

W. E. B. Du Bois and the Atlanta University Studies on the Negro, *Revisited*

Earl Wright II

Elliott Rudwick's 1957 examination of the methodology and sociological significance of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory served as the singular treatise on this topic for nearly fifty years. This query departs from Rudwick's publication through its critique of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory beyond a conceptual frame that compares the school's methodological techniques with advancements in the discipline at a later period in time, but, instead, challenges Rudwick's conclusion that the methodology was unsophisticated and of low quality and that the sociological significance was, at best, minimal.

Introduction

The Atlanta Sociological Laboratory is the moniker used to denote the period of organized sociological inquiry in the Sociology Department at Atlanta University between 1895-1924. Recent investigations into the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory suggest that this school made substantial, yet marginalized, contributions to the sociological community in America during the late 1800s and early 1900s (Gabbidon, 2001, 2000, 1999, 1996; Wright, 2005, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c). If one examines the existing literature, excluding the above inquiries, they will find almost no investigations focusing on the sociological existence or contributions of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory. For the better part of the twentieth century, the only scholarly study in the sociological literature explicitly focusing on this school was a 1957 article by Elliott Rudwick. Similar to Rudwick, this investigation focuses on the methodology and sociological significance of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory. This query, however, departs from Rudwick's 1957 publication through its critique of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory beyond a conceptual frame that compares the school's methodological techniques with advancements in the discipline *at a later period in time*, but, instead, challenges Rudwick's conclusion that

Earl Wright II is an associate professor of sociology at Fisk University.

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the methodology was unsophisticated and of low quality and that the sociological significance of the school was, at best, minimal.

Critique and Counter-Critique of the Atlanta University Studies

In "W. E. B. Du Bois and the Atlanta University Studies on the Negro," Rudwick (1957) reviews the Atlanta University monographs and concludes, "The Atlanta Studies were of uneven quality in planning, structure, methods, and content; and in order to demonstrate this disparity, one set of monographs which were poorly done will be contrasted with another group which, in the present writer's judgment, represents sounder research" (Rudwick, 1957, p. 468). The monographs selected by Rudwick to represent poor examples of research methodology include *Some Efforts of Negroes for Their Own Social Betterment* (1898 and 1909) and *Economic Cooperation Among Negro Americans* (1907). *The Negro Artisan* (1902 and 1912) represents acceptable examples of research methodology. Rudwick's critique of both sets of monographs is presented below.

In his critique of the 1898 publication, *Some Efforts of Negroes for Their Own Social Advancement*, Rudwick identifies five methodological deficiencies. First, he suggests that the sampling procedure utilized by Atlanta University researchers was questionable. This concern stems from Rudwick's belief that "[Du Bois] was not seriously troubled by the problem of sampling procedures, either in the selection of his type of cities or in the data to be located within them" (Rudwick, 1957, p. 469). The notion that Du Bois was not *seriously troubled by the problem of sampling procedures* should be tempered by the fact that the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory desired methodologically sound investigations, but often experienced financial obstacles that made such an objective difficult, at best, to accomplish. Upon assuming leadership of the two-year-old research effort at Atlanta University, Du Bois (1968) proposed to "reduce [the social condition of Black Americans] to exact measurement whenever or wherever occasion permitted" (p. 214). Unfortunately, and what would prove to be a recurring theme throughout his tenure at Atlanta University between 1897-1910, "funds were not available for such [a large scale sociological] inquiry [like the 1898 project]" (Du Bois, 1898, p. 4). Instead, Du Bois chose "nine Southern cities of varying size and ... selected in them such organizations of Negroes as were engaged in benevolent and reformatory work" (p. 4). The cities included in this investigation were Atlanta, GA; Augusta, GA; Bowling Green, KY; Clarksville, TN; Fort Smith, AR; Galveston, TX; Mobile, AL; Petersburg, VA; and Washington D.C. Although Rudwick suggests that Atlanta scholars were relatively unconcerned with the type of data collected, the records of the 1898 study counter this argument. According to the 1898 inquiry, Du Bois sought specific data concerning the philanthropic activity of churches and beneficial and secret societies.

