana Studies. This methodological approach allows us to see antithesis-thesis tension-building which leads to problem-posing. It also offers a synthesis that is designed to be problem-solving. We have to be careful in using Hegelian ideology because his premises are problematic as it relates to African-descended people. Hegel was very Eurocentric and dismissive of other cultures.

When we seek to understand Hegel in light of his influence of King, we must place greater emphasis on his methodology as opposed to his ideology. Intentionally ignorant or not, Hegel was misinformed about Africa. His dismissal of African culture as relevant in history is nonetheless racist. What is relevant for our discussion of King is King’s use of Hegel’s

methodology, which King used as a vehicle to present his problem-posing and problem-solving approach. King may have chosen to use the Hegelian model because of the model's effectiveness regardless of the Hegel's racist stance.

Gramsci

Antonio Gramsci outspokenly addressed political systems and practices. As an activist he extensively targeted class struggles and conflicts. He wrote:

The Italian Socialist Party, which has never been able to purge itself of its original sin—its democratic, parliamentary, petit bourgeois character—has never presented much of a real threat to our ruling classes. With the war and the Russian Revolution, the class struggle everywhere in Europe has taken on the ferocious character of an all-out effort to overthrow bourgeois power and establish a proletarian dictatorship (Gramsci, 1994a: 224).

Gramsci knew how to articulate the conditions and the consequences of conflict. He argued that knowing and understanding the ability to assess one's enemy places such person in an advantageous position for victory (Gramsci, 1978: 5).

The intellectual is not bound by employment in academia. Gramsci (1994b: 84) boasted in a letter written in 1931 that he was a "free journalist" and had never been a "professional journalist, who sells his pen to whomever pays him the most and must therefore lie all the time because lying falls within his professional qualifications." In a sense, the intellectual is free to be and to think without the fear of professional backlash.

Gramsci, however, never seriously interrogated the politics of racism and sexism as much as he challenged class exploitation. King, on the other hand, intertwined racism and classism (particularly poverty and economics) in the struggles against oppression, injustice, and exploitation. This is characteristic of the Africana Studies Paradigm as well as in the work of such followers of Gramsci like Stuart Hall. What Gramsci missed is the fact that class is stratified by race (Hall, 1980). Hall even goes as far as saying that Gramsci was a "political

intellectual and a socialist activist) but was never a serious academic or scholarly theorist" (Hall, 1986). Gramsci, much like King, was free to think and to contribute without economic pressure.

Parsons

Parsons predicted that at time 1, society 1 is at a state of equilibrium. At time 2, society 1 is still at a state of equilibrium. Societies tend to move toward equilibrium even when chaos exists. The reason that he was criticized by conflict theorists was irrelevant to him. The analysis is about social systems and not any society. The abstract conceptions should, over time, get closer and closer to real things. Parsons believes that people generally do not advocate for social change, but when systems change, he argues that societies are moving back toward equilibrium (Applerouth and Edles, 2007: 22-37).

According to Parsons, every social system faces a control problem of overt behavior. Even a moderate level of integration of complex elements in a system of social action is not to be taken for granted when trying to manage a system's equilibrium (Parsons, 1954: 148). A major problem with Parson's perspective is that he does not account for social change advocates. Such a position completely dismisses the validity of scholar-activism, and in a sense, Africana Studies as a discipline.

Parsons studied the works of both Karl Marx and Max Weber (Applerouth and Edles, 2007: 23), two sociologists who had at least a slight influence on the ideology of King. In his doctoral dissertation, Parsons rejected Marx's one-sided economic explanation of capitalism and embraced the multifaceted Weberian view of economics (Smelser, 2005: 31). However, the works of Parsons must be examined carefully as it relates to Africana Studies. Parsons referred to Black people as "a condition", which may be indicative to how he felt about Blacks and Black

families (Billingsley, 1970: 129). Many anti-Parsonian scholars charge Parsons with being conservatively bias and an academic elitist (Applerouth and Edles, 2007: 24).

Weber

Max Weber [2008a] argues that “classes are not communities; they merely represent possible, and frequent, bases for communal action”, while Marx defines class in terms of one's relationship to the means of production and/or exploitation [2008b]. Weber [2008b] further argues that class is broken down to people's concerns. One's position is not as important for Weber as it is for Marx; rather Weber defines class as the way that people interpret issues and how they assign meaning. King obviously and admittedly utilized Marx's understanding of class struggle and exploitation. When we examine some of King's later works, we see that King brought the variable class in to explain race relations and inequality. Weber and King applied ideologies in a similar manner.

Maurice Jackson (1970: 134) posits that Black Studies follows the Weberian proposal of the explicit interdependence of science and sociology. In other words, “cultural values play a dominant part in the selection of problems for study and the application of formulated knowledge.” Facts do not speak for themselves but are at the mercy of informed perspectives and assumptions. In this regard, a Weberian perspective speaks to three key perspectives that are applied in Africana Studies: Scholar-Activism, critical scholarship, and creation of new knowledge.

