

Du Bois, Scientific Sociology, and Race

Beginning in childhood, W.E.B. Du Bois imbibed different social and political views than Booker T. Washington. He descended from northern free blacks and became an intellectual who delighted in ideas.¹ As a young man, Du Bois decided to distinguish himself as a man of letters and a master of scholarship.² Yet Du Bois's aspirations were not rooted merely in the desire for great personal achievement. He aspired to liberate the oppressed black race by becoming an ambassador in the kingdom of culture, where his scholarship could be used as a weapon for racial liberation. In contrast to Washington, who was trained in industrial education, Du Bois was the quintessential liberal arts devotee who received the best and broadest education possible during the late nineteenth century. Born in 1868 in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, into a relatively poor home headed by his mother, who worked as a domestic, Du Bois earned bachelor's degrees from Fisk and Harvard Universities, studied at the University of Berlin under some of the world's greatest social scientists, and became the first African American to earn a doctorate from Harvard.³ Du Bois's literary skills surfaced early when at the age of fifteen he became a correspondent for the *New York Globe*, writing columns covering local news of the black community in Great Barrington. Du Bois had high self-esteem, appearing never to doubt his abilities, as evidenced in a notebook entry on his twenty-fifth birthday, where he wondered whether it was the "silent call of the world spirit that makes me feel that I am royal and that beneath my scepter a world of Kings shall bow. . . . I am either a genius or a fool."⁴

Du Bois's academic training prepared him to become the founder of scientific sociology in the United States. Only a few isolated classes in sociology were being taught in American universities during Du Bois's attendance at Fisk and Harvard. At Fisk University, in Nashville, Tennessee, where Du Bois was an undergraduate from 1885 until 1888, he experienced southern Jim Crow racism firsthand. These racial experiences, sharply different from his experiences in the genteel racial climate of Great Barrington, where the black community was small and whites were relatively liberal, deepened Du Bois's identity as a black person and caused him to realize that his membership in the Negro race locked him outside white privilege. At Fisk, Du Bois discovered the existence of talented black people who aspired to be free of racism and accomplish lofty goals. He was also introduced to the poor, uneducated, black masses who toiled in circumstances not unlike those of slavery just three decades earlier. These revelations led Du Bois to cast his lot with the oppressed black race and embrace their strivings.

While attending Fisk, Du Bois immersed himself in a liberal arts curriculum, which also included classes on Germany, where he studied that country's history and language. As William Strickland has demonstrated, Du Bois became attracted to German politics and its political leaders, including the German chancellor, Otto Von Bismarck.⁵ Because Du Bois was enamored with Bismarck's achievement of uniting a fractured Germany into a great empire, his Fisk commencement speech addressed the political significance of the German chancellor. Following graduation from Fisk, Du Bois attended Harvard as an undergraduate from 1888 to 1890 and completed his graduate work in history in 1895, becoming the first African American to earn a PhD at Harvard. While at Harvard, Du Bois studied with William James, the great scholar of religion and pragmatism. He also studied with the philosopher George Santayana, who introduced him to the German philosophical tradition, and with the Harvard historian Albert Bushnell Hart, who schooled him in the historical approach to scholarship.

At Fisk and Harvard, Du Bois studied philosophy, history, literature, and other liberal arts subjects, although he was most interested in social phenomena that would become the subject matter of the new discipline of sociology. During the late nineteenth century, it was customary for elite scholars interested in social science to study in Europe, especially under the great masters in German universities. Du Bois was acutely aware that given his aspiration to liberate African Americans through scholarship, and the view by whites that Negro scholars were incapable

of attaining the highest levels of intellectual achievement, his scientific reputation would be enhanced if he studied social science in Germany at one of its great universities. Thus Du Bois, after seeking a scholarship to study abroad, finally received funds from the Slater Foundation that enabled him to study in Germany. As a result, he participated in the transatlantic exchange of ideas by studying political science at the University of Berlin in 1892–94 under Adolph Wagner and Gustav von Schmoller while being exposed to other leading German scholars including Heinrich von Treitschke, Wilhelm Dilthey, Rudolf von Gneist, and Max Weber. His enrollment there in political science initiated a journey that transformed his worldview and shaped what would be his approach to sociology.

The cruelty of American racism during the last decade of the nineteenth century made it nearly impossible for blacks in the United States to formulate self-evaluations independent of white stereotypes and thus to experience themselves as full human beings. In Du Bois's view, blacks at the dawn of the twentieth century grappled with the question "Am I an American, or a Negro?" This question became especially salient for Du Bois when he first entered Germany and was shocked to discover that in that country he was treated as a social equal of whites.⁶ Here Du Bois gained the distance necessary to interrogate America from a new perspective. He explained, "In Germany in 1892, I found myself on the outside of the American world, looking in. With me were white folk—students, acquaintances, teachers—who viewed the scene with me. They did not always pause to regard me as a curiosity, or something sub-human; I was just a man of the somewhat privileged student rank, with whom they were glad to meet and talk over the world; particularly, the part of the world whence I came."⁷ Further, his "unhampered social intermingling with Europeans of education and manners" enabled him to undergo a personal transformation and become a world citizen: "I emerged from the extremes of my racial provincialism. I became more human; learned the place in life of 'Wine, Women, and Song'; I ceased to hate or suspect people simply because they belonged to one race or color." In this liberating social climate, he recalled, "I builded great castles in Spain and lived therein. I dreamed and loved and wandered and sang."⁸

Du Bois's experiences of personal liberation in Germany and in Berlin in particular might seem surprising given just four decades later that country constructed concentration camps and launched its Holocaust against Jews to ensure Aryan white supremacy. But, in fact, Germany was far more liberal in its racial views at the turn of the twentieth century than it would be four decades later. Du Bois's experiences in

Germany as a student appear to have been typical for African Americans who visited that country during this time. In 1903, a decade after Du Bois left Germany, his sociological protégée Richard R. Wright Jr. underwent a similar transformation there. As Wright recalled, “Study in Germany was epoch-making in my life. I associated with students, men and women, who knew little or nothing about race prejudice; who, while curious about my color, never looked down upon it.”⁹ Wright made it clear that his novel racial experiences were not superficial: “I forgot American prejudice, for even the Americans in Germany treated me as a human being. I made it a point not to look up Americans and not to speak English. The barbers argued for an opportunity to cut my hair and shave me, without charge. Germans invited me to sit in train compartments with them, join them in all sorts of celebrations, etc. I was even asked to join the White-Black Club, whose purpose was to encourage intermarriage between Germans and Africans.”¹⁰

Germany during the period when Du Bois and Wright were students was a far more liberal country racially and politically than early twentieth-century America. During the 1890s and early 1900s, Germany tolerated multiple political parties, and their members were able to express and enjoy their liberal freedoms. Such freedoms did not exclude doctrines of anti-Semitism in the academy, where it was espoused by some professors such as Heinrich von Treitschke. But at this time Germany boasted a relatively tolerant social environment and had not yet become rigid in its racial distinctions. This climate enabled Du Bois and Wright to become liberated and transformed psychologically into full human beings.

Another factor spurred Du Bois’s and Wright’s liberation in Germany: the harshness of American racism. During this period, the installation of the Jim Crow order proceeded swiftly and the number of lynchings of blacks escalated. By the second decade of the twentieth century, the American eugenics movement was consolidating strength as it developed the organizational and ideological infrastructure for its mission. The movement drew its inspiration from the English scientist Francis Galton, who in 1901 proclaimed he had developed the science of eugenics, which could identify the fittest human beings. In his view and that of his followers, a superior race of human beings could be produced through proper breeding and sterilization. Upper-class Western whites were “discovered” to be the superior stock of humans who deserved to be propagated through breeding across generations. They met the rigorous standards espoused by social Darwinists, whereas the

Negroes of the world automatically did not, given their innate biological and cultural inferiority.

The doctrines of eugenics fit well with the emerging Jim Crow system of racism and with the need to replace slavery with a docile black labor force exploitable by capital and an insecure white working class. Many powerful whites, including American social scientists, some of whom were distinguished founders of sociology, were attracted to eugenicist doctrines and hastened to organize an American eugenics movement. The first American sociological journal, the *American Journal of Sociology*, founded by the Chicago sociologist Albion Small, exposed sociologists to Galton's eugenics. The journal's lead 1904 article was by Galton: entitled "Eugenics: Its Definition, Scope, and Aims," it enumerated the principles of his new science.¹¹ Galton declared that eugenics "must be introduced into the national conscience, like a new religion. It has, indeed, strong claims to become an orthodox religious tenet of the future, for Eugenics co-operates with the workings of nature by securing that humanity shall be represented by the fittest races."¹² In the first highly visible textbook of American sociology, *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*, published in 1921, Robert E. Park and Ernest Burgess reprinted Galton's article, exposing it to a wide range of social scientists and generations of sociologists.¹³ Eugenics clearly got an appreciative audience in the American academy and in sociology in the early decades of the twentieth century.

By the time German political elites began building up the ideological foundations for what would become the Nazi Holocaust, American white racism and the eugenics movement served as models for that country's system of white supremacy. To a significant degree, Hitler's racial science was imported from the United States, and the American eugenics movement identified with and supported the development of German Nazism.¹⁴ Small wonder that Du Bois experienced racial liberation in Berlin while there as a student: at that time, racism was far more characteristic of the United States than of Germany, and the trip to Germany allowed Du Bois to escape it.

THE GERMAN HISTORICAL SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

A crucial intellectual influence that prepared Du Bois to pioneer American scientific sociology was the German historical school of economics (GHSE) and its second generation of social scientists led by Gustav von Schmoller. This socialist-leaning wing of the School of Economics at the

University of Berlin rejected classical economics, arguing that it was the purveyor of abstract concepts such as the “free market” that did not exist in the empirical world. Schmoller, who became Du Bois’s primary German mentor, and the other members of his group rejected grand theories and deductive reasoning. These scholars were quintessentially sociological, for they argued that social reality was a product of culture, customs, historical processes, institutions, and human agency. Axel Schafer captured the approach of the school: “They taught their American students to think of the economic organization of society as the reflection of specific ethical and customary views of a culture, not as the result of universal economic laws. They exhorted their students to study and understand economic life in the context of social customs, values, and institutions. They urged them to look at culture, rather than nature; at the environment, not genetics; at historical differences, not universal laws; and at ethical change, not moral absolutes.”¹⁵ In contrast to building abstract theoretical systems based on deductive reasoning, GHSE scholars advocated conducting careful empirical research focused on clearly defined questions. They insisted on a paradigm shift in which social science research would abandon the deductive approach and replace it with inductive reasoning. Sociological generalizations were to be based on empirical findings rather than on a priori systems of invented “natural” laws. The GHSE argued that these empirically based, objective generalizations constituted the scientific principles capable of guiding enlightened social reform.

