

Africana Methodology

Africana Methodology:

A Social Study of Research, Triangulation and Meta-theory

Edited by

James L. Conyers, Jr.

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This book is dedicated to the memories of: James Qawi Jamison (Bestee—
Brother), Professor Samuel Pinn Sr., and Dr. Clara L. Meek.

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Beginning with the first word is always a dare—to situate my balance, rotation, and commonsense perspective with emphasis on describing and evaluating the Africana experience from an Afrocentric perspective. Words are not hard to locate, but in turn, expressive communication is adaptable in proposing intermediary ideas and meditations. Indeed, an acknowledgement section is the “shout out” for writers to express their “thank you” to family, friends, comrades, and antagonists. Musing over three decades allows one to locate or posture interpretation and consequence in context and assessment; worded another way, “Quiet Moments Find Me a Delightful Treat.” Tranquility is a form and sense of security from which one can draw sovereignty. Indeed, peace is not equivalent to silence, but then again, this transmits a sense of stillness. Expressed another way, one is not troubled or agitated about those things one cannot control.

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INTRODUCTION

In the process of organizing this abridged volume, there were political, social, and economic issues obstructing my social environment. Truly, a part and apportion of Black proficiency are the distractive critics, shaded in deflective paths of individual progression. A commonsense approach to these realities is sustaining a will to advance onward and upward. Of course, the methodological approach affirmed in Africana Studies uses a cultural framework explaining and appraising the Black experience. Unpacked in fifteen chapters, this probe is a reader situating, locating, and pivoting the study of African phenomena from an Afrocentric perspective.

During this contemporary period, the interconnection of research, information, and technology emerges designating and gauging the causes and the conditions of civil, collective, and cost-effective issues for people of color. More explicitly, this volume focuses on Africana culture and the tools used to station intelligence for enquiry and prose. Certainly, the existing conditions of race relations in America call attention to the global continuous disparate treatment and the systemic institutionalized discrimination exhibited against African people.

Paradoxically, the concept of fake—false—news appears to be a parity of worldview and reporting of information, saturated with stratification, structuralism, and gender from a Eurocentric hegemonic perspective. Phrased another way, the progeny of altered points-of-view embellishment are constructed on privilege, racism, and racialism. Those Americans and undocumented workers who have experienced institutional and individual prejudice are befuddled about the paradoxical chess match of opportunity bartered for concessional hegemony. Providentially, the use of value-free triangulated, mixed research—correlated with the inter-subjectivity of interpretive analysis—dispenses a milieu for an alternative perspective and world view.

The core of this book provides readers with a foundation to access and address the collection of data and information in the cognitive areas of the professions, natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities vis-à-vis professional research and writing. Disclosure, debate, dialogue, and discussion have been centered on the exploration and writing style of Africana occurrences from a global Pan Africanist perspective. Yet, the core of engagement is to raise alternate query and locate research tools of

analysis. Nonetheless, the inflictions of inequality on Africana people have sustained the creation of subordinate group status and cultural narcissism sated in a Eurocentric hegemonic perspective.

The concept of systems encourages readers and investigators to locate and sift information as it relates to the human experience. Despite this fact, Africana prodigies are often contextualized as bodies from a second-person narrative of dereliction. Referencing American history and culture at this moment in time, we hear the intonation of “Let’s Make America Great Again.” The vestige of this storyline encourages, consciously or unconsciously, the residual effects of continued disparate treatment of Africana people’s proficiencies. Who would think in a modern world that the resurrection of inequality could be used to justify privilege?

Finally, research and methods of collecting information provides acumen for investigators. Correspondingly, who would ponder the American public witnessing an FBI director and a conservative presidential administration running at odds with one another? Likewise, who would contemplate an African American United States senator requesting the resignation of the Secretary of Homeland Security? Communally, research methods get us to this landscape of observation, analysis, and reflexivity, as a way for assessing Black culture from an Afrocentric perspective. In spite of that, the aspiration for amassing this research endeavors to provide students, faculty, staff, and independent research scholars with instruments for weighing up Africana existence from an unconventional assessment. In closing, the discipline of Africana Studies will require scholars to stretch, engage, preserve, and develop textual analysis for critical and deep cultural structured thought and behavior.

