

Newsletter of the ASA Theory Section

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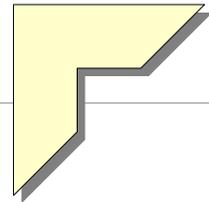
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Please submit materials for future editions of *Perspectives* to:

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## Chair's Corner

### Extreme Theory in New York

*Karin Knorr Cetina,  
University of Chicago  
and University of Constance*

For a European, New York is an extreme city. It appears to breed the exceptional and excessive, more than the financially equalized, well groomed, less intense cities of Europe. I thought it might be fitting, and in keeping with a long tradition of spirited debates about the nature of sociological theory in our field, to orient the 2007 Section activities around

a theme that matches New York's extravaganzas. The topic of our Mini-Conference, I have proposed, will be "extreme theory." Extreme theory may involve research and theorizing that encompasses extreme or surprising assumptions, metaphorically rich concepts that are suggestive but perhaps far from the empirically real, radical claims that appear uncommon and counterintuitive, and non-routine methodologies. Extreme theory includes new and emerging theoretical strategies (such as perhaps chaos theory) but could also entail theories about non-routine events.

Several other disciplines include forms of extreme theorizing. For example, in physics, what is sometimes called "theoretical theory" (e.g. string theory, lattice theory) is, from the point of view of experimental physicists, highly "speculative" and extreme in its assumptions. Phenomenological theory, on the other hand, is not; it caters to the needs of empirical research—for example, it

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## A Message from the (new) Editors

To open our first issue as the new editors of *Perspectives*, we want to applaud the excellent work of Neil Gross as the past editor. We look forward to continuing in his footsteps.

In the last issue of *Perspectives*, Sean Elias identified WEB Du Bois as a stranger in the sociological tradition, invoking the work of Simmel. Although Elias laments this marginalization of Du Bois for the fact that it prevents many contemporary sociologists from engaging with and benefiting from Du Bois's prolific writings, he also argues that Du Bois ben-

efits from this unfortunate positioning because it grants him a unique perspective on the social system, particularly with regards to issues of power, amongst others. According to Elias, Du Bois presents a "challenge to monologism, one-dimensionality, canonization, and elitism in sociological theory." Elias's essay argues for recognizing Du Bois's foundational role in the formulation of sociological theories of race—theories that recognize the constitutive character of racial dynamics.

Elias closes the essay with a warning that disregard for Du Bois's important studies of race—studies that also address issues of

global politics, history, gender, class conflict, and urban development—cannot stand for long, given the continuing significance of race and racial conflict.

Heeding that warning, we have focused this issue of *Perspectives* on Du Bois's contributions to social theory, with essays on Du Bois from leading scholars of his work—Rutledge Dennis, Benjamin Bowser, and Anthony Monteiro.

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**Call for Nominations: Theory Section Awards 2007**

THE ASA Theory Section is committed to advancing sociological theory in its scholarly and professional respects. Fulfilling those dual goals, the section awards prizes for the best professional publications in sociological theory, for the best papers written by students, and for agenda-setting in sociological theory. A list of previous award winners and other information is available on the Theory Section web page at <http://www.asatheory.org>.

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The Edward Shils—James Coleman Memorial Award recognizes distinguished work in the theory area by a graduate student. Work may take the form of (a) a paper published or accepted for publication; (b) a paper presented at a professional meeting; or (c) a paper suitable for publication or presentation at a professional meeting. Each year's selection committee has latitude in determining procedures for selecting the winner, including the option of awarding no prize if suitable work has not been nominated. This year the Shils-Coleman Award includes an award of \$750.00 for reimbursement of travel expenses for attending the annual ASA meeting. Nominations, including six copies of the nominated work, should be sent to the Chair of the Committee.

Submission Deadline: March 1, 2007.

Dustin Kidd, Chair  
Shils-Coleman Award Committee  
Temple University  
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115 West Berks Street  
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The Theory Prize recognizes outstanding work in theory, communicates the principle that theory is plural and broadly defined, and promotes the interests of the Theory Section. This year's Theory Prize will be given for an article, book chapter, or published or publicly presented paper. (The Prize is given for a book in even numbered years.) Only titles from the four years prior to the award year (that is, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2005) are eligible for the Theory Prize. At its discretion, the Theory Prize Committee may also award Honorable Mentions. The Chair of the Award Committee has latitude in determining procedures for selection of the winner, including the option of withholding the Award in a year when the Committee deems no nominated work is suitable for the prize. Nominations, including six copies of the nominated work, should be sent to the Chair of the Committee.

Submission Deadline: March 1, 2007.

Alex Preda, Chair  
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## Chair's Corner, continued

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may provide the calculations and guiding assumptions that allow high energy physicists to conduct their grand experiments.

Extreme empiricism is not unknown in sociology. Are there also traditions of extreme theorizing in our field? What sorts of theoretical "extremism" grow in the sociological imagination? Or is extreme theory rather something that develops when theory becomes axiomatic and assumes the form of science? What happens when sociological theory adopts theoretical concepts and assumptions from other disciplines and fields, do they push us to the cutting edge of thought or are such imports an indicator of imitative thinking? Do critical traditions stimulate extreme theorizing? Is unique adequacy a principle that should measure how we do in regard to members' practical accomplishments and expertise, or could it also be a measure of a theory's adequacy to higher order theoretical expectations? Are some forms of cultural sociology extreme when they turn to anarchic cases and build reflexivity into their concepts? Can and should some theory be less "grounded," less given to plausibility reasoning, than other theoretical traditions? Those invited to present will be asked to respond to such questions, bring out and defend extreme assumptions, and exemplify what extreme theorizing might mean by providing examples. There will also be an open paper session, to which those involved with extreme theorizing are invited to contribute their thoughts. I hope that the sustained attention we can give to the theme over a number of sessions will bring us up to date on what the field thinks about theoretical extremism in the social sciences.

## Editors, continued

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These essays take strong stances on difficult, even controversial issues. To that end, we would like to remind our readers that the opinions reflected in this newsletter are not necessarily reflective of the editorial team, nor of the section and its leadership. In keeping with the title of the section newsletter, these are indeed *perspectives*.

We hope that you find these essays provocative. We also encourage you to compose thoughtful responses and share them with the editors. We may make use of some these responses in later issues.

We also want to take this opportunity to request your contributions to future issues of *Perspectives*. Tell us about your work in progress; respond to recent comments on your work; or experiment with a new idea that you are playing with. Submissions should be sent to Erika Summers-Effler at [eeffler@nd.edu](mailto:eeffler@nd.edu). We look forward to your submissions!