During the closing decades of the nineteenth century, the GHSE conducted empirical research using qualitative and quantitative methods, including interviews, ethnographic research, and statistical analysis. This multimethods approach contrasted sharply with American social science research at the time, which relied almost exclusively on qualitative methods. As Camic and Xie have demonstrated, “In the late nineteenth century, American academic scholarship in the nascent social sciences still consisted mainly of historical and comparative methods pursued by going to the library or the study or the archives.”¹⁶ Moreover, in America during this period, quantitative analyses had not penetrated the natural or social sciences. A statistical approach to the sciences first developed in the mid-nineteenth century in Europe, where its pioneers argued that statistical and mathematical approaches constituted the cornerstone of the scientific enterprise. American pioneers of the statistical approach received their quantitative training in Europe before transplanting those methods to American science.¹⁷ By the turn

of twentieth century, America had only a handful of scholars trained in statistics who could conduct quantitative research and train students in those methods.

When Du Bois entered the University of Berlin's school of economics in 1892, he became one of the rare American social scientists being trained in statistics and quantitative analysis. By the time Du Bois arrived there, the multimethods approach of the GHSE already included and indeed required statistical training for students. Its proponents were publishing series of studies utilizing statistical analyses, such as articles from the acclaimed pioneer of American statistical analysis in the social sciences Richmond Mayo-Smith, who had been trained in statistics at Heidelberg and the University of Berlin.¹⁸ While in Germany, Du Bois participated in seminars on statistics and performed statistical analysis. Regarding his 1893 doctoral dissertation, "Agriculture in the Southern United States," supervised by Schmoller, Du Bois wrote, "It is a statistical inquiry into the relative economic advantage of the large and small farm."¹⁹

Du Bois's training at the University of Berlin prepared him to lead the way in introducing quantitative methods into American social science and particularly sociology through both his research and the training of his students. Yet Charles Camic and Yu Xie, in their account of the original small group of social scientists who pioneered American statistical analyses, describe only the role of Mayo-Smith, Franklin Giddings, James Cattell, Franz Boas, and Henry Moore and ignore that of Du Bois.²⁰ Mayo-Smith and Giddings are given the credit for introducing statistics into the new discipline of sociology during a time when Du Bois was using statistics in his studies and in the classroom.²¹

Du Bois appropriated the emphasis of Schmoller and his school on careful studies that would rely on the collection of data through a variety of empirical methods to develop general principles that could serve as a basis for scientific reform.²² Schmoller and his colleagues debated policy implications of their scientific work and developed policy recommendations for political leaders on pressing social problems. This policy dimension of the GHSE did not escape Du Bois's attention, for he already believed that scientific knowledge would help liberate oppressed blacks in America.

Undoubtedly Du Bois, who became a member of the GHSE's Verein für Sozialpolitik (Social Policy Association) where intellectual and policy issues were debated, was aware of dissensions and rivalries among senior professors in the GHSE over theoretical and methodological

issues. But he seems to have avoided these contentious debates while embracing the school's core scientific principles, perhaps partly because he knew he had a relatively short time to study at the university and partly because he was concerned with what were for him more pressing intellectual and political issues: the establishment in America of a truly scientific social science that could constitute the intellectual foundation on which to liberate his race. As he shuttled between Wagner's and Schmoller's seminars and conducted research, he presented work at the meetings of the Verein that focused on the race problem in America. As he related, during this period "Above all I began to understand the real meaning of scientific research and the dim outline of methods of employing its technique and its results in the new social sciences for the settlement of the Negro problems in America."²³ In Berlin he concentrated on becoming a first-rate social scientist. As Frances Broderick wrote, "W. E. B. Du Bois went to Europe in 1892 an historian; he returned two years later a sociologist."²⁴

THE MEANING OF RACE

Upon returning to "'nigger'-hating America," Du Bois embraced his life's work: the production of careful sociological studies of African Americans steeped in empirical data that could be used to discredit the dominant sociological and popular doctrine that blacks were forever stuck at the bottom of human civilizations because nature made them inferior.²⁵ The production of such knowledge, he reasoned, would lead to the general enlightenment that would end the oppression of his race. As he recalled, "I was going to study the facts, any and all facts, concerning the American Negro and his plight, and by measurement and comparison and research, work up to any valid generalization which I could."²⁶

The scientific meaning of race was the issue that immediately drew Du Bois's attention. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, sociology was under the sway of grand theories developed by Comte, Spencer, Sumner, and Chicago school sociologists. Social Darwinism, embraced by the white founders of American sociology, claimed that society could be explained by natural laws.²⁷ Social Darwinists extended evolutionary theory to stress natural selection, survival of the fittest, and differentiation as the basic processes determining human behavior.²⁸ Grand theories, including social Darwinism, posited that a holistic "society" existed as an independent reality and embraced a deductive analytic strategy to "explain" its nature and functioning. Such theoriz-

ing based its proofs, not on empirical research, but on speculation and intuition.

Du Bois's sociology of race was deeply rooted in his conceptions of the theoretical and methodological nature of the new discipline of sociology. At the turn of the twentieth century, American social science was in its infancy, attempting to chart out its most basic theoretical and methodological orientations. The various national associations of the American social sciences were not organized until around the turn of the twentieth century, with the American Sociological Society being organized in 1905. Leading American and European natural and social scientists were interested in future directions of science and the relationship between the natural and the social sciences. Many of them desired to be involved on the ground floor where these weighty issues were being contested so they could put their individual stamp on the forms that the sciences might take. A large gathering of scholars assembled at the International Congress of Arts and Science, Universal Exposition, held in St. Louis in 1904. They hailed from around the world and constituted the leading experts in every branch of science. Among the German sociologists attending were Werner Sombart, Edgar Jaffe, Ferdinand Tönnies, and Max Weber. For Weber, this was an important event because it was his first public appearance since his recuperation from a six-year debilitating bout with mental illness. University of Chicago sociologists—W.I. Thomas, Charles Henderson, and Charles Vincent—were well represented at the congress. Albion Small, chairman and founder of Chicago's sociology department, served as a vice president of the congress and functioned as a major organizer of its social sciences division. The first American sociologist to hold a named chair, Franklin Giddings, was an important conference participant representing Columbia University. Regarding the caliber of participants and the expectations for their contributions, a congress organizer declared that the addresses would be “prepared by the highest living authorities in each and every branch.”²⁹

Du Bois was not invited to or consulted for the congress to chart new directions for the sciences. A former German colleague of Max Weber who had moved to Harvard, Professor Hugo Munsterberg, a guiding light of the congress, explained that it had the “definite task of bringing out the unity of knowledge with a view of correlating the scattered theoretical and practical scientific work of our day.”³⁰ Few scholars were more prepared to contribute to these discussions than Du Bois. Indeed, Du Bois had been taught by many of the best American and

European scholars playing leading roles in the congress. At the time of the conference, he had published major scientific studies that had received critical praise both nationally and abroad. At age thirty-six, he had published far more works than most of the white scholars given prominent platforms at the congress. While there is evidence that Du Bois attended the congress, he did not make public presentations.³¹

Although Du Bois was not invited to participate in the St. Louis conference, he had important reasons to attend. His agenda included meeting over breakfast with the German sociologist Max Weber. Additionally, Du Bois was curious about how the discipline of sociology would be defined. The conference occurred when American social sciences and sociology were just emerging in the United States. Their future and stature were not at all clear, nor had their relationships with the natural sciences been determined. Sociology's future and scientific status were even less clear, and for Du Bois the conference reflected this uncertainty: "The Congress of Arts and Sciences at St. Louis last summer served to emphasize painfully the present plight of Sociology; for the devotee of the cult made the strange discovery that the further following of his bent threatened violent personal dismemberment. His objects of interest were distributed quite impartially under some six of the seven grand divisions of Science: economics, here; ethnology, there; a thing called 'Sociology' hidden under Mental Science, and the things really sociological ranged in a rag-bag and labeled 'Social Regulation.' And so on."³² The mission of the conference was to address the status of the social sciences and its subfields so their futures could be charted.

Du Bois noted how the leading sociologists at the conference sought to address the troublesome theoretical and methodological challenges faced by the new discipline. From his critique of these efforts a year later, it is clear that he attended many of the conference's panels and forums to determine if his colleagues presented solutions to overcome the impasses confronting sociology. The conference provided Du Bois with evidence that sociological conferees were not even close to solving these issues but actually headed in the wrong direction. He utilized what he learned at the conference to fuel his own unique sociological approach and to provide trenchant critiques of the sociological status quo.