CHAPTER ONE

CRITICAL THEORY OF EPISTEMIC APARTHEID: W. E. B. DU BOIS, AMERICAN SOCIOLOGY, AND THE EVOLUTION OF AFRICANA CRITICAL THEORY

REILAND RABAKA

American Apartheid Redux

Since its inception more than one hundred years ago, and in light of constantly changing social, political, and cultural conditions, American sociology has studied race, gender, and class from myriad methodological and discursive directions—the inchoate discursive formations and discursive practices of the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth century; the inauguration of symbolic interactionism in the 1930s; the forays into functionalism in the 1940s and 1950s; the radicalization of sociology as a result of the social unrest in the 1960s and 1970s; and the increasing advent of, and emphasis on, sociological specialization in race, gender, and class studies in the 1980s and 1990s. However, closely mirroring the race, gender, and class segregation of American society, throughout its history American sociology has been sometimes subtly, and sometimes not so subtly, shaped and shaded by a furtive form of what I am wont to call *epistemic apartheid*.¹

Indeed, American sociology's *conceptual quarantining* has, again however subtly, consistently reflected the racial segregation, gender injustice, and class struggles of American society, most frequently treating studies of race, gender, and class separately—that is, *intellectually segregating* racial studies from gender studies, and both racial and gender studies from class studies. The myriad social and symbolic borders and boundaries that defined and deformed the United States of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries are many of the very same

borders and boundaries that have historically fueled American sociology's *epistemic apartheid*.² For instance, early U.S. social policymakers sought to create social hierarchies in which to differentially and definitively mark, categorize, and grade people and places—especially continents, colonies, nations, and neighborhoods—utilizing a crude, nefariously negative criteria of race, gender, and class. Echoing European imperial powers' *racial colonial* social categories and conventions, the United States offered up its own vicious version of the concept of “divide and conquer” by creating its own brutal brand of apartheid, *American apartheid*, and socially segregated its population along race, gender, and class lines. As Du Bois discussed in *The Philadelphia Negro*,³ industrial capitalism in the United States spurred the increasing concentration of “ethnic” and working-class populations in inner cities and urban areas. African Americans, specifically, were considered the lowest of the low. Not only were they the epitome of poverty in a society predicated on carpetbagger capitalist wealth, but they were also unceasingly and, therefore, unforgivably black in a society that glorified, deified, and, quite literally, worshipped whiteness. Perhaps there is no better example of African Americans' peculiar predicament in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America than the 1896 Supreme Court decision *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which in no uncertain terms legalized and, therefore, institutionalized the “separate but equal” doctrine of social inequality and injustice—what we in Africana Studies, à la Lewis Gordon,⁴ are wont to call *anti-black racism*.⁵

In essence, *Plessy v. Ferguson* roguishly represents not simply one of the greatest symbols of American apartheid, but also a bitter and brutal reminder that the U.S. government, in fact, sanctioned and was patently part and parcel of the racial formation and racial segregation processes at the end of the nineteenth century that, as was witnessed in *The Souls of Black Folk*, led W. E. B. Du Bois to famously prophesy: “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line—the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea.”⁶ Hence, the critical theory of epistemic apartheid is not simply centered around the study of race and the critique of racism, but, equally important, it was created to conceptually capture the ways in which patriarchy, and gender injustice generally, has historically and continues currently to (re)define and deform the study of women's life-worlds and lived experiences. Very few academics in the twenty-first century will deny the myriad ways in which women's (let alone openly or radically feminist or womanist!) discursive formations and discursive practices have been marginalized in the seemingly (and more often

obviously!) male supremacist discourses and histories of various disciplines, and the academy more generally. Additionally, the critical theory of epistemic apartheid is aimed at critiquing the crude, insensitive, and frequently sensational ways in which elite and unabashedly bourgeois academics objectify and disreputably report on the life-worlds and life-struggles of working-class and poverty-class people. Instead of *intellectually segregated* or separate areas of inquiry, the critical theory of epistemic apartheid seeks to incessantly and insurgently *intellectually desegregate* and critically connect race, gender, and class studies and, in this specific instance, demonstrate that in spite of the unprecedented changes at the turn of the twentieth century—or, perhaps, maybe even because of those vicissitudes—the race, gender, and class borders and boundaries of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century American culture and society simultaneously *and* surreptitiously formed and deformed the frame and foci of American sociology from its inception. This in turn led to despicable discursive practices of marginalization and exclusion or, rather, the *intellectual historical amnesia* that has been carried over to, and continues to haunt, sociology in the twenty-first century.

Essentially inverting the tendency to view Africana Studies from a “traditional,” monodisciplinary point of view, this essay brings Africana Studies’ multidisciplinary theory and methodology to bear on American sociology and specifically its marginalization and exclusion of the innovations of the African American social science tradition. Linking African American social science with metatheories of human science, the critical theory of epistemic apartheid developed here demonstrates how various forms of social segregation, oppression, and exploitation (e.g., racism, sexism, and capitalism) *exterior to the American academy*, however illusively or inadvertently, have informed and influenced *the interior of the American academy* and, more specifically, the discursive formations and discursive practices of American sociology—from its inception and inchoate institutionalization at the end of the nineteenth century, all the way through to its present sociological pretensions and practices.

