



W. E. B. Du Bois at the center: from science, civil rights movement, to Black Lives Matter

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Abstract

I am honoured to present the 2016 *British Journal of Sociology* Annual Lecture at the London School of Economics. My lecture is based on ideas derived from my new book, *The Scholar Denied: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Birth of Modern Sociology*.

In this essay I make three arguments. First, W.E.B. Du Bois and his Atlanta School of Sociology pioneered scientific sociology in the United States. Second, Du Bois pioneered a public sociology that creatively combined sociology and activism. Finally, Du Bois pioneered a politically engaged social science relevant for contemporary political struggles including the contemporary Black Lives Matter movement.

Keywords: W. E. B. Du Bois; Atlanta School; scientific sociology; sociological theory; sociological discrimination and marginalization

Innovative science of society

There is an intriguing, well-kept secret, regarding the founding of scientific sociology in America. The first school of American scientific sociology was founded by a black professor located in a small, economically poor, racially segregated black university. At the dawn of the twentieth century – from 1898 to 1910 – the black sociologist, and activist, W.E.B. Du Bois, developed the first scientific school of sociology at a historic black school, Atlanta University.

It is a monumental claim to argue Du Bois developed the first scientific school of sociology in America. Indeed, my purpose in writing *The Scholar Denied* was to shift our understanding of the founding, over a hundred years ago, of one of the social sciences in America. Extant origin stories (Bernard and Bernard 1943; Turner and Turner 1990; Madge 1962) of sociology only embrace white male

scholars, at prestigious white universities, as the exclusive architects of American scientific sociology. In this approach, black social scientists, and black universities, are not even identified as marginal contributors to the development of scientific sociology. Yet, as I will demonstrate, these narratives are inaccurate because they fail to acknowledge, even mention to this day, the foundational role Du Bois' Atlanta School played in pioneering scientific sociology.

Yet, in *The Scholar Denied*, I argue that if Du Bois' innovative ideas and methodologies had been placed at the centre of the founding intellectual frameworks of sociology a century ago, they would have provided powerful theoretical and methodological directions for this new social science. In this sense, the denial of Du Bois' scholarship impoverished sociology from its very beginnings. Thus, *The Scholar Denied* aims to shift our understandings of a slice of American social history. In so doing, my aim is to challenge existing paradigms, disrupt dominant narratives and illuminate new truths.

Today, we take the social sciences for granted as long-standing fields of inquiry. But in historical time, they are recent. They arose in the last decades of the 1800s. The first department of sociology was founded at the University of Chicago in 1892. Three years later, Chicago sociologists founded the *American Journal of Sociology*, the first national journal in the field. In 1905, the first national association of sociology – the American Sociological Society – was organized. American sociology, therefore, is a product of the late nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century.

However, when early American sociology is carefully examined, it becomes clear that it was not very scientific. The first generation of American sociologists collected little empirical data to support their sociological treatises (Small 1916). When we think of sociology today, we have in mind studies where surveys are administered; interviews conducted; fieldwork undertaken; and quantitative and qualitative data are utilized to document and interpret the human condition. The purpose of these empirical methodologies is to provide evidence enabling sociologists to test hypotheses and seek valid scientific conclusions. Thus, contemporary sociologists cannot simply say 'my studies are valid because we have doctorates from an elite institution or that my opinions are accurate because they are based on my deep thoughts'. In contemporary sociology, scholars are expected to test theories with empirical data and make that data available so other scholars can reach independent judgements regarding the scientific validity of claims being advanced.

Yet, this empirically based approach was rare in early American sociology. Most sociology of that period was essentially social philosophy rather than sociological science because it relied on 'armchair theorizing' or what Du Bois referred to as 'car window' sociology signifying that it was based on casual observations one made while gazing from the window of a fast moving car (Du Bois 1903). 'Car window sociology' was not rigorous science because it was based on hunches, rumours, travelogues and loosely formed opinions.