-- *Dustin Kidd, Erika Summers-Effler, Omar Lizardo, Editors*

**Call for Nominations**  
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The Lewis A. Coser Award for Theoretical Agenda-Setting recognizes a mid-career sociologist whose work, in the opinion of the Committee, holds great promise for setting the agenda in the field of sociology. While the award winner need not be a theorist, his or her work must exemplify the sociological ideals Coser represented. Eligible candidates must be sociologists or do work that is of crucial importance to sociology. They must have received a Ph.D. no less than five and no more than twenty years before their candidacy. Nomination letters should make a strong substantive case for the nominee's selection and should discuss the nominee's work and his or her anticipated future trajectory. No self-nominations are allowed. Committee members may nominate candidates. After nomination, the Committee will solicit additional information from nominees and others for those candidates they consider appropriate for consideration. Nominations should be sent to the Chair of the Committee.

Submission Deadline: March 1, 2007.

Professor Andrew Perrin, Chair  
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## W.E.B. Du Bois: The Autobiographer as Sociological Theorist

Rutledge M. Dennis, George Mason University

When, in graduate school, I informed a fellow grad student that I had decided to write my dissertation on The Sociology of Du Bois, he replied, "Why? He is not a sociologist, nor is he a theorist." We have moved beyond questioning Du Bois's sociological acuties. There are many, however, who might question his entrance into the theoretical pantheon, though many recent books on theory (Farganis, 2004; Goodwin and Scimecca, 2006) have included chapters on Du Bois or selections from his works. With Du Bois, one might attempt to separate the more formal sociology from his activist political writings, but that might be an obstacle to a fuller understanding of both his sociology and his radical politics. Years ago when I began to seriously read his writings, I initially saw Du Bois's activist politics and radical political stance as potential obstacles in unearthing and understanding his sociological foundation, however, this was fortunately not to be the case.

Much to my surprise and intellectual pleasure, what I did conclude was that Du Bois would take a different route in alerting the public to racial prejudice and discrimination. He would inform and educate through his autobi-

ographical writings. In this sense Du Bois would represent, par excellence, the epitome of what C. Wright Mills (1959) would much later label "the sociological imagination." Du Bois would more pointedly direct this imagination towards the problem of race and use his life to illustrate the paradoxes, conflicts, and ambiguities of the American society. He himself (Du Bois 1968 [1940]) would provide the rationale for moving in this direction:

*"My life had its significance and its only deep significance because it was part of a problem; but that problem was, as I continue to think, the central problem of the greatest of the world's democracies and so the Problem of the future world. The problem of the future world is the charting, by means of intelligent reason, of a path not simply through the resistances of physical force, but through the vaster and far more intricate jungle of ideas conditioned on unconscious and subconscious reflexes of living things; on blind unreason and often irresistible urges of sensitive matter; of which the concept of race is today one of the most unyielding and threatening. I seem to see a way of elucidating the inner meaning and significance of that*

*race problem by explaining it in terms of the one human life that I know best. I have written then what is meant to be not so much my autobiography as the autobiography of a concept of race, elucidated, magnified and doubtless distorted in the thoughts and deeds which were mine. [My emphasis]*

Du Bois here alerts the reader to the fact that he is both the researcher and the object of the research, and that he is also the citizen-theorist. This elucidation of his scientific and social policy objectives in 1940 with the autobiographical sketches in *Dusk of Dawn* prompts discerning readers to trace Du Bois's logic and sociological framework back to their origins, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1961[1903]), then to *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (1969[1920]). By placing himself squarely at the center of his sociological universe because, as he says, he knows himself better than anyone else, and he trusts that "self" to be able to present a correct, and objective assessment of his world and those around him, presents him with unique opportunities to theorize "about" himself, and in doing so, he takes on the role as the black "Everyman," though there are occasions when he separates his "person" from the black everyman role. Yet even as he makes this temporary disengagement, he is really presenting a theory of socio-cultural transcendence which is both personal and collective: personal because he has placed himself at the center stage of history; collective because by placing himself there, he sees himself as merely a representative of an historical people caught in an historical web at a particular time in history.

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### NEW WEBSITE EDITOR SOUGHT FOR THE THEORY SECTION

The ASA Theory section is looking for a new editor for the section website ([www.asatheory.org](http://www.asatheory.org)) to take over the position starting in the Fall of 2007. The Website Editor is in charge of all aspects of website maintenance, including the posting of announcements in collaboration with the section Chair and the Newsletter Editors. Candidates should have experience with website composition (in Netscape Composer or FrontPage), be excited about promoting the role of theory in the discipline and profession of sociology, and have a healthy dose of enthusiasm to work for our section. The new Website Editor will be appointed by the section Council for a period of three years that is renewable. If you wish to be considered for this great position, please contact the current website editor: Mathieu Deflem, University of South Carolina, email: [deflem@sc.edu](mailto:deflem@sc.edu)

This theory of socio-cultural transcendence can be seen when Du Bois (1961[1903]: 87) calls us the literary and philosophical giants of the past and asserts his intellectual and social equality: "I sit with Shakespeare and he winces not. Across the color line I move arm in arm with Balzac and Dumas, where smiling men and welcoming women glide in gilded halls.... I summon Aristotle and Aurelius and what soul I will, and they come all graciously with no scorn nor condescension. So, wed with Truth, I dwell above the veil..."

But it is in evoking a theory of "double consciousness" (Ibid: 16-17) that Du Bois's stock would rise in the world of contemporary sociological theory. The double consciousness theme resonates both in symbolic interactionism and conflict theory, and ties in with issues of power and ethnic domination, as well as with identity, marginality, and to a degree, ideas of a group's search for a "place" in a hostile environment. And it is perhaps here that we view in a more pristine manner how Du Bois positions himself to be both subject and object. But there is a disconnect in the operations of double consciousness as Du Bois saw it, for he views the two sides of the doubleness as totally separate entities, whereas in reality, they were only separate sides of one page. Dennis (2003) asserts that there exist two double consciousness themes: Theme One represents "two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder." Theme Two depicts the "desire to merge his double self into a better and truer self," and calls for the opportunity "to be both a Negro and an American." All too often Theme One is presented as the defining feature of the double consciousness, thus suggesting the impossibility of any reconciliation. But perhaps Du Bois himself contributed to some of this misplaced emphasis by his strange use of the term, for as he describes the term, one side of the double provides a vehicle for blacks to see and assess themselves.