KING AND AFROCENTRICITY (CENTEREDNESS)

King and such activists as Stokely Carmichael disagreed on major issues including White involvement, nomenclature, and methodology. These and many other variables require a faithful investigator or scholar to analyze King's Afrocentricity in light of his contemporaries. When

King is contrasted to such activists as the Black Panther Party and the Black Power Movement and a scholar like Asante, his works raise concerns as to their inclusion to the canons of Africana Studies. This section looks at how centered King is within Africana Studies.

King wanted to bring Whites into the discussion and the movement. In fact, he insisted on including Whites in the cause. Scholars within Africana Studies have long complained of the arrogance of White academicians who are not centered in the Black experience. Centered in the Black experience does not mean that one has to be Black. As Asante points out, the centered Africana scholar must keep Africa in the center, regardless of the race of the researcher. Andrew Billingsley (1970: 131, 132) highlights the point of how White scholars treat Black family subjects. He writes:

Unfortunately, analyses of black families by well-educated, well-meaning, white liberal integrationists come more out of the perspectives which they bring with them to the black community than out of the realities and complexities of life in the black community. The continuation of the white, middle class, outsider, Anglo-Conformity perspective toward black people—born out of a combination of ignorance and arrogance—not only obscures the realities which our society needs so desperately to understand about black family and community life, but performs a downright disservice to such understanding because of the status of the propagators of this view and their access to the wider society.

Billingsley eloquently shows that scholars are not always centered; however, as discussed above, scholar-*activists* must be. Logically, it is possible for Black scholars to not be centered. King too was well-educated, well-meaning, and a liberal integrationist. King's perspective may have been distorted by intentions as well as interests and centeredness. What Billingsley points out is how White scholars can (and frequently do) an injustice to the study and the understanding of Black life.

The major problem stems from a lack of centeredness. If Whites can fail to be centered as it relates to scholarship *on* the Black people, then it stands to reason that Whites may also run

the risk of failing to be centered as it relates to activism *in* the Black community. King's centeredness and credibility in Africana Studies (particularly with the more radical groups of the Black Panthers and Black Power) may have been hurt by this insistence on having Whites included in the movement.

Billingsley (1970: 130) points out that the Moynihan report, surmising the "tangle of pathology" in the Black community was incorrectly analyzed, as it is not the weakness in the Black family that causes poverty and racism but it is the other way around. He writes:

And the greatest problems facing black families are problems which emanate from the white racist, militarist, materialistic society which places higher priority on putting white men on the moon than putting black men on their feet on this earth.

King addressed this notion of racism, militarism, and materialism throughout all of his writings.

These are among his most discussed topics. In *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* King deals directly with the space program in light of unbalanced economics.

While he does give value to space exploration, King felt that there was "a striking absurdity in committing billions to reach the moon where no people live, while only a fraction of that amount is appropriated to service the densely populated slums." He then predicted that continuing down that path would result in a man being set on the moon where "with an adequate telescope he will be able to see the slums on earth with their intensified congestion, decay, and turbulence" (King, 1968: 91).

One of the obvious advantages that King had in penning *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* was his ability to write retrospectively. He was able to retell events as he saw them in hindsight, which allowed him the ability to be both centered and subjective. One problem with writing after events unfold is that it allows the author to tell events as he/she feels they are relevant and to adjust (consciously or unconsciously) their goals and values based upon

the success or failures of their story. Scholars, likewise, are able to dismiss theories and subjectively evaluate their praxes based upon successes or failure in a manner that they might not do beforehand.

Not knowing what the outcome of the boycott would be, because King writes in the aftermath of the events, he is almost able to write as if the success was “expected”, and though he undoubtedly had faith in his methodology of non-violent resistance, King had no way of knowing the outcome. *Stride Toward Freedom* differs from King’s other book length manuscripts in that they were present tense analyses and “calls to action” with future implications (activist and prophetic in nature), while this piece looks back over already unfolded events and allows King to add his own commentary to them. Of all of his books, *Stride Toward Freedom* may be the most centered simply because it is a complete account of King's activism and lived experience within a movement.

The Measure of a Man is undoubtedly centered in the African American religious experience; however that is about as far as it goes. The book does not add anything of any substance to the Scholar-Activism paradigm or to the field of Africana Studies, though that is not the aim. What we must keep in mind is that this book was not meant to be scholarly or to add any new scholarship, but to be a theological and philosophical reflection of humanity.