Early American sociology had another enduring feature: it was racist. When sociology began taking shape at the turn of the twentieth century, American racism was at its zenith. Jim Crow racism had replaced the more liberal racism of the Reconstruction period. The Jim Crow era ushered in sharecropping and a peonage system of debt that replaced slave labour. Lynching where blacks were hung from trees were commonplace leading the great jazz artist, Billie Holiday, to sing sadly, 'Southern trees bear a strange fruit, Blood on the leaves and blood at the root, black bodies swinging in the southern breeze, Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.' Following Reconstruction, blacks were stripped of the vote, exploited economically, and treated as subhuman with no rights whites were bound to respect. As during American slavery, these post-Reconstruction conditions caused the ex-slave to sing, 'Nobody knows the trouble I have seen.'

This pernicious racism presented America with fundamental challenges: how could a self-anointed democracy declaring 'Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,' justify the oppression of millions of black folk? How could America justify to itself, and the world, that racial oppression and democracy were congruent? White America addressed this paradox by transferring the ideology of white supremacy manufactured during slavery to the Jim Crow regime. That ideology maintained blacks were an inferior race more akin to chimpanzees than human beings. It insisted that blacks were sub-humans infested with inferior DNA and a defective culture. Blacks were framed as prisoners of racial inferiority who languished at the bottom of society and were forever to remain there because God planned it that way.

Rooted in ideas made popular during the enlightenment, early twentieth-century science was gaining momentum as the superior mode of reasoning. But this science prompted a thorny question: namely, was it possible that a rigorous science of race would produce evidence discrediting the ideology of black inferiority? In other words, was the theory of white supremacy consistent with scientific facts? However, this clash between ideology and science did not materialize.

White scholars throughout academia from the sciences to the humanities, biology to literature, and history to sociology reached a solid consensus claiming that science did indeed prove that blacks were inferior. Thus, in the early twentieth century, white science and white supremacist ideology walked hand-in-hand, justifying racial oppression (McKee 1993). Nevertheless, a sure-footed challenge to this racist science was soon to be launched.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, W.E.B. Du Bois had become a confident, brilliant, young black man convinced of his own genius (Lewis 1993). Du Bois was also convinced that God had not made black people inferior. In an age during which whites viewed blacks as inferior, Du Bois' own achievements were jarringly inconsistent with the myth of black inferiority. At age 20,

Du Bois earned the bachelor degree from Fisk University; by age 22 he earned a second bachelor's from Harvard University; at age 23 he earned a master's degree from Harvard; by the age of 25 Du Bois completed two years of advanced graduate studies at the University of Berlin; and at the age of 27, Du Bois became the first African American to earn a PhD from Harvard University. His doctoral dissertation, 'The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America', became the first volume published in Harvard's Historical Studies series of 1896 (Du Bois 1896).

Thus, Du Bois was one of the most educated persons in the world during the time blacks were seen as inferior. Indeed, his genius, advanced education and supreme self-confidence prepared him to become a leading scholar who would launch an intellectual attack to overturn the ideology that God made black people inferior. That ideology, reasoned Du Bois, had to be overturned if blacks were to break free of racial oppression. But Du Bois faced a great intellectual challenge: how was he to engineer the overthrow of scientific racism?

Du Bois' scholarly preparations provided him an unshakeable foundation to launch the attack. Through his studies of historical and sociological scholarship, Du Bois uncovered profound intellectual weaknesses of the social sciences. He knew that sociological knowledge of the period was based on racial biases deeply rooted in the souls of white scholars. Du Bois, insisting on a critical social science wrote, 'Most unfortunate . . . is the fact that so much of the work done on the Negro question is notoriously uncritical; uncritical from lack of discrimination in the selection and weighing of evidence; uncritical in choosing the proper point of view from which to study these problems, and finally, uncritical from the distinct bias in the minds of so many writers' (Du Bois 1898). Du Bois recognized that this biased scholarship went unchallenged by white scholars because it was consistent with white supremacy supported by white elites. He knew that the existing science of race was not based on empirical facts but on speculation and conjecture. Du Bois was also aware that sociological theories of race emerged full-blown from the minds of white scholars who never exited their offices or libraries to conduct research (Du Bois 1904).

