USING THE MASTER'S TOOLS: THE ATLANTA SOCIOLOGICAL LABORATORY AND AMERICAN SOCIOLOGY, 1896–1924

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The Chicago School of Sociology (1915–1930) is often referred to as the first *American* school *of sociology. This investigation challenges that claim and proposes that, possibly, the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory (1896–1924) deserves the designation of being America's first school of sociology. Martin Bulmer's (1985) model of a school is applied to the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory and the findings indicate, per Bulmer's prerequisites, that the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory qualifies for school status nearly 20 years prior to the development of the Chicago School of Sociology.*

What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy? It means that only the most narrow perimeters of change are possible and allowable.   —(Lorde 1983:98)

Between 1895 and 1924 Atlanta University social scientists conducted yearly urban sociological research investigations into the social, physical, and economic condition of African Americans and the data were presented annually at the Atlanta University Conference on Negro Problems. For 20 years, between 1896 and 1917, conference findings were published by

the Atlanta University Press and made available to the academic community in both America and abroad (Adams 1930). If one were to examine the contemporary urban sociological literature seeking information concerning urban sociological research conducted at Atlanta University, they would find a paucity of data (Wright 2000). Conversely, the urban sociological accomplishments of University of Chicago sociologists are well documented and so highly revered that scholars such as Lester R. Kurtz (1984) propose that "the general outlines of urban sociological research in sociology were first developed by Park and Burgess and their students" (p. 60). Relatedly, Martin Bulmer (1984) exhorts that "the Chicago school represented the first successful American program of collective social research" (p. xv). Bulmer, further lauding the urban sociological accomplishments of the University of Chicago, proposes that "what characterized above all the achievement[s] of the Chicago school of sociology was the ability to bring theory and research together in a fruitful way" (p. xv). Notwithstanding the claims made above, Martin Bulmer (1985), in "The Chicago School of Sociology: What Made It A School," may have overstated the achievements of the University of Chicago when he developed a model of a "school" and implied that the Chicago School of Sociology,[1] circa 1913–1935, comprised the first American school of sociology. Bulmer's characteristics of a school are listed below.

1. There must be a central figure around whom the department is organized.
2. A school must exist in a university setting and have direct contact with a student population.

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[1] By most accounts, the Chicago School of Sociology developed after Robert Park and Ernest Burgess entered the sociology program at the University of Chicago and initiated urban sociological research investigations into city issues (Harvey 1987). It is important to note that Park and Burgess are associated with the second, not first, generation of University of Chicago scholars. "The second generation [of University of Chicago sociologists] belonged to the Chicago school of Robert Park and Ernest Burgess which endured through the 1920's and into the 1930's" (Smith 1988; 3). First generation University of Chicago sociologists consist of those engaged in sociological activity and affiliated with the university during the early years of the program. Thus, Albion W. Small, Charles R. Henderson, George E. Vincent, William I. Thomas, as well as Edward Bemis, Ira Woods Howerth, George H. Mead, Graham Taylor, and Charles Zueblin are included as first generation University of Chicago sociologists.

3. There must be interaction between those who work at the university and the general community in which the university is located.
4. A school must have, as its key figure, someone with a dominating personality.
5. The leader of a school must possess an intellectual vision and have a missionary drive.
6. There must be intellectual exchanges between colleagues and graduate students (e.g., existence of seminars) and the school must have an outlet for the publication of scholarship written by members of the school.
7. A school must have an adequate infrastructure (e.g., advances in research methods, institutional links, and strong philanthropic support).
8. A school cannot last beyond the generation of its central figure.
9. A school must be open to ideas and influences beyond its home discipline.

After reviewing the urban sociological accomplishments of Atlanta University social scientists and examining the Atlanta University Conference publications, one is compelled to ask if the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory fits Bulmer's model.

Shaun L. Gabbidon (1999) attempted to fit Atlanta University into Bulmer's model but could not prove the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory fulfilled parts of Bulmer's sixth and seventh criterion for a school. Gabbidon argues that the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory does not meet a component of Bulmer's sixth criterion because "[Du Bois] never stated any theoretical perspective that he tested later" (p. 31). This critique of William Edward Burghardt Du Bois' scholarship is problematic because it assumes that a theorist *must* test his or her ideas before they can become scientifically accepted or relevant. This narrow view of intellectual creativity prohibits the testing of theoretical constructions by anyone other than the theorist and possibly can be construed as a form of academic gatekeeping. Relatedly, Gabbidon asserts that the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory does not meet another component of Bulmer's sixth criterion because "we seldom find any discussion of other prominent figures who may have collaborated with Du Bois during his first tenure at Atlanta University" (p. 31). This assertion is problematic because of

the ambiguity of the term collaboration. If Gabbidon operationalizes collaboration as the teaming of individuals for the express purpose of producing coauthored publishable scholarship, then his assertion is correct. However, if collaboration is expanded to include Du Bois' personal conversations and correspondences with prominent figures such as Franz Boaz, Jane Addams, Max Weber, William James, Booker T. Washington, other leading scholars at various prestigious universities and colleges throughout the United States and the world, as well as collaborative research projects with Atlanta University students—all of which possibly influenced Du Bois' scholarship—then Gabbidon's assertion is incorrect (Du Bois 1968).

