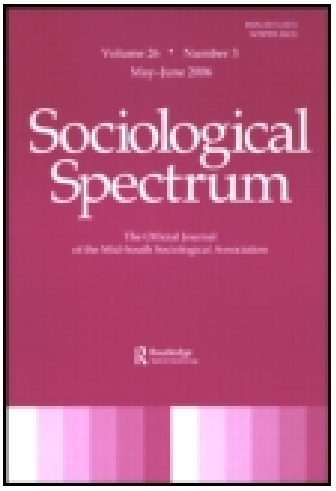

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W. E. B. Du Bois, Howard W. Odum and the Sociological Ghetto

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The sociology of the South, as a substantive area research interest, emerged during the 1800s as a means to rationalize and preserve the cultural norms of slavery era whites who would soon experience seismic social shocks including the Civil War and emancipation of enslaved blacks. The person singularly cited as the architect of this area of study is Howard W. Odum. Although Odum is identified as the person most responsible for the development of this field, archival data indicate that W. E. B. Du Bois and the men and women of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory were its first practitioners. In this paper evidence is offered to show that Du Bois's Atlanta University efforts predated Odum's North Carolina research program. Additionally, an explanation for Du Bois's marginalization in the existing sociology of the South literature is offered.

The sociology of the South emerged during the 1800s as a means to rationalize and preserve the cultural norms of slavery-era whites who would soon experience seismic social shocks including the Civil War and emancipation of enslaved blacks. Believing these changes would negatively, drastically, and irreparably impact their way of life, some whites began to write about the glorious virtues of antebellum Southern society and theorize why the continuation and preservation of that culture was necessary. What developed was a ''social philosophy [defending segregation and slavery] that . . . was was a curious mixture of logical reasoning and illogical guesses, profound arguments and stupid utterances, and subtle distinctions and blatant paradoxes'' (Duncan and Duncan 1934: 649). This 'old' sociology of the South ''became the 'blue print' for shaping the pattern of defense for Southern institutional life and for attacking the theory and practice of a free society . . . [and] sociology became one of [its agents]'' (650). By the mid 1800s the old sociology of the South was taught in some post-secondary institutions via texts including *Treatise on Sociology* by Henry Hughes and *Sociology for the South* by George Fitzhugh (Duncan and Duncan 1934). Written in 1854 and 1844, respectively, by Southern lawyers, these books addressed regionally specific topics including the thoughts of Southerners on slavery. Although Fitzhugh, unlike some sociology of the South authors of his era, attempted to articulate scholarly arguments in defense of the peculiar institution and Southern cultural life, his analysis was guided by the accepted scientific and societal belief of the inferiority of blacks vis-a-vis whites. Although the books written by Fitzhugh and Hughes:

> [W]ere used as [college] texts during the period from 1854 to 1893, sociology in the South can hardly claim academic standing during this interval . . . When

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> [the sociology of the south] did reappear it came not as a particularistic cross between propaganda and science, sponsored by lawyers, physicians, and other laymen, but as an academic subject taught by college professors and from textbooks written by more seasoned scholars. (Duncan and Duncan 1934: 656)

When this burgeoning field of study emerged on college campuses in the mid 1900's Edgar Thompson (1945) penned a definition that remains cogent today.

> The sociology of the South is the sociology of one who, whether southerner or nonsoutherner (sic), native or outsider, endeavors to maintain something of the detachment of the stranger as he looks at the South and examines it. For him the South together with its contents is a social object to be studied as he studies other social objects like a family or a city. (360–361)

The person whom most sociological historians singularly cite as the architect of the academic institutionalization of the sociology of the South as defined by Thompson is Howard W. Odum.

Odum is identified as the person most responsible for the development of this field because of his important scholarly works on the significance of location in understanding the culture and behavior of a people. His efforts in understanding Southern culture began with his master's level work on the folk traditions of blacks in rural Mississippi and Georgia in 1906 and continued through his establishment of the University of North Carolina's Department of Sociology (1920), School of Public Welfare (1920), and Institute for Research in Social Science (1924). Odum's upbringing in and understanding of the unique history and culture of the American South combined with the influence of Thomas Pierce Bailey at the University of Mississippi to compel him to view the region as ripe for sociological exploration. Believing the region could be analyzed in a manner similar to the more established and positivistic sciences that many early sociologists sought to emulate, Odum (1945) proclaimed:

> [In] the social sciences, as in the natural sciences, there is needed the living laboratory for research and planning where people live and that the smallest and basic unit for the complete scientific study of society is found in the region embodying all the elements of time, of spatial relationships, and of total cultural environment. (245)

For Odum, the most immediate and central unit of analysis for his sociology of the South was Negro folk life since ''there had been practically no scientific study of the Negro in the South; [and since] the South itself was amazingly ignorant about the Negro; [and because] practically no one was interested in the subject'' (Odum 1945: 246). Odum seized this opportunity to build his new area of sociological study on the topical areas of black Americans and Southern cultural life.