Critical Theory of the Human Sciences: Du Bois, Foucault, Archaeology, and Genealogy

Sociology’s longstanding *intellectual historical amnesia* is almost undeniably consequent to its *epistemic apartheid*. Although often articulated through dual interpretive-theoretical thrusts (qualitative

methods) and empirical-positivistic paradigms (quantitative methods), in their efforts to study the meaning and aftermath of the Enlightenment and European modernity in the United States (i.e., “New Europe”), most early European American sociologists often unrepentantly participated in, exacerbated, and perpetuated—literally, refined and repugnantly reproduced—the racial, gendered, and class social segregation outside of the academy and simply transferred and transformed it to suit their “scholastic” or “scientific” whims and wishes inside of the academy, ultimately creating an academic world that very much mirrored the undeniably undemocratic (i.e., with respect to nonwhites, non-males, and the poor) social, political, and cultural world(s) of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth century America. Continuing with this line of logic leads us to an open admission and brief discussion of the critical theory of epistemic apartheid as conceptually connected to, and conceptually conceived in, the aftermath of W. E. B. Du Bois’s pioneering contributions to American sociology and Michel Foucault’s articulation of various discursive formations and discursive practices.

Although *The Philadelphia Negro* has long been regarded as Du Bois’s quintessential contribution to sociology, especially empirical sociology, contemporary reassessments often overlook its trenchant transdisciplinarity and the real reasons it has resiliently risen to “classical”—I dare not say “canonical”—status in disciplines as varied as Africana Studies, anthropology, sociology, history, political science, and economics, among others. Undoubtedly, Du Bois was one of the earliest innovators of, and critical contributors to, empirical social science research at the dawn of the discipline of sociology in the United States, especially during its formative phase from 1895 to 1915.⁷ However, where most sociologists, in essence, start and stop with *The Philadelphia Negro*, which was published in 1899, Du Bois made several seminal sociological contributions that predate and prefigure his watershed Philadelphia work. The most noteworthy among his pre-*Philadelphia Negro* publications include: “The Conservation of Races,”⁸ “A Program for a Sociological Society,”⁹ “The Strivings of the Negro People,”¹⁰ “The Study of the Negro Problems,”¹¹ “The Negroes of Farmville, Virginia: A Social Study,”¹² “Careers Open to College-Bred Negroes,”¹³ and *Some Efforts of American Negroes for Their Own Social Betterment*.¹⁴

Years before, and for more than a decade after *The Philadelphia Negro* was published, Du Bois resoundingly rejected the anti-black, racist, and grand theorizing commonplace in the sociological circles of his day, and he, hinting at his own hard-nosed historical sociology, arraigned several of the leading sociological lights of his epoch—sociological theorists such as

Herbert Spencer, Charles Ellwood, and Lester Ward—for confusing their own racial hierarchal and racial colonial (mis)understandings of society with empirical observation of human behavior, especially African and African American cultures and practices.¹⁵ Unrepentantly challenging the ungrounded anti-black racist grand theorizing of renowned Cornell University professor Walter Francis Wilcox, author of *Negroes in the United States*,¹⁶ Du Bois's riposte to Wilcox's work, which seemed to be completely divorced from the actual life-worlds and life-struggles of African Americans, is directly related to his disdain for Spencerian anti-black racism disguised as "high science" sociological theorizing. Du Bois responded to Wilcox with words that continue to cut to the core more than a century after they were written:

The fundamental difficulty in your opinion is that you are trying to spin a solution of the Negro problem out of the inside of your office. It can never be done. You have simply no adequate conception of the Negro problem in the South and of Negro character and capacity. When you have sat, as I have, ten years in intimate soul contact with all kinds and conditions of black men [and women] you will be less agnostic [concerning black folk]. I have prejudices but they are backed by knowledge if not supported. . . . If you insist on writing about and pronouncing judgment on this problem why not study it? Not from a car-window and associated press dispatches . . . but get down here and really study it firsthand. Is it a sufficient answer to a problem to say the data are not sufficient when they lie all about us? There is enough easily obtainable data to take you off the fence if you will study it firsthand and not [through] prejudiced eyes—my eyes, or those of others.¹⁷

Du Bois's words here help to highlight many of the major issues involved in interpreting or, rather, reinterpreting his sociological legacy. Important epistemic issues, issues ranging from his "ten years in intimate soul contact with all kinds and conditions of black men [and women]," to his intense emphasis on the need for "firsthand" or empirical studies of African American life-worlds and life-struggles free from "prejudiced eyes" or anti-black racist perspectives, lie at the heart of Du Bois's sociological discourse. Du Bois challenges those sociologists, among others, who continue to theorize African American lived experiences and lived endurances through their "car-window[s] and associated press dispatches," as well as through "prejudiced eyes." His innovative sociological empiricism, however, was not always guided by "[un]prejudiced eyes," and he himself seems to allude to as much when he wrote, "I have prejudices but they are backed by knowledge if not supported." The "knowledge" that Du Bois based his early "prejudices" on

was frequently and ironically drawn from white-middle-class culture and Victorian values, which should remind contemporary readers that innovative empiricism and copious data collection are sorry substitutes for *conceptual criteria, methods of interpretation, and modes of analysis* grounded in and growing out of classical and contemporary, continental and diasporan African history, culture, and struggle.¹⁸

