

W.E.B Du Bois

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W.E.B. Du Bois

W.E.B Du Bois is an exceptional sociologist who changed sociology with theories and knowledge to help the world think critically about things that are a part of society. William Edward Burghardt was an African American born in the North in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. Since Du Bois did not face the same challenges that African Americans were facing in the South, Du Bois became a scholar in learning about what was happening in Southern states. After his education at Fisk University, Du Bois became a prominent advocate for justice for African Americans. Something that Du Bois suggested is African Americans become black nationalists. This means becoming prideful in your blackness and culture and freely embracing it. While this is true, black individuals would have to take care of their finances and economy(Allan&Daynes, 2017). Although this model of Du Bois seems like a great framework to stop injustice and discrimination happening, Jim Crow Laws were pertinent. As an example of how Du Bois's model would not work is for example, after 1903, the Tulsa Massacre happened when white supremacists conducted a mass killing of black business owners and black people who were separated from white people. The United States is a country that was founded on colonialism, oppression, and slavery and it is portrayed as the land of new opportunities. After laws passed that were against slavery, the legacy of slavery was still relevant, and will forever be when discussing the history of race (Breen, 2022).

Du Bois saw many concerns about the United States which sparked his interest in topics and specialties which he had. According to Allan and Daynes, W.E.B Du Bois conducted the first scientific study of the conditions of being black in America (2017,p.294).

Du Bois was raised during the Reconstruction period, and the opportunities available for African Americans during this time changed when Jim Crow Laws came into the picture. By Jim Crow Laws disrupting the newly founded lives of the black Americans in the South, Du Bois took action. Jim Crow laws were state or local laws that were used to continue racial segregation.

Before the birth of Du Bois, the three-fifths compromise was in effect. This is where the states only accounted for 3 out of the 5 African Americans in the states to continue to keep white control and power in authority. Voting suppression laws were used to silence black voters and limit their ability to do their civic duty of participating in democracy. From the start of Jim Crow Laws, being unlawful treatment of African Americans continued the outlawed segregation.

In W.E.B. Du Bois's personal life, he had to deal with the unequal treatment of the other scholars who questioned Du Bois's knowledge and education. Although they tried to discredit Du Bois, his work continued. He was aware of other theories that Spencer, Comte, and Darwin and rejected these theories. Even though Du Bois did not get recognized by white peers, people still supported Du Bois and his works. Typically he received support from women, as well as other black people and activists. One of Du Bois's feuds was between him and Booker T. Washington. Both were activists for the black community, yet they were so different." Du Bois approached action through philosophy and theory, while Washington was a man of action largely by faith and intuition"(Thorpe, 1956). Washington believed that black Americans should use the founding documents to get their rights. Du Bois believed that black Americans should have solidarity with each other and not integrate into white society. Overall the racial inequalities that were occurring while Du Bois grew up and developed helped shape his theories and research which he contributed to sociology.

W.E.B. Du Bois has many theories and contributions to the scholarly world, but we will only discuss a few of them in this paper for the sake of space. During Du Bois's studies, he believed that the experiences of African Americans or marginalized people can only be experienced not researched or studied since it is more difficult to understand. This is the approach that Du Bois wanted to have throughout his research. One way that Du Bois described the unfair representation of African Americans was through media and the way it presented black people in the media against the white-dominated society. A concept that Du Bois created was double consciousness. Double consciousness refers to the way one's

experience can turn into many lenses and awareness of other identities. This is related to black Americans, and although they are black, they are also American and have to take on both of these identities. Originally formulated from Cooley's theory of the looking glass, and Mead's theory of role-taking (Allan & Daynes, 2017). Another contribution of Du Bois is he was one of the scholars to say that stated how capitalism is an exploiting mechanism of those in power and control. People who are not in this category do not have the opportunity or chance to overpower the other. For example, the CEO of a company will remain the head in control of and business because of the labor of their workers. Lastly, Du Bois recognized how oppression became structural and how it suppresses African Americans culturally. Du Bois believed that due to this cultural suppression in society, he believes that this caused African Americans to gain a sense of double consciousness.

Racism is still seen in today's society and determines how some people are treated in society. Du Bois was one of the first black theorists who was recognized for his accomplishments and work in sociology and academia. From his works published like "The Souls of Black Folk," "Philadelphia Negro," and other published works he provided the layout for the study of racism in America. From Du Bois's work, he taught sociology scholars how research should be conducted. He taught scholars that for good research you must have qualitative and quantitative data, to get the best results for your research. Qualitative is the piece of research where you gain personal connections and experiences from the participants. Quantitative is the piece of research where you collect data through surveys or other ways. These two components of research are important because they back each other in their results.

As mentioned before Du Bois fought against systematic racism, but prior he was opposed to other theorists about scientific racism. He disagreed with Darwin and another theorist who created their definition of race and racism (Feuerherd, 2019). Du Bois understood that race is a social construct in society, and those who started the race trend used that as a way to increase their money. For example, this idea of race and gender being a social construct

is a way that Du Bois's contributions lasted in society. Another example of Du Bois's contributions is how double consciousness then, is now code-switching in today's term. Code-switching today is when an African American or a person of color, changes their persona when in majority white spaces(Campbell, 2022). This is commonly seen in workforce settings and things that could be beneficial to people. Like banks, loan offices, school systems, and more institutions. These people of color have to take on another person, by changing their voices, and their hairstyles, because they are trying to fit in the white space. While doing this, the people of color have to remember their culture and to embrace the culture they are a part of.

In conclusion, W.E.B. Du Bois made an impactful contribution to society and to the sociology world. The year 1986, many of the African Americans lives changed forever. Jim Crow laws were a way to silence African Americans and continue white supremacy, but Du Bois was a resilient man who continued his studies no matter what. Du Bois has made the pathway clear for many leaders fighting for racial equity and inclusion. People like Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and many more had a great person to resemble and honor while they were fighting for equality. Hopefully one day, people will be able to accept and respect that the world is diverse now and more people can have power and not just the white population.

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