Given its methodological limitations due to financial constraints, Du Bois and the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory readily acknowledge in the 1898 monograph that:

No attempt was made to catalogue all charitable and reformatory efforts but rather to illustrate the character of the work being done by typical examples. In one case, Petersburg, Va., nearly all efforts of all kinds were reported in order to illustrate the full activity of one group. The report for one large city, Washington, was pretty full, although not exhaustive. In all of the other localities only selected organizations were reported (Du Bois, 1898, p. 4).

Du Bois further acknowledges the limitations of the study when he proposes:

This [inquiry] we must remember represents only a part of the benevolent and reformatory activity of Negroes in a few cities of the South. It includes many of the more important enterprises, but not all even of them. It gives a rough, incomplete and yet fairly characteristic picture of what the freedmen's sons are doing to better their social condition (Du Bois, 1898, p. 42).

That an early school of sociology is criticized for engaging in an elementary brand of research is not unique to the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory. However, it is insightful to note that the financially induced methodological deficiencies of some early Atlanta University publications resulted in, as evidenced above, the first institutionalized program of acknowledging the limitations of one's research. Another methodological technique advanced by this school was the use of insider researchers.

The Atlanta Sociological Laboratory often utilized Atlanta University alumni, graduates and students of predominately Black colleges and universities, and educated residents of cities and towns throughout the southern United States as community researchers. Although Rudwick applauds the inclusion of *educated* citizens as community researchers, he suggests that the second methodological deficiency of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory resides in the notion that Du Bois "gave very few instructions, beyond telling them to submit limited descriptions of some of the benevolent organizations within their own communities" (Rudwick, 1957, p. 469). Unlike Rudwick's first deficiency, which can be challenged with data from the 1898 monograph, additional monographs must be included to obtain a complete understanding of the utilization of some non-sociologically trained or non-institutionally credentialed community researchers.

The 1899 Atlanta University monograph provides data that refute Rudwick's assertion while describing the manner by which researchers for the annual studies were selected and guided. According to Du Bois:

The general method of making these inquiries is to distribute among a number of selected persons throughout the South, carefully prepared [research instruments.] Care is taken to make the questions few in number, simple and direct, and, so far as possible, incapable of misapprehension. The investigators to whom these blanks are sent are usually well-educated Negroes, long residents in the communities; by calling on the same persons for year after year, a body of experienced correspondents has been gradually formed, numbering now about fifty (Du Bois, 1899, p. 4).

That “[Du Bois] provides no method for checking the reliability of the material sent to him” (Rudwick, 1957, p. 469) signals Rudwick’s third deficiency of the 1898 Atlanta University monograph. This issue is of particular concern to Rudwick since early Atlanta University Studies often relied upon community researchers to provide data on themselves as well as their community. This, according to Rudwick, “is most crucial when one recalls that an officer of an orphanage was the person who was asked to furnish statistics on his own administration of the institution” (p. 469). Rudwick correctly contends that Du Bois and the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory, in some instances, lacked sufficient techniques to check the reliability or validity of the data. However, he is incorrect when he suggests that no method for checking reliability, however elementary, was implemented.

Again, it is necessary to incorporate additional monographs to produce a complete scenario regarding this issue. Commenting specifically on the issue raised above by Rudwick, Du Bois suggests that the data collected for the 1899 study “represent[s], therefore, the reports of businessmen themselves, interpreted and commented upon by an investigator of some experience. [The data collected] can, therefore, on the whole, be depended upon as substantially accurate” (Du Bois, 1899, p. 5). Although Du Bois believes the data, in general, to be accurate, he admits “the item of ‘capital invested’ is naturally apt to contain the largest amount of errors since it is in most cases an estimate” (p. 5). Thus, capital invested estimates and others deemed too high were removed from the data by Du Bois and the resolutions of the conference reflect the necessary adjustments.

That “One also finds an absence of controls” (Rudwick, 1957, p. 470) is what Rudwick lists as the fourth deficiency of the 1898 publication. “[A]fter reading one superficial list after another,” according to Rudwick, “there is a tendency to ask, so what” (p. 470). This critique presupposes that Du Bois either consciously elected to not use controls or was unaware of this methodological practice. Without question, the ideal research study includes a control group. However, in offering an alternative explanation for the lack of a control group, one must be mindful, once again, of the financial limitations of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory. After viewing the data collected by the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory, it is reasonable to propose that Du Bois and his colleagues desired a control group possibly comprised of Black and White business leaders. However, and repeatedly, it may be more accurate to suggest that a lack of sufficient funding for Atlanta University, not ignorance by Du Bois, made such a methodological practice, now considered a ‘given’ in contemporary social science, more difficult to implement in segregation era America by Black researchers.