So successful was Odum at establishing the study of regionalism and sociology of the South that he was eulogized in the Washington Post as being the ''Eli Whitney of the modern South'' (Tindall 1958: 285). Rupert B. Vance and Katharine Jocher (1955) were more detailed in their assessment of Odum's contributions to sociology. They championed ''his mature thought in regional theory,

Southern development, and a cultural statistical approach to the analysis of regional divergence and national integration'' (207). In a summary assessment of his career they wrote:

> Odum's work went further than interpreting the South to the Nation and the Nation to the South. It pointed to one possible integration of social science; it projected trends of development for the South; and it cried aloud for implementation in social action and social planning. (207)

This passage is representative of later assessments of Odum's career that recognize his multiple and massive contributions to the discipline in general, but specifically in the area of regionalism and sociology of the South. Accordingly, when one today examines the existing literature on the sociology of the South, every scholar is compelled to recognize Odum's exploits as the first academic attempt at examining the Southern region of the United States as a unit of scientific inquiry. It is without question that Odum developed a vocabulary of, rationale for, and plan to implement regionalism and sociology of the South. However, it is incorrect to assert that Odum's efforts represent the first institutionalized or systematic research endeavors centered on examining the regionally specific experiences of a group within the Southern United States. Prior to Odum's efforts as a master's level student and his establishment and directorship of the research programs at the University of North Carolina, a small black college in Atlanta, Georgia, had initiated an applied program of sociological study on blacks in the American South that represents the first institutionalized, systematic and academic effort in the area of study now called sociology of the South.

Twenty-five years before Odum began his regionalism and sociology of the South efforts at Chapel Hill, Atlanta University (now known as Clark Atlanta University) initiated what would become a nearly 30-year program of research on the social, physical, and economic problems of blacks in the American South. More specifically, by the time Odum completed his master's thesis in 1906, the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory, the moniker bestowed on scholars engaged in sociological research under the direction of W. E. B. Du Bois at Atlanta University between 1895–1917, was well on its way to making substantive contributions to American sociology. The Atlanta Sociological Laboratory was (1) the first American school of sociology, (2) the first school to institutionalize method triangulation, (3) the first school to institutionalize the insider researcher methodology, (4) the first school to institutionalize the practice of acknowledging the limitations of its research investigations and (5) the first school to conduct American sociological studies on the family and religion (Wright 2006, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c; Wright and Calhoun 2006). Unfortunately, the existing sociological literature largely fails to recognize the accomplishments of this school in their appropriate areas of specialization, save studies of race. Specifically, Odum, in his 1951 book on the history of the discipline in America, squarely plants Du Bois's Atlanta University efforts within the singular purview of race studies despite the schools varied topical and methodological achievements. Given Odum's substantial stature in the discipline, one can only speculate on Du Bois's even greater impact on the discipline had his Atlanta University Studies become integrated into the sociological canon in the years immediately following Odum's publication instead of its partial and still incomplete incorporation nearly 70 years later. Accordingly, the objectives of this study are twofold. First, I will demonstrate that Du Bois's Atlanta University Studies predate Odum's 1906 articulation of a 'sociology of the

South.' This marker is significant as it represents the genesis of Odum's theorizing on the ''concept of regionalism and the search for . . . regional balance . . . through the southern regional studies'' (Odum 1945: 245). By using Odum's defined starting point on his theorizing on the topic it can be demonstrated that while the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory did not introduce a vocabulary of or rationale for the substantive field sociology of the South, its members were the earliest institutionalized and academic practitioners of this substantive area. The second objective of this project is to explain Odum's ghettoization of Du Bois's Atlanta University research into the singular realm of 'race studies' in his book on the history of the discipline. However, before an examination of one of Du Bois's early study is offered, a brief overview of the history of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory is presented.

Brief History of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory

In 1895 Atlanta University president Horace Bumstead and trustee George G. Bradford submitted to the school's board of trustees a proposal to establish a series of investigations on blacks, particularly in the South and primarily in cities. Their proposal emanated from correspondences with school graduates who encouraged administrators and faculty to initiate studies into the social, economic and physical condition of blacks making the transitions from slavery to freedom and rural to urban life. The city of Atlanta, according to Du Bois ([1903] 1978), was the ideal location for this type of research program since the ''university [was] situated within a few miles of the geographic center of the Negro population of the nation, and [was], therefore, near the centre of that congeries of human problems which cluster around the black American'' (62). U. S. census data from 1890 supported Du Bois's assessment by confirming that the state of Georgia contained the largest number of blacks in the nation followed closely by its Black Belt peers Mississippi, South Carolina, and Alabama, respectively. Given its central location in the American South where 5.7 million of the nation's 7.4 million blacks resided, or 76% of blacks in the nation, the Atlanta school was perfectly situated to carry out objective and scholarly research on blacks in the American South (Wilcox 1900). Du Bois affirmed the need for scientific study on blacks and the necessity of university support of such an endeavor when he stated, ''This institution, which forms in itself a 'Negro problem,' and which prepares students whose lives of necessity must be further factors in this same problem, cannot logically escape the study and teaching of some things connected with that mass of social questions'' (62).