Discursively dovetailing with Du Bois's emphasis on greater empiricism in African American studies, the critical theory of epistemic apartheid also follows Foucault's philosophical histories and/or historicist philosophies: from his critique of psychiatry in *The History of Madness in the Classical Age*, to his critique of the evolution of the medical industry in *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*; from his critique of the evolution of the human sciences in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, to his critique of truth, meaning, and reason (i.e., the *episteme* of an epoch) as situated in history, and the very methodologies through which they are arrived at or comprehended in his extremely innovative *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.¹⁹

According to Foucault, archaeology is distinguished from "the confused, under-structured, and ill-structured domain of the history of ideas."²⁰ He, therefore, rejects the history of ideas as an idealist and liberal humanist, utilizing a purely academic or ivory-tower writing style that traces an uninterrupted evolution of thought in terms of the conscious construction of a tradition or the conscious production of subjects and objects. Against the bourgeois liberalism of the history-of-ideas approach, Foucaultian archaeology endeavors to identify the states and stages for the creation and critique of ongoing and open ended or, rather, more nuanced knowledge, as well as the hidden rules and regulations (re)structuring and ultimately determining the form and focus of discursive rationality that are deeply embedded within and often confusingly operate below the perceived borders and boundaries of disciplinary development, methodological maneuvers, or interpretive intention. At the outset of *The Order of Things*, Foucault contended: "It is these rules of formation, which were never formulated in their own right, but are to be found only in widely differing theories, concepts, and objects of study, that I have tried to reveal, by isolating, as their specific locus, a level that I have called . . . archaeological."²¹

Moreover, the critical theory of epistemic apartheid also draws from Foucault's more mature materialist genealogies, such as *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*; *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: The Will to Knowledge*; *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 2: The Use of Pleasure*; and *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 3: The Care of the Self*, where he developed

his articulation of archaeology and evolved it into a unique conception of genealogy, which signaled an intensification of his critical theorization of power relations, social institutions, and social practices.²² However, the *critical theory of epistemic apartheid* does not understand Foucault's later focus on genealogy to be a break with his earlier archaeological studies as much as it is taken to represent a shift of discursive direction and, even more, an extension and expansion of his discursive domain. Similar to his archaeologies, Foucault characterized his later genealogical studies as a new method of investigation, a new means of interpretation, and a new mode of historical writing. Truth be told, then, both of these Foucaultian methodologies endeavor to radically reinterpret the social world from a micrological standpoint that allows one to identify discursive discontinuity and discursive dispersion instead of what has been commonly understood to be continuity and uninterrupted identity evolution. Consequentially, Foucault's methodologies enable us to grapple with and eventually firmly grasp historical happenings, cultural crises, political power plays, and social situations in their complete and concrete complexity. Furthermore, both Foucaultian methodologies also attempt to invalidate and offer more nuanced narratives to commonly held conceptions of master narratives and great chains of historical continuity and their teleological destinations, as well as to hyper-historicize what has been long thought to be indelibly etched into the heart of human history. More meta-methodologically speaking, in discursively deploying archaeology and/or genealogy, Foucault sought to disrupt and eventually destroy hard and fast bourgeois humanist historical identities, power relations, and imperial institutions by critically complicating and by profoundly problematizing and pluralizing the entire arena of discursive formations and discursive practices—hence, freeing historical writing from its hidden bourgeois humanist social and political hierarchies—by disavowing and displacing the bourgeois humanist (and, therefore, “socially acceptable”) subject, and critically theorizing modern reason and increasing rationalization through reinterpreting and rewriting the history of the human sciences.

By focusing on a specific critical theorist (i.e., W. E. B. Du Bois) and a specific discipline within the human sciences (i.e., sociology), in this instance the *critical theory of epistemic apartheid* reinterprets and rewrites the history of American sociology from the peripheral point of view of nonwhite, non-male, and working-class “organic intellectual” social theorist-activists and (traditionally trained) academic sociologists. Closely following Foucault's archaeological and genealogical endeavors, then, I am not so much interested in contributing to the definitive statement on Du Bois's sociological discourse as much as I am simply seeking to offer an

intellectual tool, a *discursive device*, or, rather, a *critical theoretical construct* that may allow others much more knowledgeable than I with respect to Du Bois and sociology to build bridges between disciplines and connect disparate discursive communities—if not eventually to do away with the discursive practices of *conceptually quarantining* and/or *disciplining* knowledge altogether. Hence, in all intellectual honesty, I openly admit that no single method of investigation or mode of analysis in and of itself can definitively grapple with and grasp the cornucopia of concepts and plurality of paradigms that correlate with the wide range of power relations, social institutions, and social practices that currently constitute contemporary society. Accordingly, while I have been indelibly influenced by philosophy of the human sciences, Africana philosophy, Pan-Africanism, Marxism, Frankfurt School critical theory, phenomenology, existentialism, feminism, womanism, Fanonian philosophy, Foucaultian philosophy, hermeneutics, and semiotics, and the work of William King,²³ I resolutely and unrepentantly reject a monodisciplinary or single phenomenon-focused super-theory approach. Instead I analyze classical and contemporary society from a transdisciplinary critical theoretical frame of reference that brings disparate discursive formations and discursive practices into critical dialogue in an effort to provide an *alternative optic* on, and *alternative options* to, past, present, and future humanity, history, culture, and society.

