J Afr Am St (2010) 14:44–60
DOI 10.1007/s12111-009-9103-8

ARTICLES

The Tradition of Sociology at Fisk University

Earl Wright II

Published online: 13 August 2009

Abstract The existing sociological literature includes a dearth of inquiries into the establishment and development of sociology at predominately Black institutions. This exclusion may tacitly imply to neophyte, intermediary and senior sociologists that these academic units did not offer any substantive contributions to sociology during its formative years in this nation. The primary objective of this endeavor is to examine the establishment and development of the Fisk University Department of Sociology in such a manner that could, at a minimum, extend the current literature on sociology at predominately Black institutions and, at best, produce findings that place the contributions of this unit within the cannon of significant contributors to the discipline.

Keywords Charles S. Johnson · Black sociology · Applied sociology · Sociological history

Introduction

Most sociologists are familiar with seminal achievements in the discipline including William Graham Sumner's teaching of the first sociology course at Yale during the 1872–1873 academic term; Arthur B. Woodford's recognition as the first instructor in the United States to have the word sociology in his official title (Indiana University in 1885); the establishment of the first named department of sociology in the United States at the University of Kansas (Department of History and Sociology in 1889); and the general recognition that the discipline formally began with the emergence of the University of Chicago's Department of Sociology in 1892 (Small 1916; Bernard 1948; Himes 1949). What is less well known are the contributions of Black sociologists at predominately Black institutions (PBIs) during the discipline's

E. Wright II (✉)
Department of Sociology, Texas Southern University, Houston, TX 77004, USA
e-mail: wrighte@tsu.edu

formative years in this nation. Although L. L. Bernard (1948) indicated more than 60 years ago that, "As the known facts now stand, it is apparent that sociology was first accepted by the smaller institutions of the South and by the Negro colleges" (p. 14), the existing sociological literature includes an embarrassingly low number of in-depth inquiries into the origin and scholarly activities of departments or schools of sociology at PBIs (Cunnigen 2003; Stanfield 2003). The absence of a critical mass of inquiries into the exploits of early PBIs compels one to conclude that either there is a general lack of interest in this topic by past and contemporary sociologists, that the scholarly activities, or lack thereof, of sociologists at PBIs were negligible or that the marginalization of these institutions is a continuation of this nation's perpetual minimization of the scholarly accomplishments of persons of color at PBIs. John Stanfield (2003), embracing the latter perspective, states, "The paucity of historical inquiry about the teaching of sociology in HBCU's is unfortunately demonstrating the neglect within the discipline of recognizing the pivotal place of those institutions" (p. 361). Donald Cunnigen extends Stanfield's comments by suggesting that:

> Unlike major universities with extensive works dedicated to the historical contributions of a single academic department, most African-American colleges are considered fortunate if they have any institutional history in print. It is the rare African-American college that has a published volume on an academic department . . . With the exception of a brief essay on the Fisk University department . . . African-American college sociology departmental histories are almost non-existent in contemporary scholarship. (p. 397)

While there is a dearth of inquiries into the exploits of departments or schools of sociology at PBIs, the literature does include numerous, yet minuscule in comparison to those conducted on Whites, examinations of the exploits of individual superstar Black sociologists such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Charles S. Johnson, E. Franklin Frazier and Oliver C. Cox. The lack of critical analysis of the sociological activities of departments or schools of sociology at PBIs deprives neophyte, intermediary and senior sociologists of a more complete understanding of the development of the discipline and leaves unknown whether and to what extent these academic units engaged in pioneering sociological activities in research methods, theory and any number of substantive topical areas. More insidiously, the lack of thoroughly examined histories of departments or schools of sociology at PBIs tacitly implies to students of the discipline, again neophyte, intermediary and senior sociologists, that these academic units did not offer any substantive contributions to sociology during its formative years in this nation. A thorough examination of some PBIs, for example the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory — the moniker bestowed on scholars affiliated with the social scientific efforts conducted at Atlanta University between 1895 –1917, could prove such assertions to be incorrect.

Recent research conducted on the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory indicates that the all-Black school located in the deep American South not only comprised the first American school of sociology, but was the first school to institutionalize method triangulation, the first school to institutionalize the use of insider researchers and the first school to institutionalize the practice of acknowledging the limitations of its research (Wright, Forthcoming, 2006, 2005, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c; Wright and

Calhoun 2006). Additionally, it was via this research laboratory that the first American studies on religion and family were conducted (Wright and Calhoun 2006; Wright 2002b). It is plausible that extensive examinations into the sociological activities of other early PBIs could produce similarly significant findings. While schools including Tougaloo College, Howard University and Fisk University have at least one published history of its department of sociology in the existing literature, only the exploits of the department of sociology at Atlanta University have been examined in such a manner as to challenge and, when applicable, debunk accepted dogmas in the discipline. Accordingly, the primary objective of this endeavor is to examine the establishment and development of the Fisk University Department of Sociology in such a manner that could, at a minimum, extend the literature on sociology at PBIs and, at best, produce findings that place the contributions of this unit into the cannon of significant contributors to the discipline during its formative years in the United States.

That the Fisk University Department of Sociology has an existing examination of its departmental history may lead one to believe that a second writing on this topic is redundant. The present investigation departs from Stanley H. Smith's maiden inquiry in a number of ways. First, the original study centers largely on the scholarly achievements of Charles S. Johnson to the exclusion of a discussion of his role as a component within the school's collaborative sociological activities. While he acknowledges the contributions of Johnson's Fisk peers, including Preston Valien, Bertram Doyle and G. Franklin Edwards, Smith excludes a substantive analysis of the scholarly activity of these and other Fisk sociologists and refers to the department only in juxtaposition to its relationship to Charles S. Johnson. Second, the original study excludes a discussion of the establishment and development of sociology at the institution. This exclusion negates the significant contributions of Herbert Adolphous Miller and George Edmund Haynes that are included herein. Last, the original study heavily emphasizes Johnson's role in the scholarly activities of the Race Relations Institute. While his contributions to the Race Relations Institute are immeasurable, the overemphasis on Johnson in the original effort diminishes the contributions of his colleagues. Thus, this paper addresses the deficiencies cited above and extends the original inquiry by highlighting the origin and early development of sociology at the school, highlighting the scholarly activities of the department's founders and highlighting the holistic contributions of the Race Relations Institute.