Thus, Du Bois' daunting challenge was to develop a new scientific sociology that uncovered the actual causes of racial oppression. In retrospect, Du Bois' desire to build a new sociology was ambitious. Throughout history few scholars develop new scientific paradigms. Yet, this black scholar trapped within the confines of intense racism, set out to discredit racist discourse masquerading as science. Du Bois' mission was clear: he aimed to interject science into sociology by conducting concrete studies among actual people – his people – a people who lived and died behind the veil of racism.

Initially Du Bois surmised that whites oppressed blacks because they were victims of ignorance who actually believed in the myth of white superiority. Du Bois argued that a scientific sociology would demonstrate that racial prejudice and discrimination caused the problem rather than 'black DNA'. He declared:

‘The world was thinking wrong about race, because it did not know. The ultimate evil was stupidity’ (Du Bois 1940). Du Bois believed a scientific sociology could liberate whites from their racist thinking and empower blacks because, ‘the problem was in my mind a matter of systematic investigation and intelligent understanding’. Thus, Du Bois pledged to make the world think right about race by developing a scientific-based social science. In so doing, he parted company with his white sociological peers who produced a non-scientific sociology.

Du Bois was aware of the scientific errors committed by white social scientists. First, their reasoning was not informed by history; second, they did not make use of quantitative data to carefully measure social phenomena; third, they failed to know populations intimately through situating themselves among real people where they could observe their daily lives; third, they failed to interview people to learn of their realities; fourth, they did not conduct empirical studies on the populations they analysed; and fifth, and worst of all: they substituted racist beliefs for sociological truths. For Du Bois, this brand of pseudo-knowledge did not deserve the name ‘science’.

In sharp contrast, Du Bois’ sociology embraced the scientific method. Having earned his doctorate from Harvard in history, Du Bois always anchored his sociology in history, reasoning that you could not understand people if you did not situate them within the appropriate historical context. At the University of Berlin, Du Bois mastered quantitative research and ethnographic methods by conducting empirical research based in fieldwork. After completing his training in Germany, Du Bois ‘dropped back into Nigger hating America’ to conduct empirical studies of African Americans that boldly confronted scientific racism (Morris 2015).

Through his scientific approach, Du Bois challenged ‘car window’ sociology. For example, he scolded the prominent Cornell University economist, Walter Wilcox, informing him: ‘the fundamental difficulty in your position is that you are trying to show an evaluation of the Negro problem – only from inside your office. It can never be done. If you must go on writing on this problem why not study it. Not from a car-window . . . but get down here and really study it at first hand’ (Du Bois 1904). In contrast, Du Bois often resided in communities he studied and interviewed and surveyed thousands of people. Explaining his school of sociology, Du Bois declared ‘we study what others discuss’. As a result of conducting numerous empirical studies, Du Bois invented a new scientific sociology of African Americans and race inequality. That new sociology introduced a number of innovations.

General theory

Du Bois theorized that modernity was a product of the African slave trade and centuries of slavery because they made available an exploitable labour force

and crucial commodities – cotton, tobacco, gold, sugar – that Western bourgeoisies utilized to develop modern capitalism. Thus, race stratification was an important determinant in the development of capitalism as were class and status stratifications (Morris 2008).

Du Bois theorized the color line – that is, a durable global structure of white supremacy undergirded by similar economic, political and ideological forces worldwide – arguing that it produced race stratification that would shape the social world of the twentieth century. Races, in this view, were sociological creations and not biological entities. The color line, Du Bois famously predicted, was ‘The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line – the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea’ (Du Bois 1903). This brand of theorizing inspired later predictions including Stuart Hall’s observation ‘the capacity to live with difference is the coming question of the 21st century’ (Hall 1993). Moreover, as Julian Go (2016a) has pointed out, Du Bois was one of the first social scientists to analyse colonialism and how it was constitutive in the formation of Western empires.

