

ABSTRACT

This project seeks to recreate the foot survey W.E.B. DuBois conducted in 1896 for *The Philadelphia Negro*. DuBois' book is considered a classic because it was among the earliest works of sociology to use empirical data as the basis for its findings. DuBois meticulously collected data about the black households living in the Old Seventh Ward in downtown Philadelphia and reported his results in detailed charts, tables, and maps in his 500-page study. Unfortunately, none of the primary data DuBois collected has been preserved. Household-level data from the 1900 U.S. Census and 1895 Bromley fire insurance map will be used to recreate DuBois' study to the extent possible. The resulting data set will be the basis for an online geographic information system (GIS) that will allow students reading the book to make interactive maps and queries. The data will also allow for new scholarship into the methods DuBois employed, the relationship between his work and the other studies conducted during the Social Survey Movement, the nature of residential segregation among blacks, European immigrants, and native whites, and the basis of the grades DuBois assigned to each household in his survey.

BACKGROUND

In 1896, the University of Pennsylvania hired a young W.E.B. DuBois to study the “negro problem” in Philadelphia’s Old Seventh Ward, an area bounded by 7th and 25th, Spruce and South Streets. Philadelphia’s College Settlement Association (CSA) commissioned the study, hoping that sound research would explain why African Americans were not supporting their “progressive” political reform efforts in that area. Despite the fact that DuBois had a Ph.D. from Harvard and had spent time studying with leading sociologists in Europe, Penn offered DuBois only a temporary position as an “assistant in sociology” and did little to integrate him into the University’s Sociology department. After 18 months of observing and surveying black households on his own, DuBois produced what has become a classic work of sociology, social science, and urban history, published in 1899 by the University of Pennsylvania Press as *The Philadelphia Negro* (Anderson, 1996; Katz & Sugrue, 1998).

Penn faculty members have produced much of the recent scholarship relating to this book, including sociologist Elijah Anderson who wrote the forward for the 1996 edition. Historians Michael Katz and Thomas Sugrue followed in 1998 with an edited collection of essays, *W.E.B. DuBois, Race, and the City: The Philadelphia Negro and Its Legacy*, based on papers presented at a two-day seminar at Penn in May 1995. In 1999, Anderson edited an issue of *The Annals of the American Academy* that featured papers presented at another two-day seminar at Penn on the legacy of DuBois’s scholarship. Sociologist Tukufu Zuberi contributed a chapter to the Katz & Sugrue book, Anderson’s issue of *The Annals*, and another more recent essay to *The Annals of the American Academy of Political Social Science* entitled “W.E.B. Du Bois’s Sociology: ‘The Philadelphia Negro’ and Social Science.”

PURPOSE & SIGNIFICANCE

This research seeks to build on the scholarship of these Penn faculty members, and others, to critically examine DuBois’s contribution to social science research methods and our understanding of urban life at the turn of the 20th century. DuBois’s book was path-breaking within the field of sociology for its systematic data collection, and it is among the richest historical sources of information about African Americans, addressing issues of migration, employment discrimination, religion, crime, housing, and education. Despite this, however, *The Philadelphia Negro* received little attention in its day and, even with the recent flurry of scholarship at Penn, continues to be neglected among DuBois’s writings. The University of Pennsylvania Press reports selling about 500 copies each year, decent sales figures for an academic book but certainly not indicative of how important the book was and still is. Specifically, this research aims to recreate DuBois’s study and to analyze his methods and results using geographic information systems (GIS).