King’s *The Strength to Love* is centered only from the perspective that it is grounded in the African American preaching tradition. King used Hegel’s dialectic method, which allowed King to be centered, as he approached problem-posing and problem-solving. Using the dialectic method, King created tension between the thesis (which in many cases is interpreted as the ideal life situation or scenario) and the antithesis (the real or actual life situation or scenario). The relevant question in the dialectic method is the pressing question or issue that needs to be

addressed and answered. Ultimately, King used his points for the synthesis that provide the answers to the problem posed in the sermon (Proctor, 1994).

King turned this sermon collection into a book format, but did so reluctantly. As he pointed out, “a sermon is not an essay to be read but a discourse to be heard. It should be a convincing appeal to the listening congregation. Therefore, a sermon is directed toward the listening ear rather than the reading eye” (King, 1963: 11, 12). What *Strength to Love* does is provide the reader with a glimpse into the “sermonic” styling of the Preacher King as opposed the essays and speeches of the Civil Rights King.

The “Loving Your Enemies” sermon, in a lot of ways, demonstrates the Africana Studies paradigm by “showing a more excellent way” or at least “another way” to deal with difficult people. By referencing E. Franklin Frazier, King demonstrated his African American centered scholarship. Likewise, in quoting Abraham Lincoln, he showed his American centeredness.

What is worth noting is that King clarified that his “enemies” were not other Blacks such as Black Panthers or the Black Power Movement. He did not directly make this distinction, but he did speak to his most “bitter opponents.” This speaks to King's place in Africana Studies that he does not draw battle lines with other Africana ideologues.

Arguably more than any other sermon “A Knock At Midnight” is grounded in the African American preaching tradition. King used terms such as “the so-called Negro church” and suggested that there may be two types of African American churches. By referencing slavery and quoting spirituals, King spent less time glorifying White American heroes and more time within the Africana tradition than he did in most of his sermons.

In “The Death of Evil Upon the Seashore” King used the Exodus saga to speak to the Black American tradition. This was ingenious because Black people have historically identified

with the Exodus story. Once again, however King glorified White heroes and lets them off the hook for their participation in slavery and racism. For example, when speaking of abolitionists King wrote that they “saw that the immorality of slavery degraded the white master as well as the Negro.” I do not see how slavery degraded Whites and to suggest that both Blacks and Whites endured the pains of slavery in any similarity is an insult. This perspective does not disqualify King from Africana Studies, but it does place him under greater scrutiny.

When King (1964: 13) wrote that “The Negro had never been patient” and that “the posture of silent waiting was forced upon him psychologically because he was shackled physically”, I liken that to the biblical narrative of Psalm 137. Being a preacher in the African American tradition and being familiar with oppressive themes in life and in the sacred text, undoubtedly King would have known this story. The psalmist talks of singing the Lord's song in a strange land while waiting for the Lord to deal with the oppressor. I liken Babylon as the setting of the psalm to America and in this case, “Babylon” has become home and the people are forced to live under oppression and injustice, but never have been patient about the overthrow of the oppressor.

King said that one group within the Black race was full of bitterness and hatred and this group is exemplified by Black Nationalist groups (King 1964: 75). King was undoubtedly a problem for such radicals as Malcolm X and the Black Panthers (Van Deburg, 1997). He may have appeared to vacillate in turns of his urgency for activism. However, he was not vacillating in terms of tactics and strategies; in fact, he never lost his sense of urgency, but was wise enough to understand conditions had to be right to be effective. In Chapter 4 of *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* King takes a centered perspective. Here, he makes it clear that the Black experience is unique and must be understood as such.

KING AND SCHOLAR-ACTIVISM

When King (1958: 8) wrote in *Stride Toward Freedom* that “we felt that some of the Negroes who received a portion of their training in other sections of the country should return to share their broader contacts” he was demonstrating the nature of scholar-activism. His creation or revitalization of religious education, social service, and social and political action committees show that King was proactive and had enough foresight to see what his tenure as a pastor needed in order to be efficacious. This demonstrates that King either did not wait for a problem to develop or to exacerbate before he made efforts to be productive.

King’s presentation of data regarding the life experiences of Blacks demonstrates his ability to use data to support a scholarly claim. He further demonstrated scholarship by comparative analysis over time, such as comparing voting practices for Blacks in the 1940’s and 1950’s. When he said that both the NAACP and the Alabama Council on Human Relations met a need in the community and he saw no conflict of interests, what King may have been suggesting was that activists must be willing to employ diverse methodologies in order to reach their desired goals.

King’s assistants in the MIA, particularly in the cases of Jo Ann Robinson and J.E. Pierce, exemplify the academy meeting activism, or scholar-activism. As is the case in *Africana Studies*, those in power were not always on the same page when discussing methodology. The desired militancy of some of King’s followers shows that many were not too distant from the ideology of Malcolm X and the Black Panthers.