Each Atlanta University monograph culminates with a list of resolutions that explain, predict, or provide understanding of the data uncovered at each year’s investigation. Rudwick suggests that the fifth deficiency of the Atlanta Sociology Laboratory is that the “resolutions do not seem to have grown out of the inductive material presented, and most of them are only exhortations which do not suggest any specific techniques to accomplish the ends sought” (Rudwick, 1957, p. 470). Undeniably, some of the resolutions proposed by

the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory are not byproducts of the collected data. This faux pas stands as the exception more than the rule. The resolutions of the 1898 publication, which Rudwick contends as not extending from the data collected, are identified below with, when applicable, supporting data.

The first resolution encourages churches to reduce their building and running expenses and to use the remaining capital to establish shelters for the elderly and orphans. Data obtained by Atlanta University researchers indicated a paucity of retirement homes and orphanages serving the needs of Black Americans in the areas surveyed. Given the significant communal role and financial strength of many of the churches included in this investigation, the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory bestowed upon them the moral responsibility to financially spearhead the establishment of shelters for the elderly and orphans. Heretofore, Black American retirement homes and orphanages relied, mostly, upon the philanthropy of Whites. After examining the financial records of seventy-nine churches in nine cities and covering 7 states (including the District of Columbia), the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory concluded that Black churches, after reducing extravagant building and running expenses, were financially strong enough to support these needed institutions in their respective communities. Although not a typical example, the Nineteenth St. Baptist Church in Washington D. C. is highlighted to demonstrate the means by which such a program of community betterment could be financially supported. In 1895, Nineteenth Baptist reported an income of \$5,714.09. After church running expenses were subtracted the church was left with only \$437. Du Bois suggests that expenditures such as the \$2,840 spent on building improvements, which according to the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory, were conducted more for cosmetic than imperative reasons, were excessive, took away from the uplift mission of the church, and would be better spent if pooled with monies from other churches to be used for the betterment of the community through the establishment of shelters for the elderly and orphans.

The second resolution begins with an advisement to secret societies to not give undue prominence to ritual, regalia, and parade. More specifically, Du Bois criticizes secret societies because they:

Represent much extravagance and waste in expenditure, an outlay for regalia and tinsel, which too often lack the excuse of being beautiful, and to some extent they divert the savings of Negroes from more useful channels (Du Bois, 1898, p. 17).

Although Du Bois provides no data supporting his belief that secret societies engage in pomp and circumstance, the latter segment of the same resolution commends secret societies for their real estate endeavors, building of asylums and retreats for the aged and orphaned, and careful management of organization funds and was grounded in the data obtained for the study. In fact, ninety-two secret societies were included in this investigation which elicited data concerning the number of members in each organization, investments, cash on hand, sick and death benefits, number of persons aided, and total income of the organization.

The third resolution warns African Americans of unstable and unscrupulous insurance companies. Acknowledging that data from many of the cities were incomplete, Du Bois grounds this resolution on surveys from nine beneficial and insurance societies from three states. Du Bois proposes that African Americans should be especially warned of “white societies organized to defraud and exploit Negroes” (Du Bois, 1898, p. 19). White societies were noted because they were acutely aware that “the Freedman [is] noted for his effort to ward off accidents and a pauper’s grave by insurance against sickness and death” (p. 19) and they saw this as an opportunity to exploit a largely ignorant and uneducated group of people. Atlanta Sociological Laboratory data indicate that Black Americans were exploited by beneficial and insurance companies through the establishment of high premiums and regular payments. “The educational value of conducting these [insurance businesses] is, among the Negroes,” according to Du Bois, “very great, and considering their lack of business training, the experiment has been quite successful” (p. 21).

The fourth resolution commends the smaller and ‘mutually well-known’ membership of a few beneficial societies. Specifically, the sick and death benefits provided by six beneficial societies in two states are highlighted as exemplars.

The fifth resolution condemns the tendency of Black Americans to conduct extravagant funerals. Du Bois, while providing no empirical support for this resolution as indicated by Rudwick, suggest that the monies spent on funerals could be utilized more fruitfully. Du Bois directly asserts that “the system of death benefits often encourages this [overspending]. [Thus,] societies giving death benefits, churches, and thoughtful persons in general, should frown upon these excesses as wasteful, unbecoming and unchristian” (p. 47) and instead use the money to serve the needs of the family members of the deceased or the community as a whole.

