W.E.B. DU BOIS'S TALENTED TENTH
A Quantitative Assessment

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The Talented Tenth is the moniker that W.E.B. Du Bois bestowed on the cadre of college-educated African Americans whom he charged with providing leadership for the African American community during the post-Reconstruction era. According to Du Bois's original theoretical formulation, the Talented Tenth were to sacrifice their personal interests and endeavors to provide leadership for the African American community. Following in Du Bois's footsteps, this inquiry uses the National Black Politics Study to examine the attitudes of today's Talented Tenth concerning their responsibilities as leaders of their respective communities. Multivariate findings indicate that among other things, the Talented Tenth report being more politically active and more involved in their communities and are suspect of the motives of the Black middle class. The authors' results suggest that the Talented Tenth are fulfilling the charge placed before them by W.E.B. Du Bois.

> 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, in their own and other races.
>
> —Du Bois (1903, p. 33)

The Talented Tenth is the moniker that W.E.B. Du Bois bestowed on the cadre of college-educated African Americans whom he charged with guiding the masses of freedmen through the

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post-Reconstruction years. Despite arguments to the contrary, the Talented Tenth was not designed to be an exclusionary group (i.e., a group that attempts to distance and separate itself from the masses of people with whom it is identified) but rather an assemblage of African Americans uniquely prepared to lead their race during the postslavery years[1] (Du Bois, 1948/1965). According to Du Bois (1903), "from the very first it has been the educated and intelligent of the Negro people, [the Talented Tenth], that have led and elevated the mass" (p. 34). Although Du Bois proposed that college-educated African Americans lead the struggle for African American freedom, it was to be a struggle that would recognize the humanity of African Americans rather than one in which those called on to help save the group would perversely become active participants in the exploitation and underdevelopment of the people they were called to save.

At the core of Du Bosian logic, with respect to the Talented Tenth, is the idea that educated African Americans are obligated to sacrifice their personal interests and endeavors in favor of community leadership activities designed to improve the social, economic, and political condition of the race (Du Bois, 1948/1965). This particular program of racial advancement was proposed by Du Bois (1948/1965) because

> it is clear that in 1900, American Negroes were an inferior caste, were frequently lynched and robbed, widely disfranchised, and usually segregated in the main areas of life. As student and worker at that time, I looked upon them and saw salvation through intelligent leadership; as I said, through a Talented Tenth. And for this intelligence I argued we needed college-trained men. (p. 2)

Implied within Du Bois's (1948/1965) articulation of the Talented Tenth is the belief that members of this group are compelled to

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strive for the noble cause of racial advancement as evidenced through their "willingness to work and make personal sacrifice[s] for solving the problems [of the race]" (p. 3). That the majority of African Americans were unwilling to make personal sacrifices (i.e., loss of financial stability and fear for personal/family safety) underscores the courage of members of the Talented Tenth who understood the immediate need of intellectual leadership and who willingly defied American injustice.

Although Du Bois was very clear and precise regarding the role of the Talented Tenth, critics of the concept, especially Booker T. Washington, very early began to distort his intent as being elitist. Rutledge M. Dennis (1977) supported this idea and proposed that

> Washington accuses [Du Bois's Talented Tenth] of being able to understand only theories and ideas. He asserts that they have crammed their heads full of book knowledge; in so doing they have lost contact with the real world and real people. . . . In other words, he is accusing members of the educated class of pursuing their own goals rather than the goals of the masses. He accuses them of an inability to immerse themselves into the every-day world of the masses; the end result being sociological as well as psychological. (p. 392)