Reading Walter Rauschenbusch helped King to formulate a model of what he desired to do as a sociologist and theologian. In a sense the reading of Rauschenbusch contributed to King's creation of new knowledge, as *Africana Studies* scholars advocate. For example, as King

(1958: 82) notes, he read Marx as he read other influential thinkers which was from “a dialectic point of view, combining a partial yes and a partial no.” In the case of Rauschenbusch and Marx (as with all of King's scholarly influences), King's approach was to find the good and the bad with all ideologies. In other words, King did not take any ideology with interrogation.

We must note that in the cases of Jesus and Gandhi, King offers no critique of their methodologies (albeit it is extremely difficult and could cross the line into sacrilege to criticize Jesus). Gandhi, however, is another story. King almost overly honors Gandhi, especially since much of the credit given to him by King is undo. As Agozino (2005) points out, the non-violent philosophy of Gandhi should really be traced back to its origins in Africa. Such a claim means that the methodology and ideology that King embraced was African in origin, thus making him relevant within the discipline of Africana Studies.

King's prophetic nature, more than his scholarship or his scholar-activism, comes out in *The Measure of a Man*. For example, in Chapter 1 he strongly criticized Western and American political policy. He applied religion to sociology by calling out America and the West for imperialism and colonialism in Africa and Asia.

The ministerial and prophetic nature of King is evident throughout this piece. Again, it appears to be more of a sermon than a book length manuscript. In this piece King was not really advocating for any direct activism. This book as a creation of new knowledge would likely be appreciated more in the Church and theological circles than in the academy. *The Strength to Love* does provide some activist tone, but it is not nearly as strong as in his other writings (aside from *The Measure of a Man*).

As Vincent Harding points out in the introduction of *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?*, King blended the styles of activist, analyst, pastor, and prophet (King,

1967: xvii). Consciously or unconsciously, there was no clear line of demarcation, as the boundaries of the aforementioned roles traverse into the duties and responsibilities of comparable roles. An equally important role (especially for this project) that I think Harding neglected is that of scholar or intellectual. Though I do not think Harding meant any slight toward King's intellect or scholarship, this may serve as a clear example of how King so easily gets overlooked when discussions of scholarly and intellectual works arise.

One advantage that King had over many of the young Black radicals was his ability to process and think through sound strategy. While he may not have always had the best approaches or analyses, King was never guilty of not processing and evaluating the costs associated with actions. Consider King's interaction with the rioters of Watts. While the rioters believed that they "won" because they gained attention, King pointed out that multiple deaths, community destruction, and White inaction due to violence was counterproductive (King, 1967: 120).

Once again, King appears pessimistic when he wrote that "no Negro escapes this cycle of modern slavery" (King, 1967: 127). And once again he contradicts himself as he presents a defeatist attitude, a position that he criticizes the Black Power movement for having. Though King may have been correct in his statement, he speaks in the same manner of the ideology that he condemns. King refuses to stick to one position, at times making similar claims as the Black Power movement and Malcolm X. For example, King said that Black is beautiful and bleaching creams are not necessary (King, 1967: 131), and this position sounds different from his position earlier in the book and in his earlier work. This may be a factor that hurt his credibility with many radical Afrocentric theorists and scholars.

Intentionally or unintentionally, this differentiates between scholars (scholars who are activists) and intellectuals when he spoke of education and social activism working together (1967: 164). As Gramsci pointed out, intellectuals have a sense of knowledge with no zeal to utilize it (Forgacs and Nowell-Smith, 1985: 274). That statement alone warrants King being considered within the scholar-activist tradition. Activism may be indirectly related with increasing dignity (King, 1967: 165).

King's most "activist" works seem to be *Stride Toward Freedom*, *Why We Can't Wait*, and *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* This may be due to the lack of "scholarship", sociology, and Africana Studies in *The Measure of a Man* and *Strength to Love*. *The Trumpet of Conscience* has obvious activist aims, but it is not a large work and it is a collection of essays with little continuity.

KING AND CRITICAL SCHOLARSHIP

When King offered an initial analysis of the problem for Blacks in Montgomery he concluded that it was a three-fold problem: factionalism (among leaders), indifference (among the educated), and passivity (among the uneducated). Admittedly, King stated that these factors almost made him believe that social reform in Montgomery was not possible (King, 1958: 25). The issues that King was dealing with in activism in Montgomery in the 1950's and 1960's are some of the same problems that Africana Studies scholars in the academy are presently dealing with and addressing, and have been for some time. One of the major problems is polarization. Polarization in the field has caused many scholars to spend more time addressing and arguing the differences in Africana approaches rather than spending adequate time on points of agreement (Karenga, 1988; Jackson, 2005).

King's redefining of the word "boycott" speaks to not only his methodology but also his mission. What he did was address the claims of the Montgomery city officials that the MIA was violating city ordinances. The clarity of aim justifies the Christian and ethic nature of the movement, dismissing any discomfort that King may have had with his methodology (King, 1958: 38, 39). As he (1958: 51) clarified, his boycott method was one of persuasion and not coercion. The difference is that the former is viewed as a leader who acts in the best interest of the followers, allowing them to act in their own best interests; the latter views leadership as in an oppressive manner, which is antithetical to Africana Studies. Kershaw (2001) reminds us that Africana Studies is about empowerment. One cannot be empowered while simultaneously being coerced.