The previous scholarship about *The Philadelphia Negro* has put this work into the larger context of DuBois’s long career and the evolution of his thinking. In that regard, the book is considered important for what it tells us about its author. Previous scholarship has also considered the role of *The Philadelphia Negro* to developments within sociology, in its research methodology and theoretical ideas about race, class, and culture (Anderson, 1996; Katz & Sugrue, 1998; Zuberi, 2004). But little of it has examined the role of the social survey and settlement house movements. Charles Booth launched the social survey movement in the early 1880s with his large-scale effort to quantify and map poverty in London. Following Booth’s example, Florence Kelley, Jane Addams, and other residents of Hull-House surveyed and mapped wages and nationalities in their Chicago

neighborhood, producing *Hull-House Maps and Papers* in 1895. DuBois, too, acknowledged the influence of Charles Booth on his work but provided no details about how or whether he was aware of the similar work at Hull-House. *The Social Survey in Historical Perspective* includes an essay by Charles Blumer on *The Philadelphia Negro*, comparing DuBois work with the other major social surveys of that time. But this is a fairly cursory review that relies primarily on secondary sources.

DuBois study was commissioned by Philadelphia's College Settlement Association (CSA), and DuBois lived above the Settlement House in the Seventh Ward for part of the time while conducting his study. What influence did CSA have on DuBois's work, and what influence did DuBois and his study have on CSA? When published in 1899, *The Philadelphia Negro* included an essay on domestic service by Isabel Eaton, a settlement house worker who was mentored by Jane Addams. To what extent was she influenced in her approach to research by Florence Kelley and others who worked on *Hull-House Maps and Papers*? What was the relationship between Philadelphia's CSA and Chicago's Hull-House? What was Eaton's relationship to DuBois?

In addition to looking more closely at the influence of the social survey and settlement house movements on DuBois's research methods, this study will examine DuBois's findings. His writing in *The Philadelphia Negro* has a decidedly judgmental tone, blaming whites for failing in their duty to help the less fortunate but also blaming blacks for being passive despite the fact that his empirical results provide evidence of pervasive racial discrimination. Zuberi (2004) has argued that this was a way for DuBois to distance himself from his subject in order to assume a voice the Eurocentric academy could hear. Anderson, on the other hand, explains inconsistencies in the book by pointing to DuBois's identity as an "elite Victorian young man" struggling to reconcile his faith in meritocracy with his first-hand knowledge of racial discrimination. Whether it was part of his inner conflict as an African American scholar or a deliberate attempt to please his audience, DuBois creates something of a rift between his empirical evidence of discrimination and his conclusions. In particular, DuBois does not push his critique of capitalism at the end of the book, instead choosing, in Anderson's words, to "let these dogs lie" (1996; p. xxv).

This study will recreate DuBois's survey of the Seventh Ward in order to compare DuBois's published results with empirical evidence. DuBois collected household-level data, but he summarized his findings in charts, tables, and narratives in the book, making it difficult to evaluate his findings using the book, alone. The only household-level data DuBois did include in the book are in the map of the properties he surveyed. He assigned each of these households a class grade—vicious and criminal, fair to comfortable, middle classes and those above. What was the basis for these class grades? DuBois provides a general description of each class, but there is no systematic evidence of how occupation, education, family composition, and place of birth influenced his choice. Was there a pattern to where blacks who migrated from similar areas or held similar jobs lived? DuBois only surveyed black households in the Seventh Ward, so he does not include native-born and immigrant whites in his map or larger study. What was the spatial relationship among blacks and different types of European immigrant? Are immigration chains more or less pronounced than black migration chains? Comparing DuBois's conclusions to new analyses promises to reveal more about DuBois as well as turn-of-the-century life in Philadelphia.

If this project is successful, it will generate new scholarship relating to the research questions outlined above. Because it will recreate DuBois's survey using primary data, it will enhance the learning experience of high school and college students who read *The Philadelphia Negro*. By making the data available to other researchers, it will also encourage additional scholarship beyond the

questions imagined at this stage. Together these new teaching and research opportunities will mean that more people will be reading and critically examining *The Philadelphia Negro* and learning about DuBois and urban history from Philadelphia's example.