That being said, I have not hesitated to bring the dialectic to bear on and, literally, deconstruct and reconstruct Africana critical theory in an earnest effort to demonstrate that critical theories and critical methodologies must unceasingly be subordinated to the timely and tactical necessities of the particular project, subject, or object in question. Authentic critical theory is always concerned with the complexities and specificities of real, flesh and blood, human life-worlds and life-struggles as situated in history. It is not a visceral, free-floating war machine revved up and ever ready to attack any old target the racists, sexists, and/or bourgeoisie happen to leave vulnerable. The intellectual life altering lessons I have learned from critically and systematically studying Du Bois's sociology and classical critical race theory and Foucault's archaeological and genealogical method(s) have radically reinvigorated my articulation of Africana critical theory and enabled me to inaugurate and expatiate a new, discursively deeper dimension of the Africana tradition of critical theory (i.e., the critical theory of epistemic apartheid), which brings a decidedly more transdisciplinary critical theoretical approach to disciplinary development, discursive formations, and discursive practices in the academy of the twenty-first century. Just as I

asserted above with respect to Foucault's methodological shift from archaeology to genealogy, the critical theory of epistemic apartheid should not and is not in any way intended to be a replacement for, or an abandonment of, my articulation of Africana critical theory as much as it is meant to signal and symbolize an intensification of its evolution and an even more radical methodological extension and expansion of the Africana tradition of critical theory's discursive practices and discursive domains.²⁴

Epistemic Openness: Africana Studies, Transdisciplinarity, Standpoint Theory, and Strong Objectivity

Bearing the above in mind, it should also be stated outright that I do not intend Africana critical theory or the *critical theory of epistemic apartheid* to be definitive, conceptual solutions to the problems plaguing sociology, or any other discipline for that matter. Just for the sake of clarity, it should be equally emphasized that I am most certainly not interested in founding a new discipline; truth be told, following Du Bois, Fanon, and Foucault, I have come to think of my work as insurgently *anti-disciplinary* but, however ironically, *ever epistemically open* to knowledge emerging from single-subject-focused disciplines if—and, this is an extremely important *if*—the specific disciplinary knowledge in question is deemed useful for the project at hand. As stated in almost all of my previous work, one of the reasons I was initially and remain intellectually attracted to, and intellectually enthusiastic about, Africana Studies is because of its *epistemic openness* and complete disregard for conventional conceptions of disciplinary development. At this point, then, it will be helpful to briefly operationalize my current conception of Africana Studies: from an Africana critical theoretical frame of reference, Africana Studies is the body of knowledge based on and built around critically and systematically studying a specific human group—continental and diasporan Africans—and their particular and peculiar life-worlds and life struggles, and is most modeled on or, at the very least, seems to perfectly parallel Du Bois's and Fanon's extensive and diverse insurgent intellectual activity and revolutionary praxis because, at its conceptual core, it is a *transdisciplinary human science*. Taking this line of logic one step further and more concretely synthesizing Du Bois's and Fanon's respective philosophies of the human sciences with Africana Studies roughly translates into *a form of human studies incorrigibly obsessed with eradicating the blight on the souls of black folk, the wretchedness of the wretched of the earth, and indefatigably geared toward the ultimate goal*

of deepening and developing the Africana tradition of critical theory. That being said, then, Africana Studies is unequivocally the area of investigation, as opposed to the “academic discipline,” that has most inspired Africana critical theory’s unique research methods and modes of analysis—“unique” especially when compared to other forms of critical theory that emerge from traditional, single-subject-focused disciplines—because Africana Studies is a transdisciplinary human science—that is, an area of critical inquiry that transgresses, transverses, and ultimately transcends the arbitrary and artificial academic and disciplinary borders and boundaries, the conflicted color lines and yawning racial chasms, and the jingoism and gender injustice of traditional single-phenomenon-focused, monodisciplinary disciplines, owing to the fact that at its best it poses problems and incessantly seeks solutions on behalf of the souls of black folk and the other wretched of the earth employing the theoretic innovations of both the social sciences and the humanities, as well as the political breakthroughs of grassroots radical and revolutionary social movements.²⁵