However, instead of having the other side of the double viewing and assessing whites, he defines the other side as the white side looking and assessing blacks, rather than a black side now assessing whites. Did blacks collectively, then, look at themselves through the eyes of whites? Or was this a part of Du Bois's way of constructing a sociological concept of the self in conflict with a larger external power in which it was logical to assume that would be the case? Though Du Bois was not writing as a Marxist in 1903, his explanation of power differentials and how the powerful often dominates the very language and beliefs

But Du Bois the theorist escapes this dilemma, because though he is caught in the veil by virtue of color, he has already shown us that he is able to personally transcend that veil due to his contextual understanding of his "self" in both time and history, and of that self as it is both simultaneously engaged and disengaged to a dispossessed and oppressed people. The writer Ralph Ellison spoke to this unity-split in Du Bois's movement between the self and collective in his autobiography when, while being interviewed by William Penn Warren (1966), and asked about Du Bois's concept of double consciousness, he replied that "The idea that the Negro psyche is split is not viable as it seems, though it might have been true of Dr. Du Bois personally." Instead of the deep split, Ellison presents the black self as offering a "fluid, ambivalent response to men and events, which represents, at its finest, a profoundly civilized adjustment to the cost of being human in this modern world."

Du Bois' second venture into theorizing in his 1903 (74-87) classic is his controversial theory of the "Talented Tenth." This theme constitutes a consistent Du Boisian theme on the theory and practice of leadership. He himself exemplified the best features of this group, and when one follows Du Bois's literary and political history, scattered throughout his many books, articles, and autobiographical-sociological writings the theme of leadership looms large as Du Bois stitches together a web of organizational and literary networks, all calculated to serve as weapons in the struggle for freedom and democracy.

It is interesting to compare Du Bois's idea of the role of the Talented Tenth and Lenin's later conceptualization of the Bolshevik Party (Lenin 1969). Both called for a heightened role of the educated. For Du Bois, the educated elite (Dennis 1977); for Lenin, a radicalized intelligentsia. For Du Bois, a social and cultural reformation of the United States; for Lenin, a Russian revolution. But central to Du Bois's concept was the deep and irrevocable responsibility of the educated to the people from whence they came and to whom they owed much. The idea of "giving back" to the people is deeply etched in the social psychology of Black Americans, though the reality often does not often conform to the theory. If Du Bois were religious, which he was not, he might confirm a belief in the Luke theorem (Luke 12:48): "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." Just as Du Bois's leadership ideas may be compared to Lenin's, his edu-

cated elite theory can also be compared to Antonio Gramsci's (1971) "organic intellectual" and Karl Mannheim's "free-floating intellectual" (1936), though his model of the intellectual fits more closely Gramsci's model.

Finally, Du Bois, in *Souls of Black folk*, presents an analysis of the changing worlds of blacks in the North and the South and their differing psychologies and sociologies. What Du Bois analyzed would be the degree to which relative freedoms shaped blacks in both regions, and central to these regional studies is the development of the idea of community and how black citizens create and sustain their idea of community. Though he empathized with Southern blacks and understood the hurdles they fought to overcome, it was clear in *Souls* that he saw himself as a Northern black. However, the juxtaposition of Northern and Southern blacks would remain a part of his sociological inquiry for many years. As he had already engaged in participant observation in both the North and the South by 1903—in the South: "The Negroes of Farmville, Virginia" (1898); in the North: *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (1899), and the *Black North* in 1901 (1969). Du Bois would incorporate his keen observations and interpretative sociological perspectives from these studies into his *Souls of Black Folk*, but all together he set forth a research path which forthrightly led to comparative community analysis: rural South and Urban North, and even within the urban North, comparative data and analysis on Philadelphia, New York, and Boston. In addition to directing us towards urban and rural comparative analysis, Du Bois also proffered a view of the agents, political, cultural, and economic, prompting social changes within each community.

I will skip Du Bois's 1920s autobiography, *Darkwater*, and end the paper with *Dusk of Dawn* (1940), a more pointedly sociological and autobiographical book, for it was this book which enabled me to sharpen my focus and create a clearer perception of the term "Dual Marginality." In this book Du Bois sketches what was then the most in-depth critique of actually living "with" whites in a white world, whereas most blacks could say that they lived in a white world only in a larger general sense, but could not make the claim that they lived in the world "with" whites. From his youth, high school, at Harvard, and at the University of Berlin, he lived in close proximity to whites, but he lived in a special and isolated world

within that white world. He was in a world within a world. This was not merely a paradox, but rather a paradox within a paradox, and he writes of the thick veil which made him "limited in physical movement and provincial in thought and dream." But what is most provoking about the chapter, *The White World*, are the recounted conversations he has had or heard of the white response to blacks and the wider world. But while launching a verbal attack on the white world, it is clear that Du Bois wants to be a part of that world, in as much as that world constitutes one-half of his reference group affiliations and loyalty. His is a love-hate relationship, a dialectical relationship, in which the "they" of the white world, moves uncomfortably with the "we" of his group affiliation. And though he is angered and made to feel unwanted by that world, he understands that world all too well, because he has lived intimately within its boundaries, and has seen the collective emperors unclothed. Thus, his social and psychological critique of the white world is not the work of a stranger to that world, but the work of one who has burrowed into the center of enemy territory, seen the good and the bad, and is performing a very public and collective "they" world, autopsy. And true to his dialectical reasoning, he makes it clear that he is "in" the white world but not "of" that world. The important theoretical issues here are that in my summation of the "white world" as it relates to my theme of Dual Marginality (see Dennis 1991; 2003; 2006) the individual, as Du Bois, sees himself, and describes himself, is that the world of "the other", and though he may be rejected by that world, he also rejects a part of that world.

Rejection is therefore a two-way street, as was the case with Du Bois: He wanted to be in the white world, but he chose his level of engagement and disengagement, just as whites, likewise, opened or closed doors when they so desired. Such a situation is rife with ambivalences, and paradoxes. Du Bois would plumb the depths of the "we" world of blacks just as deeply as he dissected the "they" world of whites. This world is yet another side of the dual marginality theme, but Du Bois would/could do what few blacks could: his education and status permitted him to move with relative ease within and between both worlds, especially at a time when the American society was rigidly segregated.