Though not necessarily borne from the data, the sixth resolution encourages increased cooperative business endeavors among Black American businesses. Du Bois suggests that prior to their introduction into America, “Native Africans, or at least most Negro tribes, are born merchants and traffickers, and can drive good bargains even with the Europeans” (p. 21). Unfortunately, according to Du Bois, slavery “almost completely robbed the slaves of all thought of economic initiative. Business enterprise would therefore be the last form of activity which we might expect to see recover from the effects of slavery” (p. 21).

In order to offset this negative consequence of slavery, Du Bois proposes cooperative business arrangements. Utilizing data from seventeen cooperative business companies from Washington D.C. to Little Rock, Arkansas, Du Bois suggests two avenues for the establishment of successful business endeavors. The first plan calls for the establishment of private, but similar, businesses that eventually combine into one company. The second plan encourages the establishment of cooperative endeavors from their very inception. While acknowledging that cooperative business endeavors among Black Americans was, at this particular period, in its infancy, Du Bois contends that it deserves mentioning in the present inquiry “since it represents not so much private gain as social effort for the good of the group” (p. 22).

The seventh resolution proposes the establishment of hospitals and juvenile reformatories to serve the needs of Black Americans. The dire need of hospitals dedicated to treating Black Americans is illustrated in a report received from Dr. R. H. Lewis, Secretary of the North Carolina Board of Health.

If there is one thing more than another that the colored people need, it is hospital privileges, practically within their reach, both as to distance and cost. It has been a matter of surprise with me that some of the people of the North, who have been so generous in their benefactions to educational instructions for them, have not realized this fact and devoted some of it to the relief of sickness and suffering (p. 33).

In addition to hospitals, data collected by the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory indicate a need for juvenile reformatories. The absence of such institutions, according to study reports, has detrimental consequences. Reports provided by the state of Virginia support this assertion and condemn that state for:

Unconsciously ... graduating under common and statute laws annually thousands of youthful criminals. There is no middle ground, there is no house of refuge, correction or reformatory for the black boy or girl—who from defective, and from no training, has taken the first step downward, and as a consequence, crime is accelerated and increased by law (p. 32).

The eighth resolution commends African Americans for making strides toward bettering themselves and their social and physical condition. Throughout the 1898 publication the efforts of African American churches, secret societies, beneficial and insurance societies, and businesses were analyzed to ascertain their commitment to and influence on their respective community through self-help efforts. Du Bois and the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory assert that tremendous strides have been made by Black Americans to better their condition in America, as evidenced by data indicating the number and level of organizational support in various communities. Nevertheless, they believe that more should be done by the educated and comfortable classes of African Americans—i.e., the Talented Tenth.

The ninth resolution asserts that the death rate for African Americans, when compared with Whites in 1896 and 1897, is too high. Data from the cities of Atlanta, Baltimore, Charleston, Memphis, and Richmond were utilized. An example of the continued high rate of death for Black Americans is found in Charleston, South Carolina where the death rate per 1,000 for scrofula and syphilis was 0.00 for Whites and 2.72 for Blacks in 1895. By 1896 the rate was 0.40 for Whites and 7.77 for African Americans. Additionally, the regular death rate per 1,000 city residents for Charleston was 21.99 for Whites and 39.30 for Blacks in 1895. By 1896 the rate was 21.10 for Whites and 40.32 for African Americans. Differences were also found in Memphis, Tennessee where the rate of death per 1,000 for scrofula and syphilis in 1896 was 0.50 for Whites and 0.70 for Blacks. By 1897, the rate for Whites was 0.17 and the

Black rate was 1.09. Last, the general death rate for Memphis in 1896 was 11.91 for Whites and 16.81 for Blacks. By 1897, the rate for Whites was 11.01 and the rate for Blacks was 15.37.

Rudwick's overall analysis of the 1898 study is summarized in his assertion that "Du Bois succeeded in amassing an encyclopedic array of facts (often with little connection to each other)" (Rudwick, 1957, p. 470). The 1907 Atlanta University monograph receives a similar critique from Rudwick.