Bumstead and Bradford's proposal to study the Negro in America was approved in 1895 and the initial investigation, conference, and publication of the findings followed the next year. The yearly publications were continued annually until 1917 and the conference until 1924. The first two Atlanta University Studies on the Negro Problems were directed by Bradford and were later described by Du Bois as being primarily meetings of inspiration and propaganda that contained very little scientific merit (Du Bois 1968). Upon Du Bois's appointment as director of the studies in 1897, the investigations became more scientifically grounded and the original plan was altered. Specifically, Du Bois changed the direction of the annual investigation by focusing on one topic per year over a 10-year period instead of addressing a hodgepodge of issues each year as practiced by Bradford. At the conclusion of the 10-year cycle each topic was revisited to note changes that may have occurred over the previous decade. Additionally, Du Bois upgraded the methodology and scientific rigor of the studies by implementing method and

theory triangulation, utilizing insider researchers and publicly acknowledging the limitations of the studies. With a program of research solidly grounded in contemporary practices in sociological methodology and theory, Du Bois declared that his utopian goal was the development of a 100-year body of scientific data on blacks that could be used to develop sociological theories in the area of race. While Du Bois's vision for a 100-year course of study did not come to fruition, he did manage to direct sixteen studies between 1897 and 1914.

Du Bois conducted his studies on blacks without regard to producing a vocabulary or theory for what we now call regionalism or sociology of the South. Instead, Du Bois's interest was in the acquisition of scientific data to understand the *Negro problem* within a uniquely Southern context and to use the information discovered in an applied manner to improve the condition of blacks in the South and better understand white Southern cultural life and its impact on blacks. Resultantly, the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory became the first academic unit in this nation to engage in objective, scholarly and institutionalized research on the sociology of the South with the goal of identifying trends within the region with regards to race and tacitly promoting efforts at social reform. Repeatedly, when one examines the existing sociological literature they will find no record of this accomplishment of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory. While multiple studies can be presented to demonstrate the early sociology of the South efforts of Du Bois and his Atlanta University colleagues, below is one example of the research conducted by the Du Bois-led research unit.

Atlanta University Publication #2, 1897 "Social and Physical Condition of Negroes in Cities"

The 1897 Atlanta University study, ''*Social and Physical Condition of Negroes in Cities,''* was an extension of the inaugural investigation, ''*Mortality among Negroes in Cities*.'' ''[This] investigation was begun [in 1895] by an inquiry on the part of three graduates of Atlanta University into the causes of the excessive mortality among Negroes'' (Chase 1897:3). Atlanta University officials believed ''the facts brought out at [the 1896] conference were so significant that the investigation [should be] continued for another year along similar lines'' (3). Data for this collaborative study were obtained though the examination of health reports from numerous Southern cities and two sets of blanks, now called questionnaires. L. M. Hershaw, an 1886 Atlanta University graduate, conducted the ''laborious work of analyzing the reports of the boards of health for the past fifteen years'' (5). Health reports to ascertain the causes and rates of mortality of blacks were received from cities including Atlanta, GA; Baltimore, MD; Charleston, SC; Memphis, TN; and Richmond, VA. Also, Eugene Harris, professor at Fisk University, led an investigation into the social and physical condition of Southern blacks in 18 cities. In addition to the examination of health reports and the study conducted by professor Harris, ''uniform sets of blanks [were] prepared and put into the hands of graduates of [Atlanta] University and of educated colored men and women located in different cities'' (9).[1] It is interesting to note that some of the primary data collectors for this investigation were not trained professional sociologists, but citizen researchers. Citizen researchers were ''graduates or students of Atlanta University, students from predominately Black colleges and universities

[1]The second era of the Atlanta University studies began with Du Bois' return to the school in 1932. Du Bois was only able to produce three monographs (1941, 1943 and 1944) for the new research laboratory, renamed the Phylon Institute, before he was retired by the university without his knowledge in 1944.

(PBI's), students from predominately White institutions, and ordinary citizens [of the communities investigated]'' who assisted in the data collection (Wright 2002b:349). While the utilization of citizen researchers was not the ideal data collection strategy, Du Bois argued that their repeated participation reduced the possibility of error in data collection. According to Du Bois (1899), ''by calling on the same persons year after year, a body of experienced correspondents had been gradually formed, numbering . . . about fifty'' (4). Although the use of citizen researchers was borne from a dearth of trained black social scientists to collect data from the desired locations, a latent result of this tactic was the school's institutionalization of the insider researcher.[2] Butler R. Wilson, a member of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory research team that collected data on 100 families that migrated from North Carolina to Cambridge, Massachusetts, cogently explained the selection process and benefit of using black citizen researchers during this period in American history.