And it is here in his discussion of "the Colored World Within" that Du Bois (1940:

173-74) contrasts the two worlds and presents a sociological reason, and implicit theory, for a comparative analysis of the two worlds. For blacks, the inner black world provides the opportunity for social interaction and institution-building. It also provides a space for "mental peace." But the white world, though it rejects blacks, is richer, has more opportunities, and presents a siren call to blacks. Thus, the relationships within the "we" world is also one of tensions, frustrations, and stresses: the desire to remain within the warmth and shelter of that world, and to sustain its inner world dynamics, even though that world is segregated and truncated. And a desire to disengage. Thus, there is a similar dialectic operating in the inner "we" world of individuals dialectically moving between engagement and disengagement.

Other black and white scholars have given us excellent scientific accounts of the views of whites in their world, but many have not always provided us with a window into the racial world of whites, and having been published in 1940, Du Bois' book was unique. He was able to probe the dynamics of both worlds autobiographically and theoretically because he understood both worlds and wanted to be a part of both. But for all the reasons given above, he was able to have only a partial and incomplete relationship with both. With the rise today of a black educated and professional class in the United States, the vast major of whom work within predominately white institutions, the idea of the "dual environment", suggested by Du Bois, can, with contemporary knowledge of blacks who live, work, play, and occasionally worship, in two often contrasting worlds, make the case for understanding this phenomenon under the rubric of "dual marginality": living in both worlds, but do so from the dialectics of engagement/ disengagement, participation/withdrawal and dichotomies such as these. Du Bois aided in our understanding of both worlds, and interestingly, his treatment of both worlds as autobiographer and theorist enriched our understanding of both, though many will understand Du Bois the autobiographer. Few will see the pieces of theory stitched within the personal narrative. But this is where we must make the case for Du Bois. He warned us, and informed us from the very beginning that he would weave the two ideas together. Those of us who understood what he did are all sociologically and theoretically richer.

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## Expanding W.E.B. Du Bois' Concept of Double Consciousness

Benjamin P. Bowser, California State University, East Bay

The idea that African Americans are conscious of their American identity as well as their racial identity was first popularized by W.E.B. Du Bois in *Souls of Black Folk* (1902). In addition, he pointed out that these identities are in conflict with one another and give African Americans a special insight regarding American society. Du Bois wrote:

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, -- a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, -- an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two un-reconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn as under (p. 10).

It is assumed by most social scientists that Du Bois posed double consciousness as an empirical reality. But *Souls of Black Folk* is actually a series of reflective essays that are as much fiction and biography as fact. Du Bois was also a novelist and an essayist who was not bound to empirical evidence in his latter roles. Furthermore, *Souls* was not the first time Du Bois used the concept of double consciousness; he first used it in an essay published in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1897 -- his first essay for a nationally circulated magazine. "Strivings of the Negro People" was reprinted in *Souls* (Bruce Jr. 1992). It was Du Bois' intent to persuade his largely white audience that the Negro is a human being and is not a "thing" as viewed in the minds of many Whites. He argued: if black people are human then they also have consciousness of their and others' plights and, if given the opportunity,

can articulate what they see and think. Du Bois' continued work on the theme of blacks as a conscious humanity in his later novels and essays -- *Quest of the Silver Fleece: A Novel* (1911), *Dark Water: Voices from within the Veil* (1920), *The Gift of Black Folk* (1924), *Dark Princess: A Romance* (1928) and *Dusk of Dawn* (1940).

The internal conflict between being American and a "Negro" and now "black" has also been a central theme in black literature and explored in the writings of Frederick Douglas (Blight, 1990), Richard Wright and Toni Morrison (Gilroy, 1993), Ralph Ellison (Banner-Haley, 2002), and other creative writers and essayists (Adell, 1994; Hubbard, 2003). But what is not clear after a century are answers to the following: if Du Bois' double consciousness exists, who has it; who does not; under what circumstances does it develop or wane; do other racial/ethnic groups have it also? Might there be additional consciousnesses that raise the same questions of who, when and how? Then if these empirical questions can be answered, there is an additional question of what differences do having two or more consciousnesses make? Do they, indeed, affect black personalities or insight about themselves, America or anything else as Du Bois suggested?

Du Bois seemed to have taken double consciousness for granted in his social science. If he had studied it, we can only guess what might have been his starting hypotheses. Based upon his descriptions of social classes in *Philadelphia Negro* (1898), different social values and perceptions were as much a part of class differences as economic differences. In this sense, he was comfortable with Max Weber's notions of class and consciousness and, in fact, knew Weber. But after 1935 Du Bois spent the rest of his long career engaged in advocacy and explanation of black racial oppression as national and international issues. This work started with *The Negro* (1915) and became more evident in *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935); *Black Folk Then and Now* (1939); *Color and Democracy* (1945); and *The World and Africa* (1947). These are Du Bois' central statements about social structure. In his mind con-

ventional writing as well as the Marxist tradition did not adequately account for the role that racial exploitation played in the rise of western capital and industrialization. Nor did they account for the continuing economic misdevelopment and subordination of Africa and African peoples throughout the world. Macro-theory that explored global inequalities with regard to European dominance simply missed the mark if it did not look at racism and Africa.

It was not until Du Bois was well into his eighties before he could have returned to the concept of double consciousness. But there is less of a sense of the concept in his late-career work -- *The Black Flame: A Trilogy* (1957) or *An ABC of Color* (1963). Nor is there extensive discussion of double consciousness in his *Autobiography* (1968). His late biographer, Herbert Aptheker, stated that the elder Du Bois had second thoughts about some of his early work. He underestimated the ability of powerful white interests to buy out black leadership, here and abroad, which repudiated his notion of the talented tenth. He also questioned the wisdom of his early petitions to the western powers in the 1900 Pan-African Congress and the 1911 Universal Races Congress. It was naïve to attempt to convince the people who ran American and European industries and governments to recognize the humanity of people of color and to withdraw from the colonies. These second thoughts provide some insight for why Du Bois did not return to the concept of double consciousness in his final years.

### Double Consciousness Reconsidered

There may be another reason why Du Bois did not return to double consciousness. He passed his entire life in a formally segregated America. Du Bois died in 1963 just as de jure racial segregation was about to be dismantled in the South and de facto segregation questioned in the North. Indeed, he was an American but also had to live among other Blacks even in New York. A double consciousness of both being an American and "Negro"

was a predictable outcome of this structural arrangement. In which case, the double consciousness that Du Bois wrote about was a taken-for-granted outcome of middle class racial segregation and was too obvious for formal study. If consciousness is shaped by social structure, then the production of consciousnesses in contemporary society may be vastly more complex than in the prior century. Also there may be aspects of consciousness that existed during Du Bois' time that are only now being expressed openly.