As this book will demonstrate, Du Bois's exclusion from the congress by his white contemporaries was not an isolated event but rather an instance of a pattern that persisted for over a century. The uninvited, marginalized Du Bois had definite views about the topics debated at the congress that he set down in an essay entitled "Sociology Hesitant," but

it was not published during his lifetime. In this document, written around 1905, Du Bois chronicled his disagreements with the scholars at the congress. He presented theoretical and methodological solutions that he argued sociology would need to adopt if it was to bear analytical and programmatic fruit.³³

At the congress, the system-building theories of Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer loomed large in discussions regarding the future of sociology. Du Bois began his critique by arguing that Comte and Spencer's grand theories erred by positing an abstract "society" as a mystical whole that was the object to be studied rather than the concrete deeds and actions of men.³⁴ Du Bois described the quest for such grand systems as metaphysical wanderings and concluded that "Spencer and his imitators have done good, inspiring, but limited work."³⁵ But those limits, in his view, were fatal "because their data were imperfect—woefully imperfect: depending on hearsay, rumor and tradition, vague speculations, traveller's tales, legends and imperfect documents, the memory of memories and historic error."³⁶ Reflecting on the debates at the conference, Du Bois claimed that such sociological reasoning was flawed by an unscientific methodology that generated unsound data. He argued that for the new science of sociology to be scientific it had to be based on empirical data rather than armchair theorizing and what he called "car window sociology," quick and superficial generalizations about complex social phenomena like the impressions one might gather by glancing at scenes through the window of a fast-moving automobile. These approaches, argued Du Bois, only led to sterile concepts such as "'Consciousness of Kind,' 'Imitation,' the 'Social Imperative,' and the like."³⁷

The concepts that Du Bois lists here represented the efforts of the first American sociologists to produce the one sociological principle driving all social interactions and social structures. The magical principle, reasoned each of these founders, was driven by natural laws operating in the same manner as those uncovered by natural scientists. Relying on armchair conjectures and inspiration, scholars competed furiously with each other regarding whose conceptual creation would be considered the supreme sociological key to understanding a universal social reality. Thus Franklin H. Giddings introduced the concept of "consciousness of kind" as "a state of consciousness in which any being . . . recognizes another conscious being as of like kind with itself"; on this basis, human beings established their own distinct social groupings in which they led their collective lives.³⁸ The French sociologist Gabriel Tarde and his American followers advanced the principle of "imitation" as the fundamental

sociological mechanism driving humankind.³⁹ University of Pennsylvania sociology professor Samuel McCune Lindsay entered the fray with his concept of the “social imperative,” defined as “the modifying influence which makes the individual act differently in the presence of his fellow man from the way in which he would act under the same circumstances if he were alone.”⁴⁰ For Lindsay, the social imperative trumped all other units of sociological investigation, including the family, social man, or the social type. Albion Small argued for his principle of “interest” that drove social reality.⁴¹ For Du Bois, these first principles were wrong-headed; they mistook abstractions for reality. Sociology was the science of human action, not an enterprise seeking to explain abstractions that begot more abstractions in a futile effort to discover universal laws.

By rejecting Spencerian organicism, Du Bois also made clear his rejection of social Darwinism: “The elaborate attempt to compare the social and animal organism failed,” he wrote, “because analogy implies knowledge but does not supply it—[it] suggests but does not furnish lines of investigation.”⁴² Du Bois believed the main reason sociologists became trapped in the search for natural laws was their inferiority complex regarding natural scientists. He depicted sociologists as dumbfounded when confronted with questions such as “Is this science? Where are your natural laws? What sort of a science is a science without laws?”⁴³ Indeed, these were the kinds of questions that had been raised at the St. Louis Congress in 1904.

The search for comprehensive incontrovertible laws was inconsistent with Du Bois’s conception of sociology. He argued that sociology should be developed as the science of human action, which would seek to understand both patterned behavior that unfolded in lawlike fashion and unpredicted lines of human action driven by chance. Chance factors were also crucial because human agency helped shape the outcomes of human behavior: “For a thousand and a thousand years, and today as strongly as, and even more strongly than, ever, men, after experiencing the facts of life, have almost universally assumed that in among physical forces stalk self-directing Wills, which modify, restrain, and re-direct the ordinary laws of nature. The assumption is tremendous in its import. It means that, from the point of view of Science, this is a world of Chance as well as Law.”⁴⁴ Du Bois argued that sociology’s task was to study and measure the interactions between social patterns that consistently structure human action and chance, or, in contemporary language, between structure and agency.⁴⁵ He believed that both dimensions of human behavior could be studied scientifically by sociology.

Throughout his career, Du Bois sought a dynamic sociology because in his view a static, mechanistic sociology based on universal laws of human behavior failed to capture social reality.⁴⁶ Du Bois's conception that sociological theory should account for the role of human agency in social events made it possible for him to undertake a "public sociology" approach that informed his academic sociology as well as his extensive career of social change activism.

Du Bois, therefore, broke from the dominant theoretical stance by arguing that there were no universal laws mechanistically governing human behaviors. His focus on the powerful role of human agency in human affairs was innovative when sociology was developing in America at the turn of the twentieth century. In this period, sociologists struggled to get a foothold inside academia and be recognized as legitimate in the same manner as natural scientists. To receive such recognition, sociologists felt compelled to demonstrate that human behavior was propelled by natural laws as sure as those governing ants or plants. Thus, one year following the congress, a group of pioneering sociologists founded the American Sociological Society to advance the professional interests of the new discipline. Its first president, Lester Ward, considered by some as the father of American sociology, gave the society's inaugural address. Ward claimed that sociology had proven that human behavior, like the inorganic behavior studied by the natural sciences, was guided by natural laws. He urged sociologists who aspired to professional status to be unintimidated by arguments that sociology was not a real science:

The place of sociology among the sciences has been definitely fixed. It stands at the summit of the scale of great sciences arranged in the ascending order of specialty and complexity according to the law of evolutionary progress. It rests directly upon psychology, in which it has its roots, although it presents a great number of striking parallels with biology, chemistry, physics, and even astronomy, showing that there are universal laws operating in every domain of nature. The motor principle of sociology is psychic, and the study of this principle has shown that social phenomena are produced by the action of true natural forces, which, when abstraction is made of all perturbing elements, are found to be as regular and reliable as are the forces of gravitation, chemical affinity, or organic growth.⁴⁷

Ward recognized that human behavior was both dynamic and static and that sociologists needed to study both dimensions. For him, the static aspect encompassed the study of social order while the dynamic dimension required study of the domain of social transformation, where

processes of change modified social structures and human institutions. Nevertheless, Ward's conception of social dynamics differed from Du Bois's view of human chance. For Ward, both aspects were governed by natural laws because social statics and social dynamics had been discovered and formulated and their workings described by sociologists. Yet Ward was uncomfortable with the energy that social dynamics unleashed: "The social energy is so powerful as to exceed its proper bounds and threaten the overthrow of the social order, and would do so but for some effective curb to its action. The motion power of society has to be guided into channels through which it can flow in harmony with the safety of society. The guidance has been furnished by the higher mind or intellect of man."⁴⁸ For Ward, it was crucial that sociology discover the laws of socially transformative forces so those forces could be mastered and directed by responsible agents of the social order.

Scholars of the origins of American sociology agree that the white founders sought to uncover universal laws because they were upwardly mobile middle-class individuals who hungered for the legitimacy and recognition enjoyed by "hard" scientists in the business of formulating natural laws at work in the universe. Thus Anthony Oberschall concludes that the early founders were insecure and excessively self-conscious about their lack of professional legitimacy.⁴⁹ Breslau similarly asserts that "the social sciences faced special problems of legitimation, and their very presence in the new universities was by no means certain. They therefore imitated the established natural sciences in order to appear 'scientific.'"⁵⁰ They dreamed up natural laws of human behavior as part of a quest for cultural authority that would confer on them the status of "real" scientists.

Du Bois did not share the professional insecurities of the white founders. In 1900, while addressing graduates at Atlanta University regarding the need for sociological researchers, Du Bois revealed his conception of the new science:

The study of society as it is carried on today is a slow and difficult task. No sociologist claims to present in his science any such finished system of laws and measurement as chemistry or astronomy—it is rather a great field of study where careful observers are daily counting, measuring and searching—gathering the data which another age will systematize and interpret. . . . It [sociology] has discovered no great or startling laws of human action and may never do so—but it has collected a mass of material of supreme interest and value, and of such a nature that no modern thinker who is interested in the condition and destiny of beings can afford to ignore its methods and results.⁵¹

As early as 1897, Du Bois offered a similar description of sociology's task, cautioning that it was not scientific in the same way as the work of the natural sciences: "But if you mean by sociology a vast and fruitful field of inquiry into the mysterious phenomena of human action, which has yielded evidence of the working of scientific laws to some extent, and promises much more for the future—if such a work deserves, as many think, the name of science, then Sociology is one of the greatest of sciences."⁵² Du Bois had no need to posture as a "real scientist" building a system of natural laws to legitimate sociology. He was satisfied with the more modest ambition of elucidating human action in ways that took into account both its patterned, lawlike character and its unpredictable rhythms produced by human agency.

Du Bois rejected the idea that such socially transformative forces operated according to natural laws and could be rationally controlled in advance. This did not mean, however, that understanding human agency was beyond the reach of sociology. Rather, human agency had to be studied as a creative force capable of generating new directions and possibilities. Thus Du Bois insisted that the domain of the sociologist included the study of both patterned social structures and the unpredictable creative role of human agency. Moreover, he insisted that the sociologist, to arrive at sociological generalizations, had to study the deeds and interactions of real human beings rather than metaphysical constructions. Being true to his German historicist roots, Du Bois discarded the straitjacket of grand theories, including social Darwinism, and replaced them with an inductive method seeking sociological knowledge based on clearly defined empirical research. Clearly, Du Bois's conception of sociology at the dawn of the twentieth century prefigured the midcentury call by Robert Merton to construct sociological theories in the middle range rather than to pursue abstract grand theories.⁵³

DU BOIS AND RACE

Du Bois formulated a social constructionist view of race. However, not all Du Boisian scholars interpret Du Bois as a social constructionist, especially in terms of race. I argue that Du Bois's sociology of race was rooted in the fundamental postulate that the people who in his political and historical moment were defined as "Negroes" were not inherently inferior to any other so-called race on earth, including "white Americans," as they were being called in the United States. Nevertheless, this argument is at variance with a prominent literature developed by social

scientists and philosophers arguing the opposite. This alternative view claims that a biological conception lies at the heart of Du Bois's race analyses and that, contrary to his numerous claims otherwise, he believed what his white contemporaries contended, that blacks were racially inferior. This view has been given classic expression by the philosophers Anthony Appiah and Gooding-Williams and the political scientist Adolph Reed Jr. and the sociologist Jerry Watts.⁵⁴ Accompanying these claims is the argument that Du Bois was an elitist who had contempt for the black masses and viewed them as inferior to culturally refined individuals like himself. These scholars purport to prove these claims by using texts from Du Bois's own pen.

I take issue with these scholars and will demonstrate that their claims cannot be sustained. They privilege a selective assortment of isolated phrases and concepts extracted from Du Bois's writings and present them as pillars of Du Bois's thought. My differences with these scholars are based on an analysis of Du Bois's entire corpus of sociological work and particularly his work on the sociology of race, where his unique approach radically differentiates him from his social science contemporaries.