Gabbidon (1999) also suggests that Atlanta University, under the guidance and leadership of Du Bois, fails to meet a component of Bulmer's seventh criterion—strong outside philanthropic support. Although the level of philanthropic support obtained by Atlanta University never matched that of John D. Rockefeller and the University of Chicago, university officials and Du Bois were able to amass enough funding to sustain the Atlanta University conferences for almost three decades and the yearly publications for two decades—a life span similar to that of the Chicago School of Sociology. This author suggests that the publication of 20 volumes of the Atlanta University Conference publications, without the philanthropic support enjoyed by institutions such as the University of Chicago and Tuskegee, is an indication of strong philanthropic support during the span of the Atlanta University conferences and publications. That Atlanta University published 20 monographs without the financial support enjoyed by the University of Chicago denotes the strength and determination of, not only the director of the Atlanta University Conference on Negro Problems, but its administrators, faculty, students, and ardent supporters. Elliott Rudwick (1974) similarly argues that:

> Since Atlanta University was a struggling and impoverished institution that could not afford to support Du Bois' research adequately for one year—much less for a decade or century— it is a tribute to his determination that he actually supervised the preparation of sixteen Atlanta University sociological monographs between 1897 and 1914 (p. 42).

Instead of focusing on the lack of funding or philanthropic support that lead to the demise of the Atlanta University conferences and publications, a new focal point should be directed at the tremendous accomplishments that took place at Atlanta University, despite the myriad obstacles faced by the individuals engaged in such an undertaking at that particular period in American history.

A couple of factors may have prevented Gabbidon from successfully proving that the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory qualified for school status as outlined by Bulmer. First, Gabbidon approached the subject from a criminology/criminal justice perspective and did not fully address sociological issues. For example, Gabbidon (1999) argues that "Du Bois, as stated earlier, never developed any rigorous theory for future testing. Rudwick, after reviewing his Atlanta Studies, commented that [Du Bois' Atlanta University studies] were lacking in systematic theory" (p. 34). The author suggests that the ambiguous and possibly discipline-specific definition of a term can sometimes negate an otherwise compelling critique. If one defines a theory as a set of interrelated statements that attempt to explain, predict, and/or understand social events, and that can be replicated and generalizable, then the resolutions offered in the conclusion of each Atlanta University Conference publication qualify as systematic theoretical constructions. Undoubtedly, the presentation of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory theories did not mirror that of traditional scholars. Despite this fact, should Atlanta University's theoretical contributions be minimized or omitted because, although they qualify for theoretical status according to the strict definition of the term, they do not qualify ideologically?

Second, Gabbidon's argument for the school status of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory is imbedded in an article in which it is, possibly, given secondary importance. In a 16-page article devoted to the social scientific research of W. E. B. Du Bois and Atlanta University, only five pages are devoted to proving that the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory qualifies for school status.

The present investigation departs from Gabbidon's study through its sociological mode of inquiry, singular topical focus, and more thorough presentation of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory's qualifications for school status.

The next phase of ascertaining whether or not the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory comprised a school includes operationalizing the term "school" and applying Bulmer's criteria to Atlanta University.

WHAT IS A SCHOOL?

Bulmer (1985) states that, "A 'school' in the social sciences may be thought of as akin to the term used in art history to designate a group of contemporaries sharing a certain style, technique or set of symbolic expressions, and having at some point or other in time or space a high degree of interaction (e.g., the Impressionists, the Bauhaus School, etc.)" (p. 61). Bulmer further clarifies his definition of a school when he notes that:

> Schools of social science, particularly those committed to systematic empirical inquiry, are sufficiently unusual to merit some consideration. Most university departments of sociology are an assemblage of more or less independent scholars, pursuing diverse interests either individually or in small groups. They cooperate for purposes of teaching and administration, but in research go their own way. Any suggestion that there should be an integrated research program across a department, or that individuals should orient their research to certain central themes, ideas or problems, would be regarded by most academic sociologists as anathema (p. 61).

Succinctly, Bulmer's notion of a school includes a collective program of research undertaken by scholars located at the same university. The focus of this investigation now shifts to the application of Bulmer's model to the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory, 1896–1924.

WAS THE ATLANTA SOCIOLOGICAL LABORATORY (1896–1924) A SCHOOL?