For example, the black underclass might be more racially and class segregated today than ever before (Massey 1993). It has proportionately more members cut off from even racially discriminatory employment with no role whatsoever in the mainstream economy. They survive in an underground economy organized around drug trafficking. The black working class is proportionately smaller and less influential than in the 1930s – an outcome of automation, deindustrialization, urban renewal, displacement of jobs to the suburbs along interstates highways and overseas, and the war on drugs (on black people). The black middle class is not as physically segregated and perhaps one-quarter live among whites. If consciousness follows structure, there could be three, four or more distinct racial consciousnesses among African Americans following variations in structural conditions.

#### What If Chris Rock Is Right?

Chris Rock cut right to the core: "I love black people, but I hate niggers" . . . "There is a civil war going on . . . between black people and niggers." What if he is correct about the two identity camps? In the first "black people" have at least a double consciousness with a sense of racial identity consistent with Du Bois's. The social scientific literature supports this point (Cokley 2002; Cross 1991; Seaton, et al 2006; Sellers, et al 2006). The most interesting of this empirical work hypothesizes stages of development. The most advanced black and white people have psychologically worked through the negative influences of racism and are well adjusted in their respective racial identities (Cross 1991; Helms 1990). The work that most closely examines the second camp—"niggers"—is Elijah Anderson's *Code of the Streets* (Anderson 1999).

Studies of racial consciousness are equally deficient in identifying any dimension of racial awareness that comes close to the description of "niggers" or even self-hatred which might be closely associated with identifying and calling oneself a "nigger" (Brown 2002; Durant & Sparrow 1997; Eidelson 2005; Wester, et al 2006). The most desirable points in both the research on racial identity and race consciousness are based upon becoming well adjusted and, in effect, middle class.

If Chris Rock is correct, there is another black identity and consciousness evident among African Americans who self-identify as "niggers." The implication is that these black people not only use the n-word to describe themselves, but also that they have a whole life-style, world-view and consciousness that comes with it. We know very little about this world and instead have black middle class characterizations such as "niggers" do not value higher education, view going to jail as an honor, could give a damn what white people think and have absolute contempt for the black middle class. They see nothing wrong with being a "thug," with using illegal drugs, with calling women and men they disrespect as "bitches" and with referring to each other as "niggers" in both a negative and positive sense. There is no indication that these folks are torn between American and racial identities or

anything else.

The sudden visibility of this black underworld is due to the influence of gangster rap. One might even claim that the world of "niggers" did not exist before the early 1990s prominence of the gangster rap group N.W.A. (Niggers with Attitude). Members of this rap group claimed that the term "nigger" is commonly used in their home community, Compton, California, and can have positive meanings. That the world N.W.A. reflected would break out into public view from southern California is no surprise. The vast majority of Compton residents are from the rural and deep South and still have folkways dating back to Jim Crow and sharecropping. Also the black middle class in California has much less control over these folks; black recording company executives initially opposed the gangster rappers as did black publications and radio stations because of their foul language and repulsive images. The very bottom of the African American society has been commercialized and made public by independent entrepreneurs and major recording corporations over ineffective opposition and objections from black middle class gatekeepers.

"Niggers" are not new and existed long before N.W.A. and their contemporaries. Black comedians such as Richard Prior, Redd Foxx and Moms Mabley have long described people with the same values and attitudes described by Chris Rock. The implication of "niggers" in the past and present is that there are people who are part of the black experience who have been overlooked in research on racial identity and consciousness. Their existence calls into question how thorough are formulas of black double consciousness and black identity. Well before gangster rap, St. Clair Drake pointed out to me that he and Horace Cayton in *Black Metropolis* (1945) used largely middle class lenses to describe the culture of the "underworld" as did John Daniels in *In Freedom's Birth Place* (1914) and W.E.B. Du Bois in *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899). Studies of the effect of racial segregation on black youth in the South were other lost opportunities to investigate this identity ignored by middle class social scientists (Davis, 1940; Frazier, 1967; Johnson, 1941). The essential finding of this work is that racial segregation driven out of a pervasive belief in the racial inferiority of blacks led directly to an internalization of racial self-hatred in black children. This work was extended to research on the effect of segregation in Harlem which had the same impact in self-hatred among black children (Clark, 1955, 1965). Research on the impact of racial segregation offered major evidence in the 1954 Supreme Court case *Brown vs. Board of Education* which outlawed intentional racial segregation in the U.S.

If this work on black children's self-concept had been followed up with similar research on their parents, we might have learned long before gangster rappers and Chris Rock why black adults would use a vile racial epithet to identify themselves. Closer attention should have and still needs to be paid to the ways in which these black folks deal with their social condition and what cognitive sense they made of their circumstance and of themselves. They will have to be allowed to define their own sense of self and racial consciousness. There were at least three other research opportunities to further explore black racial consciousness and identity. The first was in W.E.B. Du Bois' missing work. It turns out that Du Bois spent close to twenty years traveling in the rural South during the height of Jim Crow doing interviews of

black sharecroppers. This project was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor from roughly 1910 to 1930. The late Herbert Aptheker believed that this might have been Du Bois' most perceptive sociological work, and may have addressed the issue of alternative black racial identity and consciousness. The Labor Department reportedly destroyed the manuscripts and field notes in response to Du Bois' growing prominence as a critic of the South and of domestic and international racism.

The second opportunity to explore black racial consciousness and identity was in the field work of John Work, Lewis Jones and Samuel Adams, Jr., all students of Charles Johnson during the 1930s. They set out to study the sociological basis of Mississippi Delta black communities and efforts to establish gospel music. From their music transcripts the n-word was clearly prominent in Delta every day language (Gordon 2005). But this fact and its implications were ignored. Instead, they focused on attempts to introduce more respectable gospel music to unlettered Delta residents. Only in Lewis Lomax's *The Land Where the Blues Began* (1993) does one get a full sense of the oppressive racial social structure of the Delta. But Lomax's status as a white outsider prevented him from making inferences about black identity and consciousness. Lomax got entry into the black community through Work, Jones and Adams. The final opportunity was with Charles Johnson. He and his research team produced the most insightful description of how black sharecroppers exercised agency over their oppressive circumstances in *Patterns of Negro Segregation* (1943). But here again, the fact that black sharecroppers might have had a different sense of racial identity and consciousness than outlined by Du Bois was overlooked.