From certain characterizations of the black masses espoused by Du Bois it might appear that Appiah, Gooding-Williams, Reed, and Watts have grounds for arguing that Du Bois considered blacks to be an inferior race. In early writings Du Bois at times referred to blacks as "backward," of "low social grade," "undeveloped people," "ignorant," in a state of "race-childhood," "primitive folk," and in need of "guidance" from culturally superior groups, including selective whites. These characterizations, according to the critics, show that Du Bois, though usually considered to be a champion of black liberation, actually loathed the black masses and agreed with his white scholarly forebears and contemporaries that blacks were an inferior race. Because such serious charges deserve intense scrutiny, I turn to an investigation of their merits, but not before some caveats concerning language usage and politics. At the close of this discussion I explicate how Du Bois's choices of words and descriptions have had negative unintended consequences.

When analyzing terminology used by Du Bois over a century ago, some contemporary scholars have tended to unwittingly blame Du Bois for not using social constructionist language that had not been invented. It was possible for Du Bois and other scholars in the early twentieth century to use a vocabulary not meant to convey essentialism, even though today no constructivist would use it. Hence there is a need for caution against a contemporary reading of what Du Bois *should have*

been writing about in those times, given the current vocabularies available to scholars writing today.⁵⁵ Such caution, however, does not erase the need to examine whether Du Bois's scholarship was driven by race essentialism or by an innovative sociological approach.

Du Bois is often thought to have been elitist because of his strategy to achieve black liberation. Du Bois argued that an educated elite—a “talented tenth”—was the group capable of leading black people to overthrow racism. He wrote, “The Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men. The problem of education, then, among Negroes must first of all deal with the Talented Tenth; it is the problem of developing the Best of this race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst.”⁵⁶ For Du Bois, slavery had produced illiteracy and ignorance among the black masses, so that they lacked the intellectual and material resources necessary for liberation. Therefore, those blacks who acquired advanced and broad educations were to be the leaders of the masses. As we will see, these alleged deficits were not thought to inhere within black people in particular. Rather, they were products of social development and existed in all racial groups at a similar level of social development. However important these issues of language and politics were, it was Du Bois's sociological analysis that made clear he did not view the black masses as inherently a racially inferior group.

In an article entitled “The Uncompleted Argument: Du Bois and the Illusion of Race,” Appiah contends that Du Bois did not formulate a social constructionist analysis of race.⁵⁷ According to Appiah's reasoning, Du Bois clung to a biological definition of race even as he superficially substituted a socio-historical approach. According to Appiah, “We need to make clear that what Du Bois attempts, despite his own claims to the contrary, is not the transcendence of the nineteenth century scientific conception of race—he relies on it.”⁵⁸ Appiah seeks to establish this claim by dissecting Du Bois's famous 1897 definition of race as a “vast family of human beings, generally of common blood and language, always of common history, traditions and impulses, who are both voluntarily and involuntarily striving together for the accomplishment of certain more or less vividly conceived ideals of life.”⁵⁹ Appiah's main argument is that if Du Bois really believed that race was socially constructed by factors such as common history, language, customs and traditions, long collective memories, and common experiences of oppression and discrimination, then he would not need to invoke biological notions of “common blood” at all.

Consequently, Appiah claims Du Bois held the same biological conception of race as his white intellectual forbearers and contemporaries. Appiah accuses Du Bois of a sleight-of-hand intellectual maneuver when he repeatedly appears to privilege sociological explanations of race: these “only lead us back into the now familiar move of substituting a sociohistorical conception of race for the biological one; but that is simply to bury the biological conception below the surface, not to transcend it.”⁶⁰

Yet the causal language in Du Bois’s analysis of race overwhelmingly privileges sociological explanations:

What is the real distinction between these nations [races]? Is it the physical differences of blood, color and cranial measurements? Certainly we must all acknowledge that physical differences play a great part, and that, with wide exceptions and qualifications, these eight great races of to-day follow the cleavage of physical race distinctions. . . . But while race differences have followed mainly physical race lines, yet no mere physical distinctions would really define or explain the deeper differences—the cohesiveness and continuity of these groups. The deeper differences are spiritual, psychical, differences—undoubtedly based on the physical, but infinitely transcending them. The forces that bind [races] together . . . are, then, first, . . . race identity and common blood; secondly, and more important, a common history, common laws and religion, similar habits of thought and a conscious striving together for certain ideals of life. The whole process which has brought about these race differentiations has been a growth, and the great characteristic of this growth has been the differentiation of spiritual and mental differences between great races of mankind and the integration of physical differences.⁶¹

In this passage, Du Bois seeks to define and account for the constitutive qualities of race—those that explain how races cohere and maintain that group feature through time. These constitutive qualities, for Du Bois, are the “deeper differences” driving race phenomena, and sociological factors—a common history, common laws and religion, similar habits of thought, and a conscious striving together for certain ideals of life—are more important in determining race because in a causal sense they “infinitely transcend” biological factors. As we proceed, I produce additional evidence that Du Bois formulated a view of race consistent with a social constructionist view. Suffice it to say here that nowhere in Du Bois’s race analysis are biological factors elevated in causal significance over sociological ones. Appiah is right that by introducing talk of “blood” into the definition of race, Du Bois creates a tension between the biological and the sociological. Yet that tension never rises to a level where biology trumps sociological explanations of racial categories and

racial outcomes. If biological causation were paramount for Du Bois, we would find elaborate analyses of the role that “blood” played in determining racial outcomes; we would find formulations purporting to explain how preceding genealogical trees crucially determined subsequent racial outcomes in succeeding generations. Since we find, instead, that Du Bois produced an elaborate sociological analysis explaining racial dynamics, we can conclude that Appiah’s charge is unfounded.

In an essay on Du Bois’s concept of “double consciousness,” Reed suggests that Du Bois did not formulate this concept from thin air.⁶² It was common, he argues, for leading scholars and activists, black and white, male and female, around the turn of the twentieth century to describe their inner lives in terms of dual selves coexisting in tension. Those dual selves were seen as rooted in dichotomies of femininity versus masculinity and lower races versus superior races. It was common, Reed points out, for women, men, whites, and blacks to assign superior reasoning and cultural abilities to men and to whites. Reed claims that Du Bois absorbed these ideas current in dominant intellectual discourse and thus fell in line with those who assigned racial superiority to whites.⁶³ Drawing on scattered passages from Du Bois’s writings that refer to blacks disparagingly, Reed concludes that Du Bois, just like other leading scholars of the period such as sociologists W.I. Thomas, Edward Ross, and Robert Park, “defined blacks as comparatively primitive and undeveloped as a race,” considered their state to be a “race-childhood,” and saw them as “emotional” and in need of white tutelage.⁶⁴

Reed claims that Du Bois’s views on race—evidenced, for him as for Appiah, by the language of black inferiority that Du Bois sometimes employed to describe the black masses—flowed directly from an acceptance of the Lamarckian theory of the inheritance of acquired characteristics. In the late eighteenth century the biologist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck had developed his own theory of evolution, arguing that in order to adjust to changing environmental conditions organisms changed their habitual patterns of using their powers, and that such changed patterns could be passed on to their offspring in the form of developed or discarded characteristics. Over long periods such organismic changes could become enduring qualities of a population. Although Lamarckianism was to some extent supplanted by Darwin’s theory of natural selection and Mendel’s discovery of genes as mechanisms of inheritance, the period between Darwin’s death in the 1880s and the discoveries in genetics of the 1920s and 1930s featured numerous challenges to Darwinism and a revival of Lamarckian theory that has been called neo-Lamarckianism.

And as James B. McKee has shown in his definitive history of racial theory at the beginning of the twentieth century, sociological thinking was at this time very much “entangled with Lamarckianism.”⁶⁵ This was a “soft theory” of evolution because it posited that the mechanisms of inheritance were not strictly genetic; adaptive changes to environmental conditions could eventually lead to alteration of a population’s inheritance. The conceptual shift occurred precisely when biological theories of black inferiority were being discredited. Neo-Lamarckian theory is important because it provided social scientists of the early twentieth century with a theoretical foundation to continue claiming that blacks were inferior because their common history had produced a collective, heritable temperament that was marked by inferior racial traits. Neo-Lamarckian theory allowed white sociologists to continue to “play the dozens” with black people, as the Princeton sociologist Howard Taylor has described for more contemporary sociological approaches to inequality: “a game of one-upmanship whose aim is ‘to cleverly insult someone by insulting members of one’s family, usually by making derisive comments, preferable of a sexual nature, about one’s mother.’”⁶⁶ The theory merely replaced unalterable biological racial traits with acquired racial traits that had become encoded in biology and would take perhaps centuries of altered environmental conditions to change.

Although Reed states that Du Bois’s “basic views on race proceeded explicitly from the convention of neo-Lamarckian social science,” he actually does not provide direct evidence for this claim.⁶⁷ He presents no proof that Du Bois or his students corresponded with Lamarckian scholars or even cited them. Reed claims, for example, that in a 1904 lecture entitled “Heredity and the Public Schools” Du Bois shows his support for the “soft inheritance” approach of neo-Lamarckians,⁶⁸ yet Du Bois in fact makes no statements in the article that would support a biological approach to race. To the contrary, throughout the article Du Bois argues that sociological factors are the basic determinants of racial dynamics. Indeed, he states outright that heredity cannot be invoked to explain differences in educational performance between black and white children. Not only do their differing social circumstances provide sufficient explanation, but no hereditary differences between the races in physical development can be found: “What now are the facts in the case and the fair deductions? First, as to sheer physical heredity, are the black races degenerate or undeveloped specimens of humanity? The answer to this is clear and unequivocal and has never for a moment been disputed by any scientific evidence; the Negro races are from every

physical standpoint full and normally developed men; their stature and muscular development, their keenness of sense and their physical measurement show absolutely no variation from the European type sufficient to base any theory of essentially human differences upon.”⁶⁹

As with Appiah, if Reed’s claims were accurate we would expect Du Bois to produce a body of work demonstrating how the inheritance of acquired characteristics determined racial inequality. Indirectly, Reed acknowledges that no such Du Boisian approach exists when he says that “Du Bois did not attempt to detail the biochemical mechanisms through which alleged racial characteristics were generated and solidified within populations, as Thomas and others did.”⁷⁰ As I will demonstrate, Du Bois did not produce such formulations because he did not advance any claims that racial hierarchies rested on biological foundations. Du Bois headed in a completely different direction: he formulated a sociology of race showing that racial hierarchies rested on edifices of power, discrimination, and entrenched oppression.