The first characteristic of a school is that it "requires a central figure around whom it is organized" (Bulmer 1985:63). The Atlanta University Conference on Negro Problems was initiated by President Horace Bumstead and Trustee George G. Bradford in 1895 because:

> Atlanta University always [drew] its students exclusively from the cities and large towns, and a great portion of its graduates [were] holding positions at these centers of influence. From these workers information [came] to the faculty and trustees of the University from time to time that led them to believe there exist[ed] a great need for a systematic and thorough investigation into the conditions of living among the Negro population of cities (Chase 1896:5).

On July 1, 1895, the Atlanta University Board of Trustees approved President Bumstead and Bradford's proposal to initiate a series of urban sociological research investigations into the social condition of African Americans. The first conference was scheduled to take place during the Atlanta Exposition later that year, however, "after further consideration, it was deemed wise to change the time to the Commencement in May, 1896" (Chase 1896:5).

George G. Bradford served as the director of the annual investigations and conferences until W. E. B. Du Bois was "approached by President Horace Bumstead of Atlanta University in 1896 and asked to take charge of the work in sociology, and of the new conferences which they were inaugurating on the Negro problem" (Du Bois 1968:209). Upon his hiring, Du Bois was granted full control of the annual investigations and quickly marked the studies with his particular stamp of systematic and scientific inquiry-method and theory triangulation, data comparison, theoretical analysis, and, whenever possible, nationally representative data samples (Wright 2000). According to Du Bois (1968):

> Without any thought or consultation I rather peremptorily changed the plans of the first two Atlanta Conferences. They had been conceived as conferences limited to city problems, contrasting with the increasing popular conferences on rural problems held at Tuskegee. But I was not thinking of mere conferences. I was thinking of a comprehensive plan for studying a human group (p. 62).

For 12 years Du Bois served as the sole director of the annual conference and editor of the resultant publications. Du Bois, after his resignation from Atlanta University in 1910, continued to serve as the director of the Atlanta University

Conference and co-editor of the Atlanta University Conference Publications from 1910 to 1914. Adams (1930) notes that:

> After the retirement of Dr. Du Bois in 1910 to become editor of the *Crisis* and director of publicity in the newly organized National Association of Colored People, his successor as professor of sociology was Augustus G. Dill, an Atlanta University graduate of the class of 1906, of Harvard in 1908, and who also continued the work of the conferences. Mr. Dill had, however, the benefit of a certain measure of assistance from Dr. Du Bois, whose name still appeared in the catalogue as director of the conference (pp. 93–94).

Although Adams suggests that Du Bois provided assistance to Augustus Granville Dill, the conference continued to follow the exact plan of systematic and scientific inquiry outlined by Du Bois upon his hiring at Atlanta University some 12 years earlier. Additionally, Du Bois continued to attend the conferences and make presentations. The solitary indication of assistance offered to Dill by Du Bois during this period resides in the fact that Du Bois and Dill are listed as co-editors of four publications. Any suggestion that Augustus Granville Dill, a former student of Du Bois who terminated his connection with the Atlanta University Conference in allegiance to Du Bois in 1914, allowed Du Bois to assist him during this period is vacuous and not empirically substantiated. After Du Bois relinquished his position as director of the conference in 1914, the singular published research investigation released after his departure followed *his* model of urban sociological inquiry. Thus, even after his complete separation from Atlanta University and the annual conference in 1914, Du Bois, who supervised the preparation of 16 Atlanta University Conference publications, continued to be the central figure from whom the annual studies relied for its sociological and scientific guidance.

The second characteristic of a school is that it ''exist[s] in universities and requires students as a necessary and integral part of their activity'' (Bulmer 1985:64). Included within this feature are the benefits derived from the location of the university and the ''training [of] graduates in research [rather than] undergraduate teaching that was common in universities in the English-speaking world'' (p. 64).

The city of Atlanta served as an ideal research site for the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory. Du Bois ([1903b] 1978), discussing the benefits derived from having the city of Atlanta as a sociological laboratory, said:

> Atlanta University is situated within a few miles of the geographical centre of the Negro population of the nation, and is, therefore, near the centre of that congeries of human problems which cluster round the black American. This institution, which forms in itself a "Negro problem," and which prepares students whose lives must of necessity be further factors in this same problem, cannot logically escape the study and teaching of some things connected with that mass of social questions (p. 62).