When W.E.B. Du Bois penned his concept of the Talented Tenth, he was attempting to "develop the thesis that the leadership of American Negroes should be in the hands of a talented and educated minority, who should become their leaders in order to guide and conduct them out of their condition of semi-slavery" (Du Bois, 1948/1965, p. 1). Despite possessing the trappings of elitism, Du Bois's original conceptualization was designed to promote self-sacrifice by the Talented Tenth. Years after proposing the concept, Du Bois readily acknowledged that he did not fully articulate the obligations of the Talented Tenth in such a manner that could curtail and prevent possible misperceptions of his concept (Du Bois, 1948/1965). That Du Bois did not fully articulate a more accurate meaning of the concept has enabled some scholars, in light of this fact, to offer very pointed and necessary critiques. For example, two consistent critiques of Du Bois's theory on African American leader-

ship are that he believed only those of means could become members of his cadre of elites and that he was cultivating an entourage of elites who would only seek individual gain at the expense of the masses. Addressing these critiques nearly 50 years after the publication of his seminal article, "The Talented Tenth" (1903), Du Bois said,

> [My critics suggest] that I conceived that those Negroes who were advantaged in gift and property, should be educated and should become the group which spoke for the Negro and assumed that they represented the Negro. . . . [Also], my idea of the Talented Tenth was criticized because as men said I was thinking of the exceptional persons and the persons who had and could get advantages and losing sight entirely of the great mass of people in the race, and that my program therefore contemplated the uplift of the few, rather than the development of the many. (Du Bois, 1948/1965, p. 1)

Du Bois rejected these criticisms as not being "fair to my meaning" (p. 1). Contrary to these critiques of the Talented Tenth, Du Bois asserted,

> We, [the Talented Tenth], did not regard ourselves as separate and superior to the masses, but rather as a part of the mass which was being equipped and armed for leadership and that leadership was of course for the benefit of the masses. (pp. 2-3)

Thus, Du Bois's preference for Talented Tenth leadership is based more on ability and preparedness than, necessarily, one's pedigreed lineage. In addition, Du Bois believed that an educated cadre of ex-slaves, representing the best interests of that group, could help prevent African Americans from becoming the victims of unfair business and political practices by unscrupulous White and Black Americans (Du Bois, 1898, 1899). Thus, the original Talented Tenth concept mandates not elitism but self-sacrifice and leadership of the masses by those who possess a college education. The objective of this investigation is to ascertain whether Du Bois's Talented Tenth are currently engaging in leadership activities as the original concept mandates.

TALENTED TENTH OR BLACK MIDDLE CLASS

THE TALENTED TENTH

Talented Tenth and *Black middle class* are not synonymous terms,[2] yet there is conceptual confusion due to a tendency of many scholars to use the terms interchangeably. According to Du Bois's original concept and for the purposes of this investigation, the Talented Tenth will refer to college-educated African Americans (Du Bois, 1903). This usage is consistent with Du Bois's usage; he asked,

> How then shall the [Talented Tenth] of a struggling people be trained and the hands of the risen few strengthened. There can be but one answer: The best and most capable of their youth must be schooled in the colleges and universities of the land. (p. 45)

Although Du Bois's original conceptualization suggests that a college education is sufficient for admission into the Talented Tenth, Rutledge M. Dennis (1997b) asserted that

> Du Bois was often imprecise in his use of the [Talented] Tenth: sometimes referring to a cultural "aristocracy"; at other times referring to the educated who would educate future generations; yet at other times, the term is used to characterize those individuals who are not merely educated but have chosen the world of ideas and the elucidation of ideas as the defining feature of their life. (p. xii)

For the purposes of this article, the term *Talented Tenth* will be used in a manner that remains consistent with Du Bois's original formulation of the term as defined in his classic essay, "The Talented Tenth" (1903). This use of Du Bois's original conceptualization does not take into account his attitudinal or conceptual change toward the Talented Tenth over the course of his life. By retaining Du Bois's initial concept of the term, we are able to note Du Bois's later disapproval of the Talented Tenth while remaining consistent

with Dennis's assertion of the possible dual meaning of the Talented Tenth to refer both to "the educated who would educate future generations" and the educated who have "chosen the world of ideas and the elucidation of ideas as the defining feature of their life."