The proposal of the MIA has some element of Black empowerment, but also has a tone of acquiescence and accommodation. The first and last points concerning treatment and employment by the bus company are reasonable requests. The second point of "Negro seating from the back" seems to be far too weak and passive. The MIA's proposal that Blacks be seated from the back to the front sounds as if the oppressed have internalized their position, and in an effort to pacify the oppressor, have opted for a self-defeating bargain.

King's commitment to non-violence was not only an ideology but also a practice. He exemplified the type of model leadership that promotes non-violence that Agozino (2005) addresses. King reiterated that the power of the mind and the power of the soul were far more powerful than the physical force.

Speaking of the empowerment of the African American in Montgomery, King (1958: 183) wrote:

His expanding life experiences have created within him a consciousness that he is an equal element in a larger social compound and accordingly should be given rights and privileges commensurate with his new responsibilities.

In evaluating King's claim in *Stride Toward Freedom*, we may do so in light of Kershaw's work (1990; 2001). Also, when King (1958: 184) talked about the American "schizophrenic personality" we can compare that to Du Bois' double consciousness.

When King (1958: 205) suggested that "not every minister can be a prophet", I reject that notion. I feel that all ministers *must* be prophets. This is not a choice or an option. As King himself pointed out, religion that is not concerned with the social conditions of men is irrelevant.

King criticized war practices and he espoused the same principles as those of Agozino (2005). Both men understood that education is critical to empowerment. Both men advocated for the de-arming of Black youth in order to limit unnecessary violence.

King (1963: 45) wrote that the Supreme Court justices who handed down the Dred Scott Decision "were not wicked men", but were "decent and dedicated." This is one of the prevalent problems with King's scholarship. His desire and even his need to find the good in everyone, is an asset but, as in cases like this, prove to be a liability. He gave too many opponents the benefit of the doubt, and to suggest that such men were "decent" is a far stretch.

The Measure of a Man and *The Strength to Love* offer very little in the way of critical scholarship. These are theological, pastoral pieces that have some Africana Studies and sociological tone, but these works were not designed to be scholarly. For Africana Studies and sociology these works may appear to be always irrelevant (*The Strength to Love* is more valuable than *The Measure of a Man*); however, they could be rather useful for theological studies.

King evaluated the work of President Kennedy cautiously in *Why We Can't Wait*. When he said that "Negroes" had cast their vote with Kennedy, and thought they expected more from

him, he had not betrayed his promise but that his administration attempted to coast on civil rights (1964: 7). Here King gave due credit without failing to be critical. In a very prophetic manner (which may also be interpreted as scholar-activist), King evaluated the work of the government, attempting to be objective as he approached the analysis from the perspective of Blacks and the Kennedy administration.

King (1964: 8) made one of his most powerful and self-reflecting statements when he wrote: “I am aware of current events. I know everything you are telling me about what the white man is doing to the Negro. Now tell me: What is the Negro doing for himself?” At this point, King became less passive and less reliant upon the oppressor to do right (as he does in the above mentioned works) and focused more on Black self-accountability and empowerment.

King’s sociological training is evident in his understanding of social revolutions. He (King: 1964: 27) wrote: “A methodology and philosophy of revolution is neither born nor accepted overnight.” He (1964: 28) added that direct action and legal action complement one another, and when done correctly, both become effective. I agree with his claim as I notice how non-violent direct action became the catalyst for legislative changes.

King made the plea for Black ministers to step out as leaders and I completely agree with him. Historically, it has been the Black ministers who set the tone for direction and activism in the Church (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). King himself did what he was asking others to do. As King (1964: 59) posited, they were “waiting to see me put into practice what I had so passionately preached.” And so he did. On Good Friday, King marched in downtown Birmingham to be arrested. This in turn set up one of King’s (and one of history’s) greatest compositions: “The Letter from Birmingham Jail.”

The four basic steps of any non-violent campaign are as follows: (1) collection of facts to determine if injustice exists; (2) negotiation; (3) self-purification; and (4) direct action (King, 1964: 66, 67). The first and last steps resemble Kershaw's (1990; 2001; 2010) model of Scholar-Activism. Interestingly, King wrote that sometimes step four must be initiated to open the door to step two.

Slavery is not limited to physical bondage (King, 1964: 117). In a very prophetic and scholar-activist role, King spent much of Chapter 8 in *Why We Can't Wait* attacking the major social ill in America: poverty. Impenetrable poverty that many Americans face is still problematic nearly a half century later. Not physical but economic bondage oppresses many Americans in modernity. There are conditions and institutions in place that benefit from and work to keep certain groups from receiving upward economic mobility (Massey & Denton, 1993; Wilson, 1996).