Challenges to African American Education

Fisk University was established in 1867 through the post-Civil War efforts of the American Missionary Association and the Freedman's Bureau. Erastus M. Cravath, field secretary, and Reverend Edward P. Smith, district secretary of the Middle West Department, "were directed by the association to establish a school for freedmen" in the Tennessee valley region (Richardson 1980, p. 3). Nashville was considered a prime candidate since "its central location would enable [the] school to service both the border states and the deep South" and because it "was 'a nostril' through which the state had 'long breathed the Northern air of free institutions'" (p. 3). After

conferring with John Ogden, Superintendent of Education for the Freedman's Bureau in Tennessee, it was agreed that Nashville would be an ideal location and that all efforts should be made to obtain land and funding for the new school. Perhaps the most significant contributor to the efforts to establish the school for Negroes in Nashville was the assistant commissioner of the Freedman's Bureau for Tennessee and Kentucky, General Clinton B. Fisk. It was Fisk who spearheaded the monumental tasks of acquiring buildings and funding for the future educational oasis. "Because of General Fisk's assistance in securing the buildings and his continued interest — he eventually gave the institution approximately $30,000 — the school was named for him" (p. 3).

Fisk was not unlike many universities of the era in that secondary and some elementary instruction were offered in addition to college grade work. Although the majority of Black institutions labeled themselves university and college, the quality of the curriculum and instruction was not yet equal to that of many well established predominately White institutions (PWIs) offering university and college level work. For the most part, the curriculum offered at most early PBIs was equal to that of common and normal schools. Common school was the name given to state supported schools where children of varying ages and grade levels were taught in the same classroom and by the same teacher. Usually housed in poorly built one room structures, the curriculum of the common school would be consistent with contemporary elementary and middle schools. While the primary objective of the common school was to provide basic instruction in reading, 'ritin and 'rithmatic, the need for teachers to educate the millions of newly freed American citizens led to the establishment of a different type of school. Normal schools were established to provide training to those who wanted to become teachers. If the curriculum of the common school can be considered consistent with contemporary elementary and middle school work, the normal school curriculum may be considered consistent with high school and junior college work. Bowles and DeCosta (1971) suggest that, while many PBIs titled college and university included common and normal school curriculums, this was done in the spirit of what each institution would eventually achieve on its own merit:

> Literally hundreds of [Black institutions] were founded with 'normal,' 'college,' and 'university' in their titles. Of course, they were largely elementary and secondary schools, but their titles were selected with the aim of indicating the eventual purpose they were to serve. (p. 29)

It must be noted that the inclusion of common, normal or, as they are called today, preparatory curriculums at universities and colleges was not exclusive to PBIs. Bowles and DeCosta (1971) note that:

> As late as 1895, all the white colleges in Alabama [with the exception of the University of Alabama] reported preparatory enrollments . . . Even in Massachusetts, Boston College and Tufts College reported preparatory enrollments. (p. 31)

Despite its instruction of elementary and secondary work during its early years, the founders of the institution "hoped that Fisk would eventually become a first-class college that would give Blacks the opportunities and advantages of education so longed enjoyed by White people" (Richardson 1980, p. 4). An argument can be

made that this promise was achieved prior to the end of the first decade of the twentieth century when the W. E. B. Du Bois led Atlanta Sociological Laboratory conducted what are regarded as the first objective and scholarly investigations into Black colleges and their graduates. It was proposed in the 1900 Atlanta University investigation that, while Howard University was the only PBI that rated nearly equal to the comparative group of small PWIs located in the New England area, Fisk was in the next group representing schools that were only 1 – 2 years behind (Du Bois 1900). The 1910 Atlanta University investigation, using the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching admissions requirements as its unit of measurement, concluded that Fisk rated higher than all PBIs except Howard. In fact, Fisk rated higher than well known southern based PWIs including the University of Alabama, University of North Carolina and the University of Virginia. Fisk, grounded in the liberal arts curriculum and guided by a social gospel themed mission aimed at promoting the acquisition of knowledge for the express purpose of improving humanity, proved to be fertile ground for the establishment of sociology.

The First Era of Fisk Sociology, 1893–1918

The instruction of sociology at Fisk began during the 1893–1894 academic term when coursework in the discipline was offered as a component of the English course requirement in the school's Theology Department. The 1895–1896 academic catalog indicates that sociology was included as a sub-discipline of Pastoral Theology. Pastoral Theology, according to the catalog, examines "the relation of the ministry to the social problems of our times [and] is made a subject of the lectures. The aim is to improve the facilities for study and original work in this line." The social gospel themed mission of Fisk University provided an environment where the acquisition of an education was not viewed as a self serving or self profiting endeavor. Instead, education was viewed as a tool that, when combined with Christian vigor, leads one to engage in uplift activities to improve the social condition of fellow citizens. That the social gospel inspired education philosophy of the university was embraced by its faculty is gleamed from Du Bois, an 1885 graduate of Fisk, who writes, "[they] developed in me, and I am sure the majority of my fellow students, the idea of the Negro problem as being an evangel, a gospel where chosen men were trained and armed, and went out to take the leadership of the mass" (Du Bois [1948] 1980a, p. 2). While sociology did not become an integral part of university curriculum until the early 1890's, what Du Bois describes concerning his time as an undergraduate at Fisk is a pre-sociology environment where the potential limitations of a religiously influenced university did not take precedence over the development of men and women who would use their education to improve the communities in which they would eventually live. It is paradoxical then that the social gospel inspired mission of the university would coalesce with scientific and objective sociology in such a manner as to form one of the earliest programs of sociology in this nation.