Although Du Bois promoted his Talented Tenth concept, he clearly understood and acknowledged that other options were available—specifically, industrial and vocational school training as promoted by Booker T. Washington. Nevertheless, Du Bois (1903) argued,

> All men cannot go to college but some men must; every isolated group or nation must have its yeast, must have for the talented few centers of training where men are not so mystified and befuddled by the hard and necessary toil of earning a living, as to have no aims higher than their bellies, and no God greater than Gold. (p. 46)

Du Bois also acknowledged educational options beyond the liberal arts; however, he was insistent in his belief that the leadership of the African American community was more in need of intellectual than physical muscle. Tracing the development of the Talented Tenth to the days of slavery, Du Bois later asserted that a number of Black leaders during this time possessed a measure of education.

Undoubtedly, the enslavement of Africans in America created an environment that was not conducive to the development of Du Bois's Talented Tenth. The American South, unlike the North, however, often provided no educational opportunities for Blacks. In fact, in many proslavery states, it was illegal to educate Blacks. Nevertheless, according to Du Bois (1903),

> here and there in the early part of the century came . . . exceptional men. Some were natural sons of unnatural fathers and were given often a liberal training and thus a race of educated mulattoes sprang up to plead for Black men's rights. (pp. 37-38)

Despite the inhumanity of slavery, the slavery-era members of Du Bois's Talented Tenth, many of whom were educated in the American North, included

> some, like Frederick Douglass, [who] was self-trained, but yet trained liberally; others, like Alexander Crummell and McCune Smith, [who] graduated from famous foreign universities. Most of them rose up through the colored schools of New York and Philadelphia and Boston, taught by college-bred men like Russworm, of Dartmouth, and college-bred white men like Neau and Benezet. (Du Bois, 1903, p. 42)

The data presented to this juncture suggest that Du Bois's original conceptualization of the Talented Tenth tilted heavily toward a college education. However, during the years of American slavery, for obvious reasons, this requirement was relaxed when necessary (e.g., Frederick Douglass). Arguably, as Dennis (1997a, 1997b) suggested, Du Bois altered his definition of the Talented Tenth as times and circumstances changed during the course of his almost 100-year life. Before his death, Du Bois (1968), feeling abandoned by the Talented Tenth because of its relative silence during the government's attempt to brand him a traitor and a Communist while denying him a passport, asserted that "the intelligentsia, the 'Talented Tenth,' the successful business and professional men, were not, for the most part, outspoken in my defense. They were silent or actually antagonistic" (p. 370). Offering an explanation for the Talented Tenth's silence during his trial and their refusal/inability to honor the charge placed before them almost 50 years prior, Du Bois (1968) said,

> Negroes of intelligence and prosperity had become American in their acceptance of exploitation as defensible, and in their imitation of American "conspicuous expenditure." They proposed to make money and spend it as pleased them. They had beautiful homes, large and expensive cars and fur coats. They hated "communism" and "socialism" as much as any White American. Their reaction toward Paul Roberson was typical; they simply could not understand his surrendering a thousand dollars a night for a moral conviction. (pp. 370-371)

Here, Du Bois suggested that the Talented Tenth, many of whom were firmly entrenched in the middle class, forsook their responsibility to their communities in favor of personal gratification and

accomplishments. For this reason, Du Bois suggested that the Talented Tenth were not engaging in the leadership activities that he outlined for them 50 years prior. Despite Du Bois's alteration of his concept throughout the course of his life and Dennis's (1997a, 1997b) argument that Du Bois's operationalization was often imprecise, inclusion into the Talented Tenth, for the purposes of this article, rests solely on acquiring a college education. The leadership and uplift of the race for its own betterment is the obligation that was placed before the Talented Tenth by Du Bois. According to Du Bois (1903), "the Talented Tenth of the Negro race must be made leaders of thought and missionaries of culture among their people. No others can do this work and Negro colleges must train men for it" (p. 75).