King understood that progress and activism must be contextual. Evaluations are not transitory. For example, as King pointed out, it would be incorrect and irresponsible to evaluate progress in the North with progress in the South when virtually all programs were aimed at conditions in the South. This relates to Kershaw's (1990; 2010) scholar-activist approach of centered, problem-posing, and problem-solving. Kershaw notes that this approach can be used to do research with any group of people. However, with Kershaw and Karenga (1988) centeredness becomes the key. To do research on any group, the researcher has to know the subject's story the way that the subject sees it. King understood that he could not translate Southern progress into the North. In his analysis, "the North at best stood still as the South caught up" (King, 1967: 20).

King argued that social justice and progress prevent riots. I agree with this to some extent, but I think King was a little narrow in this perspective. The only way to know for sure

what incites riots is to talk to those who initiate them. While I agree that social justice and progress may be the key to limiting or stopping riots, we have to question how much social justice is considered justice and to what degree and at what speed is progress considered to be made.

King said that Black Power is a cry of disappointment (King, 1967: 33). While I do not disagree that there is a sense of disappointment with the power structure, King seemed to portray Black Power as weak, passive, and totally reactionary. Black Power is about honoring racial distinctiveness, to speak to the Black experience, and to empower and promote group autonomy (Van Deburg, 1997: 13-16). This is evidence why Carmichael did not want Whites in the movement because he likely felt that Whites would subvert the struggle for “self-determination, self-identification, and liberation” (Van Deburg, 1997: 123).

In his discussion on power, King was careful to note that power and love work cohesively. The former without the latter is reckless; the latter without the former is anemic (King, 1967: 38). I completely agree with this notion. Black Power and Black Nationalist advocates exist along a continuum, with many operating solely under a power dynamic void of love (Van Deburg, 1997).

King pointed out that the psychological effects of slavery had crippled the psyche of Black people. Semantics had contributed to dehumanizing and disrespecting “blackness” and anything related to it. This is seen even in religion and theology (Asante, 1990; Usry & Keener, 1996). “Black” is made to be negative, and so King said that Black Power seeks to reverse the damage done by such indoctrination.

Black Power is presented as having a defeatist perspective. King presented the ideology as one that says that Blacks cannot win (King, 1967: 47-49). I disagree in that I interpret Black

Power to not be a movement that says “we cannot win”; instead it appears to be an ideology that espouses “we will not play by these rules.” King misinterpreted the basic tenets of the movement.

King appeared to further confuse Black Power and Black Nationalism. He did clarify that Black Power is not “Black racism” as some have suggested. He did however believe that Black Power preaches a doctrine of separation (King, 1967: 49). Black Nationalism espouses separatism, but Black Power does not necessarily endorse this.

According to King in *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* there is no salvation in separation. King posited that the Negro is not relying on White leadership, but is working with an equal partner for a common goal (King, 1967: 53). Separate political power can be effective and make the majority group take notice. King himself demonstrated this principle in his leadership of the MIA. Though that may not have been the aim of the MIA, the separation from the mainstream society accomplished the desired goals of the movement. In a sense, King fails Black people in much of his doctrinal approach and analyses because he fails to account for the influence of isolation and promotes a paternalistic doctrine.

When King (1967: 54) wrote that “the Negro is the child of two cultures—Africa and America” he was playing off of Du Bois' (1994) notion of double consciousness. Du Bois' desire, much like King's, was for the Black man to be able to comfortably exist in the nation of his birth. In King's mind, Black Power does not do this, but I completely disagree that it does.

It is noteworthy that King rarely used the term “Black” to refer to his race of people, opting more frequently to use the term “Negro” instead. There are times when King did begin to use the term “Black” more frequently. I note that it takes place following King's discussion on

Black Power and Black Nationalism. It could be that as the trends of the Civil Rights Movement shifted that he was consciously or subconsciously affected by these changes.

In Chapter 2, I raised the issue that Asante had with the Christian religion. Christianity was defended by King as being co-opted to justify slavery and racism. As King (1967: 79) clarified: "Ethical Christianity vanished and the moral nerve of religion was atrophied. This terrible distortion sullied the essential nature of Christianity." This speaks directly to Asante's (2003) claim that Christianity and its Eurocentric nature perpetrated violence on African people. This may be true to an extent on a surface level, but in reality, it was never the institution rather the individuals who interpreted and applied it.

When King spoke of the nation's "schizophrenic duality" (1967: 85), he took a soft approach in his analysis. Is this schizophrenic duality or hypocrisy? Or is this a matter of regret and attempted regression to progress? In reality, it could be a combination.