I have long critically comprehended the myriad dangers that, literally, *disciplining* knowledge has done and continues to do to knowledge production and knowledge dissemination in particular, and to human culture and civilization in general. Africana critical theory, here under the guise of a *critical theory of epistemic apartheid*, is aimed at and unapologetically attacks the epistemological presuppositions and methodological procedures at the historical heart of narrow-minded (mono)disciplinary development, discursive formations, and discursive practices, and deftly demonstrates the ways in which they continue to influence and inform contemporary (mono)disciplinary development, discursive formations, and discursive practices. Therefore, I honestly believe that Du Bois’s transdisciplinary and deeply *sociological* discourse offers an ideal alternative history of sociology in general, and American sociology in particular, because the bulk of his work seems to have escaped a great many (albeit not all) of the (racist, sexist, and classist) assumptions of mainstream (classical) sociology by being simultaneously *academically marginalized* and a *sociology of the socially marginalized*.

To continue the longstanding discursive practice of (dis)placing Du Bois’s discourse utterly outside of the history and disciplinary development of sociology in general, and American sociology in particular, is to patently participate in and discursively perpetuate *epistemic apartheid*, which, as was witnessed above, has most frequently hinged upon a coarse combination of Eurocentric, patriarchal, and bourgeois conceptions of “science,” “social science,” and “sociology.”

This briskly brings us to the watershed work of the noted feminist philosopher of science Sandra Harding and the influence her version of “standpoint theory” and articulation of “strong objectivity” has exerted on *epistemic apartheid*’s conception of the human sciences, in general, and the social sciences in particular.²⁶ Overall, it would seem that at the conceptual core of Harding’s critique of “traditional” histories, philosophies, and sociologies of science is her controversial claim that “there could be many universally valid but culturally distinctive sciences.”²⁷ She contentiously contends that “taking a standpoint ‘outside’ European culture enables the identification of aspects of the conceptual frameworks, paradigms, and epistemes of European sciences and technologies not so easily detected from ‘inside’ European culture.”²⁸ In suspending Eurocentrism and panoramically viewing the history of European sciences and technologies from peripheral points of view “outside” of, and most often ardently oppressed by, European culture, an alternative vision and alternative version of European science and technology is offered up, and we are able to critically comprehend, in Harding’s well-founded words, that

[M]odern sciences have been enriched by contributions not only from the so-called ‘complex’ cultures of China, India, and others in east-Asian and Islamic societies, but also from the so-called ‘simpler’ ones of Africa, pre-Columbian Americas, and others that interacted with the expansion of European cultures. . . . Some knowledge traditions that were appropriated and fully integrated into modern sciences are not acknowledged at all.²⁹

Obviously, Harding is critically turning our attention to the fact that, as quiet as it has been kept, “prior to European expansion African, Asian, and indigenous American cultures had long traded scientific and technological ideas among themselves as they exchanged other products, but this possibility was reduced or eliminated for them and transferred to Europe during the ‘voyages of discovery.’”³⁰ Indeed, a critical question begs: “In what ways have the existing projects in physics, chemistry, engineering, biology, geology, and the history, sociology, anthropology, and philosophies of the sciences been excessively contained [and, even more, *conceptually incarcerated*] by Eurocentric assumptions and goals?”³¹ This is an extremely important question and one that is at the conceptual core of my book, *Against Epistemic Apartheid*, although with an exclusive focus on the ways in which Du Bois’s sociological discourse, by “taking a standpoint ‘outside’ European [American sociological] culture enables the identification of aspects of the conceptual frameworks, paradigms, and epistemes of European [American social] sciences and technologies not so

easily detected from ‘inside’ European [American sociological] culture.” By expanding Harding’s critique of “traditional” conceptions of the “hard sciences” and intensely applying it to the so-called “soft sciences,” and sociology in specific, I wish to critically accent and intensely engage *the distinctive dialectic of systematic knowledge and systematic ignorance* that has come to characterize modern (Eurocentric) sciences (i.e., both “hard” and “soft” sciences). Moreover, sociology has long sought to model itself after the “hard sciences,” whether with regard to its methods of investigation and modes of analysis or through its pretensions to, and pontifications of, strictly adhering to experimental, empirical, quantifiable data and/or “the scientific method,” as well as its obvious obsession with accuracy and, seemingly above all else, objectivity. This means, then, that many of the very same patterns of systematic knowledge and systematic ignorance that Harding, among others, maintains plagues the “hard sciences” may be surreptitiously embedded in the intellectual origins, methods of investigation, and modes of analysis of the “soft sciences,” and especially sociology. Having strongly stressed all of this, however, I simply could not agree with Harding more when she earnestly asserts that the “point here is not that non-Western cultures and their scientific traditions are all good and Western ones are all bad, but that all of us can learn and benefit from the achievements of non-European civilizations’ traditions also.”³²