Du Bois (1920) makes clear that the exploitation of darker people in colonies was crucial to the ‘take-off’ industrial development in the white West:

The day of the very rich is drawing to a close, so far as individual white nations are concerned. But there is a loophole. There is a chance for exploitation on an immense scale for inordinate profit, not simply to the very rich, but to the middle class and to the laborers. This chance lies in the exploitation of darker peoples. It is here that the golden hand beckons. Here are no labor unions or votes or questioning onlookers or inconvenient consciences. These men may be used down to the very bone, and shot and maimed in ‘punitive’ expeditions when they revolt. In these dark lands ‘industrial development’ may repeat in exaggerated form every horror of the industrial history of Europe, from slavery and rape to disease and maiming, with only one test of success, – dividends!

In his analysis of European colonies, Du Bois (1920) linked race, violence and capitalism. He argued that:

Colonies, we call them, these places where ‘niggers’ are cheap and the earth is rich; they are those outlands where like a swarm of hungry locusts white masters may settle to be served as kings, wield the lash of slave-drivers, rape girls and wives, grow as rich as Croesus and send homeward a golden stream. They belt the earth, these places, but they cluster in the tropics, with its darkened peoples: in Hong Kong and Anam, in Borneo and Rhodesia, in Sierra Leone and Nigeria, in Panama and Havana – these are the El Dorados toward which the world powers stretch itching palms.

As a theorist, Du Bois shed illuminating and distinct analytic light on the social processes shaping the development of capitalism and modernity writ large.

Like George H. Mead (1934) and Charles Cooley (1902), Du Bois developed a theory of the self. Du Bois' concept of 'double consciousness' theorized that the self was a social product arising from social interaction and communication. However, Du Bois' conceptualization was theoretically advanced because he demonstrated that in addition to influences of social interactions and symbolic communication, self-formation was also shaped by race and power relations (Itzigsohn and Brown 2015).

Du Bois theorized that interactions among class, race and gender had to be explicated to explain social inequality (Morris 2007). Thus, this theoretical emphasis anticipated the intersectionality paradigm and critical race theory (Morris 2015).

Finally, Du Bois' theorizing was based in an original standpoint theory which privileged analysis from the standpoint of the marginalized and the oppressed (Wright 2002). His analysis of racial inequality stemmed from a fundamental question regarding black people: How does it feel to be a problem? (Du Bois 1903; Go 2016a).

Specific innovations regarding the study of African Americans

Du Bois was the first scholar to engage in the critical social scientific study of African Americans. Among his innovations in this field are demonstrations that:

African Americans were the equals of other races because racial oppression, rather than biological traits determined the social location of Blacks at the bottom of the racial hierarchy. (Morris 2015)

'Black crime' is a sociological fallacy because social conditions, and not racial characteristics, produced crime. (Du Bois 1899).

The black community rather than being a homogeneous mass as assumed by most white scholars was actually a heterogeneous community, consisting of social classes and diverse experiences. (ibid.)

The church was the central institution that served as the organizational hub for the black community's social and cultural activities. Because of the cultural and political resources housed in their churches, black people were capable of liberating themselves through their own organization and collective intelligence. Long before the modern civil right movement, Du Bois predicted that a black movement, situated in the mass-based black church, would arise to overthrow racial inequality. Hence, breaking from the accepted wisdom, Du Bois analysed the agency residing in black people through which they could change the course

of their history (ibid.). Therefore, Du Bois became one of the first scholars to develop a ‘sociology of agency of the oppressed’ elucidating the capacities of subjugated peoples to produce social transformations.