Although the instruction of sociology began during the 1893–1894 academic term, the first course dedicated exclusively to sociology was taught during the 1900–1901 academic year when Herbert Adolphus Miller became the school's first designated sociology instructor (Instructor of Sociology, Political Economy and

Civil Government). Miller's most well known contribution to sociological scholarship is a 1924 book, *Races, Nations and Classes*, "in which he developed his concepts of vertical and horizontal groupings and the oppression psychosis as applied to minority groups" (Teeters 1951, p. 563). Miller, who would later teach at schools including Oberlin College, Olivet College, Bryn Mawr and Ohio State University, only spent 3 years at Fisk but gained a particular insight into the Black world that possibly impacted his 1924 book and definitely altered his view of the ex-slaves during his tenure at the Nashville school. As an undergraduate, Miller took a class in ethnology and sociology from David Collins Wells at Dartmouth.

> The course in ethnology emphasized the classification of races into superior and inferior. Upon graduation Miller accepted a position at Fisk University where he was engaged to teach Greek and athletics. He stated later in life that while at Fisk he became convinced that Keane's *Ethnology* was wrong. Years later he became a trustee of Fisk University. (Teeters 1951, p. 563).

Although the existing literature includes virtually no examination of Miller's impact in the discipline, upon his death in 1951 Negley K. Teeters wrote glowingly of Miller's place in sociological history. According to Teeters, "[Miller's] death brought to an end a distinguished triumvirate of pioneer scholars whose field was racial and minority groups — W. I. Thomas, Robert E. Park, and Herbert A. Miller" (p. 563). While Miller's tenure at the institution lasted only 3 years, Fisk's commitment to sociology continued after his departure and is evident in the amount of time that was soon dedicated to its instruction.

In 1910, as discussed earlier, Du Bois conducted the second of his groundbreaking inquiries into the state of Black colleges and their graduates. This investigation focused principally on topics including, but not limited to, current occupation, economic status, community involvement, the ownership of property and the education of the children of Black college graduates. Beyond the ranking of PBI's as guided by the Carnegie standard, arguably, the most interesting data to emerge from this inquiry into Negro education was the examination of 'curricula [in] Negro colleges.' Specifically, Du Bois thoroughly examined the curriculums of eighteen PBIs and provided a detailed report of the amount of course time devoted to the topical areas of Ancient Languages, Modern Languages, Natural Sciences, Math, English, Sociology & History, Philosophy and Miscellaneous. According to Du Bois' study, only Atlanta University provided more instruction time to Sociology & History than any other subject (19.1%). The only areas of study at Fisk to receive more instruction hours than Sociology and History (12.9% of total time) were Ancient Languages (21.7% of total time) and Natural Science (17.7% of total time). The amount of class time dedicated to other subjects at Fisk were English (12% of total time), Modern Languages (12% of total time), Mathematics (8% of total time) and Philosophy (7.2% of total time). The amount of class time devoted to the instruction of Sociology and History at Fisk was greater than fourteen of the eighteen schools surveyed. With its commitment to the instruction of sociology firmly established during the first decade of the twentieth century, Fisk was now in need of a trained sociologist who could place their particular stamp on the school's social gospel inspired discipline that was viewed as a means to study, analyze and offer prescriptions to ameliorate racial inequality in America.

In his seminal article on the Fisk University Department of Sociology, Stanley H. Smith (1974) suggests that "Charles S. Johnson's coming to Fisk heralded the formal establishment of the Department of Social Sciences in 1928" (p. 181). While it is doubtless that Johnson's tremendous standing within the discipline and professional connections as a result of his position within the National Urban League (NUL) provided much social capital that he adeptly parlayed into the development of one of the most influential schools of sociology during its era, it would be erroneous to suggest that a formal department emphasizing sociological instruction and inquiry did not exist prior to Johnson's 1928 arrival. According to former Fisk University Department of Sociology faculty member, Preston Valien (1950, History of the department of social sciences, fisk university, 1911–1948." Department of sociology, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee. Unpublished manuscript".), "In 1911, George Edmund Haynes, who had received the Bachelor's degree from Fisk University . . . returned to [his alma mater] to organize the first Department of Social Sciences and Social Work" (p. 1).

George Edmund Haynes was born in Pine Bluff, Arkansas to "an unskilled father who had great difficulty in securing stable employment and a hard working mother who gradually became a dominant influence in his life" (Hunter 1988, p. 43). After graduating from Fisk in 1903, Haynes "A year later . . . received the M. A. degree from Yale University, where he was introduced to the science of sociology by the eminent American sociologist William Graham Sumner . . . [Haynes] fully participated in Sumner's seminars and visited his home occasionally with other students to discuss more intimately their teacher's ideas" (p. 43). In 1912 Haynes became the first African American to take the Ph. D. at Columbia University. With a major emphasis in sociology and social administration and a minor in social work, Haynes completed a doctoral dissertation on the condition of Blacks living in northern cities that, in part, propelled him into action to study and improve the condition of Blacks in cities.