Atlanta proved to be a suitable location for the study of urban African Americans and, also, a research training field for the learning of sociological research techniques by undergraduate and graduate Atlanta University students. Du Bois ([1903b] 1978), discussing the training of Atlanta University undergraduate students in sociological research, asserts that, "We have arranged, therefore, what amounts to about two years of sociological work for the junior and senior college students... Our main object in the undergraduate work, however, is human training and not the collection of material, and in this we have been fairly successful. The classes are enthusiastic and of average intelligence, and the knowledge of life and of the meaning of life in the modern world is certainly much greater among these students than it would be without such a course of study" (pp. 62–63). Although Du Bois suggests that human training took precedence over the collection of materials, the Atlanta University Conference publications (1896–1917) often cite the assistance of various Atlanta University undergraduate sociology classes in the collection of conference data (Wright 2000). To that end, Du Bois proclaims

> [W]e carry on in our conferences postgraduate work in original work... Sometimes [the original work conducted by undergraduates and postgraduates for the Atlanta University Conference studies] are of real scientific value: the class of '99 furnished local studies, which, after some rearrangement, were published in No. 22 of the Bulletin of the United States

Department of Labor; the work of another class was used in a series of articles on the housing of the Negro in the *Southern Workman*, and a great deal of the work of other classes has been used in the reports of the Atlanta Conferences (pp. 62–63).

Atlanta University fulfills the second criteria for a school through its instruction of research techniques to Atlanta University postgraduate and undergraduate students.

The third characteristic of a school is that it is not isolated from the city in which it is located. Atlanta University faculty, specifically Du Bois, frequently came into contact with members of the Atlanta community. Du Bois occasionally participated in meetings held by organizations such as the First Sociological Club of Atlanta where, upon his hiring, he addressed the club and presented his vision for the organization (Du Bois 1965). Du Bois (1968), discussing his activities beyond the ivory tower, said "also I joined with the Negro leaders of Georgia in efforts to better local conditions; to stop discrimination in the distribution of school funds; and to keep the legislature from making further discrimination in railway travel" (p. 219). Du Bois' activities indicate that he was indeed a part of the Atlanta city community as well as the Atlanta University community.

The fourth characteristic of a school is the dominating personality of its key figure. Bulmer (1985) asserts that dominating personalities are the very reason that schools exist and that the leader commands the "personal loyalty and admiration of their colleagues and students" (p. 65). Additionally, leaders of schools "look for talented collaborators to participate in the research they conduct" (pp. 65–66). That Du Bois possessed a dominating personality was demonstrated by his determination to develop the Atlanta University studies into a credible and reliable source of scholarly data on African Americans. Commenting on the conference held before his hiring, Du Bois asserted that "as a scientific accomplishment the first conference was not important" (Du Bois [1940] 1965:797). Du Bois (1968) believed the first conference to be of low scientific value because "[the investigations] followed the Hampton and Tuskegee model[s] of being primarily meetings of inspiration, directed toward specific efforts at social reform and aimed at propaganda for

social uplift in certain preconceived lines'' (p. 214). After being selected to direct the Atlanta University Conference on Negro Problems in 1896, Du Bois immediately implemented his own agenda for the Atlanta University Conference and ''did not pause to consider how far [his] developed plans agreed or disagreed with the ideas of the already launched project'' (p. 214). Du Bois' desire to alter the direction of the conference despite possible opposition indicate a dominating personality. Although Du Bois possessed a dominating personality, he received strong personal loyalty from some of his colleagues and students.

Dorothy Yancy (1978) suggests that ''Du Bois was recognized by his students and colleagues as 'one of the greatest scholars the race has ever produced''' (p. 59). The loyalty of some of Du Bois' students can be ascertained through the impact that he had on some of their lives. Some indication of this impact was revealed when one student became an Episcopalian and later a priest because he thought '' 'the Doctor' was Episcopalian'' (p. 60). The loyalty and admiration extended to Du Bois from his colleagues was equally impressive. Yancy (1978) writes that some ''colleagues had warm memories [of Du Bois] and called him the perfect host ... in a small group he was all right ... very warm. He was also witty in these small groups. He was known for proclaiming that he 'got his Ph.D. when Ph.D.'s were Ph.D.'s' '' (pp. 63–64). Although the comments presented to this point are favorable of Du Bois, some of his former students and colleagues loathed his aloofness, reserved nature, and bluntness. A former student of Du Bois said, ''Even though there was the intimacy of his suite and the small classes, many students felt he was aloof and an 'intellectual snob.' One student felt he was definitely not a 'hail fellow well met. ... he was very gracious, [but had] a great deal of reserve. He laughed a lot, but even his laughter was reserved. ... He made jokes, could see fun in things, but never a good horse laugh'' (p. 61). A colleague of Du Bois provides a similar example. ''Benjamin Mays recalled an example of Du Bois' bluntness when people walked up to him and asked him if he remembered them. Du Bois' tart reply was usually, 'why should I?' '' (p. 62).