In sum, the work of Du Bois, as well as other classic scholars and contemporary investigators with reference to racial consciousness and identity is incomplete in coverage. The use of the n-word among urban black youth and its popularization among whites by gangster rappers has opened the door to a much larger issue than the commodification of lower class black culture. The fact that there is another black world of potential racial consciousness and identities is now very apparent. We may find that black racial identity and consciousness may be much more varied than previously believed. There may be multi-consciousnesses and multi-identities among blacks that may indeed follow varied social structures.

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# W.E.B DU BOIS AND THE STUDY AND EMANCIPATION OF BLACK HUMANITY

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Du Bois's sociological and philosophical oeuvre produced epistemic ruptures; a revolutionary rethinking of the human order. The Du Boisian epistemic ruptures produced new ways of engaging racial domination and oppression. They, in the end, changed not just the way we think about the world and ourselves, but also the way we exist in the world. W.E.B Du Bois was, therefore, a revolutionary thinker. His breakthroughs occur from the margins of white academic and intellectual practices and from within what Du Bois famously called the Veil. He emerges organically from the life worlds of Africans. He establishes at Atlanta University the second academic sociology department in the United States, along with it Sociological Laboratory and the famous Atlanta University Conferences and the publications that came from them. At Atlanta University he headed an Africana scientific community, organically linked to the black South. In this framework he produces the literary and social scientific masterwork *The Souls of Black Folk* and *The Atlanta University Studies*. From within this scientific culture he declares in the most transgressive civilizational sense the centrality of Africa to humanity's knowledge of itself. He insists that modernity cannot be understood without understanding race; in fact they are dialectically joined. He boldly proclaims that he himself is an African. His retheorizing of modernity displaces the dominant European notions that emerge from the founding thinkers in modern European philosophy and sociology. Modernity did not produce unfettered progress, in Du Bois' thinking, nor was the only conceptual and epistemological standpoint for understanding the world European. European progress, in Du Bois's theorizing, was just that—European; human, and certainly African, progress was quite another thing. He theorizes Europe as derivative of older African and Asian civilizations, rather than historically or civilizationally primary. In establishing the theoretical foundations for a social study of race in the modern world he created new and stunning epistemological foundations for the social sciences. In so doing Du

Bois supersedes sociology as such and over the course of his sociological research invents a new science one which is inclusive, rather than exclusive and essentially European and becomes a science of global humanity. His is a transdisciplinary scientific study. He is not limited by institutional or disciplinary boundaries. He is, thereby, free to invent disciplines and explore connections between them.<sup>1</sup>

His assertion of an African identity is part of an epistemic move towards humanity in ways that European science and reason were incapable. Not only is it his anchoring his episteme within the Veil, but as part of the emancipatory aspirations of those within the Veil, his is the first scientific effort that captures the African as agent of history and as a dynamic part of the conscious development of humanity. Hence, rather than the European conceptualizations of the African as Other and as object, Du Bois sees the African as an agent of modernity and Progress. For him studying the Negro is critical to larger study of Africa, Asia and the concept of race.

He reasoned that by establishing means to study Africans he would eventually lay conditions for a study of humanity.<sup>2</sup> And doing this, in his words, as an African.<sup>3</sup> Hence, a self-conscious African-centered scientific study of race and the Negro is what he set out to do and in most respects accomplished. This 'paradigm shift', a revolutionary move in the definition of and the practice of knowledge construction, was a negation of the old and the creation of a new modality for reasoning and research. A new moment in intellectual history is begun. A real foundation for a human science, which upsets the old social science based upon notions of European and white supremacy becomes possible.

In the first instance he acknowledged that he was "flesh of the flesh and blood of the blood" of those he studied. He asserts openly that the telos of his research was to emancipate Black folk as part of liberating humanity. The immediate moral purpose to his research was to end the brutal systems of Jim Crow and colonialism. To investigate the uninvestigated, his historical and sociological research merged

science with metaphor and poetics. Which is to say he connects in practice literary and scientific work, discovering and describing events, institutions and people that had gone unnoticed and unstudied. In all of these aspects he moves against the grain of positivism and even the empirical realism of the German school headed by his professors in Berlin: Wagner and von Schmoller. Du Bois' critique of the social sciences and their extant practices, especially their blindness to race and the African, made even more robust and profound his assault upon their epistemological foundations, and their attendant tropes of reason and science. However, he humanizes social science research by making the African human its center.

Du Bois's achievement occurred not from the centers of academic knowledge production and philosophical debate, but from their margins. His project was not encouraged, but viewed with indifference and often contempt. He was a researcher, ethnographer, historian, working social scientist, active Pan Africanist, early feminist and proponent of racial uplift. In some ways he was too busy to indulge lengthy academic debates about philosophy and theoretical questions about methods. He insisted, simply, that he wanted to be accurate and careful about his work, even when the American world did not care much and hoped he would embarrass himself.

Du Bois identified his career and intellectual project as explaining a Problem (he usually capitalized Problem when speaking of the problem of race). Hence, he made no special claims to 'scientific objectivity', or a transcendent vision. Neither did he toy with two competing and extant philosophical ways to get around a critical challenge to European epistemology; the self edifying and transcendental path of pragmatism, or the self absorbed nihilism of Nietzschean existentialism. In *Dusk of Dawn* (1940) [his second autobiography] he tells us, "My life had its significance and its only deep significance because it was part of a Problem: but that problem was, as I continue to think, the central problem of