> The results . . . depend upon the intelligence . . . of the investigators, who were selected with great care from the ranks of well-known colored educators, ministers, physicians, lawyers and businessmen . . . All the data . . . gathered by this body of trained colored leaders, are believed to be . . . more than usually accurate because of the investigators' knowledge of the character, habits and prejudices of the people, and because . . . they were not hindered by the suspicions which confront the white investigator, and which seriously affect the accuracy of the answers to his questions. (Du Bois 1899: 5)

While the notion of 'insider researcher' first received widespread attention from mainstream sociologists in the late twentieth century, this passage clearly indicates that this methodological technique was institutionalized at the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory nearly 100 years earlier and facilitated the collection of detailed data on blacks in the South.

Three sets of blanks were collected from 1,137 households participating in this investigation. ''Blanks No. 1 and 2 [served] the purpose of a permanent record by which to measure the progress of each city community from year to year [and] Blank No. 3, called the Family Budget blank, provide[ed] for a more intimate inquiry into the conditions of life existing in a particular community'' (Du Bois 1899: 9). The data obtained via Blank No. 1 included the general condition of home life, size of the home, sanitary conditions inside the home and the amount of sickness inside the home. Data collected from Blank No. 2 focused on the economic condition of the family, occupations of working family members and the amount of income earned by each family member. Data collected from Blank No. 3 focused on the expenditures of each family for food, rent, alcohol, and extravagance. Atlanta University officials concluded that the expenditures resulting from Blank No. 3 caused the negative conditions experienced in Blanks No. 1 and 2. Although they hypothesized that the conditions experienced in Blanks No. 1 and 2 resulted from the practices identified in Blank No. 3, Atlanta University officials ardently asserted they were not attempting to develop a generalizable theory on the condition of Southern blacks living in cities based on their, admittedly, limited data. In fact, George Bradford stated, ''We are not attempting to prove or disprove any theory, but we are trying to get at the most

[2]See Wright (2002b) for a detailed discussion of the use of citizen researchers for the Atlanta University studies.

unfavorable conditions affecting our communities, in order that we may improve those conditions'' (10). The blanks were combined with census data to provide the foundation for the resolutions offered by the executive committee of this conference.

The first resolution asserted that the high death rate among blacks was not mainly due to environmental factors. This conclusion was based on health board reports and census data that revealed ''the rate [of death for Blacks had] decreased [over the past fifteen years] . . . in the face of hard, exacting and oppressive social and economic conditions'' (Du Bois 1899: 18). Officials argued that if environmental factors were the main cause of the high death rate for blacks then the number of deaths would have increased over the previous 15 years instead of decreasing. In fact, Atlanta University officials suggested ''The history of weak and inferior races shows that they begin to decrease in number after one generation's contact with Anglo-Saxon civilization . . . We do not witness this decay and decrease in numbers in the colored race anywhere in the Western Hemisphere'' (18). Thus, Atlanta University officials were left to ponder, ''When all of the facts in the colored man's case are taken into consideration, the wonder is, not that the death-rate is as high as it is, but that it is not even higher'' (18).

The second resolution proposed that the high rate of death among Blacks living in cities was due mostly to their 'ignorance or disregard of the laws of health and morality.' Eugene Harris stated:

> In public conveniences the Negro must take separate
> apartments; but the air in them is just as invigorating,
> the water is just as healthful and pure, and the food
> is just as nourishing as in the apartments for the [W]hites.
> Regular bathing will throw off dead matter through the
> skin, and control of the appetites will contribute largely
> to health in Negro quarters as well as anywhere else. (Du Bois 1899: 20)

Reports from the inaugural Atlanta University conference supported this resolution by providing descriptive accounts of how some blacks ''drive or walk all day in the rain or snow, come home and go to bed with his wet cloths on, with the belief firmly fixed in his mind that unless he lets these clothes dry on him he will contract a cold, and no argument we might use will convince him otherwise'' (Chase 1896: 16).

The third resolution suggested that the high death rate and increase in immorality among blacks was caused largely by the neglect of the home by both parents, especially mothers who worked outside of the home to supplement their family's income. This proposition was the continuation of an argument made at the first Atlanta University conference:

> It may be that the work of the mother of the family
> requires that she be away from home all day. Leaving
> at six a.m., without giving any care to the house or children,
> she returns at eight o'clock at night. The children are asleep,
> in the street, or at some neighbor's, where they have been
> all day. The tired mother, after a few words, goes to bed.
> She awakes next day only to carry out the same program. (Chase 1896: 19)

The fourth resolution suggested that the inability of black men to adequately support their families harmed the race socially, physically, and economically. This resolution, unlike the

previous ones, was not grounded in any tangible data. Nevertheless, similar to the proposal that the high rate of death among blacks was not caused by ones environment, Eugene Harris asserted, ''There is no [B]lack law upon our statute books regulating [the] private habits [of Black males], or imposing upon him unsanitary surroundings, or restricting him to deleterious occupations, or forcing him to immoderate indulgences'' (Chase 1896: 20). Harris and the executive committee suggested here that individual, not societal, factors contributed to the social, physical and economic well-being, or lack thereof, of the black family. It is clear here, as in several instances above, that the executive committee placed a premium on individual responsibility. However, an argument can be made that the board's emphasis on personal responsibility, void a full analysis of the impact of structural influences on blacks, distorted the true social condition of blacks in the American South.