While working on his doctoral dissertation, *The Negro at Work in New York City*, Haynes became familiar with the social, economic and physical conditions affecting Blacks making the transition from life in the slow-paced rural South to the fast-paced American North. Although Haynes was aware of the problems facing Blacks at the turn of the century and knew there was a need for sociological research in this area, many Northern philanthropic organizations were not convinced that the funding of investigations into the condition of Northern Blacks were worthy endeavors since the 'Negro problem' was considered to be largely a southern phenomenon. Nancy Weiss, author of a history of the NUL, argues that Haynes scoffed at this notion and subsequently expended his efforts toward establishing an organization that, per the dictate of the data collected for his dissertation, addressed the needs of Blacks relocating to the North. According to Weiss, Haynes did not desire the establishment of an organization to propagandize for the needs of Blacks in the North, but instead he championed "an educational movement designed to bring existing welfare organizations to include Blacks in their social service efforts" (Weiss, 1974, p. 33). Haynes' effort to entice existing social welfare groups into collaborative action proved challenging as the influential organization, Committee for Improving the Industrial Condition of Negroes in New York City (CIICNNY), initially refused to participate. The rejection of Haynes' plan was grounded in the CIICNNY's belief that his education component was unnecessary. Despite the unfavorable response from CIICNNY, Haynes was able to convince the National League for the Protection

of Colored Women, under the leadership of Ruth Standish Baldwin, to participate. Adamant that an organization with a mission centered on improving the condition of Blacks in cities should be established, Haynes and Baldwin formed the Committee on Urban Conditions Among Negroes. Within 1 year this new organization, along with Baldwin's National League for the Protection of Colored Women and the previously uninterested Committee for Improving the Industrial Condition of Negroes in New York merged to form what is now known as the National Urban League. Not only was Haynes a founder of the NUL, he continued to be the impetus behind its education component which included:

> Research for facts about the movement of [W]hite and Negro populations to the cities; living and working conditions among Negroes in cities . . . Educational opportunity for training of Negro social workers, and social science education for Negro leaders in other walks of life as to prepare them for leadership in urban centers . . . [and] to [secure] openings for trained Negro workers in existing welfare agencies and [to induce] such agencies to include Negroes in the community they served. (Weiss 1974, p. 43)

Almost immediately after the establishment of his new organization, Haynes was invited to serve as the director of the newly established Department of Social Sciences at Fisk University. Bolstered by the suggestion of Columbia professor Edward T. Devine that he combine his program for training social workers with his interests in scholarly research, Haynes forwarded to Fisk University president George A. Gates an outline of his plan to initiate an applied sociology laboratory "underscoring the opportunity it presented to the University to train social workers. Thus Fisk," wrote Haynes, "could lead the way for the Negro college to grapple with the city problem as Tuskegee and Hampton are working at the rural conditions" (Parris and Brooks 1971, p. 27).

The notion of applied sociology did not originate with Haynes. One of the earliest applied sociology initiatives in America was that of Jane Addams and the women of Hull-House. According to Mary Jo (Deegan 1988), Addams believed "sociology was intended to serve the people and be a part of their everyday life. It was accountable to them and its home was in the neighborhood" (p. 311–312). Haynes, similar to Addams, believed the academic community should be brought into closer contact with everyday people through the application of programs and activities that positively impacted members of the community. Because of the discipline's path toward academic acceptance and validation through its emphasis on positivism to the exclusion of 'hands on' sociology, Haynes and Addams are not often mentioned as early contributors to sociology, in general, or applied sociology, specifically. Instead, because their work emphasized human contact and interaction they are more often than not cited as social workers, not sociologists. Nevertheless, Haynes' applied sociology plan seemed a natural fit with the spirit of sociology that emerged at the school during and immediately following the Miller era. This idea is echoed by Preston Valien who examined Haynes' tenure at the Department of Social Sciences at Fisk. "The primary aim of Dr. Haynes, in developing the Department," according to Valien et. al. (1950, History of the department of social sciences, fisk university, 1911–1948." Department of sociology, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee. Unpublished manuscript"), "was to formulate a plan of work which would bring the education of the students closer to the needs of the community" (p. 19).

As printed in the Fisk University catalogue of 1910–1911, the Haynes led department noted that:

> The growing urban concentration of Negroes demands special study and the development of methods of social betterment to meet the problems attendant upon the increasing complexity of their life and condition in cities, North and South. This urban situation can best be met by college Negroes who have had training in the social sciences and in practical methods of social work. (Valien, 1950, History of the department of social sciences, fisk university, 1911–1948." Department of sociology, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee. Unpublished manuscript" p. 2).

Emphasizing the mission of the department, the catalogue entry continues:

> The greatest need of the urban situation is a number of well trained social and religious workers. It is the chief aim of this department to develop courses, theoretical and practical, in Economics, Sociology and Social Problems that will give a thorough foundation as a preparatory training for social and religious workers. (Valien 1950, History of the department of social sciences, fisk university, 1911–1948." Department of sociology, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee. Unpublished manuscript" p. 2)

The program of applied sociological work at Fisk consisted of two components — coursework and an internship.

Coursework for students in applied sociology included Industrial History and Organization; Elementary Economics; Advanced Economics; Economics and Labor Relations; History of the Negro in America; the Negro Problem; Sociology; Social Problems; and Practical Sociology which included sections on family and child welfare, social research, community work, mental hygiene & psychiatry, and criminology. In addition to taking courses, students were exposed to lectures by prominent persons such as Roger M. Baldwin, John Hope and Booker T. Washington on topics including 'Religious Problems Among Negroes in Cities,' 'Special Problems among Negro Women in Cities,' and 'Principles of Relief and Charity Organizations.' After the completion of coursework, students were required to participate in an internship at the Bethlehem House.