Rudwick identifies two deficiencies in the 1907 Atlanta University monograph, *Economic Cooperation Among Negro Americans*. Since *Some Efforts of Negroes for Their Own Social Advancement* (1898) and *Economic Cooperation Among Negro Americans* (1907) both address Black American efforts to engage in cooperative endeavors with the desired outcome of aiding the less fortunate members of their community, Rudwick's first deficiency centers on the lack of a comparative analysis of data collected for the 1898 and 1907 investigations. The targets for criticism are the data collected on churches, beneficial and insurance societies, and a manufacturing company. Although, as purported by Rudwick (1957), "the 1907 monograph was a 'continuation and enlargement' of the 1898 account.... Du Bois did not utilize any of his 1898 material on individual Negro churches" (p. 470). Concerning the beneficial and insurance societies, it is proposed that "[Du Bois] made no reference to his handling of the beneficial and insurance societies in 1898.... The 1907 volume included the history and purpose of some of the larger societies" (p. 470). Lastly, Rudwick asserts:

In the 1898 monograph, Du Bois mentioned several examples of cooperative businesses, and a few of them were described in some detail. One of these organizations was a cotton mill named the Coleman Manufacturing Company, which was discussed in 1907, but there was no connection made between these two examinations of the same company. Nothing was said about the development of the company in the nine years intervening (p. 470).

Rudwick's critique, seemingly, extends from his understanding of the research question guiding each investigation as articulated in the Atlanta University publications. Undoubtedly, the records of the 1907 Atlanta University monograph indicate that this inquiry was, as partially quoted by Rudwick, a 'continuation and enlargement' of the 1898 investigation. What Rudwick fails to mention, however, is that although the topic of both investigations essentially remained the same—economic cooperation among Negro Americans—the research question guiding the inquiries differed. The research question for the 1898 investigation, "What is the Negro doing to help himself after a quarter century of outside aid?" (Du Bois, 1898, p. 4) focuses on the social uplift activities of Black Americans at a particular period—the turn of the twentieth century.

Conversely, the research question guiding the 1907 study provides for an analysis of the historical development of Black American cooperative endeavors prior to and since their introduction into the United States, circa 1555. Although the 1907 monograph indicates, as written by Du Bois and speciously

quoted by Rudwick, “The present study is a continuation and enlargement of this initial study made nearly ten years ago, with certain limitations and changes. The question set before us in the present study is: How far is there and has there been among Negro Americans a conscious effort at mutual aid in earning a living” (Du Bois, 1907, p. 10)? Viewed in its entirety, and in context, this research question, although sharing the topical focus of the former, differs in the nature and type of data to be included. Undoubtedly, an inquiry utilizing previously collected data would be desirable, when applicable. Nevertheless, if one were to rely solely on Rudwick’s analysis, it is possible that the key point of his argument—that there was a shared research question guiding both studies—would be uncritically accepted and not understood in its proper context.

Rudwick also criticizes Du Bois and the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory for not comparatively utilizing data on the Coleman Manufacturing Company. He argues that upon revisiting the Coleman Manufacturing Company almost ten years later, Atlanta University researchers discovered that the founder had died “and a white company bought the mill and is running it with white help.... Here was an excellent opportunity for a case study of the failure of race enterprise” (Rudwick, 1957, p. 470). Rudwick, seemingly, makes an excellent point with his assertion that the 1907 monograph could be strengthened with the inclusion of a comparative analysis of the manufacturing company during the period identified. However, an essential element is missing from Rudwick’s critique. As indicated earlier, the research question guiding the 1898 inquiry differed from that of 1907. As such, the focus of the latter is on the history of cooperative endeavors within the race, not the accomplishments, or lack thereof, of individual efforts.

The second deficiency of the 1907 investigation, similar to the critique of the 1898 monograph, extends from Rudwick’s belief that the resolutions were “not developed out of the data presented in the monograph” (p. 470). “Some ‘resolutions,’” according to Rudwick, “were promulgated by the committee of the conference, of which Du Bois was a member, and a ‘crisis’ was stressed in Negro organizational living” (p. 470). The crisis to which Rudwick refers is “the economic development of the Negro American” which, according to the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory, is “at present ... in a critical state” (Du Bois, 1907, p. 4). It is quite factual that some resolutions presented by the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory over the twenty-year period of publications did not extend from the data collected. More germane at present, the 1907 monograph produced one resolution—“that every effort ought to be made to foster and emphasize present tendencies among Negroes toward co-operative effort and that the ideal of wide ownership of small capital and small accumulations among the many rather than great riches among a few, should persistently be held before them” (Du Bois, 1907, p. 4).