As the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory's nearly 30-year research program was nearing its end, Howard Odum's North Carolina research program was in its infancy. Within a matter of years Odum would write one of the earliest texts examining the history of the discipline and he would place Du Bois's Atlanta contributions squarely and singularly within the realm of *race studies*.

. . . Between Friends?

The primary argument in this paper is that W. E. B. Du Bois spearheaded an institutionalized program of Southern sociological study of blacks in America that represents the first institutionalized, systematic, and academic efforts in the area of study now called sociology of the South. While this position is easily supported by comparative historical artifacts, what is not so easy to ascertain are the causes of this school's sociological negation. The existing literature includes only one article offering an explanation for the sociological negation of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory. I (2002b) conclude that the school's sociological negation is caused by misnomers minimizing its accomplishments and significance, including the idea that the school's monographs and books wallowed in academic obscurity; that the school employed unsophisticated and low quality methods of research; that the school omitted theory from its analyses; and that the school produced ungeneralizable findings. I ultimately contend that the most significant cause of the school's sociological negation is racism. This investigation extends my effort by examining in greater detail whether or not the accomplishments of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory are not recognized in the existing sociology of the South literature because of 'academic obscurity.' More specifically, the question guiding this section is, ''Was Howard W. Odum aware of the sociological activity of W. E. B. Du Bois and the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory?'' If yes, then an attempt to explain the lack of recognition of the schools sociology of the South activities is presented. Before these questions are addressed an insightful and brief review of my notion of academic obscurity is offered.

I define academic obscurity as the idea that the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory's research accomplishments and activities were unknown to the mainstream academic community because of a lack of promotion and/or dissemination. It is possible that one can construct an argument on the invisibility of this school around the idea that its research activities were simply unknown to mainstream white sociologists during this period of seemingly impenetrable segregation and intense racial intolerance, and their omission was one of ignorance, not calculation. However,

this argument is difficult to accept after reviewing the records of the Atlanta University studies which indicate that research reports were requested from, and mailed to, graduate students at institutions including, but not limited to, Columbia University, Harvard University, University of Chicago and University of Texas between 1896 and 1917. Additionally, reports were sent to professors and teachers at institutions including, but not limited to, Colorado State University, Mercer University and Trinity Park High School in North Carolina during the same period (Du Bois 1899). If these persons were aware of the research activities of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory, would it not be prudent to suggest that the Southern-based and grounded research program led by Du Bois at Atlanta University for more than a decade was known at the University of North Carolina as well? Personal correspondences between Du Bois and Odum and the review of an Odum book on the development of sociology in America aid in answering this question.

In a letter dated November 3, 1924, Guy B. Johnson informed Du Bois that he and University of North Carolina colleague (and proposed book co-author) Howard W. Odum, were planning a ''long time study of the Negro which, when completed, will comprise three or four volumes'' (W.E.B. Du Bois Papers 1979, Reel 50, Frame 367). Johnson asked Du Bois to forward the names and contact information of 10 persons familiar with 'Negro community life' whom could be queried for detailed information. The letter ended with Johnson welcoming ''any criticism or suggestion that you wish to offer. In fact, we would appreciate your saying exactly what you think about this study'' (W.E.B. Du Bois Papers 1979, Reel 50, Frame 367). It is interesting to note that Du Bois's short letter of reply included the names of knowledgeable persons including E. Franklin Frazier, Alain Locke and Julia Childs Curtis, but did not include suggestions for improving the manuscript. Du Bois simply stated, ''Of course, 'community' is rather an indefinite term and I am not sure that I know just what you include. I shall be glad to be of service in any way that I can'' (W.E.B. Du Bois Papers 1979, Reel 50, Frame 367). This correspondence between Du Bois and Johnson prompts two questions.

First, why did Johnson and Odum seek out Du Bois's assistance in this project? The easiest and most obvious answer to this question is that by 1924 Du Bois was the leading race scholar in the nation as he had produced, now, classic works including *The Philadelphia Negro* (1896), *Souls of Black Folk* (1903), *The Negro* (1915) and *Darkwater* (1920). Additionally, by 1924 the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory had produced 20 monographs on the condition of blacks in America which were published between 1896 and 1917. If one is to believe Du Bois's opinion on the importance of the Atlanta University studies, then Johnson and Odum's request for assistance is sensible. Du Bois wrote (1968):

> It must be remembered that the significance of these studies lay not so much in what they were able to actually accomplish, as in the fact that at the time of their publication Atlanta University was the only institution in the world carrying on a systematic study of the Negro and his development, and putting the result in a form available for the scholars of the world. (219)