"In 1913 the University formed a relationship with the Women's Missionary Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Training School, in conducting a social settlement house in a Negro area, called Bethlehem House, where the students could do their practical work in Sociology" (Valien et. al. 1950, History of the department of social sciences, fisk university, 1911–1948." Department of sociology, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee. Unpublished manuscript" p. 3). This effort was spearheaded largely by Fisk graduate Sallie Hill Sawyer who sought the establishment of an agency that would include programs directed at Nashville's neglected Black women. The coalescing of this interracial assemblage was timely given the University's emphasis on racial equality and its commitment to developing the skills of its students in leadership and philanthropy. The Bethlehem House internship "was a 1 year course opened to high school and college graduates. A certificate was granted by the University to college graduates who completed the social service training course" (p. 4). More specifically, "the

Bethlehem House . . . included twenty students on the staff who were required 'to spend 4 hours each week in field work, one half the time to be spent at the House and one half in visiting the homes in the neighborhood, a city-block assigned to each student'" (Hunter 1988, p. 44). Haynes' applied sociology efforts, combined with those of the women of Bethlehem House, reached its zenith in 1916 when a fire in east Nashville devastated the homes of many Black and White citizens.

> George Haynes and the [applied sociology] students . . . played a significant role in providing relief to the families who were victims of the fire . . . The students were divided into two groups of field staff and office staff . . . Their social problems classes had prepared them with analytical skills and their intimate involvement with the community had helped to familiarize them with the social networks, lifestyles, and values of the Nashville community. (Carlton-LaNey 1996, p. 35–36)

The Nashville fire of 1916 provided Haynes and his students the opportunity to show the importance and impact of an applied sociology program to a community. Unfortunately, within 2 years Haynes and his research program would be gone. By the time of his departure, 115 students were participating in the applied sociology program at Bethlehem House.

In 1918 Haynes left Fisk University after he was appointed supervisor of Negro Economics for the United States Department of Labor. His responsibilities in this new position included developing applied sociology programs similar to those he established for the NUL at Fisk. Because Haynes could not successfully perform his duties at the Department of Labor and simultaneously continue his work at Fisk and the NUL, he requested a leave of absence from both institutions. The NUL, unlike Fisk, was reluctant to approve his request because of the important works that he was engaged in for the organization. Given that Haynes was resolute in his desire not to decline the government position, the NUL asked for his resignation and in 1919 it was secured. With Haynes no longer affiliated with Fisk and with his resignation from the NUL secured, the applied sociology training program hosted by Fisk University and sponsored by the NUL was in jeopardy and would soon be ended. "It began the summer of 1918, when [NUL officials] had visited the president of Fisk and first pared to the bone [their] contribution to Fisk and the support of Haynes' assistant" (Parris and Brooks 1971, p. 162). When the NUL moved its southern headquarter from Nashville to Atlanta, Georgia all connections with Fisk were severed. This action, combined with Haynes' departure to Washington D. C., effectively ended the first era of sociology at Fisk University.

The Second Era of Fisk Sociology, 1928–1956

After George Edmund Haynes' departure in 1918, the university's commitment to sociology did not end. Instruction in sociology continued during this period under the leadership of Paul Franklin Mowery (1915–1926). Although Mowery was a competent instructor of sociology, Fisk administrators were desirous of a trained sociologist who could reestablish the social science department and spearhead a program of sociological research in the area of race relations. Exactly 10 years after Haynes' departure, a young University of Chicago trained sociologist accepted the

challenge to reestablish the social science department around the central theme of race relations in the American South. In an unpublished history of the Fisk University Department of Social Sciences, Preston Valien et al (1950, History of the department of social sciences, fisk university, 1911–1948." Department of sociology, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee. Unpublished manuscript") writes:

> The curriculum of the Department remained unchanged from 1919 to the school year 1927–28, when it was realized (sic) that the Department should be reorganized, for the original organization no longer met the needs of the time. There was a growing significance attached to research in the area of race relations and various other new trends in Sociology. This partially influenced the University to select a group of strong men to come to Fisk and aid in the reorganization of the Department. Charles Spurgeon Johnson, then director of Research and Editor of Opportunity magazine for the National Urban League, was invited by Dr. Thomas E. Jones, President of Fisk University, to head the department and supervise its reorganization. (p. 5)

While Fisk was anxious to add a scholar of Johnson's caliber to its faculty, the NUL, once again, was disinclined to relinquish the valuable services of one of its members.

In May 1927 President Jones wrote a letter to NUL executive secretary Eugene Jones requesting that Johnson be relieved of his duties at that organization and be allowed to join the faculty at Fisk. Johnson's services were needed at Fisk to establish the research program in race relations in the South because, according to President Jones, "he is a trained sociologist. Then he has balance of judgment, understands research methods and has the confidence of the Negro race" (Thomas Elsa Jones Collection, Box 34, Folder 21, p. 1 1927a). Attempting to appeal to the NUL's previous research relationship with Fisk and the possibility that the relationship that existed under Haynes could be reestablished, President Jones suggests that Johnson "can further the work of the Urban League and also the Opportunity magazine by helping set up this new instrument" of research that could be utilized by the organization (p. 1). In a short reply penned a few weeks later, Eugene Jones firmly informs President Jones that, "The Steering Committee voted unanimously that it could not comply with your request for the services of Mr. Johnson" (Thomas Elsa Jones Collection, Box 34, Folder 20, p. 1 1927b).

While discussions concerning Johnson's availability, or lack thereof, were being conducted between Fisk and the NUL, Johnson was engaged in research activities away from his home in New York City for the better part of the first half of that year. In a July letter to President Jones, Johnson informs him that he had been unaware of the request for his services until recently. Lamenting his absence during the period that his services were requested, Johnson writes, "I am just returning to New York for a longer stay and am able for the first time to communicate with you with full knowledge of the circumstances which made impossible this year's connection with Fisk University" (Thomas Elsa Jones Collection, Box 34, Folder 20, p. 1 1928). He then states his understanding of the steering committee's decision to not allow his duties to be divided between two institutions in separate parts of the country. Concluding the letter, Johnson writes, "I have thought it proper to resign myself to the decision of the organization on that point which involved a division of my services" (Thomas Elsa Jones Collection, Box 34, Folder 20, p. 1 1928). Despite his

inability to join the faculty at Fisk, Johnson did offer his advisory assistance in the development of the proposed program in race relations.