In many ways King possessed a dual personality. His language sounds very much like the pessimist that he criticizes the Black Power movement for having. King's hope often gives way to his heartbreak. He vacillates between believing that the American ideal can be achieved and rejecting the notion that it ever will.

When King said that Blacks should be their own spokespersons and that Whites must take a supportive role in the movement, it might have been better to have made that clear to Carmichael and others. Ownership of the problem and advocacy were very important for the Black Power movement and King may have missed what the nature of the problem was. Blacks did not want to be infantilized nor helpless; they knew that empowerment meant that they had to have agency. King may have finally realized this later, but not soon enough to satisfy the Black Power movement.

King was arguably more outspoken and more direct about war in *The Trumpet of Conscience* than the previous works (obviously this has something to do with what was going on at the time). He demonstrated the ability to observe more than the symptom of a problem, but he diagnosed the disease. War abroad, successful or not, creates social decline at home.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

Prophetic leadership, or the function of a prophet in the Church, and a scholar-activist in the academy look a lot alike. Among other things, they have a commonality with their concern for community. Additionally, both are interested and invested in the communal change.

King's Ph. D dissertation at Boston University entitled *A Comparison of the Conceptions of God in the Thinking of Paul Tillich and Henry Nelson Wieman* demonstrates his ability to discern and dissect scholarly arguments. Though the topic was more theological and religious than it was sociological or Afrocentric, it does provide some degree of relevance for our discussion. Consider King's methodological approach. He compared and contrasted the theologies of both Tillich and Wieman. What King did was give credence to both theologians, recognizing both contributors in a healthy discussion of theology. Once again, King demonstrated his open mindedness and academic training by seeing more than one side to a discussion.

As a scholar and an activist in Africana Studies, King embodied that same spirit of being just one contributor in the healthy discussion of improving the life chances and bettering the life experiences of Black people, which is one of the key tenets of Africana Studies. Further, as a scholar, King demonstrated his ability to compare and contrast such issues as violence and non-violence; separatism/nationalism and integration; capitalism and socialism; democracy and Communism; sociology and theology, and the balance of praxis of both.

One of my major critiques of King's work is his lack of concentration and clarity on the points of integration versus desegregation. Throughout his works the term "integration" appears incessantly, while the term "desegregation" appears infrequently. It appears at times that King understood the distinction in the nomenclature, but at times it also appears that when he used the

term “integration” the term “desegregation” may have been a better fit and served his purpose more accurately. It is important to note that King was looking for a fundamental transformation of society as whole, not Blacks becoming Anglo-Saxons.

As I understand the terms, “integration” appears to be more of a blending or mixing of distinct separates, while “desegregation” sought to make sure that there was not an intentional separating of persons based on racial or economic differences. Africana Studies leans more toward the latter. King’s idea of integration appears to have been a historical phenomenon where people work together and have influence in shaping society.

Leaders in the field and scholar-activists appeared to be less concerned with being “integrated” into the mainstream of society and more concerned with making sure that people of African descent have better opportunities and outcomes that are not denied based on race, class, or gender. The majority of Africana Studies scholars advocate less for acceptance and more for access. Equality of access *and* opportunity is what Africana Studies scholars push for.

I agree with Asante in that King is very Eurocentric, however King does demonstrate Kershaw’s approach of being centered, problem-posing, and problem-solving. King demonstrated that the Africana Studies approach (particularly the scholar-activist method) can be used to do research with any people in virtually any context. To address Asante’s claim that King does not belong in African Studies, all we need to do is look at the works of one of Asante’s contemporaries and one of the most recognized names in the field of Africana Studies in the person of Maulana Karenga (Jackson, 1970). Karenga (1988) says that the African American experience is given more credit or weight in Africana Studies. King was trained in both African American and Eurocentric settings and he became the face and the name symbolic with the Civil Rights Movement (Kershaw, 2001).

King's Eurocentric perspective often gets in the way and does not endear him to all Afrocentrists. For example, King spent an inordinate amount of time praising White American leaders such as Abraham Lincoln. This hurts (though maybe not tremendously) King's case of being included in Africana Studies canons. Lincoln was no friend to Black people. As Mildred Fierce (1990: 65) points out, Lincoln was neither "great" nor an "emancipator." Lincoln was a politician. Fierce puts this in perspective by suggesting that it is troublesome to ascribe to Lincoln "a reputation as friend, savior, great emancipator which he has not earned." We must, in Fierce's claim, bury the myth of Lincoln as a Black hero or great emancipator.

In Chapter 2 of *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* King devoted a great deal of attention to Black Power. He both defined and defended Black Power, while simultaneously detailing its deficiencies and dilemmas. In many ways, he appears to attempt to approach the discussion objectively. In the end, he is not in favor of, or a proponent of, Black Power. This sets him in contradiction to more militant groups which are given respect within Africana Studies such as the Black Panthers and the Nation of Islam (particularly Malcolm X).