THE BLACK MIDDLE CLASS

Attempts to operationalize the term *Black middle class* have proven to be problematic. Bart Landry (1987), while conducting research for his book *The New Black Middle Class*, discovered

> there could be found no consensus in either scholarly or popular literature on the definition of middle class. Some writers defined the group by their educational level, others by their income, and still others by their occupations or some combination of these characteristics. (p. x)

This is similar to Sidney Kronus's (1971) argument in *The Black Middle Class* that finding a consensus on the term *middle class* is problematic. Kronus suggested that contemporary scholars often use socioeconomic status as a means by which to offer a definition of the Black middle class. However, according to Kronus,

> education is more frequently emphasized than any other status element, followed by occupation and income, respectively. Other criteria which were mentioned in the past but which are in a state of flux today, are (in order of importance): respectability or morality, refinement or "culture," skin color or white ancestry, family background, and property ownership. (p. 5)

The latter "prerequisites" that Kronus offered for admission into the Black middle class (e.g., skin color, family background, White ancestry, etc.) date back to the development of this group during the years of American slavery. Kronus asserted:

> The Black Middle Class, then, was born on the plantations of the Old South. . . . Its identifying characteristics were light skin and either work that put its members in contact with whites or professional and business-trained people who provided services within the black community. The identifying characteristics of the black middle class have historically centered around color and occupation. (p. 4)

This reference to a Black middle class concerns, almost exclusively, enslaved Blacks in the American South. Thomas Sowell (1981) suggested that another Black middle class, comprising free Blacks, also developed in the American North and South prior to the end of slavery:

> The lives of most "free persons of color" were narrowly circumscribed, economically, politically, and legally. They were usually poor, unskilled workers, lacked basic civil rights in most of the South and much of the North, and had very little or no legal protection against fraud or even violence by whites. . . . Most "free persons of color" could read and write in 1850, although only 1 or 2 percent of slaves could do so. . . . The descendants of "free persons of color" remained prominent among Negro leadership in many fields, into the twentieth century. (pp. 195-196)

Although both Kronus and Sowell suggested that the foundation for a Black middle class developed during slavery, the first attempt at defining a Black middle class was undertaken by W.E.B. Du Bois in the years following the abolition of slavery.

In the seminal urban sociological study, *The Philadelphia Negro*, Du Bois (1899/1967) challenged the "strong tendency on the part of the [White] community to consider the Negroes as composing one practically homogeneous mass" (p. 309). Instead, Du Bois suggested that "wide variations in antecedents, wealth, intelligence and general efficiency have already been differentiated

within this group" (p. 309), thus leading to the development of a Black middle class that he called the "well-to-do." Du Bois proposed that the Black middle class, or the well-to-do, includes

> families of undoubted respectability earning sufficient income to live well; not engaged in menial service of any kind; the wife engaged in no occupation save that of a housewife, except in a few cases where she had special employment at home. The children not compelled to be bread-winners, but found in school; The family living in a well-kept home. (p. 311)

Here we find that Du Bois's definition of the *Black middle class*, similar to the argument made by Kronus (1971), includes socioeconomic status and thus contributes to the uncertainty of an agreeable articulation of the term.

E. Franklin Frazier (1930/1966) proposed that the Black middle class did not become a conceptual reality until post-Reconstruction:

> The Negro Middle Class signalized its achievement of self-consciousness in the organization of the National Negro Business League in 1900 under the leadership of Booker T. Washington. This organization was the culmination of a movement fostered by Negro leaders, which had its beginning in the eighties and nineties. The belated evolution of this class as well as its mental isolation was revealed in the resolutions of the leaders gathered in Atlanta [for the Fourth Atlanta University Conference on Negro Problems, titled The Negro in Business]. (p. 317)