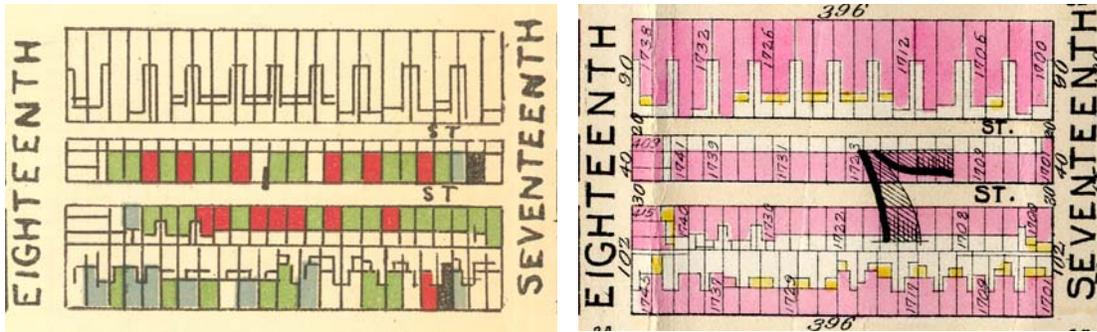
RESEARCH METHODS & DATA COLLECTION

This research will involve extensive collection of primary data and mapping and analysis using GIS. Unfortunately, the actual data that DuBois recorded on cards about households in the Seventh Ward no longer exist. The only address-level data from his study that are available are the grades he assigned to households in his map of the Seventh Ward. The best proxy for DuBois's survey results is the 1900 U.S. Census, which is available for individual households. Because DuBois collected his data in 1896 and 1897, data from the 1900 Census will not necessarily include all of the same households. Efforts will be made to assess the frequency of household moves during this time period in order to estimate the overlap between households in DuBois's study and the 1900 Census. The 1900 Census included fewer variables than DuBois's schedule, but it contains sufficient information about household composition, occupation, migration, immigration, and education to address the proposed research questions.

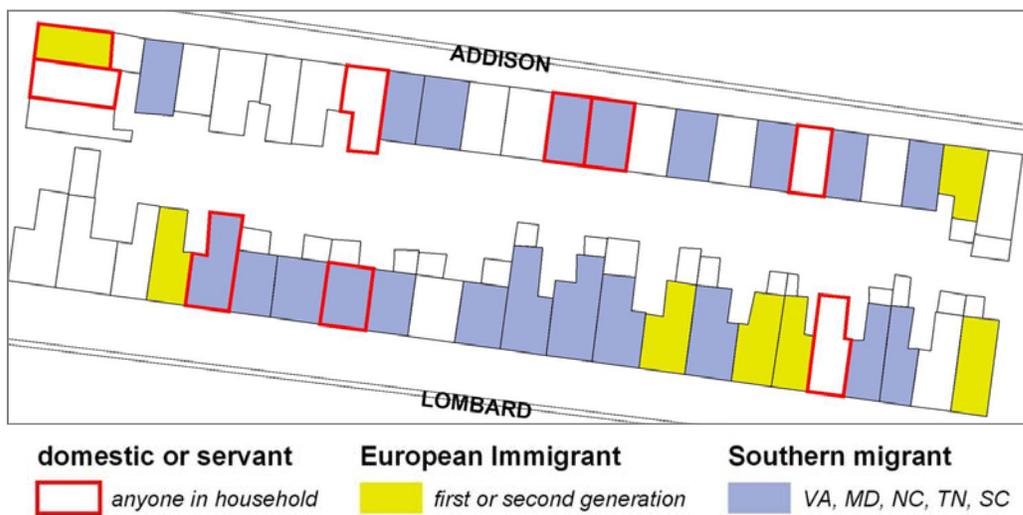
Last name	First Name	Relation	Race	AGE	BIRTH	Father	Mother	Occupation	Read	Write	English
Grimmage	Nathan	Head	B	57	PA	DE	DE	Cook	Y	Y	Y
Grimmage	Margaret	Wife	B	45	MD	MD	MD	Dressmaker	Y	Y	Y
Grimmage	Kay	Daughter	B	20	PA	PA	MD	Dressmaker	Y	Y	Y
Grimmage	Duke	Son	B	13	PA	PA	MD	At School	Y	Y	Y
Grimmage	Madeline	Daughter	B	12	PA	PA	MD	At School	Y	Y	Y
Phinnizia	Katherin	Lodger	B	48	SC	SC	SC	Dressmaker	Y	Y	Y
Turner	P.	Lodger	B	28	MD	MD	MD	Electrician	Y	Y	Y
Newman	William	Lodger	B	23	VA	VA	VA	Cook	Y	Y	Y
Turner	Bessie	Sister	B	21	MD	MD	MD	Servant	Y	Y	Y