Second, why did Du Bois not provide Johnson and Odum substantive criticism or suggestions for their project? While a definitive answer to this question cannot be provided, it is proposed here that Du Bois possibly believed the North Carolina scholars should simply review the Atlanta University studies from 1897 to 1917 to uncover the desired information for their

proposed book, titled *Race Progress: A Graphical and Statistical Study of the Progress of the Negro in the Last Fifty Years*. If they had reviewed the Atlanta University studies, and there is no evidence to suggest they did not, they would have found that not only did Du Bois and other Atlanta University researchers build a solid foundation of research on blacks covering the 50-year period identified in their proposal. They would have also found that the majority of their proposed chapter titles mirror those of the Atlanta University Studies, some verbatim. Specifically, 13 of the chapter titles proposed by Johnson and Odum mirror those of the Atlanta University studies and another five chapter titles mirror substantive topical material covered in other studies. Consequently, it is quite possible that Du Bois, instead of highlighting his accomplishments at Atlanta University from nearly 10 years prior, simply assumed that his work had been reviewed by his peers and that he successfully satisfied their request by forwarding the names of potential research resources. While this exchange does not suggest that Johnson and Odum knew of Du Bois's Atlanta University studies or that a direct relationship between Du Bois and Odum existed, correspondence nearly 20 years later between the sociology giants does.

In a letter dated May 20, 1942, Howard W. Odum asked Du Bois to review an article titled, ''A Sociological Approach to the Study and Practice of American Regionalism.'' Odum wrote:

> I am sending copies around to several of my friends and especially to some of the younger sociologists to ask whether they consider this realistic sociology. I have the impression that in the past most of my sociological friends have thought that regionalism was getting out of the field of sociology into the borderline of public administration, political science, and geography. It is my own conviction, however, that in our search for something to make sociology more realistic and rigorously scientific, enabling us to make systematizations and real theory from empirical studies, regionalism offers first-rate area and tools. (W.E.B. Du Bois Papers 1979, Reel 54, Frame 53)

Odum concluded the letter by asking Du Bois to respond to three questions. First, ''Is it sociology; [Second], What [are your] special criticisms of definitions, premises, assumptions, [and] postulates [and last]; In particular, I would appreciate your giving close scrutiny to the problem of delineation of regions, districts, states, subregions, etc.'' (W.E.B. Du Bois Papers 1979, Reel 54, Frame 53).

Although Odum posed three specific questions, Du Bois's single-spaced, roughly one-page response only briefly addressed his request. In a letter dated June 25, 1942, Du Bois suggested to Odum that he tweak his regionalism concept to include substantive topics focusing on issues of difference and race. Du Bois wrote:

> What I have in mind is that your regional interpretation of human action must be modified in some cases but especially calling attention to so powerful a force as cultural antagonism, cultural lag and group segregation. (W.E.B. Du Bois Papers 1979, Reel 54, Frame 54)

Du Bois then discussed his plan to revive the Atlanta University studies and requested Odum's participation and insight into a proposed second era of Atlanta University studies. While it is fascinating to peer into the private conversation of two of the founding giants of American

sociology, what is germane to this inquiry is evidence ascertaining whether Odum was aware of Du Bois's work at Atlanta University and the extent of their professional/personal relationship.

Evidence of a professional, and possibly personal, relationship is gleamed from the first line of both Odum's and Du Bois' letters. Odum indicated in his letter that he is seeking the counsel of 'friends and younger sociologists.' By the time Du Bois received Odum's letter he was 74 years of age, hardly a young sociologist. One can argue that Odum had some knowledge of Du Bois's sociological accomplishments and considered him, if not a personal friend, a professional colleague whose credentials in this topical area merited his counsel. Similarly, evidence of a relationship is found in Du Bois's response when he wrote, ''I have your letter of May twentieth and it reminds me that I have been going to write you for sometime'' (W.E.B. Du Bois Papers 1979, Reel 54, Frame 54). One can infer from this pronouncement that if, as he wrote, Du Bois had been planning on communicating with him, then some type of relationship existed, whether professional, personal, or both. Although Du Bois did not divulge any information on the extent of the relationship, he did intimate that Odum should be aware of the Atlanta University studies conducted nearly 50 years prior when he wrote, ''You, of course, remember our old studies of the Negro problems'' (W.E.B. Du Bois Papers 1979, Reel 54, Frame 54). Again, while one cannot make a definitive determination on the extent of their relationship, whether professional, personal, or both, it is proposed here that Du Bois believed, at a minimum, that Odum should have been knowledgeable of his accomplishments since Atlanta University provided the first systematic study of the Negro in America, and subsequent scholars researching that topic should use his data as the starting point in their analyses of the historical condition of blacks in America. These correspondences support the idea that Du Bois and Odum maintained, at a minimum, a professional relationship. However, they provide no definitive clarity in ascertaining whether or not Odum was knowledgeable of the Atlanta University studies. Greater insight into this question is provided in a seminal essay on the sociological negation of Du Bois, ''W. E. B. Du Bois: A Case in the Sociology of Sociological Negation,'' by Dan S. Green and Edwin D. Driver.