Admittedly, the latter portion of the resolution is not reflected in the data and can be rightly categorized as race or class propaganda. However, that the cooperative business efforts of Black Americans at that period should be fostered and emphasized is reflected in data obtained from churches, schools, beneficial and insurance societies, banks, and other co-operative endeavors

in the 1907 monograph. In fact, the monograph contains a voluminous bibliographic account of the examined sources upon which this resolution is grounded. A very limited, but helpful, listing of the sources of data utilized include previous Atlanta University monographs, Department of Labor bulletins, National Negro Business League reports, Hampton University conference reports, and scholarly journal articles.

The 1909 monograph, *Some Efforts of Negroes for Their Own Social Betterment*, receives only one major critique. Rudwick contends that the 1909 study would have been more informative and persuasive had Du Bois, once again, incorporated previously collected data. Given that the 1898, 1907, and 1909 studies share a general focus on activities directed towards improving the Black American community fifty years after emancipation, "the later monographs," according to Rudwick, "would have contributed more to science if Du Bois had developed the data which he introduced in the earlier stud[ies] on the same subjects" (p. 471). Although, as discussed previously, the 1898 and 1907 monographs were guided by different research questions, this particular critique by Rudwick's is more than accurate if confined to the 1907 and 1909 investigations.

Although Rudwick identifies various methodological deficiencies in the three monographs discussed above, he believes the 1902 and 1912 volumes of *The Negro Artisan* "signif[y] a more thorough and ordered contribution to our knowledge of the Negro" (p. 471). The 1902 *Negro Artisan* monograph receives a favorable critique from Rudwick because, unlike the previous studies highlighted, "part of the material [can] be checked by 'third parties'" (p. 471). For example, information collected from workers "was validated by making inquiries of their fellow workers and their employers" (p. 471). Secondly, this study receives a favorable critique because "the 1902 research was based upon many resources" (p. 471). Last, that Du Bois comparatively utilized data to ascertain similarities and differences between Black and White artisans signaled an advancement over other studies given that his investigation extended beyond the realm of mere speculation and the 'careless usage of partial data.'

Rudwick also found the 1912 monograph to be more sound than other Atlanta University studies. His conclusion is based on three factors. First, this study is considered to be more scientific than other Atlanta University monographs because Du Bois mailed the same questionnaire to many of the same groups participating in the project. Rudwick's accolades concerning the use of similar questionnaires is mysterious given that this author's analysis of the methodology of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory uncovered no evidence that, at any point during the period of this school, Atlanta University researchers used different questionnaires for similar groups. Secondly, the utilization of census data enabled researchers to compare statistical data during the periods in which the first and second *Negro Artisan* monographs were conducted. The third strength of this study is the ability of researchers to make generalizations through the utilization of census data for comparative purposes.

Elliott Rudwick concludes his critique of the Atlanta University monographs by declaring that the impact of the studies on the scientific community and the

discipline of sociology were, at best, minimal. Below, Rudwick's rationale for suggesting that the sociological significance of Du Bois and the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory is minimal is addressed.

The Atlanta Sociological Laboratory "As a Framework for the Dissemination of [Du Bois'] Propaganda on Leadership"

Rudwick offers five reasons why he deems the sociological research conducted at Atlanta University to be insignificant. First, "[Du Bois'] method of case-counting was naive and influenced by his acquaintance with the work of social reformers and social workers" (Rudwick, 1957, p. 473). Seemingly, Rudwick suggests that the methodology of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory was unsophisticated and of low quality. Wright (2002b) addresses this notion in an article titled, "Why Black People Tend To Shout: An Earnest Attempt to Explain the Sociological Negation of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory Despite Its Possible Unpleasantness." Wright's examination of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory uncovers data that refute Rudwick's suggestion that the methodology of the school was of low quality and unsophisticated. In fact, Wright argues that several contemporary methodological practices were institutionalized at Atlanta University years before they were embraced by mainstream American sociologists.