As Daniel (1980) points out, Black Studies professionals have been trained in some other academic discipline outside of Black Studies. King was trained in sociology and theology. Daniel and Karenga (and most scholars) agree that it was after the death of King that separate departments and faculty were demanded by students across the nation. As Daniel further elaborates, the development of Black Studies occurred out of a need to solve community problems. And when discussing this in greater detail he writes:

Black Studies theorists must therefore be about the business of training people in terms of coping with problem areas rather than just disciplines. Black Studies professionals must train toward specialization, but the kind of specialization which sees a student as a master-craftsman, an Imhotep, who integrates all of the knowledge of the time. In other words, students must be trained to be

simultaneously sociologist, historian, educator, political scientist, anthropologist, businessperson, and so on (Daniel, 1980: 198).

Daniel (1980: 199) goes on to say that the goal of Black Studies is not merely to create knowledge for knowledge sake, “but also to attempt to improve the lot of all or a particular segment of the Black community.” With all of that taken into consideration, it would be difficult, if not irresponsible, to at least not seriously consider King as a candidate for inclusion into Africana Studies.

The fact that King seems to contradict the positions of such activists as Malcolm X and the Black Power Movement does not dismiss or discount King’s inclusion in the discipline; on the contrary, it may actually help to make the case for his inclusion. Diversity within the discipline is both normal and needed. Africana Studies scholars are at odds and openly criticize one another in their efforts to define the discipline, to stake their scholarly claims, and to carve out their own intellectual territory.

Jackson (2005) gives three names that serve as the leadership (or vanguard) of Africana Studies: Asante, Karenga, and Kershaw. Of these three, Karenga and Kershaw readily give King their endorsement for his contribution to Africana Studies. And even Asante gives King some level of credit for contribution.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was a predecessor to both the Africana Studies paradigm and to Black Liberation Theology (Asante, 1990; 2003; Karenga, 2002). He holds relevance to the academy and to the Church. Because he was centered, empowering, and created new knowledge, King exemplifies the Africana Studies and the Scholar-Activist paradigm. As Molefi Asante (1990: 12) maintains, that “centrism, the groundedness of observation and behavior in one’s own historical experiences, shapes the concepts, paradigms, theories and

methods of Africalogy. Asante (2003:19) speaks of King as “the classic nonviolent activist.” Of King, he writes:

In the realm of philosophy, King’s views were new and initially dynamic. In the realm of action, King’s age made the demonstration a rhetorical instrument; and in the realm of ethics, he extended the moral frame of reference. Kingism survives in a muffled form but it should be remembered as a significant action philosophy, not as an Afrocentric statement which it never claimed nor should ever claim (Asante, 2003: 20, 21).

I disagree with Asante in claiming that King was not Afrocentric. King was centered, empowering, and he created new knowledge; all of which qualify him for the scholar-activist paradigm. In both his civil rights and human rights approaches, the lived experiences of those whom King represented become the focal point.

Scholar-Activism and Afrocentricity are two paradigms utilized within the field of Africana Studies. Based on the literature, it logically appears that a scholar or researcher can be an activist and not be an Afrocentric scholar, while both may still be included in the field. King (or any other scholar) does not have to satisfy Asante’s claims to contribute to Africana scholarship.

I do not want to make it seem that I disagree with Asante on every issue. While I adamantly disagree with him regarding Christianity’s role in African oppression, I do believe that he offers a great perspective on Afrocentricity. Asante’s perspective on Christianity aside, he is a very established scholar in the Africana Studies. What Asante calls “Afrocentricity” and what Kershaw calls “Scholar-Activism” look very similar to one another. Since King embodies scholar-activism well, it is not illogical to suggest that he too embodies at least a strand of Afrocentricity, though maybe not to the extent of a Karenga or an Asante.

What “centered” means is not the same as “Afrocentric.” Asante’s argument appears to be that it is not enough just for one to be centered; he or she must be centered on African-

descended people. From Asante's standard King is not centered. From the scholar-activist approach King is centered. The goal of this project is not to address Asante's concerns; the goal was to see if King's works warrant his inclusion into the canons of Africana Studies. What the field of Africana Studies is supposed to be is not something that all scholars agree upon, suggesting that diversity within the field is normal.

I set out to answer the question whether, based on King's six book length manuscripts, one could include him in the scholar-activist paradigm or whether such a paradigm needed to be redefined to include him. I conclude that King meets all of Kershaw's requirements for the scholar-activist paradigm. The fact that King's six book length manuscripts consistently meet all of Kershaw's requirements, that Karenga recognizes his contribution and lauds his activism and his life as a significant factor in the development of the discipline, and no scholar in the field (including Asante) can definitely exclude King and his work, I suggest, without any reservation, that King should be included, as not just a contributor, but as a trailblazer in the field of Africana Studies.

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