Frazier, further defining the Black middle class by financial status, concluded,

> The middle-class group, whose family life we are considering, includes, in addition to those in business enterprises and white-collar occupations, men and women engaged in professional pursuits and employed in responsible positions in public service. In limiting the new Negro middle class which has emerged in recent years to these four occupational classes, we have omitted representatives of other occupational classes who maintain similar standards of behavior and are sometimes accepted socially by members of the

> middle class. But here we are dealing with an economic class composed of certain occupational groups that may be identified statistically. (p. 318)

The operationalization of the term *Black middle class*, in this manner, allows for the detailed categorization of this group purely on the basis of occupation and salary. For example, in his book *Negro Youth at the Crossways*, E. Franklin Frazier (1940/1969) proposed that the middle class includes "the skilled and most of the semiskilled industrial workers and the majority of female domestic servants" (p. 23). Bart Landry (1987) extended Frazier's notion of a middle class to include

> all white-collar workers and small businessmen plus a number of service occupations that I consider on par with sales and clerical work. . . . These service occupations require a period of training before admission and may even attempt to maintain professional standards. (pp. 10-11)

The most telling indicator of one's inclusion into Landry's Black middle class, and a feature similar to other definitions of the middle class as a group, is that he suggested that

> the concept of class does not rest so much on the development of an infallible list of occupations for each class as on the existence of overall, gross differences in the real economic rewards received by individuals in different occupational groups. (p. 11)

In sum, the problematic task of defining the middle class has been and continues to be one that combines a number of factors—most notably, educational attainment, occupation, and income. It is very possible that through hard work, determination, and pure effort, one can become a member of the Black middle class without obtaining a college education. It is not possible, however, to become a member of the Talented Tenth by any means other than obtaining a college education. For this reason, the usage of the term *Talented Tenth*, which is not synonymous with *Black middle class*,

excludes financial prerequisites and rests solely on the level of education that one has obtained.

THEORETICAL ANALYSES OF THE TALENTED TENTH

The existing literature contains no quantitative tests of W.E.B. Du Bois's Talented Tenth concept. Instead, there is a plethora of articles and books that combine various aspects of the Talented Tenth with theoretical analyses of selected areas such as gender, pan-Africanism, and Du Bois's ideological battle with Booker T. Washington (see Wright, 2000). In addition, there is a body of literature that traces the historical development of Du Bois's concept. For example, Dan S. Green (1977) charted the progression of Du Bois's attitude toward this group of college-educated leaders through his almost 100-year life. Rutledge M. Dennis (1977) extended Green's investigation by providing a more detailed "evolution of Du Bois's concept of the educated elite from its inception to the years just prior to his death" (p. 399). In addition, Dennis (1997a, 1997b) combined aspects of Du Bois's Talented Tenth with theoretical analyses of Black radical thought and the "new" Black intellectual. These examples are reflective of a wealth of scholarly investigations that theoretically analyze the significance and limitations of the Talented Tenth while failing to quantitatively test Du Bois's concept. This inquiry will fill that research gap and, in so doing, it is hoped that it will offer a path to new theoretical and conceptual insights.

RESEARCH METHOD

SAMPLE AND DATA

The data employed for this study were drawn from the National Black Politics Study, 1993. This study was designed to provide information on attitudes and opinions regarding issues of importance to African Americans. Using all African American house-

holds in the United States with telephones, a multiple frame, random-digit probability technique was employed. The first frame included a national sample, and the second frame was selected from a list of households located in census blocks with 50% or more African American households. Furthermore, all analyses presented here were weighted using census estimates from March 1994. The study was conducted from December 1993 to February 1994. Ultimately, the sample used here (N = 1,035) represented approximately 6.5 million African American households.

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

To test the Talented Tenth concept, we explored three aspects germane to the term. First, we wanted to measure the political activism of that population. To do so, we constructed a mean composite measuring if, in the past two years, the respondent had helped in a voter registration drive, given money to a political candidate, attended a fund-raiser for a candidate, handed out campaign material or placed campaign material on cars, and/or signed a petition supporting a candidate who was running for office. This variable has an alpha of .70.