Du Bois' collaborative work, as addressed earlier, did not manifest itself in the form of coauthored, publishable

scholarship, but developed through personal conversations and correspondences (Wright 2000). Du Bois (1968) notes that, "In addition to the publications, we did something toward bringing together annually at Atlanta University persons and authorities interested in the problems of the South. Among these were Charles William Eliot, Booker T. Washington, Frank Sanborn, Franz Boaz, Walter Wilcox, [Max Weber, and Jane Addams]" (p. 219). Each of the above-mentioned scholars and noteworthy citizens were instrumental in collaborating with Du Bois, if collaboration is expanded to include personal conversations and correspondences that assisted in the framing of specific ideas, concepts, and conference resolutions (Du Bois 1968).

Bulmer's fifth characteristic of a school mandates that a clear intellectual vision and missionary drive be possessed by the leader. Du Bois clearly possessed an intellectual vision and missionary drive that he, unfortunately, was unable to bring to fruition because of two coerced departures from Atlanta University. Du Bois (1968), expounding on his intellectual vision for the Atlanta University Conference on Negro Problems, said:

> This program at Atlanta, I sought to swing as on a pivot to one of scientific investigation into social conditions, primarily for scientific ends. I put no special effort on special reform effort, but increasing and widening emphasis on the collection of a basic body of fact concerning the social condition of American Negroes, endeavoring to reduce that condition to exact measurement whenever or wherever occasion permitted (p. 214).

Du Bois' intellectual vision included upgrading the Atlanta University Conference on Negro Problems from purely descriptive analyses of human behavior and the collection of census type data to one grounded in scientific truths and systematic inquiry.

In addition to making the conferences more scientific, Du Bois proposed that each year's investigation focus on one specific aspect of African American life instead of a hodgepodge of issues to be addressed every year as Bradford's original plan suggested. According to Du Bois ([1904] 1978):

The method employed is to divide the various aspects of [the condition of African Americans] into ten great subjects. To treat one of these subjects each year as carefully and exhaustively as means will allow until the cycle is completed. To begin then again on the same cycle for a second ten years. So that in the course of a century, if the work is well done we shall have a continuous record on the condition and development of a group of 10 to 20 million of men—a body of sociological material unsurpassed in human annals (p. 58).

Du Bois' ([1940] 1965) intellectual vision also included altering the existing Atlanta University Conference by:

[M]inimizing the conference part of the program, that is speeches, the reminiscences, the meeting of people and put the whole stress upon the preceding year-long investigation of social condition. Moreover, instead of trying to study the whole mass of social conditions and discuss the whole Negro problem, I deliberately put an "s" upon "problem" and emphasized the study of Negro problems and then took up one problem or one phase of a social problem affecting Negroes for a year's intensive study (p. 3).

Du Bois believed that the Atlanta University Conference on Negro Problems could have developed to address its "weak . . . economic side. [The conference] did not stress enough the philosophy of Marx and Engels and was of course far too soon for Lenin. The program ought to have been—and as I think would have been if I had kept on this work—the Economic Development of the American Negro Slave: on this central thread all the other subjects would have been strung. But this I had no chance to essay" (Du Bois 1968:217).

The sixth characteristic of a school concerns the "seriousness and intensity of the intellectual exchanges between the leader and other members of the group, whether these are colleagues or graduate students" (Bulmer 1985:67). This criterion is further divided into two areas, "the existence of seminars where ideas and approaches are developed and applied, and the availability of avenues for the publication of the work of the school" (p. 68). The *Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Atlanta University* (Atlanta University 1897) indicates that sociological seminars covering statistics, general sociological principles, social and economic conditions,

and methods of reform were offered at Atlanta University during Du Bois' tenure. "In addition to this, graduate study of the social problems in the South by most approved scientific methods [was] carried on by the Atlanta Conference, composed of graduates of Atlanta, Fisk, and other institutions" (Atlanta University 1897:13). In addition to instructing undergraduate courses and serving as, what can be called, the "Director of Ethnographic Research" for graduate students, Du Bois also fulfilled the duties of a teacher.

> Many of his graduate students remember most the monthly seminars he held in his suite of rooms in Ware Hall. His classes discussed various seminar topics…. According to one student, these evenings were … 'Perfectly delightful…. The atmosphere was different from the classroom [because it was more intimate]. We were special and he let us know it….' According to one student, he was a 'charming host … thoughtful and entertaining. He told anecdotes and showed that he did understand his students … he seemed very relaxed in his apartment, very witty and permissive' (Yancy 1978:61).

Other students have "described [Du Bois] as a '[hard] task master.' In one class each student wrote one paper a week on some aspect of the Afro-American experience, presented it to the class and defended his point of view. According to one student, 'no one took a class from Dr. Du Bois voluntarily. [He was] no softy.' His assignments were lengthy, yet interesting" (pp. 60–61). Reflecting on his teaching skills, Du Bois asserts that:

> I was, for instance, a good teacher. I stimulated inquiry and accuracy. I met every question honestly and never dodged an earnest doubt. I read my examination papers carefully and marked them with sedulous care. But I did not know my students as human beings; they were to me apt to be intellects and not souls (p. 62).