Another philosopher, Robert Gooding-Williams, has analyzed Du Bois’s scholarship with a keen eye toward understanding his approach to race. After thorough examination, Gooding-Williams reached some conclusions consistent with Appiah’s claims: like Appiah, he draws on Du Bois’s writings to argue that Du Bois viewed the black masses as backward people unable to meet the standards of an advanced white civilization. He makes a seemingly convincing case that Du Bois’s elitism toward the black masses was extensive and permeated his scholarship.⁷¹ But unlike Appiah he does not think Du Bois viewed the black masses as culturally backward because they were a black race. Rather, for Gooding-Williams Du Bois viewed the racism that blacks encountered as the cause of delayed social development. Du Bois, according to Gooding-Williams, rejected the intellectual heritage of the nineteenth century that viewed race as biologically determined and broke with his contemporaries by conceptualizing races sociologically. “For Du Bois mental and spiritual differences have historical and social causes (law, religion, and so forth) that are not reducible to biological racial differences. In fine, he takes these causes to be causally independent of biological racial facts.”⁷² The philosopher Lucius Outlaw concurs with Gooding-Williams on this important issue.⁷³

Gooding-Williams highlights Du Bois’s language regarding the black masses as derogatory but does not place it within the context of the early twentieth century, when a social construction vocabulary did not exist. Even more important, Gooding-Williams, like the other scholars discussed, fails to examine Du Bois’s structural analyses of caste and white

oppression and how these negatively affected cultural conditions of the black masses. Thus Gooding-Williams asserts that Du Bois expressed arrogance toward the lower classes but fails to engage with Du Bois's structural analyses of the culture of the oppressed, which demonstrate that racial oppression trumped cultural factors as a determinant.

Watts reaches conclusions much like Reed's and Appiah's concerning Du Bois's view of the black masses but on different analytic grounds. According to Watts, Du Bois's "cultural distaste for the black masses is repeatedly displayed in *Souls of Black Folk*,"⁷⁴ and he attributes that alleged distaste to deep and pervasive personal insecurities: "One cannot understand the richness of *The Souls of Black Folk* without confronting the anguished, almost racially/culturally obsequious, status-grasping motivations in Du Bois' use of arcane, highbrow Western humanistic language."⁷⁵ Moreover, Watts claims that Du Bois's race analyses reflect his search for personal recognition from white oppressors because he longed to be embraced as the exceptional Negro. This account of Du Bois's *Souls of Black Folk* contrasts sharply with the usual view of this work as an eloquent call for recognizing black humanity and the need for black liberation. In rejecting this view of *Souls*, Watts maintains: "The voice that Du Bois appropriated in the hope of generating a serious reading of the text is supposedly used in the service of racial uplift. One could just as easily reverse the reading and argue that the elitist Du Bois was using the plight of the subjugated black neopeasantry as a backdrop to highlight the uniqueness of his own problematic status as a black man-of-culture."⁷⁶

To clinch his argument, Watts selects from Du Bois's works phrases regarding the black masses that are very similar to those selected by Appiah and Reed. He cites this passage: "I should be the last one to deny the patent weaknesses and shortcomings of the Negro people; I should be the last to withhold sympathy from the white South in its efforts to solve its intricate social problems. I freely acknowledge that it is possible, and sometimes best, that a partially undeveloped people should be ruled by the best of their stronger and better neighbors for their own good, until such time as they can start and fight the world's battles alone."⁷⁷ However, Watts cites this quote without examining Du Bois's next sentences which rejects white guidance:

I have already pointed out how sorely in need of such economic and spiritual guidance the emancipated Negro was. . . . But the point I have insisted upon and now emphasize again, is that the best opinion of the South to-day is not the ruling opinion. That to leave the Negro helpless and without a ballot

to-day is to leave him not to the guidance of the best, but rather to the exploitation and debauchment of the worst; that this is no truer of the South than of the North,—of the North than of Europe: in any land, in any country under modern free competition, to lay any class of weak and despised people, be they white, black, or blue, at the political mercy of their stronger, richer, and more resourceful fellows, is a temptation which human nature seldom has withstood and seldom will withstand.⁷⁸

Thus Watts fails to understand a fundamental dimension of Du Bois's analysis of the need for "Negro" guidance. In this passage, Du Bois does not address the essential nature of black people or the alleged intrinsic nature of "races" for any other racial group. Rather, he addresses class dynamics in the context of a capitalist economy—or what he refers to as "modern free competition"—and the role of power and exploitation exercised over lower economic classes. But for Du Bois, there is a special twist regarding poor black workers in the early twentieth century, and that is the condition whereby class exploitation is joined with exploitation based on racial prejudice. In an article dissecting race inequality, Du Bois instructs readers to see more than class exploitation; in addition, he writes, "You must see the color line. It stands at the depot with 'waiting room for white people' and 'waiting room for colored people,' and then the uninitiated might lose sight of it; but it is there, there and curiously wandering, but continuous and never ending."⁷⁹ The color line produced diminished wages for black farm laborers; it also controlled the spaces their bodies occupied and the absence of justice they experienced in the courts and the public square. In short, Watts mistakenly sees Du Bois's characterizations of the black masses as expressing pejorative essentialist race qualities. He also mistakes Du Bois's searching sociological analysis as a quest for personal status that Du Bois supposedly was desperately seeking from white oppressors. In so doing, Watts, like Appiah and Reed, ignores Du Bois's sociological analysis of race and labors under a grave misconception regarding Du Bois's assessment of the masses.

Du Bois's sociology of race is the hallmark of his scholarship and radically differentiates his analyses from those of his contemporaries that flourished over the ensuing century. A systematic examination of Du Bois's sociology of race makes clear that he proceeded from a social constructionist framework. Talk of biology and inherited racial traits is absent, and such traits are attributed no causal power. In contrast to Appiah, Reed, and Watts, and to Gooding-Williams to some extent, historical specificity is crucial in Du Bois's accounts of racial dynamics

and assessments of the black masses. This is not surprising, given that besides earning a doctorate in history, Du Bois while at Harvard and the University of Berlin was exposed to the role of history in human affairs. He insisted that if analysts were to grapple intelligently with race they were compelled to focus on “the greater problems of human development in society.” Moreover, to understand the development of a people, Du Bois argued, “we must seek to know what human advancement historically considered has meant and what it means today, and from such criteria we may judge the condition, development and needs of the group before us.”⁸⁰ Like his fellow German historical school contemporary Max Weber, Du Bois paid close attention to developmental tendencies regarding race, including how such tendencies were fundamental in the development of African Americans.⁸¹ Thus historical time and social development were key sociological principles driving Du Bois’s sociology of race.

Du Bois’s scholarship of race early in the twentieth century addressed a historically specific population just decades removed from slavery: “The basic question is, How soon after a social revolution like emancipation ought one reasonably to expect the appearance of habits of thrift and the accumulation of property? Moreover, how far is the accumulating of wealth indicative of general advance in moral habits and sound character, or how far is it independent of them or in spite of them?”⁸² In examining recently freed slaves, Du Bois delved into their past conditions of servitude and their postemancipation status to determine whether race or sociological factors accounted for their subordinate position in the social order. He found that the first generation following slavery was actually not free structurally or culturally. Structurally, black people after emancipation were constrained within a system of economic and social domination. Culturally, they were severely crippled by a social heritage inherited from two centuries of slavery.

The economic bondage former slaves encountered was a caste system initially constructed by white slave masters and refashioned by the southern white aristocracy to control the now-emancipated slaves. It was a caste system, according to Du Bois, because American slavery initially operated through a Slave Code that did not tie bondage to skin color. However, once the slave system became regulated by a Black Code, a caste of race replaced the caste of condition.⁸³ This caste system equating subordination with black skin doomed African Americans to centuries of class and racial oppression. In Du Bois’s analysis, this tight linkage between physical traits (the biology of black skin and the bloodlines that

created people without black skin who were nevertheless classified as black) and the condition of bondage and inferiority was a political accomplishment created through codes, laws, and economic contracts. This caste system followed the freedmen as they moved from formal slavery to neo-slavery following emancipation: “The most piteous thing amid all the black ruin of war-time, amid the broken fortunes of the masters, the blighted hopes of mothers and maidens, and the fall of an empire,—the most piteous thing amid all this was the black freedman who threw down his hoe because the world called him free. What did such a mockery of freedom mean? Not a cent of money, not an inch of land, not a mouthful of victuals,—not even ownership of the rags on his back.”⁸⁴ As a result, emancipated slaves became economically dependent on white masters by entering exploitative arrangements of debt peonage and sharecropping that kept them perennially in debt and able to live only a “hand to mouth” existence. Moreover, without the vote, legal protections, and education, the black masses trapped by caste were defenseless neo-slaves within a new system of oppression. Du Bois discovered little substantive difference between formal slavery and the new slavery of emancipation: “And after the first flush of freedom wore off, and his true helplessness dawned on the freedman, he came back and picked up his hoe, and old master still doled out his bacon and meal. The legal form of service was theoretically far different; in practice, task-work or ‘cropping’ was substituted for daily toil in gangs; and the slave gradually became a metayer, or tenant on shares, in name, but a laborer with indeterminate wages in fact.”⁸⁵ Du Bois argued that these social conditions severely hampered blacks by throwing them into competition with white workers who had been taught to despise them. These workers trampled over blacks as they struggled to make ends meet in a fierce capitalist system engaged in an incessant quest for profit. Therefore, for Du Bois, economic exploitation, the lack of political power, and the absence of education determined racial inequality and not inherited race traits or some other essentialist racial characteristics.

Du Bois recognized that systems of domination produce and are sustained by cultures of subordination that drastically curtail challenges from below and derail social development of the oppressed. What Du Bois’s critics fail to recognize is that when Du Bois spoke of the development of blacks he was referring to their development not merely as a race but as a social group. Du Bois analyzed black development in a comparative context, comparing it with similar processes that people and nations have undergone globally and historically. He argued that

all nations developed through a series of overlapping stages because “in the life of advancing peoples there must go on simultaneously a struggle for existence, accumulation of wealth, education of the young, and a development in culture and the higher things of life.”⁸⁶ These stages of development applied to all racial groups as they matured culturally and socially through time.