The necessity of exploring the subjective worlds of blacks arguing that racial oppression produced within blacks a ‘double consciousness’ that was simultaneously constraining and enabling thus crucial to the prospects of black liberation (Du Bois 1903).

Thus, Du Bois created a new scientific brand of rigorous and emancipatory sociology. Two decades before the Chicago School of Sociology routinely conducted empirical studies Du Bois and his Atlanta School produced numerous empirical studies using multiple methods where he pioneered the technique of data triangulation (Wright 2002). Because these studies were conducted on rural and urban populations, Du Bois pioneered both rural and urban sociology (Morris 2015). While the Chicago School is credited with founding urban sociology in the 1920s, Du Bois’ 1899 *Philadelphia Negro* was a masterpiece of urban sociology steeped in multiple empirical methodologies (Hunter 2013). Moreover, Du Bois was surely among the first social scientists to develop structural analyses of social inequality while white scholars advanced biological and naturalistic explanations. Therefore, Du Bois emerged from his early scientific studies as the first number crunching, surveying, interviewing, participant observing and field working sociologist in America (Morris 2015).

Nevertheless, white sociologists ignored Du Bois’ pioneering scholarship. Indeed, sociologists of the Chicago School of the 1920s, promoted themselves as the founders of empirical sociology and race studies. Because of the marginalization of Du Bois’ scholarship, this myth regarding the origins of American scientific sociology has continued to exist. In contrast, the German sociologist, Max Weber, studied Du Bois’ scholarship and embraced his view that the problem of the twentieth century would be the global color line (Morris 2015). Weber came to share Du Bois’ analysis that modernity sprung from global race oppression as much as from class and status distinctions (Scaff 2011). Weber, therefore, concluded that Du Bois was a scholar with whom no white American scholar could compare.

Du Bois did not create this new scientific sociology alone. Unforgotten scholars and students, heretofore erased from sociological history, were crucial in developing Du Bois’ Atlanta School of Sociology (Morris 2015). Du Bois’ researchers included professional sociologists, undergraduate and graduate students, alumni of Atlanta University and other historically black colleges and universities, and community leaders. By investing in liberation capital and forging insurgent intellectual networks, they conducted fieldwork in numerous communities where they were as likely to collect data on rural cotton pickers as urban city slickers. A few portraits of members of his school help to demonstrate this point. Monroe Work who earned a Master’s degree in sociology from the University of Chicago in 1903 and became the first African American

to publish in *The American Journal of Sociology* in 1900 became a prolific member of Du Bois' research team. He published numerous and important sociological studies. Richard R. Wright, Jr, the first African American to earn a doctorate in sociology at the University of Pennsylvania in 1911, also participated in Du Bois' research projects and published pioneering sociological studies. Edmund Haynes, the first African American to earn a doctorate in sociology at Columbia University in 1912, and was a co-founder of the national Urban League, became a key member of Du Bois' team and published numerous social scientific studies.

Du Bois' genius, therefore, included the ability to collaborate with other talented researchers. Thus, Du Bois assembled a team of scholars, students and community leader who conducted research, presented it at conferences and wrote scholarly papers illuminating the dynamics of racial inequality. It was this cadre of researchers that constituted the Atlanta School of Sociology. Yet, these scholars have been erased from the collective memory of the discipline (Morris 2015).

Science and activism

A month before Martin Luther King, Jr was assassinated, he reflected on the enormous contributions Du Bois made to sociology and the black freedom struggle. In 1968, King stated: 'Long before sociology was a science [Du Bois] was pioneering in the field of social study of Negro life and completed works on health, education, employment, urban conditions, and religion. This was at a time when scientific inquiry of Negro life was so unbelievably neglected that only a single university [Atlanta University] in the entire nation had such a program, and it was funded with \$5,000 for a year's work' (King 1968).