The critical theory of epistemic apartheid is essentially an extension and expansion of Harding’s contention that “all of us can learn and benefit from the achievements of non-European civilizations’ traditions also.” Moving beyond the meta-philosophical and meta-methodological contentions of Lewis Gordon’s critique of disciplinary decadence, Michel Foucault’s early archaeological studies, and Sandra Harding’s standpoint theory, and—à la Fanon’s *A Dying Colonialism* and Foucault’s later genealogical studies, especially *Discipline and Punish*—the critical theory of epistemic apartheid critically re-theorizes and more concretely complicates the intellectual history, disciplinary development, discursive formations, and discursive practices of a specific European and European American scientific tradition (i.e., sociology), by deftly demonstrating what a specific non-European social scientist’s (i.e., W. E. B. Du Bois’s) discourse has to offer that “all of us can learn and benefit from.” Du Bois has been and remains something akin to European and European American sociology’s quintessential Other, and his sociological “Otherness” has long hinged on *the diabolical dialectic of white superiority and black inferiority*. However, as observed in *Against Epistemic Apartheid*, Du Bois increasingly came to reject the black/white dichotomy—what Fanon, in

The Wretched of the Earth and Toward the African Revolution,³³ referred to as the “Manichaeism” of the racially colonized world—and refused to invest his intellectual energy into the doomed *dialectic of white superiority and black inferiority*.³⁴ With regard to “science,” Du Bois sternly stated: “Students must be careful to insist that science as such—be it physics, chemistry, psychology, or sociology—has but one simple aim: the discovery of truth. Its results lie open for the use of all men [and women]—merchants, physicians, [women and] men of letters, and philanthropists, but the aim of science itself is simple truth.”³⁵ According to Harding, it would seem that Du Bois’s conception of science runs counter to commonly held European conceptions of science since, for the most part, European sciences have long had Eurocentrism, if not outright white supremacism and other elements of imperialism, at their conceptual core:

Nobody has discovered an eleventh commandment handed down from the heavens specifying what may and may not be counted as a science. Obviously the project of drawing a line between science and non-science is undertaken because it emphasizes a contrast thought to be important. Belief in the reality of this demarcation, as in the reality of the science versus pseudoscience duality, is necessary to preserve the mystique of the uniqueness and purity of the West’s knowledge-seeking. Thus the sciences, as well as the philosophies that are focused on describing and explaining that kind of rationality so highly valued in the modern West, have been partners with anthropology in maintaining a whole series of Eurocentric contrasts, whether or not individual scientists, philosophers, or anthropologists so intended. The self-image of the West depends on contrasts not only between the rational and the irrational, but also between civilization and the savage or primitive, the advanced or progressive and the backwards, dynamic and static societies, developed and undeveloped, the historical and the natural, the rational and the irrational, and other contrasts through which the European Self has contrasted its Other, and thereby justified its exploitative treatment of various peoples. My point here is that even though there clearly are obvious and large differences between modern sciences and the traditions of seeking systematic knowledge of the natural world to be found in other cultures, it is useful to think of them all as sciences to gain a more objective understanding of the causes of Western successes, the achievements of other sciences, and possible directions for future local and global sciences.³⁶

The critical theory of epistemic apartheid is not about denying the “successes” or overall validity of many aspects of European sciences any more than it is about accenting each and every intellectual insult European American sociologists have inflicted upon non-European American—and,

especially, African American—sociologists and/or contributors to American sociology. In other words, the critical theory of epistemic apartheid is not another intellectual exercise in “negative dialectics,” but a critical theory about the ways in which continental and diasporan Africans’ sociological negation at the hands of the “white sociological fraternity” has thwarted sociology in general, and American sociology in particular, from developing to its fullest potential and making more substantial or concrete contributions to the democratic, more multicultural, and genuinely transgendered transformation of contemporary society. Taking Harding’s words to heart, the critical theory of epistemic apartheid aims to disrupt the ongoing Othering of non-white sociologists and/or contributors to sociology by explicitly illustrating why it is important to think of non-European/non-white “traditions of seeking systematic knowledge of the natural [and social] world[s] . . . as sciences to gain a more objective understanding of the causes of Western successes [and failures], the achievements [and pitfalls] of other sciences, and possible directions for future local and global sciences.”³⁷ Du Bois’s sociological discourse certainly offers us an irrefutable example of one of the “achievements of other sciences, and possible directions for future local and global sciences.” Furthermore, as a new discursive device especially created to conceptually capture not only “the process of critical decay within a field or discipline” (à la Lewis Gordon’s conception of disciplinary decadence) but also, even more, *the processes of institutional racism or, rather, academic racial colonization and conceptual quarantining of knowledge, anti-imperial thought, and/or radical political praxis produced and presented by non-white—and, I am tempted to sardonically say, “especially black”—intellectual activists*, the critical theory of epistemic apartheid also makes an important contribution to the discourse on the “achievements of other sciences, and possible directions for future local and global sciences.”