Green and Driver outline Du Bois' major sociological accomplishments, argue for his canonized status and offer explanations for his lack of canonization by past and contemporary sociologists. In their review of the existing literature on the history of sociology in the United States, they find only one white sociologist who, at least publicly, afforded Du Bois his proper status within the discipline. According to Green and Driver (1976), ''Only Howard Odum in his chronicle of United States sociology from its beginnings to 1950 clearly treats Du Bois as an important 'being' in the sociological enterprise'' (321). Green and Driver, continuing their review of Odum's 1951 book, *American Sociology: The Story of the United States through 1950*, wrote:

> Odum says that Du Bois deserves a special place for his contributions to 'realistic sociology' and 'practical sociology' and for his role in advancing sociology as a university discipline . . . Odum's most significant tributes are his acknowledging that Du Bois 'was among the earliest to apply sociology to empirical enquiries, producing more than a dozen titles,' and that 'few have contributed to more widely read sociological literature.' (Green and Driver 1976: 321)

It is interesting to note here that Odum proposed that Du Bois's heightened status in the discipline should be based on his more than 12 empirical studies. Without question, the empirical studies to which Odum was referring were the Atlanta University studies that Du Bois edited

or co-edited between 1897 and 1914. Odum (1951) elucidated this point when he indicated that these accomplishments were the result of Du Bois serving ''as originator and editor of the pioneering *Atlanta Sociological Studies* from 1897 to 1910'' (378). While the earlier correspondences between Du Bois and Odum suggested a relationship between the two early sociologists, Odum's book provided a definitive answer to the guiding question of this section. Yes, Howard W. Odum was knowledgeable of the sociological activity of W. E. B. Du Bois and the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory. Since Odum and presumably most white sociologists were aware of the activity of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory, why have the school's sociological accomplishments not been canonized in substantive topical areas including, but not limited to, sociology of the South, but rather restricted primarily to race? This question is addressed using the theoretical perspective sociology of knowledge as a guide.

The Sociology of (Race) Knowledge

The sociological negation of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory is framed here through Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge perspective. The sociology of knowledge frame is useful because it, ''does not refer only to specific assertions which may be regarded as concealment, falsifications, or lies,'' (Mannheim 1968: 238) but ''examines [these issues] on structural, [cultural, and/or ideological] level[s], which it views as not being the same for all men, but rather as allowing the same subject to take on different forms and aspects in the course of social development'' (238). The use of this frame to understand the sociological negation of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory is not new. I (2002b), in an article explaining the causes of the sociological negation of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory, argued that the:

> Utilization of this perspective enables the author to maneuver through disagreements that may arise over minute social facts in favor of scientific analyses of social structures that could lead critics of Atlanta University to analyze the contributions of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory in their own, possibly biased, manner. Thus, the sociology of knowledge perspective, although making allowances for the discussion of various debatable social facts, provides a foundation upon which one can understand how data may be viewed differently in light of one's specific social location (i.e., race, class, gender, sexual preference)'' (337).

This inquiry departs from my offering through a more detailed analysis of institutional racism as the principal cause of the sociological negation of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory.

It is suggested here that the sociological negation of the accomplishments of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory by some early white sociologists may not have been overt acts of individual racism, which argued here combine discrimination and prejudice. Instead, it is proposed that the existing folkways, mores and cultural practices in America, supported by 'scientific' data, reinforced the belief that blacks were innately inferior to whites and that any suggestion that a black scholar could produce works comparable, if not superior, to that of a white scholar was anathema. In other words, institutional discrimination was the foundation for Du Bois' marginalization (Carmichael and Hamilton 1967). The distinction between 'race as a factor' and 'racism as an act' is important as the latter should be evidence-based in the suggestion that,

in this case for example, a sociologist knowingly minimized the accomplishments of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory because they desired that schools work to not surpass that of a white sociologist. 'Race as a factor' as an explanation of the sociological negation of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory suggests that societal norms, folkways and mores, void clear evidence of a person's intent, caused its exclusion. It should be stated clearly and explicitly that, without question, individual racism may have been a cause of the sociological negation of the works of Black sociologists including Du Bois and the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory. However, unless and until data proving racist intent are presented, 'race as a factor' (or institutional racism) is the explanation of choice used here to explain the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory's sociological negation as opposed to the blanket label of racism. Use of this frame prevents the unnecessary and untidy umbrella accusatory position directed at all white sociologists of that era, but allows for an explanation that factors in the societal norms as they existed and were applied to blacks. An example of this idea is found in a 1960 interview of W. E. B. Du Bois.

In this interview he provided a first-hand example of the impact of race as a factor on a colleague who, at least from one's reading of the passage, Du Bois did not consider a racist, but one who was simply constrained by the folkways of the era in which he lived. Providing insight into the racial climate that often created cavernous separation between colleagues in the South differenced by nothing more than race, Du Bois said:

> We had absolutely no social contact with white Atlanta. Once in a while a white person would call on me—I remember one professor of sociology from Mississippi, who slipped up on the campus at dusk and came to my office. He said, 'You're the first person I've visited in Atlanta, and I wouldn't want people to know it.' He didn't dare come up to call on me in broad daylight.
> (W.E.B. Du Bois Papers 1979, Reel 84, Frame 163)

The interviewer then asked Du Bois how such a frank statement by his colleague made him feel.