The comments from Du Bois and his students suggest that, per Bulmer's prerequisite, "the qualities to be developed in students … the ability to understand, apply, and develop … the central tenets of the school" were met (Bulmer 1985:67).

Also, included in the sixth characteristic of a school is the ability of the school to publish its research. Atlanta University

published the findings of its yearly investigations through the Atlanta University Press from 1896 to 1917. In addition to the publication of 20 conference monographs, the Atlanta University Press also published a variety of books, catalogues, and pamphlets (Adams 1930).

The seventh characteristic mandates that a school have an adequate infrastructure in place to promote advances in research methods, develop institutional links, and garner strong philanthropic support. Atlanta University researchers promoted advancements in three areas of sociological research. First, Atlanta University researchers were among the first academics to openly discuss the benefits and limitations of insider/outsider researcher status. African American researchers were utilized exclusively by Atlanta University officials because "[a]ll the data gathered by this body of trained colored leaders, are believed to be, perhaps, more than usually accurate because of the investigators' knowledge of the character, habits, and prejudices of the people, and because of the fact that they were not hindered by the suspicions which confront the white investigator, and which seriously affect the accuracy of the answers to his questions" (Chase 1897:5). This idea is similar to Patricia Hill Collins' (1991) outsider within concept which suggests that insiders "[provide] a special standpoint on self, family, and society for [African Americans]" (p. 35). Collins adds that, as scientific scholars, insiders are able to "look both from the outside in and from the inside out [because] we understand both" (p. 36). In the context of this investigation, insider Atlanta University researchers possibly provided a different and more accurate analysis of African American life than their White counterparts could have offered. Additionally, Collins' concept suggests that outsider researchers are more prone than insider researchers to misinterpret the behaviors and actions of the observed group. This idea is similar to Du Bois' ([1903a] 1969) notion of "car window sociology." According to Du Bois, a person who engages in research for a limited period of time and then makes generalizations on the subject investigated without having extensive data concerning that subject is engaging in car window sociology. Du Bois noted that this method of studying African Americans was common during the early 20th century and he, through the Atlanta University Conference on Negro

Problems, sought to replace the incorrect data with accurate, systematic, and scientific data.

Relatedly, Atlanta University officials were aware of the distrust that many African Americans held toward White researchers. Consequently, Atlanta University officials employed what they believed to be the most effective research strategy available to obtain the desired data. The research strategy employed included using African American investigators to interview African American subjects. Similarly, this strategy has been employed by scholars such as Cannon, Higginbotham, and Leung (1991).

> We expected that Black women might also be apprehensive about participating, since the request came from researchers at a predominately White educational institution. We . . . sent Black members of the research team to speak exclusively to Black groups, White members to speak exclusively to White groups, and a biracial team to speak to every group that had both Black and White women. Only Black interviewers interviewed Black subjects, and White interviewers interviewed White subjects (p. 113).

The second contribution of Atlanta University scholars to the sociological community was the triangulation of research methodologies (Denzin 1970). The use of two or more methods of data collection was a constant and important component of most Atlanta University Conference investigations (Wright 2000). For example, the methods of research utilized for the 1900 Atlanta University study, *The College-Bred Negro*, were analyses of admissions data of an unspecified number of colleges and universities, direct correspondence with 12 college and university presidents, a response from the United States Commissioner on Education, and questionnaires received from 1,312 African American college graduates. When the same topic was addressed at the annual conference ten years later, *The College-Bred Negro American* in 1910, the methods of research included the examination of 32 catalogues from African American colleges and universities, questionnaires from the presidents of 35 predominately white colleges and universities, and questionnaires received from 800 African American college graduates. Arguably, Atlanta University scholars were not the first individuals to engage in method triangulation, but it is

very possible that Atlanta University was the first *school* to institutionalize this data collection strategy in their program of systematic and scientific university-sponsored research investigations.