King recognized that the modern civil rights movement inherited gifts bequeathed by Du Bois. While many scholars remain cloistered in the ivory tower fearing that political involvement contaminates scholarship, Du Bois did not share this perspective. For him, the very purpose of science was to produce valid knowledge useful to liberation struggles. Du Bois, together with activists of his day, developed the blueprint that made the modern civil rights movement possible. Du Bois insisted that people of colour engage in ceaseless protests to overthrow white supremacy. As a result, as Du Bois researched, studied and wrote, he marched onto the battlefield, leading important movements for justice. Martin Luther King was aware of his debt to Du Bois: 'History had taught [Du Bois] it is not enough for people to be angry – the supreme task is to organize and unite people so that their anger becomes a transforming force' (King 1968).

King regretted not having time to engage scholarship given the demands he faced as a movement leader. King admired Du Bois' ability to excel at both

scholarship and activism. Du Bois, according to King, ‘soon realized that studies would never adequately be pursued nor changes realized without the mass involvement of Negroes. The scholar then became an organizer. . .’ King listed the numerous national and international liberation movements in which Du Bois was either a founder or participant. King concluded that Du Bois alarmed ‘imperialists in all countries and disconcerting Negro moderates in America who were afraid of this restless, militant, black genius’. Indeed, Du Bois organized movements leading directly to the civil rights movement. Regarding Du Bois, King wrote ‘It was never possible to know where the scholar Du Bois ended and the organizer Du Bois began. The two qualities in him were a single, unified force’ (King 1968). Thus, Du Bois provided a new model for scholars wishing to understand and change the world. He demonstrated it was possible to be a first rank scholar and a prodigious activist. Beginning with Max Weber, sociologists have long argued for a value free scholarship based on the assumption that biased science emerged when scholars failed to separate their scientific work from politics and activism.

Yet, contemporary scholars devoted to the intersectionality paradigm and standpoint theory have persuasively argued that it is impossible to separate science and politics because all scholarship is rooted in the experiences and social location of knowledge producers (Go 2016b; Collins 2000). As a result, there are sociologists calling for a public sociology useful to liberation struggles. Michael Burawoy (2004) has led this call for a public sociology arguing that for sociology to remain relevant, it must return to its radical roots and provide critical analyses that illuminate power and human domination. Indeed, the claim that politically engaged scholarship automatically loses its objectivity should be rejected. In contrast, subaltern sociologies seek to be more rigorous than status quo science precisely because the stakes are so high for a science dedicated to social transformation.

Thus, long before sociologists called for a rigorous public sociology, Du Bois engaged in a public sociology that was both scientific and politically engaged. Du Bois, therefore, a hundred years ago, provided a challenging example of how radical scholars can act as change agents despite the clamouring voices of purists claiming science and protest do not mix.

Du Bois and contemporary social movements

Du Bois’ example is relevant for contemporary movements including the Black Lives Matter movement. Movements are usually propelled by young people, especially students. Indeed, most successful movements utilize young people because of their flexible schedules, energy, idealism and innovative thinking (McAdam 1986). Not surprisingly, young black people played crucial roles in the social justice movement of Du Bois’ day. It is instructive to inquire as to

how Du Bois responded to young black protesters. Did he advise them to follow the ‘politics of respectability’ and protect their prospects of upward mobility? Or, did Du Bois advise students to initiate protest, attacking injustice head-on?

Du Bois’ response to student protests in the 1920s at his alma mater, Fisk University, provides a compelling example of his stance. At the time, Fisk’s white president, Fayette McKenzie, engaged in a racially biased leadership. As a result, the ability of students and faculty to address racism advanced by Fisk’s administration was severely curtailed. Fisk students were forced to follow the dictates of Jim Crow racism. Nevertheless, these students broke rank and rebelled. Du Bois supported the young protesters:

And here again we are always actually or potentially saying hush to children and students, we are putting on the soft peddle, we are teaching them subterfuge and compromise, we are leading them around to back doors for fear that they shall express themselves. And yet whenever and wherever we do this we are wrong, absolutely and eternally wrong. Unless we are willing to train our children to be cowards, to run like dogs when they are kicked, to whine and lick the hand that slaps them, we have got to teach them self-realization and self-expression. (Du Bois 1924)

While other black leaders rebuked student protests because white money flowing into Fisk would dry up, Du Bois thundered: dignity and self-expression were far more precious than baskets full of white dollars.