> I had no simple response. I mean, the way he said it, you knew he was perfectly honest. Here was a situation which I understood as well as he did: a professor from a white Mississippi college couldn't come and visit as a social equal with a Negro professor. He simply couldn't do it. I knew it as well as he did, of course. Of course, on the other hand he knew perfectly well that I wasn't going to call on him no matter where he was; that the next time we meet, on the street or anything of that sort, I was going to fail to see him. I always had difficulties of that sort. (W.E.B. Du Bois Papers 1979, Reel 84, Frame 163–164)

Du Bois provided a vivid description of the restraints experienced by professional sociologists during his first tenure at Atlanta University (1896 – 1910) and the difficulty that colleagues in the South had simply trying to meet as human equals, let alone professional equals. It is argued here that this type of suffocating racial climate, reinforced through segregation, science and the law, may have resulted in some white sociologists simply 'not seeing' their dark skinned peers as able to contribute to the discipline in manners as substantive as whites, if at all. However, when recognition was offered to blacks in the discipline it was principally through

a racialized lens. Although Green and Driver laud Odum for being one of the few white sociologists to provide early accolades to Du Bois for his works at Atlanta University, his accomplishments were principally relegated to 'race work.' Green and Driver (1976) wrote:

> [W]hile Odum's tribute is indeed a rare one, he fails to fully develop an appreciation of Du Bois's sociological contributions. By placing all of Du Bois's publications under the title, 'race/ethnic/groups/folk,' and only under this title, Odum fails to communicate to the reader the relationship of Du Bois's publications to the specialties of research methods, social problems, the community, the family, and population and ecology—each being a separate chapter in Odum's book. (321)

Green and Driver continued their critique by arguing that:

> If, for example, Odum had placed Du Bois's *Mortality Among Negroes in Cities* (1896) under population as well as race/ethnic titles, just as he did Woofter's *Negro Migration* (1920), then Du Bois's contribution to population would be seen as antedating by 19 years Thompson's *Population* (1915)—the first book in Odum's listing—and as antedating by 24 years Woofter's book—the second book in Odum's listing. (321–322)

A similar argument for Du Bois and the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory as being the first to perform specific sociological studies per Odum's list can be made for *The Philadelphia Negro* (1897) in community studies and urban studies and *The Negro Artisan* (1902) in industrial sociology. Additional publications meriting high listings would be *Some Notes on Negro Crime Particularly in Georgia* (1904) in specialized volumes on criminology (number two), *The Negro American Family* (1908) in marriage and the family (number three), and *Social and Physical Condition of Negroes in Cities* (1897) in applied and practical sociology (no order listing in this topical area). It is not suggested here that racism caused Odum to minimize the works of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory by confining its relevance to the sociological ghetto of race and ethnic studies. It is suggested that the cultural milieu of the era, 'race as a factor' or institutional racism, prevented some scholars, such as Odum, from viewing the works of blacks beyond the lens of race and, accordingly, limiting their potential readership, impact within the discipline and later canonization.

Conclusion

The objectives of this inquiry were to prove that the first institutionalized research program in the South was established at Atlanta University prior to Howard Odum's North Carolina efforts and to explain his marginalization of Du Bois's scholarship in his book on the history of the discipline. Both objectives were successfully accomplished as the 1897 Atlanta University Study provided evidence of an institutionalized program of sociology of the South studies predating that of Odum. Additionally, evidence was uncovered indicating that not only was Odum aware of the Atlanta University studies, he praised Du Bois's efforts at the school. Despite Odum's praise, the sociological contributions of Du Bois and the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory were, and remain largely, confined to the topical area of 'race studies' and not expanded to additional

appropriate areas. Given the findings presented herein, it is recommended that recognition for the academic establishment of the topical area known as sociology of the South should rest not upon the mantle of Howard W. Odum, but upon that of W. E. B. Du Bois and the men and women of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory. Beginning in 1895, Atlanta University initiated a nearly 30-year program of research into the social, economic, and physical condition of American blacks. Since the overwhelming majority of blacks were located in the American South and a major focus of many Atlanta University studies was their social, economic, and physical condition within the context of Southern life, the Atlanta University studies should, at a minimum, be recognized in the existing literature as an early contributor to this field. This idea is not only promoted by this author, but is supported by a contemporary of Odum. Discussing Du Bois's impact on the discipline in a 1937 article, Odum's University of North Carolina colleague Guy B. Johnson said, ''In 1896 [Du Bois] went to Atlanta to teach in Atlanta University. There he undertook what was perhaps the first real sociological research in the South'' (Johnson 1937: 65). Ultimately, while Odum provided a vocabulary and intellectual/scholarly framework for regionalism and sociology of the South, without question Du Bois and the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory were its first academic practitioners.

AUTHOR NOTE

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