In addition to their political involvement, we were interested in what they were doing for their local community. To measure their community activism, we constructed a mean composite measuring if, in response to neighborhood issues, within the past two years, they had contacted a public official or agency, attended a protest meeting or demonstration, taken part in a neighborhood march, signed a petition in support of something or against something, and/or talked to family or friends concerning community issues. This variable has an alpha of .60.

Unfortunately, neither of these variables measure political or community activism within the African American community. Rather, they measure political activities anywhere and community activism in one's own neighborhood irrespective of its racial composition. However, given the high level of racial segregation in housing in the United States (Farley, 1983) and data limitations, we thought it best to use the political activism variable. With respect to

community activism, we not only wanted to measure it in their community (see above), but we also wanted to know how the larger community viewed the Talented Tenth's efforts. Therefore, we analyzed the variable middle-class helping, which reflects the respondent's response to the statement, "Black people who have made it are doing a lot to improve the social and economic position of poor blacks." This 4-point Likert-type scale variable was coded such that those who agreed with the statement had higher numbers than those who disagreed.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Talented Tenth is a dummy variable where those with at least 16 years of education were coded 1 (20%) and those without were coded 0. Male is a dummy variable where men (45%) were coded 1 and women were coded 0. Age reflects the respondents' response to the question, "What was your age at your last birthday?" Not Democrat measures political affiliation where those who self-reported as anything other than Democrat were coded 1 (29%) and Democrats were coded 0. Household income was measured with nine categories ranging from "up to $10,000" to "$75,000 and over." Big city measures urbanicity. Respondents were asked if they lived in a rural or country area, a small town, a small city, a suburb of a city, or a large city. Those who self-identified as living in a large city were coded 1 (56%), and those living in suburbs, small cities, small towns, or rural areas were coded 0. Self reliance reflects responses to the Likert-type-scaled statement, "Black people should rely on themselves and not others." The variable was coded such that those who agreed with the statement had higher numbers than those who disagreed.

TWO MODELS EMPLOYED FOR ANALYSIS

To accurately investigate the effects of Talented Tenth status, two models were used on the three dependent variables. For each dependent variable, first, Talented Tenth status alone was entered into the model. Next, we wanted to examine how Talented Tenth

TABLE 1
Descriptive Variables for African American Adults (N = 1,035)

Variable	*Mean*	*Standard Deviation*	*Minimum*	*Maximum*
Politically active	.29	.31	0	1
Community active	.49	.27	0	1
Middle-class helping	2.30	.87	1	4
Top 10	.20	.40	0	1
Male	.45	.50	0	1
Age	40.52	15.77	18	88
Not Democrat	.29	.45	0	1
Household income	4.71	2.44	1	9
Big city	.55	.50	0	1
Self-reliance	3.24	.81	1	4

status performed in the presence of other demographic and attitudinal variables under consideration. Therefore, in the second model, we added gender, age, political affiliation, income, urbanicity, and attitudes toward self-reliance.

RESULTS

A summary of the means, standard deviations, and other descriptive statistics for the dependent and independent variables is presented in Table 1.

Model 1 in Table 2 shows that the Talented Tenth reported higher levels of political activism than their counterparts. Model 2 reveals that though the gap decreases in the presence of other variables, it remains statistically significant. Men, Democrats, and those living in big cities also reported being more politically active. Age and income showed a positive relationship with the dependent variable whereas self-reliance was not statistically significant.

Model 3 reveals that the Talented Tenth report higher levels of community activism than their counterparts. This relationship holds even in the presence of additional independent variables (see Model 4). Also, income and urbanicity showed a positive relationship with community activism. All other variables were not statistically significant.