When Du Bois learned of additional student protests, he embraced the politics of disruption:

Again and for a second time, and with no advice nor instigation from without, the students ‘rioted’ and struck. They pounded ash cans, they sang, they yelled and they broke windows.

I thank God they did. I thank God that the younger generation of black students have the guts to yell and fight when they’re insulted, mocked and oppressed. . . A spontaneous rebellion of young and hurt souls, who refuse to submit to calculated and remorseless tyranny, is a splendid and a heartening thing. (Du Bois 1925)

Du Bois, the Harvard man, renowned author, organizer of African peoples, and the leader of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), stood in solidarity with protesting students yelling and breaking windows. Moreover, Du Bois encouraged radicalism for change because he saw the protesters as, ‘the real radical, the man who hits power in high place while power . . . backed by unlimited wealth hits it and hits it openly and between the eyes: [the black students] talked face to face and not down “at the big gate.” God speed the breed’ (Du Bois, 1925). Du Bois’ support directly influenced the student protests:

On February 4, 1925, more than one hundred male students again ignored curfew and stormed through campus – singing, yelling, smashing windows, overturning chapel seats to the tune of ‘Du Bois! Du Bois!’ and ‘Before I’ll a slave, I’ll be buried in my grave’. (quoted in Rogers 2012: 40)

A result of Du Bois’ support for the students’ protest is that Fisk’s white president was forced to resign enabling racial changes at his alma mater.

Conclusions

The time has arrived for colleges and universities to infuse their curricula (especially in sociology) with Du Boisian scholarship. Given what we have discovered about Du Bois’ scholarship, failure to include his corpus of work in the curricula is to practise academic racism. While *The Scholar Denied* documents how Du Bois and his school were marginalized and erased from the history of sociology, evidence abounds that such erasures are widespread. Deegan (1988) has demonstrated how the pioneering sociology of female sociologists at Hull House have been marginalized by mainstream sociology. Seltzer and Haldar (2015) have also documented the fate of Hull House scholars, including Jane Adams and Florence Kelley, who made pivotal intellectual contributions to modern sociology but were erased from sociology’s collective memory because of sexism. These erasures document the need for critical and reflexive sociologies that are forever diligent, ensuring all sociological contributions are considered rather than merely those of mainstream elite sociologists.

In light of Du Bois’ treatment in the academy, there are a number of questions that should be probed.

1. Are there important voices around the globe that should be incorporated in the academy but excluded because of discrimination and a lack of resources?
2. To what extent are the contemporary social sciences driven by powerful elite interest, causing social scientists not to investigate global inequalities and realities affecting millions of people?
3. Should elite institutions help fund and nurture scholarship at institutions on the periphery of the prestige hierarchy around the globe?
4. What can scholars learn from insurgent schools in the social sciences in other oppressed communities around the world?

Finally, it is time to vanish the myth that American scientific sociology was exclusively pioneered by a group of white male sociologists at the University of Chicago. Instead, the Du Bois-Atlanta School of Sociology should be recognized as a crucial founder and early contributor to modern scientific sociology. As Du Bois scholarship demonstrates, the false dichotomy proclaiming social science and activism to be polar opposites should be rejected. By so doing,

sociology can be re-established as a rigorous field that also excels in scientific scholarship which unleashes social truths empowering the agency of those struggling to liberate humanity. Du Bois' legacy is that of an enduring historical toolkit of scientific and activist ideals fully capable of guiding social science and efforts to free humanity.

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