For African Americans, the stages of group development were rudely interrupted by devastating forms of oppression, including the slave trade, over two centuries of slavery, and the radical ruptures caused by the Civil War and emancipation. For Du Bois, these social disruptions were culturally cataclysmic: “A nation that breaks suddenly with its past is almost fatally crippled. No matter how crude or imperfect that past may be, with all its defects, it is the foundation upon which generations to come must build. Beauty and finish and architectural detail are not required of it, but the massive weight of centuries of customs and traditions it must have.”⁸⁷ In Du Bois’s analysis, a negative achievement of American slavery was the upheaval of the social institutions and cultural foundations that existed in the African fatherland. This included the near dissolution of the African family, native languages, and the myriad customs and habits that had previously guided the Africans. Centuries of slavery embedded a culture of broad ignorance and submission into African Americans, making them “ignorant of the world about them, of modern economic organization, of the function of government, of individual worth and possibilities,—of nearly all those things which slavery in self-defence had to keep them from learning.”⁸⁸ From this perspective, such ignorance stemmed not from an inherited racial temperament but from a system of domination that required ignorance for its survival. Therefore, if the black masses needed “guidance” to overcome their “child-like” stage of social development, their cultural ignorance had been imposed upon them; “Nor does it require any fine-spun theories of racial differences to prove the necessity of such group training after the brains of the race have been knocked out by two hundred and fifty years of assiduous education in submission, carelessness, and stealing.”⁸⁹

Du Bois did not deny that African Americans a few decades removed from slavery suffered from cultural ignorance. Yet he was not surprised, given that such ignorance sprang from oppressive social forces aimed at keeping blacks ignorant. Addressing defects in black cultural capital head on, Du Bois related that his studies had led him to examine this condition “in all its degradation and uncleanness,” but he also concluded, “I cannot but see a plain case of cause and effect. If you degrade

people the result is degradation, and you have no right to be surprised at it.”⁹⁰ Du Bois was clear that cultural degradation did not arise from biological or culturally transmitted traits. Rather, it sprang from an oppression that kept blacks illiterate and uneducated and from the narrow horizons inherent in the experiences of people too poor to travel in Jim Crow cars and too illiterate to read the books that would enable the imagination to soar. Because of the origins of these cultural deficiencies, Du Bois defiantly declared: “Nor am I called upon to apologize for these people, or to make fun of their dumb misery. For their condition there is an apology due, witness High Heaven; but not from me.”⁹¹

Du Bois’s descriptions of the “dumb misery” of the black masses might in retrospect appear judgmental, elitist, and inappropriately derogatory. Yet whenever Du Bois dwells on the ignorance or backwardness or primitiveness or undeveloped nature or “childlike-ness” of blacks, he explains it as a consequence of white oppression. His analysis of the stereotype of blacks as “shiftless” is illuminating:

To the car-window sociologist, to the man who seeks to understand and know the South by devoting the few leisure hours of a holiday trip to unravelling the snarl of centuries,—to such men very often the whole trouble with the black field-hand may be summed up . . . “Shiftless!” They have noted repeatedly scenes like one I saw last summer. We were riding along the highroad to town at the close of a long hot day. A couple of young black fellows passed us in a muleteam, with several bushels of loose corn in the ear. One was driving, listlessly bent forward, his elbows on his knees,—a happy-go-lucky, careless picture of irresponsibility. The other was fast asleep in the bottom of the wagon. As we passed we noticed an ear of corn fall from the wagon. They never saw it. . . . A rod farther on we noted another ear on the ground; and between that creeping mule and town we counted twenty-six ears of corn. Shiftless? Yes, the personification of shiftlessness. And yet follow those boys: they are not lazy; to-morrow morning they’ll be up with the sun; they work hard when they do work, and they work willingly. They have no sordid, selfish, money-getting ways, but rather a fine disdain for mere cash. They’ll loaf before your face and work behind your back with good-natured honesty. They’ll steal a watermelon, and hand you back your lost purse intact. Their great defect as laborers lies in their lack of incentive beyond the mere pleasure of physical exertion. They are careless because they have not found that it pays to be careful; they are improvident because the improvident ones of their acquaintance get on about as well as the provident. Above all, they cannot see why they should take unusual pains to make the white man’s land better, or to fatten his mule, or save his corn.⁹²

In one example after another, Du Bois shows how behaviors that would ordinarily be explained by racial stereotypes are actually rational

because oppression provides few incentives to act otherwise. To be an efficient slave was to act irrationally because it increased the power of one's oppressor. Du Bois did not sugarcoat the negative effects of white racism on black people, for to do so robbed the devil of his due.

Du Bois's sociological analyses, based on surveys, ethnographic research, massive interviews and participant observation, took him behind cultural stereotypes of the black masses, enabling him to realistically describe the conditions with which they struggled, conditions that were unknown to the public and most social scientists:

We seldom study the condition of the Negro to-day honestly and carefully. It is so much easier to assume that we know it all. Or perhaps, having already reached conclusions in our own minds, we are loth to have them disturbed by facts. And yet how little we really know of these millions,—of their daily lives and longings, of their homely joys and sorrows, of their real shortcomings and the meaning of their crimes! All this we can only learn by intimate contact with the masses, and not by wholesale arguments covering millions separate in time and space, and differing widely in training and culture.⁹³

Du Bois's sociological studies of the masses do not square with the views attributed to him by Appiah, Reed, and Watts. Du Bois's data led him to conclude that the black masses tended to be hardworking and honest but only barely literate and desperately poor. He emphasized their humanity as individuals, stating, "We often forget that each unit in the mass is a throbbing human soul . . . [that] love and hates, . . . laughs and weeps its bitter tears, and looks in vague and awful longing at the grim horizon of its life."⁹⁴ In contrast to critics who claimed that he saw the masses as biological and cultural primitives, he described them as a population who, despite stifling oppression, were resolutely advancing in their social evolution: in only one generation since slavery, "the Negro . . . forms the chief laboring force of the most rapidly developing part of the land. He owns twelve million acres of land, two hundred and fifty million dollars worth of farm property, and controls as owner or renter five hundred millions. Nearly three-fifths of the Negroes have learned to read and write. An increasing number have given evidence of ability and thoughtfulness."⁹⁵ For Du Bois, the figures indicating black advancement meant that the development was distinct and markedly in the right direction, and that, if blacks were given justice and help, no honest man could doubt the outcome.

A large part of Du Bois's intellectual project involved documenting the great strides made by the black masses in all phases of life just one decade following slavery. Another dimension of that project was to

prove the black masses were not culturally inferior but culturally challenged by historical contingencies. Thus Du Bois warned that “to assert dogmatically that the present distribution of culture is a fair index of the distribution of human ability and desert is to make an assertion for which there is not the slightest scientific warrant.”⁹⁶ Regarding the abilities of the black masses, Du Bois agreed with a recently emancipated young boy, Richard R. Wright Sr., who, when asked in 1868 to provide his assessment of the newly freed slaves, responded: “Tell them we are rising!”

Appiah, Reed, Gooding-Williams, and Watts assume that when Du Bois referred to whites as possessing superior civilizations, he meant that they were racially superior to blacks. They imply that Du Bois engaged in moral judgments suggesting that whites had a “better” or “higher” civilization. Yet this is a misreading of Du Bois’s conception of civilization. Degrees of civilization for Du Bois were determined by a population’s literacy rate, knowledge of economic activities, social organization, and knowledge acquired beyond local setting. If a population was high on these dimensions, it ranked high in civilizational achievements. Even so, for Du Bois, such “higher” cultures were not automatically “better” or more worthy in a humanistic sense. In fact, “higher” cultures might be morally corrupt and even more barbaric than “lower” cultures.

Thus Du Bois considered white American and European civilizations that colonized and discriminated against people of color to be barbaric and backward. Speaking of caste oppression by whites, Du Bois declared that “this outrageous programme of wholesale human degeneration is not outspoken yet save in the backward civilizations of the southern United States, South Africa and Australia. But its enunciation is listened to with respect and tolerance in England, Germany and the northern states.”⁹⁷ Pointing to the failures of American white civilization, Du Bois cried out, “Merciful God! in these wild days and in the name of Civilization, Justice, and Motherhood,—what have we not seen, right here in America, of orgy, cruelty, barbarism, and murder done to men and women of Negro descent.”⁹⁸ Though the white man’s civilization “boasted much” of moral superiority and though the modern white man “took himself and his own perfectness with . . . disconcerting seriousness,” “We whose shame, humiliation, and deep insult his aggrandizement so often involved were never deceived. We looked at him clearly, with world-old eyes, and saw simply a human thing, weak and pitiable and cruel, even as we are and were.”⁹⁹

This examination of Du Bois's sociological approach to race demonstrates that biology played no role in his causal analysis of racial inequality. Instead, what we find is a political sociology stressing power, economic exploitation, and social oppression as producers and sustainers of racial inequality. Moreover, Du Bois's students such as Monroe Work, Richard R. Wright Jr., Edmund Haynes, and Mary White Ovington followed their mentor in rejecting biological factors as determinants of racial inequality. For example, Wright concluded in his social study of the blacks of Xenia, Ohio, that "the future will see the Negroes better their condition as their environment becomes better."¹⁰⁰

Du Bois's race analysis is dynamic because it stresses how historical specificity and developmental tendencies influence and shape race and class dynamics. It also takes culture into account by emphasizing how social oppression creates cultural deficits among the dominated, thus encouraging cultures of domination to take hold in ways that stunt a group's social development and its capacity to engage in collective action.¹⁰¹ Although Du Bois's choice of language such as *primitive*, *childhood*, and *low grade of culture* in his early works has led some scholars to highlight tensions within his sociological approach, their theories are based on a failure to recognize Du Bois's larger sociological framework for understanding culture and on a mistaken apprehension that his language supports biological and cultural determinist arguments regarding race inequality. Even worse, such language has provided grist for the mills of racists intent on using the dean of Negro scholars' words to support their own beliefs. Reed confirms that as early as 1904 Du Bois abandoned language suggesting essentialist interpretations of black oppression.¹⁰² Indeed, Du Bois expressed embarrassment for having used such language as a young scholar.¹⁰³ It should be borne in mind, however, that at the turn of the twentieth century constructivist language did not yet exist and social Darwinism permeated intellectual discussions of race inequality. Despite these difficulties, Du Bois developed a potent sociology of race that transcended the biologicistic and cultural determinism driving race analyses at the turn of the twentieth century.