the greatest democracies and so the Problem of the future world." With breathtaking insight, anchored in critical self-reflection upon forty-five years of active social science, he identifies the importance of his work. "The problem of the future world is the charting, by means of intelligent reason, of a path not simply through the resistance of physical force, but through the vaster and far more intricate jungle of ideas conditioned on unconscious and subconscious reflexes of living things; on blind unreason and often irresistible urges of sensitive matter; of which the concept of race is today one of the most threatening. I seem to see a way of elucidating the inner meaning and significance of that race problem by explaining it in terms of the one human life I know best" (1940 [1986], 551). This last sentence, rather than a retreat into subjectivism and psychologism and an abandonment of the search for objective truth, manifests his rather sophisticated understanding of the intricate dialectic of the subject of knowledge's relationship to the objects of knowledge. In his characteristically subtle and understated fashion Du Bois was presenting a living alternative to positivism and 'scientific objectivism'. Knowledge production in this Du Boisian construal is an active process whereby the researcher/scientist/practitioner actively engages the objects of knowledge. Hence, an unbreakable dialectical relationship emerges. He avoids reification and what could be a claim of scientism. His move parallels the famous phenomenological move made by Edmund Husserl. The researcher is an active subject engaged with objects of research, themselves conscious, active and ever changing.<sup>4</sup> Knowledge is, henceforth, a living product of the intellectual engagement of the active subject with the living objects of knowledge. Du Bois will, therefore, insist, in explaining *Dusk of Dawn*, "I have written then what is meant to be not so much my autobiography as the autobiography of a concept of race, elucidated, magnified and doubtless distorted in the thoughts and deeds which were mine" (ibid). "We argued in an 1897 paper 'The Study of the Negro Problems' that 'The American Negro deserves study for the great end of advancing the cause of science in general'." Again in *Dusk of Dawn*, speaking of the 1890's he said, "Social scientists were then still thinking in terms of theory and vast and eternal laws, but I had a concrete group of living beings artificially set off by themselves and capable of almost laboratory experiment" (ibid, 600). He took upon himself to carry out these studies at Atlanta University. He hoped "to broaden and intensify the study, sharpen the tools of investigation and perfect our methods of work, so that we should have an increasing body of scientifically ascertained fact, instead of the vague mass of the so-called Negro problems" (ibid).

Du Bois in *The Autobiography* (1968) [his third autobiography] suggests that he turned from philosophy to history and what would later come to be called sociology because William James told him that he could not make a living with philosophy. However, he also suggests a more compelling explanation. "But it was James with his pragmatism and Albert Bushnell Hart with his research methods," he says, "that turned me back from the lovely but sterile land of philosophic speculation, to the social sciences as the field for gathering and interpreting that body of fact which would apply to my program for the Negro," (1968, 148). He

then makes an astonishing revelation, which in light of other observations bespeaks a unique epistemology, "[A]nd after my work with Hart in United States history, I conceived the idea of applying philosophy to an historical interpretation of race relations." He follows this remarkable sentence with these words, "In other words, I was trying to take my first steps toward sociology as the science of human action" (ibid). Rather than abandoning philosophy since he could not make a living with it, he applied it "to an historical interpretation of race relations". Epistemological questions remained integral to his definition of the practices of social science. He sums up this extraordinary moment in his intellectual life, "Thus in my quest for basic knowledge with which to help guide the American Negro I came to the study of sociology by way of philosophy and history rather than by physics and biology" (ibid, 149). Rather than philosophy as speculative philosophy, he sought to turn it into an active part of social science research, what he called "applying philosophy". It is also important that he makes clear that he comes to social science not through the natural sciences, which could have bogged him down in the trap of positivism and maybe psychologism, but through philosophy and history. Out of the wild claims and boastfulness of a superficial Anglo-American academy, whose social science practices were defined by Herbert Spencer's theorizing and claims to have found eternal laws of race evolution and potentiality, Du Bois projects the possibility of doing actual science. But, again, a new epistemology was called for. But this epistemology would come from, as he insisted, applying philosophy. It is a move that we would today identify as phenomenology, rather than metaphysics.

In a 1956 letter to Herbert Aptheker (1956:[1978]:394) about Aptheker's recently published book *History and Reality*, Du Bois once again talks about his philosophy. In this letter he anticipates what he said in the *Autobiography* concerning philosophy, history and sociology. He tells Aptheker he went to Harvard seeking Truth, "which I spelled with a capital". He continues, "For two years I studied under William James while he was developing Pragmatism; under [George] Santayana and his attractive mysticism and under [Josiah] Royce and his Hegelian idealism." Out of these two years he tells us, "I then found and adopted a philosophy which has served me since; thereafter I turned to the study of History and what has become Sociology." He said he wished to express his "philosophy more simply." "Several times in the past," he begins, "I have started to formulate it, but met such puzzled looks that it remains only partially set down in scraps of manuscript. I gave up the search of 'Absolute' Truth; not from doubt of the existence of reality, but because I believe that our limited knowledge and clumsy methods of research made it impossible now completely to apprehend Truth. I nevertheless firmly believe that gradually the human mind and absolute and provable truth would approach each other and like the 'Asymptotes of the Hyperbola' (I learned the phrase in high school and was ever after fascinated by it) would approach each other nearer and nearer and yet never in all eternity meet. I therefore turned to Assumption--scientific Hypothesis. I assumed the existence of Truth, since to assume anything else or not to assume was unthinkable. I assumed that Truth was only partially known but that it was ultimately largely knowable, although perhaps in part forever unknowable."

He then returns to science and points out "Science adopted the hypothesis of a Knower and something Known." This is not Du Bois's approach. His, as he pointed out, is Asymptotic, rather than reificationist. Knowing is an active process of emergence predicated upon a dialectic between an active agent of knowledge and a living object of knowledge. While "assum[ing] the existence of Truth," Du Bois "assumed that Truth was only partially known but that it was ultimately largely knowable," and then the proviso or the conditionality of the activist quest or engagement with the living /changing objects of knowledge, "although perhaps in part forever Unknowable." For this reason he rejected in 1897 Herbert Spencer's search for Eternal Laws of human society. And in this letter the rank positivism of the natural sciences. He returns to academic philosophy of his Harvard years and Williams James's pragmatism. "The Jamesian Pragmatism as I understood it from his lips was not based on the 'usefulness of a hypothesis, as you put it, but on its workable logic if its truth was assumed." James was an agnostic in terms of the possibilities of knowing the world, and therefore pessimistic about changing it. He rejected the method of proceeding on the basis of a hypothesis about the world. For James we only know what is in our heads or what is given to our minds through the senses. There are no provable statements about the world that were valid or 'useful'. James, unlike Du Bois, moves to psychology rather than sociology and history. However, Du Bois' combining of philosophy, history and sociology produces outcomes similar to Husserl's, yet goes beyond Husserlian phenomenology by contextualizing the intersubjective within historical and social frameworks. James, Husserl and Du Bois, however, started from philosophy, but each ended up in different places.

Du Bois completes this short exegesis through philosophy and science with the following observation, "I assumed Cause and Change. With these admittedly unprovable assumptions, I proposed to make a scientific study of human action, based on the hypotheses of the reality of such actions, of their casual connections and of their continued occurrence and change because of Law and Chance."