Among the firsts posited by Wright, some of which were discussed earlier, are the notions that the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory was the first to institutionalize method triangulation, acknowledge the limitations of their research, and conceptualize the benefits of utilizing insider researchers. According to Wright (2002b):

Admittedly, early Atlanta University studies, specifically the first two studies directed by George G. Bradford, lacked scientific depth and a measure of methodological sophistication. Nevertheless, [after Du Bois' arrival in 1897] the methods of research were not totally unsophisticated because method triangulation was utilized. In addition to utilizing method triangulation, Atlanta University social scientists, demonstrating a further sophistication in methodology, readily acknowledged the limitations of their annual investigations (p. 347).

Beginning in 1896, Atlanta University officials readily acknowledged the limitations of their research, which was directly related to a lack of adequate funding. Despite the school's financial difficulties, Du Bois and his researchers utilized questionnaires, interviews, and participant observation to obtain the most current and relevant data on urban Americans. This practice, method triangulation, is now widely accepted and practiced in the discipline.

Secondly, Rudwick found the Atlanta University Conference studies to be "lacking in systematic theory" (Rudwick, 1957, p. 473). This notion is also challenged by Wright in the aforementioned article. Included in most Atlanta University Publications is a list of resolutions emanating, in a majority of cases, from the data collected. If, according to Wright (2002b), one defines a theory as "a set of interrelated statements that attempt to explain, predict, or under-

stand social events, and that can be replicated and generalized, then the resolutions offered in the conclusion of the Atlanta University Conference Publications, after being tested by interested social scientists, qualify" (Wright, 2002b, p. 353).

Thirdly, Rudwick argues that the Atlanta Studies never achieved wide circulation. This notion is also addressed and refuted by Wright when he reveals that "professors and graduate students from [predominately Black and White] colleges and universities across the United States requested and received copies of specific Atlanta University Conference Publications" (Wright, 2002b, p. 342). "In addition to the mailing of reports to students and various faculty," according to Wright:

[C]onference publications were sent to national organizations like the American Missionary Association, The New York Independent, McClure's Magazine, the Northern Inter-Collegiate Oratorical League, Carroll D. Wright (United States Bureau of Labor), Professor Katharine Coman (Wellesley College), Dr. David J. Fuller (Brooklyn, New York), and Miss Jane Porter Scott (Social Settlements Association) (p. 342).

Du Bois proudly proposes in the 1913 publication that the Atlanta University monographs were utilized in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the United States.

Fourthly, although he provides no evidence to support his assertion, Rudwick suggests that "the Atlanta Studies served as a framework for the dissemination of [Du Bois'] propaganda on leadership" (Rudwick, 1957, p. 474). Du Bois' well-known philosophy on leadership, the talented tenth, suggests that a group should be led by its most talented, skilled, and, ideally, college educated members. If, as Rudwick suggests, the Atlanta University studies served as the framework for Du Bois' propaganda on leadership, then the most obvious place to find evidence of such an agenda would be the resolutions that are found in sixteen of the eighteen publications edited or co-edited by Du Bois between 1896 and 1913. A review of the Atlanta University publications indicates that, utilizing Du Bois' theory of the talented tenth as the measure, only two of the 112 resolutions presented during his tenure can be categorized as supportive of the talented tenth ideology. While acknowledging the presence of a minute number of talented tenth related resolutions, the suggestion that the Atlanta Universities Studies were merely the conduit through which Du Bois promoted his brand of leadership his highly problematic and, possibly, politically motivated.

Rudwick's critique of Du Bois and the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory was published six years after the dean of the American intellectual tradition was indicted on federal charges. Because of his robust activity within the peace movement and his overseas lectures in which he publicly detailed America's unjust treatment of Black Americans, Du Bois was contacted by the United States Justice Department and instructed to register as an agent of a foreign nation. Du Bois, in a 1961 interview said: "I wrote back and told them that was nonsense.... I wasn't representing a foreign government, I was representing peace. But they wouldn't listen to anything and first thing I knew I was

indicted and threatened with 5 years in prison and a fine of \$5,000" (Du Bois, 1961, p. 7). Although acquitted of all charges, Du Bois was abandoned by his beloved Talented Tenth and was reviled by mainstream White America for his promotion of communism among Black Americans.