TABLE 2

Unstandardized Regression Coefficients for Political Activism, Community Activism, and Middle Class Helping (N = 1,035)

	Political Activism				*Community Activism*				*Middle-Class Helping*			
	Model 1		*Model 2*		*Model 3*		*Model 4*		*Model 5*		*Model 6*	
	Coefficient	*Beta*	*Coefficient*	*Beta*	*Coefficient*	*Beta*	*Coefficient*	*Beta*	*Coefficient*	*Beta*	*Coefficient*	*Beta*
Top 10	.119***	.156	.079***	.104	.121***	.178	.084***	.124	–.276***	.127	–.199**	–.092
Male			.063***	.102			.028	.050			–.041	–.023
Age			.003***	.155			–.000	–.003			.002	.034
Not Democrat			–.045*	–.066			–.028	–.046			.034	.018
Household income			.020***	.157			.017***	.155			–.036**	–.054
Big city			.050**	.081			.050**	.090			–.096**	–.054
Self-reliance			.001	.004			.028	.082			–.095**	–.089
Constant	.261***		.007		.462***		.378***		2.356***		2.804***	
Adjusted R^2	.024		.091		.031		.068		.015		.032	

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Finally, Model 5 highlights that the Talented Tenth were less likely to feel that Blacks who had "made it" were doing a lot to improve the social and economic position of poor Blacks. This relationship was maintained with the addition of other independent variables into the model (see Model 6). Furthermore, those with higher household incomes, those who supported notions of self-reliance, and those who lived in big cities were less likely to feel middle-class Blacks were helping poor Blacks. None of the other variables proved to be statistically significant.

CONCLUSION

The objective of this inquiry was to ascertain whether the group of college-educated African Americans known as the Talented Tenth is currently engaging in the leadership activities of their communities. The multivariate findings of this investigation indicate that members of the Talented Tenth are currently and significantly engaged in political (.119, $p < .001$) and community ($p < .001$) leadership activities in their respective communities. Even more revealing is the fact that, in the presence of additional variables, beta scores indicate that Talented Tenth status was the most powerful in predicting if Blacks are lifting as they climb (–.092). These data indicate that the Talented Tenth are fulfilling Du Bois's charge to provide leadership for the masses, even in the presence of additional influences. That the members of the Talented Tenth are engaging in the leadership activities of their communities debunks the commonly believed notion that members of the Talented Tenth have reneged on their charge to lead their respective African American communities because they are primarily concerned with individual and personal accomplishments. Not only have the Talented Tenth not reneged on their responsibility to lead their communities; the findings of this investigation indicate that the Talented Tenth believe the Black middle class, not the Talented Tenth, are the cadre of elites who are not doing a lot to improve the social and economic position of poor Blacks because they are more concerned with their individual accomplishments than group advancement. Thus, the

assertion that a group of African American successes reneged on their community leadership responsibilities could, possibly, be a more accurate proposal if it were directed at the Black middle class and not the Talented Tenth. The data collected for this investigation clearly indicate that members of the Talented Tenth are engaging in leadership activities; however, a reasonable question to ask in light of this information is, Are members of the Black middle class engaging in the leadership activities of their respective communities? We suggest that the answer to this question could possibly alter the historical tendency to discredit the Talented Tenth as being only concerned with their individual accomplishments and/or status. Possibly, members of the Black middle class, a group that has often and mistakenly been labeled as synonymous with the Talented Tenth, are the true practitioners of American conspicuous expenditure and individualism as Du Bois suggested in reexamining his theory more than 50 years later (Du Bois, 1948/1965). Although this is a relevant question, it is beyond the scope of the current investigation. The objective of this investigation was to ascertain if the Talented Tenth are engaged in the leadership activities of their respective communities. The findings of this investigation indicate that, indeed, members of the Talented Tenth are upholding the charge to lead their communities as mandated by Dr. William Edward Burghardt Du Bois almost 100 years ago.

NOTES

1. The belief that Du Bois was developing a group of elitists and the change in his thinking concerning the Talented Tenth are addressed in a later section.

2. Although we make distinctions between the Talented Tenth and the Black middle class, the authors recognize that a degree of overlap is possible.

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