And then a remarkable definition of sociology, "I called Sociology the measurement of the element of Chance in Human Action." This connection of Law and Chance suggests an acute understanding of the possibility of infinite variation (a la quantum mechanics) and Law or regular patterns. Reality, for Du Bois is complex and chaotic. There exists a dynamic between variation and regularity, between Chance and Law, or between law and uncertainty. Sociology, therefore, not only studies the given regularities, or Laws in human behavior, but, and here the Du Boisian definition of sociology, the measurement of Chance (I read possibilities) in Human Action. The social universe in the Du Boisian construal is a dynamic state, much like a quantum physical state or that envisioned by chaotic dynamic principles. A world, however, in spite of its complex dynamism is knowable, at least in part. The social scientist while attempting to know the human world is constantly developing methods of research that will make it possible to know more and more about a reality that is never absolutely knowable. However, when it comes to human action the realm of chance is equal to or even trumps law.

In a 1905 essay entitled "Sociology Hesitant" he argues against positivist sociology, claiming that it deals in abstractions, it calls these abstractions society and then attempts from these abstraction to discover laws that govern society. In the end sociology in this construal was merely an endless word game. He proposed an alternative. As he says, the true student of sociology...

"adopted the speech and assumption of humanity in regard to human action and yet studied those actions with all possible scientific accuracy. They have refused to cloud their reason with metaphysical entities undiscovered and undiscoverable, and they have also refused to neglect the greatest possible field of scientific investigation because they are unable to find laws similar to the law of gravitation. They have assumed a world of physical law peopled by beings capable in some degree of actions inexplicable and uncalculable according to these laws. And their object has been to determine as far as possible the limits of the Uncal-

culable—to measure, if you will, the Kantian Absolute and Undetermined Ego" (1905/2001:42).

He concludes, "Again these students of human nature have repeatedly refused to be thrown into utter confusion by the question: Is this a science?" Ronald Judy commenting upon this extraordinary essay insists that Du Bois "conceived of the Negro as an object of analysis that functions as a fundamental metaphor of universal social development (2000:34)." Judy continued, "That attempt required a new habit of thinking, one that included the natural and human sciences as equally valid yet distinctive modes of accounting for reality" (ibid).

Social science, for Du Bois, was not an abstract endeavor. The location of the scientist and his/her identities and entanglements with the social universe in general and objects of her/his research specifically is a decisive dimension of the knowledge production process. Du Bois' metaphor of the Veil is noteworthy in this regard, especially when discussing his transgressive epistemology. The Veil connotes not only physical social barriers, but also modalities of knowing. One's ways of knowing the world are conditioned, in known and unknown ways, by the nature and location of one's racial identity and being. The social scientist is, ultimately, a subject/agent of research and implicated/entangled in the object of study. The Veil as a metaphor for the conditions and origins of one's epistemic status/position and the modalities of one's epistemology are deeply significant. It is the Veil as an epistemological metaphor that explains the phrase "autobiography of a race concept" in the subtitle of *Dusk of Dawn*. In a sense Du Bois argues that his autobiography is connected to the history of the Veil and a race concept. His intellectual project and its epistemology are bound by, though not overdetermined by the object of his research, the Veil and the Negro.

The Negro, he says in *Souls*, is shut out from the white world by a vast veil. Those within the Veil are defined as a problem by the white world and are always being asked or wanting to be asked by the white outer world "How does it feel to be a problem?" While the outer world views them as a problem, Du Bois looked upon those within the Veil differently. They were

a seventh son, born, as legend had it, with a veil, a membrane over their eyes. [T]he Negro," he argues, "is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second sight in this American world--a world which yielded him no true self consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world." So the Negro has both deeper vision as a seventh son, and blurred vision due to seeing himself, as an oppressed race, through the eyes of the Others, the dominant race. How, Du Bois asks, can the double aims, rooted in double consciousness be made one; how can the deeper vision of things inform a single emancipatory project? For Du Bois it is science and the vast intellectual project related to race liberation. Double consciousness obscures the social world and one's place in it, which makes necessary social science of race and the Negro people. Science, related to race activism, potentially moves the Negro beyond double (or obscured) consciousness to the potentialities inherent to a seventh son ontology. The project must locate itself, finally within the Veil, not outside of it, or above it. The African American scientist him/herself is forever on the precipice, always, too, an agent, encountering the pitfalls of double consciousness, but equipped and working in a critical collective, to scientifically demonstrate what Du Bois calls Chance and Law (see "Sociology Hesitant"). Yet, the African centered scientist is always perilously close to succumbing to the wasted aims and contradictions of double consciousness, of, in fact, seeing the world and having his/her work judged by the aims of what Du Bois calls the outer world. So much of promising Black scholarship has been ultimately wasted in this ceaseless and self-defeating dance to achieve white acceptance (see Hortense Spillers "The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: A Reconsideration"). Yet, as the metaphorical seventh sons, flesh of the flesh and blood of the blood of Africans, she/he is capable of stunning insights and scientific breakthroughs. In this regard the African American social scientist, as with Du Bois, potentially represents a scientist of a new type. As Du Bois' autobiographical writings suggest, to achieve this, a difficult and perilous path must be traversed: through the intellectual and scientific universes and the social and cultural obstacles of the white constructed world. The realities created by the Veil must be constantly engaged. To engage the realities created by the Veil a special intellectual consciousness is called for on the part of the researcher; one informed by an awareness of the vast and perilous journey to be objective without succumbing to reification; and to perfect the intellectual instruments of the agent/subject of knowledge without giving in to agnosticism, nihilism and pessimism. Knowledge is possible; freedom is possible. At the heart of each is engagement and struggle. Hence, Du Bois' practices of social science rupture the boundaries and limitations of white world social science and its racial assumptions. As well it acknowledges truth, while seeing all truths as contingent and provisional. It draws upon Hegelian phenomenology and Jamesian pragmatism, but brilliantly proposes a new phenomenology as a way of knowing the African world, that challenges the 'normal' way of seeing African and deploys a different science based upon the humanity of Africans. It is my contention that the revolutionary move was to assert as necessary to the social sciences the humanity of the African, but in so doing Du Bois moves beyond them to what becomes a human science, liberated

from notions of racial supremacy and civilizational hierarchy.

#### Notes

1 His sociological and historical work seldom fits disciplinary standards. If anything we see him bending disciplinary definitions, while he invents new ones. In many ways his work goes beyond multidisciplinary to what I am calling transdisciplinarity.

2 *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899: 388).

3 "On The Souls of Black Folk" (1904).

4 To get a full sense of the range of the epistemic grounding of his sociological research methods a close reading of the *Atlanta University Studies* is required. Particularly significant from an epistemic and methodological standpoint are the studies on "The Negro Church" (1903) and "The Negro Family" (1905).

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