Appiah, Reed, and Watts fail to grasp Du Bois's transcendence of determinism because they ignore the body of sociological analysis produced by Du Bois and his students and focus instead on terminology that they believe conveys the essence of Du Bois's analyses. They take this position even in the absence of any declarations by Du Bois that blood and ancestry determined racial inequality.

In actuality, Du Bois's analysis anticipated the contemporary social constructionist view of race. The historian Tom Holt captured this aspect of Du Bois's thinking: "Those who contend, therefore, that DuBois embraced certain elements of the nineteenth-century conceptions of race, even as he struggled to free himself from their biological genesis, are only partially correct. They are wrong in not crediting DuBois with going a much greater distance in refiguring the nineteenth-century 'race idea' that he had inherited. But even more important is our own intellectual loss in not recognizing and building upon DuBois' insights into the relation between 'the race idea' and history."¹⁰⁴ Indeed, as we will come to see, while Chicago school sociologists were still asserting that biological factors played important roles in racial dynamics, Du Bois was insisting, "There are no races, in the sense of great, separate, pure breeds of men, differing in attainment, development, and capacity."¹⁰⁵

Unlike white sociologists, Du Bois had a vested interest in distancing himself from social Darwinist thought. In his autobiographical *Dusk of Dawn*, Du Bois recalls: "At Harvard, I began to face scientific race dogma: first of all, evolution and the 'Survival of the Fittest.' It was continually stressed in the community and in classes that there was a vast difference in the development of the whites and the 'lower' races; that this could be seen in the physical development of the Negro."¹⁰⁶ Du Bois related the disgust he felt while visiting a museum where he observed "a series of skeletons arranged from a little monkey to a tall well-developed white man, with a Negro barely outranking a chimpanzee."¹⁰⁷ In addition to its fatal analytical flaws, social Darwinist thought was personally reprehensible to Du Bois because it defined black people as inferior. Thus, on scientific and ideological grounds, Du Bois elevated racial analysis to the sociological plane and discarded social Darwinist explanations of race.

THE PHILADELPHIA NEGRO AND "THE NEGROES OF FARMVILLE": PIONEERING TEXTS OF MODERN EMPIRICAL SOCIOLOGY

In 1899, Du Bois published *The Philadelphia Negro*. Now recognized as a classic, it is usually depicted as the first study of an urban black community. But its status as America's first major empirical sociological study has rarely been acknowledged. Du Bois made clear the broad scientific aims of his sociological works:

The American Negro deserves study for the great end of advancing the cause of science in general. No such opportunity to watch and measure the history and development of a great race of men ever presented itself to the scholars of a modern nation. If they miss this opportunity—if they do the work in a slipshod, unsystematic manner—if they dally with the truth to humor the whims of the day, they do far more than hurt the good name of the American people; they hurt the cause of scientific truth the world over, they voluntarily decrease human knowledge.¹⁰⁸

Du Bois felt that studies of African Americans should be conducted in the most careful and systematic manner and anchored in observations and comparisons. He always maintained that racial transformation was sorely needed in America and the world. But he insisted that scientific research on race be based solely on scientific criteria, especially in America given the volatility and entrenched biases associated with the race problem.¹⁰⁹ He warned that “students must be careful to insist that science as such . . . has but one aim: the discovery of truth. . . . Any attempt to give it a double aim, to make social reform the immediate instead of the mediate object of a search for truth, will inevitably tend to defeat both objects.”¹¹⁰ However, he was not advocating for an “objective” science where the scholar steers clear of “meddling” in the real world because those concerns taint the authenticity of science. At the top of his scientific agenda was the production of a *critical* social science: “Most unfortunate . . . is the fact that so much of the work done on the Negro question is notoriously uncritical; uncritical from lack of discrimination in the selection and weighing of evidence; uncritical in choosing the proper point of view from which to study these problems, and, finally, uncritical from the distinct bias in the minds of so many writers.”¹¹¹ Scientists had to seek first the truth utilizing the best available theories and methods. Regarding sociology and social change, Du Bois stated, “The sole aim of any society is to settle its problems in accordance with its highest ideals, and the only rational method of accomplishing this is to study those problems in the light of the best scientific research.”¹¹² Scholars had the responsibility to make scholarship available to scientists across the world so it could be evaluated on purely scientific grounds. But like Marx, Du Bois believed that once the scientific truth was established, the point of knowledge was to transform the world. Efforts seeking racial changes could be effective only if based on scientific findings derived from carefully conducted research.

Du Bois employed demanding scientific standards while researching and composing *The Philadelphia Negro*. In so doing, he broke new

sociological ground. The book was a study of the black population in the Seventh Ward of Philadelphia at the close of the nineteenth century. Its first seminal contribution was its empirical methodology. Departing from the armchair conjectures and flashes of intuition customary at the time, it rested on an empirical base: not only extensive interviews with all families in the ward but also surveys, archival data, and ethnographic data from participant observation. Indeed, Du Bois emerged from *The Philadelphia Negro* as the first number-crunching, surveying, interviewing, participant-observing and field-working sociologist in America, a pioneer in the multimethods approach. He cross-checked his quantitative and qualitative data to ensure accuracy by eradicating undetected errors associated with a particular method. Thus he also pioneered the data-gathering technique known as triangulation.¹¹³

The Philadelphia Negro was steeped in historical and comparative analyses. It was not by happenstance that Du Bois's sociology was deeply rooted in historical analyses; he had been trained as a historian at Harvard and had earned his doctorate in that field. Thus he studied blacks during slavery, charted their migration to Philadelphia, and explored the complex ways through which they constructed an urban community in a large northern city. He explained, "One cannot study the Negro in freedom and come to general conclusions about his destiny without knowing his history in slavery."¹¹⁴ Comparative analysis was required because during this period social scientists conceptualized blacks as subhuman. To address this fallacy, Du Bois compared the development of Philadelphia blacks with that of the city's European immigrants, showing similarities at comparable stages of development. He pointed out that when social context and developmental conditions were similar black outcomes on major indices were comparable to those of European immigrants.

Du Bois was aware that white sociologists possessed little knowledge of black institutions and cultural processes. They tended to view black communities as distorted and inferior copies of white communities.¹¹⁵ In *The Philadelphia Negro* Du Bois showed this conception to be sociological nonsense by analyzing the black community's institutions and culture. Sociologists of the period usually ignored class distinctions among blacks, thus treating them as a homogeneous mass. Du Bois analyzed the black class structure and demonstrated how it shaped the community and its stratification dynamics.¹¹⁶ He developed a novel sociology of work and occupations analysis by exploring stratification and mobility processes within the black community.¹¹⁷

Du Bois analyzed the conditions of black women and the unique challenges they faced in the labor market. *The Philadelphia Negro*, therefore, focused attention on gender relations.¹¹⁸ In this work, Du Bois also developed a sociology of demographics, population, and health to scrutinize death rates and the health status of black Philadelphians.¹¹⁹ He analyzed “how the African American slums were experiencing population turnover as more affluent African Americans were moving out and being replaced by African Americans migrating from the ‘country areas.’”¹²⁰ As we will see, this line of inquiry anticipated future ethnic succession models and provided a sustained sociological analysis of the urban community. Du Bois analyzed black crime, revealing that it was largely rooted in social conditions rather than in biological and social degeneracy, as white social scientists usually claimed.¹²¹ In developing a novel sociology of religion, Du Bois analyzed the social organization and cultural processes of the black church and laid bare its role as the community’s central institution, affecting all aspects of black life.¹²² He subjected other community organizations, including a wide range of voluntary associations, to fine-grained analyses,¹²³ and he examined leisure by analyzing the recreational activities of black Philadelphians.¹²⁴

The Philadelphia Negro was not exclusively an analysis of the black community. It also focused on racial power relations and demonstrated that oppression and discrimination trapped blacks in a vicious cycle of subordination.¹²⁵ The rich data from *The Philadelphia Negro* were the empirical basis for Du Bois’s construction of an intricate sociological narrative clearly identifying the racial dynamics that existed at the beginning of the twentieth century and that continue to drive contemporary American race relations. The sociological frames that emerged were largely structural and cultural, pinpointing how white discrimination and prejudice produced a peculiar and powerful social environment that crippled Philadelphia’s black community. *The Philadelphia Negro* was characterized by novel inductive theorizing, for it flew in the face of social Darwinist theories that blamed racial inequality on black inferiority.

Yet it would be a mistake to view *The Philadelphia Negro* and Du Bois’s scholarship generally as merely black sociology. Du Bois sought to explicate the human condition by interrogating the color line in America and globally. For him, that color line was a social divide structuring social inequality between the haves and have-nots. It was as important for dominant white groups to understand that color line as it

was for oppressed people of color across the globe. As Du Bois put it in the “Forethought” to *The Souls of Black Folk*, “Herein lie buried many things which if read with patience may show the strange meaning of being black here at the dawning of the Twentieth Century. This meaning is not without interest to you, Gentle Reader; for the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line.”¹²⁶

While completing *The Philadelphia Negro*, Du Bois also traveled south and conducted a classic study of Farmville, Virginia’s rural black community.¹²⁷ The first empirical study of rural sociology in the United States, it examined questions similar to those explored in *The Philadelphia Negro* and employed the methodologies it had pioneered.¹²⁸ This strategy enabled Du Bois to compare a rural and an urban community before the turn of the twentieth century. Du Bois believed that to understand American race relations the sociologist had to focus on both North and South and rural and urban communities because together they reflected an unbroken chain of social processes operative in both milieus. This approach was to remain a distinguishing feature of Du Bois’s sociology.