By February 1928 Johnson's relationship with the NUL had begun to change in ways that he believed not to be in his best interests. It was at this juncture that he responded to a January letter from President Jones in which his services were, again, being pursued. In his reply, Johnson indicated a willingness to consider accepting the still vacant position. In a long four page letter Johnson wrote:

> There are several matters regarding my own situation which should be mentioned: I have talked with Mr. Outhwaite specifically and frankly about them, stating the reservations which I had entertained concerning my present organization, the question of the magazine, and the severing of many important research connections and library contacts here. He is already aware that my research interest is definitely committed to the South. I have talked similarly with Mr. Hollingsworth Wood, and to both of these I think I made my first definite commitments about resigning the work here. (Thomas Elsa Jones Collection, Box 34, Folder 21, p. 2 1928)

In a letter written barely 1 month later, Johnson informs President Jones that "I announced to Mr. Jones, the Executive Secretary, that I had decided to resign the work here . . . to take up the duties at Fisk in the Fall" (Thomas Elsa Jones Collection, Box 34, Folder 20, p. 1 1928).

Johnson's major duty upon his hiring was reestablishing of the Department of Social Sciences and Social Work with an emphasis on race relations. This objective was included in the school's 1928 catalog which indicated that:

> The specific aims of the department are to effect a productive working relationship between teaching and research activities in the social science field; to stimulate and support research projects which offer promise of contributing to the store of useful knowledge in the social sciences, to provide a field of training for students in active social practices; to seek out and to encourage productive scholarship; to assist, through its inductive handling of social materials, in converting social theories into a basis of social action. The interests and plan of this department are thus related to the community. (Valien 1950, History of the department of social sciences, fisk university, 1911–1948." Department of sociology, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee. Unpublished manuscript" p.6)

Between 1928 and 1942, the objectives of the department were carried out through a number of means including undergraduate and graduate coursework where "theses developed by the graduate students showed a definite interest in the social problems of Negroes and tended to place emphasis on the survey as a means of social research. These surveys were conducted primarily within the Negro community of Nashville" (p. 6). Additionally, the department received funding from philanthropic organizations like the General Education Board, Rosenwald Fund and Greenwood Foundation to support research on topics including racial attitudes, Negro education in Louisiana and the statistical analysis of data on rural Negro children. By 1936 the university had entered into a partnership with the Tennessee Valley Authority to provide internship opportunities to students interested in

investigating changes in rural areas due to the new soci-economic realities of the era. In 1940 Fisk established a working relationship with the Tuskegee Institute to "train workers who would be able to understand the agricultural and social problems of Negroes in the rural South and to prepare them to give aid and direction to these people in improving their pattern of life" (p. 11). While most of the accomplishments above were achieved without the direct assistance of Charles S. Johnson, when this era of Fisk University sociology is discussed the emphasis is usually on Johnson. Without question Johnson was one of the preeminent sociologists of his era, what is less mentioned in the existing literature are the applied sociological accomplishments that were collaboratively made by Johnson and his Fisk colleagues at the Race Relations Institute.

While the Johnson led Department of Social Science was busily engaging in myriad projects aimed at investigating and impacting the lives of Blacks in areas including agriculture, education and labor, racial tensions in the United States were escalating to such a boiling point in the late 1930's and early 1940's that many believed the area of race relations required greater investigation, analysis and prescriptions. "Acting out of almost a century of experience and dedication in this field of concern, the American Missionary Association and Board of Home Missions established the Race Relations Department [at Fisk University] as its instrumentality of service in this field of demanding need" (Long 1953, 10 years perspective on our work in race relations: Report to the joint meeting of the american missionary association divisional committee and the policy and planning committee of the board of home missions of the congregational and christian churches at Deering, New Hampshire, June 16–17, 1953. Department of Sociology, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee. Unpublished manuscript. p. 1). Moreover, the department was established because there did not exist, at least since the cessation of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory nearly 20 years prior, a research laboratory dedicated to "shap[ing] [the] body of knowledge [on race relations in the United States] . . . into the definite structure of an agency program" (p. 3). Under Johnson's leadership the Race Relations Department, later reconfigured into the Race Relations Institute (RRI), utilized the applied sociology model to ascertain and impact relations between the races in the United States. The fundamental goal of the RRI was to "discover a way of rendering services to the communities in need of them, and making a dent in the armor of segregation and discrimination, long established in countless social practices as ways of meeting the racial problem" (p. 3). Furthermore, "regardless of how well such programs might be conceived . . . the ultimate test was the extent to which they became translated into some form of concrete activity and service rendered through or with an actual organization or a community itself" (p. 4). A review of the records of the RRI indicates that it successfully passed the ultimate test.

During the RRI's first 10 years its concrete activities and services were rendered in numerous cities and on various topics. While members of the RRI conducted research on race relations in many places and on various topics, they never entered communities in which they were not invited. After being invited to study the condition of race relations in a community, researchers would administer a self survey to residents to ascertain their specific needs. According to the architects of the institute's methodology, "the invention of the community self-survey as a technique

of involving an entire community in a program of self-help was probably the most significant single technique which has been developed in the field of interracial agency services" (p. 5) since it allows members of the community, not academics, to articulate the problems most in need of social science inquiry. Herman Long suggests that "over the 10 year period in which the Race Relations Department has functioned there have been twenty-seven cities of the nation which have been serviced directly by departmental staff programs. To this number should be added the 32 local Church and Race roundtables which have been held since inclusion under our department" (p. 7). Several examples of the RRI's impact on communities in areas such as education, labor and public policy are highlighted below.