**On the Apartheid of the American Academy (with an
Emphasis on the Apartheid of American Sociology):
Applying the Critical Theory of Epistemic Apartheid and
Ending Intellectual Segregation**

As an offshoot of Africana critical theory created to conceptually capture not only the ways in which the social borders and political boundaries built around race, gender, and class within American society have been egregiously grafted onto American sociology, but also *the intellectual segregation of knowledge* throughout the academy in general (i.e., above

and beyond issues revolving around race, gender, and class), the critical theory of epistemic apartheid has several distinguishing features that should be briefly discussed. First, within the world of *epistemic apartheid*, everything has a particular place or quarantined space, *one* place or *single* space, as places and spaces are coarsely catalogued and have meaning only in relation to each other or to an “Other,” which is also to say that every place or space must be mercilessly and mechanically ranked and registered. Hence, *epistemic apartheid*—whether overt or covert, visible or invisible—is integral to, and inextricable from, the social construction of the social segregation(s) surrounding, and the social hierarchies (re)defining and deforming, race, gender, and class in American culture and society.

Second, within the world of *epistemic apartheid*, cultural conventions and social practices compulsorily categorize and designate individuals to segregated places and quarantined spaces. Non-whites, women, and working-class people often appear to voluntarily embrace their prescribed places, spaces, and identities, but it must always be borne in mind that they involuntarily inherited their ranked and registered social statuses and social identities, and they must perpetually wrestle with the actual or alleged attributes, whether positive or negative, associated with the places, spaces, and identities they have been involuntarily assigned. We witness here exactly where Foucault’s conceptions of not only “counter-identities” but also, equally important for the critical theory of epistemic apartheid, “counter-sciences” come into play.³⁸

Third, *epistemic apartheid* revolves around an often illusive form of essentialism (albeit not only racial essentialism), which in the most unscientific and objectionable manners imaginable absurdly assumes that non-whites, non-males, and the poor who have been compulsorily categorized and who share involuntarily assigned ranked and registered social statuses and social identities in reality have a “collective mind” and share many (keep in mind, coercively conceived) common characteristics. In fact, for the elite and privileged few with access to or who *own* proper places and spaces (recall Cheryl Harris’s critical discussion of “whiteness as property”³⁹) within the world of *epistemic apartheid*, embracing this all-encompassing brand of essentialism breeds and rewardingly reinforces the foresaid social hierarchies and, most importantly here, a perceived homogeneity. As I observed in *Against Epistemic Apartheid*, whites—whether willfully or unwittingly—often embrace what Jean-Paul Sartre called “bad faith” when they fool themselves into believing and/or thinking of, in Du Bois’s words from *The Philadelphia Negro*, “Negroes as composing one practically homogenous mass”; additionally, men who

attempt to gloss over the glaring differences within women's life-worlds and life struggles can be said to be in "bad faith"; and the rich, too, who rob the poor of their human right to be different, to be humble and hardworking on their own terms, indeed, they also bathe in the murky waters of "bad faith."

Lastly, sustaining intellectually and/or socially segregated places, spaces, and identities necessitates an enormous amount of border and boundary maintenance, policing, and patrolling, which at this point in American intellectual and social history seems almost as "American" as apple pie, baseball, and a McDonald's "Big Mac." In order to exacerbate and perpetuate *epistemic apartheid*, the spoils of the intellectual and cultural wars historically and currently being waged must be touted and distributed to those faithful (*badly faithful*, if you will) to its tenets, which means that crude (albeit often clandestine) racist, sexist, and classist criteria have been and continue to be employed to distinguish between those who are authentic apartheidists (intellectual, social, or otherwise apartheidists), and those who are interlopers—thus, the latter designation (i.e., interlopers) usually approximates and encompasses the position(s) of the white liberals (academics or otherwise) who roguishly ride the line between white supremacist conservatism and authentic white anti-racist radicalism. Therefore, as critically discussed at length in *Against Epistemic Apartheid*, in American sociology generally, and in its subdisciplines specifically, Du Bois's "sociological negation" has most frequently revolved around *a dialectic of discursive formations and discursive practices of inclusion and exclusion* (mostly exclusion) that reveal that *epistemic apartheid* has been indispensable to and, even more, at the heart of the myriad ways in which sociology has historically and continues currently to *conceptually quarantine* and *conceptually colonize* not only the sociological study of race, gender and class, but also its (i.e., sociology's) intellectual history, curriculum, discursive formations, and discursive practices.⁴⁰

On the one hand, it could be said that at its inception American sociology, of all the disciplines in the American academy, was almost perfectly poised to grasp and grapple with the various versions of *social and epistemic apartheid* running rampant, because its *raison d'être* revolved around identifying and critically analyzing the rules and regulations of social institutions and social practices that were invisible or long ignored in conventional social etiquette and social exchanges. Clearly, race, gender, and class relations in America have been defined and deformed by a fusion of different forms of, whether implicit or explicit, *apartheid*—that is, domination and discrimination, as well as