The third contribution of Atlanta University to American sociological research was theory triangulation. Many critics of the Atlanta University Conference on Negro Problems suggest that the absence of pure theories weakened the sociological significance of the investigations. The author, as stated previously, believes that the ambiguity of the term theory has led to multiple understandings, or misunderstandings, of the theoretical contributions of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory. Historically, sociologists have constructed narrow definitions of what constitute a theory. This objective is often embarked upon as if a singular proposition is sufficient to answer most, if not all, of the questions emanating from the social events of the world. Atlanta University researchers, on the contrary, offered multiple theories (resolutions) in their attempts to better understand, explain, and, possibly, ameliorate the social conditions (or events) identified in their data. For example, the 1904 Atlanta University Conference Publication, *Some Notes on Negro Crime Particularly in Georgia*, proposed that the high rate of crime committed by African Americans could be explained by transition from slavery to freedom, race prejudice, lack of protection under the law, inequality of sentences between Whites and Blacks, and the unfair methods of punishment used by the Georgia court system. The theories (resolutions) also assert that the unequal treatment of African Americans in the criminal justice system could be alleviated through an appeal to Whites proposing fairer criminal laws, justice from the court system, abolition of the convict lease system, the development of more intelligent methods of punishment, the refusal to allow free labor to be displaced by convict labor, and the acknowledgment that it is the lower classes of people who are threats to the citizens of Georgia and not necessarily all African Americans. The 1908 Atlanta University Conference publication, *The Negro Family*, produced theories (resolutions) that proposed to strengthen the African American family through 1) the instruction of younger women about the seriousness of marriage and 2) the teaching of young men to

revere womanhood and motherhood. Additionally, it was further proposed that 3) the institutions of marriage and family be identified as sacred institutions and, thus, treated as such in everyday practice. Theoretical triangulation is not overly promoted by contemporary sociologists and, possibly, has been historically undervalued. Nevertheless, Atlanta University was one of the first institutions to promote theoretical triangulation.

Institutional links are reflected in cooperative efforts between Atlanta University and the faculty and students from various historically Black colleges and universities and predominately White institutions (Chase 1896; Du Bois 1965). Relatedly, the collaborative efforts of various national and international scholars previously cited constitute individual as well as institutional links.

The ability to garner strong philanthropic support is the final component of the seventh criterion for school status. It is well documented that Atlanta University officials experienced tremendous difficulty attempting to procure funding for their annual investigations. Nevertheless, Atlanta University amassed enough strong philanthropic support to host almost 30 conferences and publish 20 monographs (Adams 1930). That Du Bois succeeded in amassing enough funding to study African Americans during a period of intense racial segregation is a testament to the level of commitment held by Atlanta University and its supporters. Du Bois commented on the tremendous difficulties that he and Atlanta University officials experienced while attempting to obtain economic support from philanthropists.

> If the Negroes were still lost in the forests of central Africa we could have a government commission to go and measure their heads, but with 10 millions of them here under your noses I have in the past besought the Universities almost in vain to spend a single cent in a rational study of their characteristics and conditions. ... [A]t Atlanta University we beg annually and beg in vain for the paltry sum of $500 simply to aid us in replacing gross and vindictive ignorance of race conditions with enlightening knowledge and systematic observation (Du Bois [1904] 1978:55).

Essentially, Du Bois suggests that the inability of many philanthropists to view Blacks as fully human may have affected

contributions to the all Black university that was engaged in research exclusively focused on African Americans. Du Bois, expounding on this idea, said:

> [I]f the Negroes are not ordinary human beings, if their development is simply the retrogression of an inferior people, and the only possible future for the Negro, a future of inferiority, decline and death, then it is manifest that a study of such a group, while still of interest and scientific value is of less pressing and immediate necessity than the study of a group which is distinctly recognized as belonging to the human family, whose advancement is possible, and whose future depends on its own efforts and the fairness and reasonableness of the dominant and surrounding group ([1904] 1978) p. 55).

In addition to race prejudice, Du Bois also believed that Atlanta University had difficulty procuring substantial funding because of his ideological battle with Booker T. Washington. According to Du Bois (1968), ''there came a controversy between myself and Booker Washington, which became more personal and bitter than I had ever dreamed and which necessarily dragged in the University. . . . I did not at the time see the handwriting on the wall. I did not realize how strong the forces were back of [Booker T. Washington's] Tuskegee [University] and how they might interfere with my scientific study of the Negro'' (pp. 223–24). Du Bois alleges that Booker T. Washington, *the* Negro leader of the early 20th century, campaigned against his efforts to obtain financial support for himself and the Atlanta University Conference on Negro Problems. For example, in 1905 Du Bois wrote to a prominent philanthropist to procure funding for a ''high-class journal to circulate among the intelligent Negroes'' (1968, p. 224). According to Du Bois:

> Mr. Schiff wrote back courteously, saying: ''Your plans to establish a high-class journal to circulate among the intelligent Negroes is in itself interesting, and on its face has my sympathy. But before I can decide whether I can become of advantage in carrying your plans into affect, I would wish to advise with men whose opinion in such a matter I consider of much value.'' Nothing ever came of this, because, as I might have known, most of Mr. Schiff's friends were strong and

sincere advocates of [Booker T. Washington and] Tuskegee. (pp. 224–25).

A few years later Du Bois resigned from Atlanta University hoping that the university could obtain additional philanthropic support for the annual studies in his absence.