In San Francisco the RRI was vital in that city's decision to begin employing Black school teachers, in appointing its first Black school principal and in the establishment of a chapter of the National Urban League. "These [accomplishments] followed a direct recommendation from the [community] survey [which indicated] that in order to effect integration . . . the use of Negro leadership in critical positions of community affairs was essential" (p. 9). In Minneapolis similar achievements were made. The results of this community survey included an increase in the number of employment opportunities for Blacks in areas from which they had been previously excluded, employment of Black and Jewish teachers in the school system for the first time, the elimination of segregation in hospital practices and the elimination of residential segregation through the proactive efforts of many White realtors. The RRI's efforts in Minneapolis "resulted in an award being made to that community by the National Conference of Christians and Jews as being the city in America which had accomplished most towards the improvement of human relations" (p. 11). While the RRI provided social science prescriptions addressing the needs of communities, they were adamant that "it's ultimate results are good only insofar as the community leadership is strong and dedicated to a continuous process of action and follow-up" (p. 12)

The Institute also achieved success in the area of education. Their first acknowledged success was the establishment of a travelling children's exhibit that sought to debunk racial and ethnic stereotypes. This exhibit, including teacher aid materials, was sent to classrooms across the nation to instigate cordial and educational discussions on race relations issues. Another successful effort in the area of education was the development of an interracial calendar. This project was important because it displayed pictures of interracial cooperation "appropriate to each month of the year . . . [that] could be a constant reminder to a teacher, or a minister, or a business man on a day-to-day basis" (p. 18) of the fact there existed no real difference, biological, intellectual or otherwise, between Blacks and Whites. Last, pamphlets on race relations were constructed and distributed to specific community groups in the hope that an informed and educated citizenry would not fall prey to the existing stereotypes of the era. Specifically, the institute's most successful pamphlet, titled If Your Neighbors Are Negroes, was an informative document that was distributed to Whites who may have had concerns about living next door to Blacks. Probably the most significant information included in this pamphlet were data debunking the idea that the property value of White neighborhoods would dramatically decrease if Blacks were to move in. This pamphlet was printed in four editions and more than 5,000 copies were distributed

throughout the nation. Last, in the area of organized labor the RRI also had a positive impact. Invited by the United Packinghouse Workers of America to 'implement its already clearly stated policies of nondiscrimination,' the Institute's more than 3 year relationship with the union resulted in strengthened grievance procedures for discrimination, better job positions for workers within the various companies and the elimination of segregated working facilities.

Similar to the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory, the Race Relations Institute engaged in research activities that produced findings that could be utilized for public policy purposes (Wright and Calhoun 2006). According to Long, Johnson and members of the Institute viewed sociology as a tool that could be used to objectively analyze American society and offer solutions for improvement. "Aside from the short-term projects of the department which are related to services to organizations and communities, it has been considered extremely important to address ourselves to a larger strategy and objective. This has been fundamentally an attack upon the policy of segregation as it expresses itself at the national as well as local levels" (p. 30). Although the Institute acknowledged its public policy objective, it firmly reassured the scientific and general communities that its research would be conducted objectively, impartially and focus only on fact-finding, not propagandizing. Long (1953,10 years perspective on our work in race relations: Report to the joint meeting of the american missionary association divisional committee and the policy and planning committee of the board of home missions of the congregational and christian churches at Deering, New Hampshire, June 16–17, 1953. Department of Sociology, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee. Unpublished manuscript) continues by proposing, "Since this department is not a direct lobbying agency, a good portion of initiative in these matters has to be left with organizations which are at the present time free to act" (p. 34). Examples of the research conducted by the Institute that were used for public policy purposes include segregation in housing and railway accommodations.

The Institute conducted a study of restrictive covenants in Chicago, St. Louis and Cleveland to "discover the extent to which land areas and the various instrumentalities within the community, official and unofficial, were responsible for [discriminatory housing segregation of Blacks]" (p. 31). Used by Charles Hamilton Houston before a case in the Supreme Court, the Institute's resultant book, People v. Property, "became an official document which the Court considered in its hearing of the race restrictive housing covenants cases. When the case was won in interest of eliminating court sanctions for restrictive agreements, Attorney Charles H. Houston generously sent to our department a word of congratulation for our part in aiding this victory for democratic and Christian policy" (p. 32). Similar success was garnered with the Institute's study on the segregation of Black passengers in railway travel titled, Segregation in Interstate Railway Coach Transportation. Some of the findings "revealed discrimination in the amount of space allotted to [N]egro passengers, and exclusion from through-train services which were provided exclusively to [W]hite passengers . . . These findings are now in the hands of the two committees on interstate commerce within the Senate and House" (p. 33). It is reasonable to suggest that this study could have been proactively utilized by interested parties and may have contributed to the ending of segregation in interstate travel in the late 1950's.

The second era of sociology at Fisk should be recognized for more than being the period in which Charles S. Johnson was employed at the university. Instead, this

period should be viewed as a time that the Johnson led unit engaged in social science activities that improved the social and economic condition of Americans, both Black and White. Thus, notwithstanding his gigantic sociological shadow, credit for the scholarly accomplishments of the Institute during this period should include the tremendous efforts of Johnson and the numerous known and unknown scholars associated with the Race Relations Institute.