In an almost hysterical climate of McCarthyism and anti-communism, one may postulate that Rudwick's reduction of Du Bois' scholarly contributions, during his years at the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory, to the simple idea of an agenda centered on promoting the uplift of the proletariat (Black America) against the bourgeoisie (White America) may best be understood through a 1950s lens in which Du Bois' past and current activities were considered antithetical to capitalism and democracy. Such an elementary synopsis of Du Bois' thirteen years of inquiry at Atlanta University ignores the fact that, as Du Bois indicates in his 1961 interview, he did not engage in propaganda until after the unjust lynching of Sam Hose and the torrid display of this man's body parts in a local Atlanta grocery store. Soon after this incident Du Bois left academia. Consequently, it was only after years of anguish over lynchings, riots, mob violence, and the disfranchisement of Black Americans that Du Bois abandoned his belief that this nation, once educated and in possession of objective empirical data on the 'Negro problem' and relations between Blacks and Whites, could rise above its racial intolerance (Du Bois, 1961).

Last, Rudwick proposes that Du Bois' admitted efforts to help social reform detracted from the scientific aim of the investigations. It is, in fact, true that Du Bois believed scholarly research could be used to direct social reform. However, careful examination of Du Bois' active years as a sociologist at Atlanta University (1897-1913) uncovers no evidence that Du Bois undertook a research agenda directed at social reform. In a forthcoming manuscript by Wright and Calhoun (2005), it is suggested that Du Bois was cognizant of the complications that could arise from promoting a social reform agenda within a profession where objectivity was the lynchpin. To the notion that social reform had a place in scientific research, Du Bois proclaimed, "any attempt to give [science] a double aim, to make social reform the immediate instead of the mediate object of a search for truth, will inevitably tend to defeat both objects" (Du Bois, [1898] 1978, p. 80). While acknowledging the negative consequence of adhering to a social reform agenda, Du Bois desired to construct objective research studies because he was aware "There [would] be at first some difficulty in bringing the Southern people, both black and white, to conceive of an earnest, careful study of the Negro problem which [had] not back of it some scheme of race amalgamation, political jobbery, or deportation to Africa" (p. 80).

Given this challenge faced by him and other Black scholars, Du Bois, providing a concluding statement on this issue, said:

Only by such rigid adherence to the true object of the scholar, [objectivity], can statesmen and philanthropists of all shades of belief be put into possession of a reliable body of truth which may guide their efforts to the best and largest success (p. 81).

Thus, for Du Bois, if after coming into possession of a reliable body of truth, social reform initiatives are instigated then science has fulfilled its duty. However, contrary to Rudwick, social reform, at least during his years as a practicing sociologist, was not a stated research objective of Du Bois or the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory.

Conclusion

After reviewing the Atlanta University Conference publications, Elliott Rudwick concludes:

The Atlanta Studies may not have improved the conditions of the race very much, but they probably did improve its morale. At a time when political and social restrictions upon the American Negroes were increasing, the Atlanta monographs must have provided many members of the race with a sense of group integration and ego satisfaction (Rudwick, 1957, p. 475).

Few can deny that, as Rudwick proposes, the Atlanta University studies improved the condition of the race. More important, however, is the understanding that *improving the condition of the race* was not a goal of Du Bois and the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory. The stated objective of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory was to *study* the social, economic, and physical condition of Black Americans making the transition from slavery to freedom and from rural districts to large cities (Chase, 1896). The responsibility of *improving* the condition of Black Americans fell on civil rights activists, politicians, and social reformers, not the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory. For Rudwick to suggest that the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory is not sociologically relevant because it did not improve the condition of the race misrepresents the mission and objectives of the school while supporting his notion that the activities of the laboratory were geared toward social reform efforts which could then be measured as successful or not based on the success, or lack thereof, of specific social policies.

It is quite possible that, as Rudwick proposes, the Atlanta Studies improved the morale and ego satisfaction of Black Americans. Although the rationale for such an assertion presented here is different from what Rudwick proposes, it is possible that Black Americans, in general, and supporters of historically black colleges and universities specifically, may experience increased morale and ego satisfaction over the realization that the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory is now being cited as the first American school of sociology (Wright, 2002a). Additionally, recent studies indicate that the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory was the source of the first sociological study of the family in America and the source of the first sociological study of the church in America (Dennis, 1975; Wright, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c; Zuckerman, 2005).

Ultimately, the legacy and significance of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory may best be articulated by the architect of the Atlanta University research program in sociology. W. E. B. Du Bois (1968), in his posthumously pub-

lished autobiography, penned a self-effacing summary of the legacy of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory.

It must be remembered that the significance of these studies lay not so much in what they were actually able to 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 (p. 219).

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