Although Atlanta University and Du Bois experienced difficulty amassing sums of money comparable to the University of Chicago, the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory fulfills this criterion because Atlanta University officials were able to garner enough strong philanthropic support to sustain the investigations for more than two decades—once again, a life span similar to that of the Chicago School of Sociology, circa 1915–1930. For example, Atlanta University received monies from the Carnegie Institution in Washington, D. C. for the 1907 study and the John F. Slater Fund for the 1908–1913 investigations.

The eighth characteristic states that a school cannot last beyond the generation of its founder. This characteristic is exemplified in both of Du Bois' coerced departures from Atlanta University. After Du Bois' initial break from the Atlanta University Conference in 1914, his successors managed to publish only one research investigation and one compilation of articles on "the race question" before the publications were ended. After Du Bois' second departure from the Atlanta University Conference, then known as the Phylon Institute, "there were some earnest attempts to carry the proposed program on. [The conference] was transferred to Howard University, with E. Franklin Frazier in charge. An excellent conference was held in 1945. But Frazier was not given funds for continuing the project and the Land Grant Colleges gradually ceased to cooperate. The whole scheme died within a year or two. It has never been revived" (Du Bois [1960] 1965:39).

The ninth and final characteristic of a school mandates that it is open to the ideas and possible influence of other disciplines. The Atlanta University Conference, by the very nature of its subject matter, was open to the ideas and influence of various disciplines. Werner J. Lange (1983) notes that Du Bois, director of 16 Atlanta University Conferences on Negro Problems, was open to the ideas and influence of

other disciplines and employed discipline triangulation, or interdisciplinary collaboration, before it became an accepted sociological practice.

> It is important to note that Du Bois, clearly delineated four approaches to "the study of the Negro as a social group": (1) historical study; (2) statistical investigation; (3) anthropological measurement; and (4) sociological interpretation. The fact that these social scientific domains—now departmentally separated at most United States universities—constituted a single unit for Du Bois reflects the degree to which the young scholar valued and used a cross-disciplinary approach in his work. He was an accomplished historian, sociologist, statistician and anthropologist at a time when these disciplines were in their infancy in the United States (p. 143).

The Atlanta University Conference on Negro Problems was open to the ideas and influence of other disciplines by the very nature of its objective-exploring the holistic condition of urban African Americans. Thus, the conference benefitted from Du Bois' emphasis on interdisciplinary investigation and the various academic perspectives espoused by invited guests and consultants such as Booker T. Washington, Jane Addams, Franz Fanon, Walter Wilcox, Frank Sanborn, and E. P. A. Seligman (Wright 2000).

The objective of this inquiry is to ascertain whether or not the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory, 1896–1924, comprised a school as outlined by Martin Bulmer. The data presented in this investigation indicate that, per Bulmer's model and prerequisites, the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory, comprised a school. That Atlanta University qualifies for school status between 1896–1924 and the University of Chicago achieved school status between 1915–1930 indicate that the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory, not the Chicago School of Sociology, is the first American school of sociology. This discovery is very compelling and a reasonable question that one may ask in light of this finding is, "Why have the academic accomplishments of the first American school of sociology been rendered sociologically invisible?" Although this is an important question, it is beyond the scope of the present investigation. The conclusion, however, does provide a foundation for an investigation into the sociological invisibility of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory.

CONCLUSION

Audre Lorde (1983) once proclaimed, "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (p. 99). The objective of this investigation is not to dismantle the master's house, but simply to reorganize it. The sociology of knowledge theoretical perspective suggests "[t]hat which within a given group is accepted as absolute appears to the outsider conditioned by the group situation and recognized as partial" (Mannheim 1968:253). This perspective suggests that those from the margins are able to recognize distortions and offer alternative insights into existing paradigms (Collins 1991; Mannheim 1968). Historically, the existing sociological paradigms have excluded *others*. Barbara Peters (1991) notes that, "since the founding of the first academic department at the University of Chicago ... [S]ociology has had a history of silencing voices that were different from the dominant, white, male, bourgeois, and 'moral' voices of the founding fathers" (pp. 248–49). It is the historical silencing, negation, and invisibility of various sociological voices that necessitates studies such as the present investigation. This inquiry should not be viewed as an attack on the Chicago School of Sociology, its supporters, or past sociologists who minimized or ignored the sociological contributions of the first American school of sociology—Atlanta University. This inquiry should be viewed as a clarion call illustrating the tremendous accomplishments of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory, 1896–1924. Unlike Audre Lorde (1983) who believed the utilization of the master's tools would only enable "us temporarily to beat him at his own game ... [and] never enable us to bring about genuine change" (p. 99), this author contends that the continued push for historical inclusion of others in sociology will not result in the dismantling of the master's house, but in its reorganization that will beget an edifice unrecognizable to those who previously possessed the keys to the front gate.

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APPENDIX

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