Conclusion

Although Joseph S. Himes (1951) posits that the instruction of sociology at PBIs began at Morgan College (now called Morgan State University) as a component within a course in the social sciences in 1894, data uncovered in this investigation suggest that, at a minimum, this distinction should be shared with Fisk University as its instruction of sociology began during the 1893–1894 academic year as a component within coursework in the theology department. Between 1893 and 1956 Fisk sociologists embraced the practice of applied sociology, conducted studies and produced findings that impacted the everyday lives of many Americans. Specifically, the first two eras of sociology at the school included research that improved American life in areas including social service, employment, education, law, agriculture, housing and public policy. These accomplishments were made through the efforts of persons including, but not limited to, Herbert Adulphus Miller, George Edmund Haynes, Ella Alma Walls, Paul Franklin Mowery, Bertram Doyle, Charles S. Johnson, E. Franklin Frazier, Mark Hannah Watkins, Lewis Wade Jones, Lewis Copeland, Rudiger Bilden, Donald Pierson, Preston Valien, Inez Adams, Edward N. Palmer, Jitsuichi Masuoka, Bonita Valien, Donad Wyatt and Inez C. Boyd. While the collective achievements of Fisk University sociologists are not as sociologically significant as those produced by schools like the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory and the Chicago School of Sociology, they are noteworthy because of the school's use of applied sociology to impact the lives of everyday people. Acknowledging the accomplishments of early sociologists who embraced and promoted applied sociology during a time when the discipline was dominated by positivist inclinations takes us a step closer to placing the important contributions of these individuals and schools within the sociological cannon alongside those who practiced and championed pure sociology, untainted by hands on interaction between researcher and subject.

References

Bernard, L. L. (1948). "Sociological trends in the South". *Social Forces, 27*(1), 12–19.

Bowles, Frank, & DeCosta, Frank A. (1971). *Between two worlds: A profile of Negro higher education*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Carlton-LaNey, I. (1996). George and Birdie Hanyes' legacy to community practice. *Journal of Community Practice, 2*(4), 27–48.

Cunnigen, D. (2003). The legacy of Ernst Borinski: The production of an African American sociological tradition. *Teaching Sociology, 31*, 397–411.

Deegan, Mary Jo. (1988). *Jane Addams and the men of the chicago school, 1892–1918*. New Brunswick: Transaction Books.

Du Bois, W. E. B. (1900). *The college-bred Negro: Atlanta university publication, no. 5*. Atlanta: Atlanta University.

Du Bois, W. E. B. ([1948] 1980a). The talented tenth: The re-examination of a concept. In The Papers of W. E. B. Du Bois. Sanford, North Carolina: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1980–1981.

Himes, J. S., Jr. (1951). The teacher of sociology in the Negro college. *Social Forces, 29*(3), 302–305.

Himes, J. S., Jr. (1949). Development and status of sociology in Negro colleges. *Journal of Educational Sociology, 23*(1), 17–32.

Hunter, H. M. (1988). The clinical sociology of George Edmund Haynes (1880–1960). *Clinical Sociology Review, 6*, 42–50.

Parris, G., & Brooks, L. (1971). *Blacks in the city: A history of the national urban league*. Boston: Little, Brown Publishers.

Richardson, J. M. (1980). *A history of fisk university, 1865–1946*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama.

Small, A. (1916). Fifty years of sociology in the United States (1865–1915). *American Journal of Sociology, 21*(6), 721–864.

Smith, S. H. (1974). Sociological research and fisk university: A case study. In J. E. Blackwell & M. Janowitz (Eds.), *Black Sociologists: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (pp. 164–190). Chicago: University of Chicago.

Stanfield, J. H., III. (2003). "Teaching sociology in historically black colleges and universities: A neglected chapter in the history of the scholarship of teaching sociology". *Teaching Sociology, 31*, 361–365.

Teeters, N. K. (1951). "Herbert Adolphus Miller, 1875–1951". *American Sociological Review, 16*, 563–564.

Thomas Elsa Jones Collection, Fisk University, Box 34, Folder 20, page 1. (1927a). Letter from Eugene Kinkle Jones (Executive Secretary of the National Urban League) to President Thomas Elsa Jones (Fisk University).

Thomas Elsa Jones Collection, Fisk University, Box 34, Folder 21, page 1. (1927b). Letter from President Thomas Elsa Jones (Fisk University) to Eugene Kinkle Jones (Executive Secretary of the National Urban League).

Thomas Elsa Jones Collection, Fisk University, Box 34, Folder 21, page 2. (1928). Letter from Charles S. Johnson (National Urban League) to President Thomas Elsa Jones (Fisk University).

Weiss, N. J. (1974). *The national urban league, 1910–1940*. New York: Oxford University.

Wright II, Earl. (Forthcoming). Beyond W. E. B. Du Bois: A note on some of the lesser known members of the atlanta sociological laboratory. Sociological Spectrum.

Wright, Earl, II. (2006). W. E. B. Du Bois and the atlanta university studies on the Negro, revisited. *Journal of African American Studies, 9*(4), 3–17.

Wright II, Earl. (2005). W. E. B. Du Bois and the atlanta sociological laboratory. Sociation Today — The Official Journal of The North Carolina Sociological Association: A Refereed Web-Based Publication, Volume 3(1) http://www.ncsociology.org/sociationtoday/v31/outline5.htm

Wright, Earl, II. (2002a). The atlanta sociological laboratory, 1896–1924: A historical account of the first american school of sociology. *Western Journal of Black Studies, 26*(3), 165–174.

Wright, Earl, II. (2002b). Why black people tend to shout!: An earnest attempt to explain the sociological negation of the atlanta sociological laboratory despite its possible unpleasantness. *Sociological Spectrum, 22*(3), 325–361.

Wright, Earl, II. (2002c). Using the master's tools: Atlanta university and american sociology, 1896–1924. *Sociological Spectrum, 22*(1), 15–39.

Wright, Earl, II, & Calhoun, Thomas C. (2006). Jim crow sociology: Toward an understanding of the origin and principles of black sociology via the atlanta sociological laboratory. *Sociological Focus, 39* (1), 1–18.