The Philadelphia Negro analyzed the city as a setting where spatial arrangements revealed racial dynamics. Through his extensive use of maps, Du Bois captured how spatial configurations of Philadelphia were shaped by racist practices generated by the color line. His geographical analysis documented the high levels of racial segregation in the city and how segregation resulted from decisions made by economic elites to protect white interests. Unlike the urban analysts of the Chicago school three decades later, Du Bois documented racial configurations within city spaces as planned phenomena rather than as outgrowths of natural ecological processes:¹²⁹ the locations of neighborhoods and businesses were products of those who possessed money and power. This was true even within the black community because middle- and upper-class blacks separated themselves spatially from the black lower classes to the extent possible given the dictates of Philadelphia’s color line. Evaluating Du Bois’s analysis of the city, the urban sociologist Mary Pattillo commented that “movement across space was key for DuBois and surely predated the Chicago School spatial concepts of human ecology, invasion and succession, and concentric zones.”¹³⁰ The Du Boisian scholar Marcus Hunter concurred:

Long before scholars such as Robert Park (1915), St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton (1945), William Julius Wilson (1987, 1996), and Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton (1993) (to name a few) imagined ethnic and racial urban

enclaves as comprising entities unto themselves, Du Bois (1899) characterized urban Black enclaves as “a city within a city” (p. 5). Employing and examining this spatial concept, Du Bois’s *The Philadelphia Negro* provides an oft-overlooked analytic bridge between the varied directions taken by urban scholars. Emphasizing the persistent impact of race, historically and contemporarily, Du Bois’s analysis offers a path to examine the spatial organization of urban America.¹³¹

Thus in the *Philadelphia Negro* Du Bois pioneered an urban sociology that remains relevant for contemporary urban analysts.

The Philadelphia Negro was an original treatise based on empirical methods and sociological analysis. It contained analysis in what would become major subfields of modern American sociology, including stratification, class, race, gender, work and occupations, crime, demography and population, institutions, religion, and leisure. These multiple areas were analyzed with a novel multimethod triangulated set of data. This was a quintessential pioneering study because, as Mia Bay has argued, “Since white sociology’s natural laws and negative assessments of black capacity tended to be based on evolutionary theory rather than any sort of empirical evidence, American social science offered no research models for DuBois as he set up his study of Philadelphia’s black population.”¹³² Thus, by utilizing his analytic training gained from the Schmoller wing of the German historical school, Du Bois engaged in bold intellectual innovations, producing the first classic of American scientific sociology.

Other scholarly influences besides the GHSE were directly relevant to the production of *The Philadelphia Negro*. As he conducted the research, Du Bois was aware that sociology needed new intellectual directions to reach its potential as a new illuminating discipline. *The Philadelphia Negro* represented Du Bois’s first sustained effort to produce a sociological study that broke from the tradition of armchair grand theorizing. Yet, as Randall Collins has argued, intellectual work is always influenced by scholarly activities embedded in historic and contemporaneous networks.¹³³ Despite the intellectual isolation and racism Du Bois encountered throughout his career, he was influenced by scholarly networks, and so was *The Philadelphia Negro*. As we have seen, Du Bois’s educational experiences at Fisk, Harvard, and Berlin helped shape his intellectual orientation. Beyond those experiences, particular works, and intellectual networks, influenced *The Philadelphia Negro*.

By the time Du Bois commenced research for *The Philadelphia Negro* in 1896, Charles Booth had published eight of his seventeen volumes of *Life and Labor of the People in London*.¹³⁴ These were ground-

breaking works conducted by a large research team that examined the poor of East London. They pioneered particular empirical methods, including statistical surveys and interviews that were used to determine the size of the population of poor East Londoners and to explore the social conditions that circumscribed their lives. Moreover, Booth's volumes pioneered the use of color-coded maps to produce powerful visuals of the people and the social conditions they encountered. Therefore, *Life and Labor of the People in London*, first published during the last decade of the nineteenth century, contained extensive quantitative and qualitative data derived from house-to-house interviews and questionnaires.

Booth's empirical research on the poor broke from the armchair speculation typical of the period. Future social science researches, especially of urban communities, were deeply influenced by Booth's pioneering research.¹³⁵ Surveys, interviews, and maps became standard features of many future studies. These methods enabled researchers and activist-scholars to depict oppressed populations through trenchant visuals and accuracy not previously achieved.

The American settlement movement, which developed in London before being transplanted to America, made effective use of empirical techniques pioneered by Booth. Hull House, founded in Chicago in 1889, became the model inspiring the spread of settlement houses across America.¹³⁶ The settlement movement was usually though not exclusively organized by talented women who had backgrounds in social science, especially in the emerging field of sociology.¹³⁷ Jane Addams, the charismatic and brilliant leader of Hull House, modeled her settlement after the famous Toynbee Hall in London. Hull House leaders were well aware of Booth's studies of the urban poor and its use of survey methodology and maps. In 1894, Hull House leaders produced a volume that examined poor immigrant communities in downtrodden neighborhoods just beyond the settlement's doorstep.

In 1895, Jane Addams published *Hull House Maps and Papers (HHM&P)*, which examined the social conditions of the poor in Chicago's Nineteenth Ward. Sklar asserts that "until the publication of the multi-volume *Pittsburgh Survey* in 1909, *HHM&P* represented the state of the art of social science analysis of working-class urban life in the United States."¹³⁸ Like Booth's studies in London, *HHM&P* utilized scientific methods including surveys, questionnaires, and maps to produce data-driven essays that captured social conditions confronting Chicago's poor.¹³⁹ Indeed, the book's skillful use of maps was its most distinctive feature, "the American equivalent of Charles Booth's stunning 'Descriptive Map of London Poverty,' published

in five parts in 1891.”¹⁴⁰ Thus ensuing empirical studies of urban communities could not afford to ignore the pathbreaking contributions made by *HHM&P*.

Another project that produced multivolume examinations of urban communities in the early twentieth century was the *Großstadt-Documente*, headquartered in Berlin. This effort, led by Hans Ostwald, led to the publication, between 1904 and 1908, of a series of fifty-one volumes with the aim of capturing everyday life in Berlin and several additional European cities.¹⁴¹ A collection of forty writers, none of whom were professional social scientists, published books on the people and institutions of modern European cities. These were usually based on ethnographic research and firsthand personal documents, and their analyses tended to focus on classifying “social types” of urban dwellers (such as bohemians or unmarried mothers).¹⁴² Although these volumes produced rich empirical data on modern city life, they had little impact on professional social science in Europe or the United States. However, their choice of an urban focus and their use of personal documents and ethnography would influence the Chicago school.¹⁴³ Although publication of these works began five years after *The Philadelphia Negro*, their appearance is another indicator that Du Bois’s classic was produced during a period in which scholars and reformers were turning attention to empirically based studies of urban communities.

The studies, which launched a survey movement, made contributions to this emerging tradition. *The Pittsburgh Survey* was the outcome of a large research team of seventy-four individuals who studied the impact of industrialization on communities of steelworkers in Pittsburgh.¹⁴⁴ This work was initiated in 1907 when a large research team entered the field collecting data on the working class and its living conditions by utilizing surveys, interviews, maps, and photographs. In 1914, the results were published in six volumes collectively known as *The Pittsburgh Survey*. This impressive effort was soon adopted in other cities, initiating the survey movement. Like the other efforts, *The Pittsburgh Survey* reflected the interest of social scientists and reformers in establishing a scientific reservoir of data to address the impact of rapid industrialization, labor strife, and explosive racial and ethnic tensions in the early twentieth century. Nevertheless, neither the *Großstadt-Documente* nor *The Pittsburgh Survey* influenced Du Bois’s *The Philadelphia Negro* because Du Bois’s book predated them by five and ten years respectively. By the time these projects published their results, Du Bois had produced numerous studies at Atlanta University.

Du Bois formally acknowledged the influence of Booth's *Life and Labor of the People in London* on *The Philadelphia Negro*, and that influence is unmistakably present in its pages. Du Bois used techniques like Booth's to collect and analyze his data. Further, the use of numerous graphs, tables, maps, and charts pioneered by Booth was replicated in Du Bois's study. Thus Du Bois was one of the first American social scientists to make use of the empirical methods pioneered by Booth.

Du Bois was also directly influenced by Hull House's publications and leaders. These female leaders and Du Bois shared bonds of oppression, one based on race, the other on gender. Both he and the leaders of Hull House were marginalized from mainstream academia and the emerging sociology programs at prestigious institutions including Chicago, Columbia, and Pennsylvania.¹⁴⁵ Du Bois had no choice but to work at financially impoverished black institutions, while women in the settlement movement developed their own female-based institutions known as settlement houses. Yet a certain freedom derived from this marginalization because Du Bois and settlement leaders could avoid the intellectual censorship otherwise imposed by dominant white male leaders.¹⁴⁶ Du Bois had less freedom than the women did because he battled both white racism and efforts of black leaders to silence his challenging voice. Because of oppression and marginalization, Du Bois and settlement leaders like Addams viewed scholarship and social change differently than dominant white male scholars. Whereas white male scholars, given their privileged position and the rewards they inherited from the status quo, were wary of efforts to use science to promote social change and considered such aims as detrimental to objectivity and detachment, Du Bois and settlement leaders, though believing that the purpose of research was to generate scientific knowledge using the best methods and theories available, viewed scholarship as having the additional goal of informing struggles against oppression. Du Bois and settlement leaders frequently shared forums where they debated and discussed both scholarship and social activism.

The *Philadelphia Negro* profited from these associations and intellectual exchanges. Because he was familiar with the works produced by settlement houses, including Hull House's groundbreaking *Maps and Papers*, Du Bois incorporated insights from their findings, especially as these related to gender. *HHM&P* had even more impact on *The Philadelphia Negro* than the Booth studies did. Isabel Eaton, who participated in the research and writing of *HHM&P*, was chosen to write a section of *The Philadelphia Negro* on black domestic service work: an

important contribution given that large numbers of black women worked as domestics and experienced the economic and sexual exploitation associated with that occupation.¹⁴⁷ Clearly, Booth's work and *HHM&P* directly contributed to the quality of Du Bois's first social science classic.

Yet it would be misleading to conflate the contributions of *The Philadelphia Negro* with those of other empirical studies produced at the dawn of the twentieth century. Whereas *Life and Labor of the People in London* and *HHM&P* examined specific social problems, *The Philadelphia Negro* was a comprehensive sociologically informed community study.¹⁴⁸ The former two studies, as products of research teams covering disparate issues, lacked a broad conceptual framework and a distinct sociological argument at a time when sociology was seeking to find conceptual focus. In contrast, as anthropologists Faye V. Harrison and Irene Diggs pointed out, "The method and theoretical point of view which Du Bois articulated for this study helped to lay foundations for research that changed the discourse on race and culture in the social sciences in the United States."¹⁴⁹ However, as we will see, that contribution would not prevent *The Philadelphia Negro* from being largely ignored by mainstream white social scientists for decades.