Data from the 1900 U.S. Census on one household in the Seventh Ward.

This information will be collected for all of the households (regardless of race) in the Seventh Ward using the microfiche records at the Van Pelt Library. These data will be matched to a master address list of all addresses in the Seventh Ward. The master address list will be developed using scanned 1895 Bromley fire insurance maps, already provided by The Athenaeum of Philadelphia. The fire insurance maps include street names and house numbers. Because DuBois did not include house numbers on his map, it will be necessary to line up DuBois's map with the fire insurance map. The boundaries of all the parcels in the Seventh Ward will be digitized (traced on screen) so that these census variables and DuBois's class grades can be linked to the relevant parcel and viewed as map layers. A map layer showing the streets and street names as they were in 1896 will also be constructed.



Several blocks of data from DuBois's map of class grades is show above (left) along with the comparable section of the 1895 Bromley map (right). Note that the Bromley map includes house numbers.



By digitizing the outline of the parcels in the Seventh Ward to create a new vector GIS layer, data from the DuBois map of social class or 1900 U.S. Census (above) can be displayed in thematic maps.

By displaying different combinations of variables in different map layers, it will be possible to generate new hypotheses regarding patterns in race, migration and immigration status, employment, and education. Various segregation indices (dissimilarity, isolation, exposure) will be created to measure the extent of segregation among households based on race, migration and immigration status, and employment. Tests of significant clustering (Ripley's Local K-Function) will also be used to determine the statistical significance of segregation. Spatial regression (spatial lag and spatial autoregressive) models will be used to determine what household characteristics help explain the class grade DuBois assigned.

FUTURE EXTENSION AND FUNDING

The work proposed here is part of a larger project aimed at developing teaching and learning resources that promote the use of *The Philadelphia Negro* in high school and college history, sociology, and urban studies courses. I applied to the National Endowment for Humanities in October 2005 for a Grant for Teaching and Learning to develop an online mapping information system that would include the data described in this proposal as well as historical photographs, narratives, and

institutional histories. That proposal emphasized humanities themes and teaching and learning because that is what the NEH grant permitted. By contrast, this proposal emphasizes the integral social science research issues involved in this project. The bulk of the NEH grant would go to covering salaries (summary salary for me, part of Cartographic Modeling Lab staff salaries) and programming costs involved in creating an online GIS (subcontract to Avencia, Inc.).

Both the research and the learning materials developed through this larger project will likely become part of a larger online historical GIS for Philadelphia. The Pennsylvania Association of Special Collection Libraries (PACSCL) has a planning grant from the Mellon Foundation to develop a GeoHistory Network, and I am serving on their advisory board. This group expects to apply for a larger implementation grant from the Mellon Foundation, and the Philadelphia Negro GIS project will likely be included in that proposal. The Cartographic Modeling Lab at Penn is also involved in this GeoHistory effort and is exploring the possibility of applying to Pew Charitable Trusts or the William Penn Foundation to support an historical GIS project. The Philadelphia Negro GIS would likely be included in those proposals, as well.

Funding through these larger grants would allow for much wider data collection efforts, such as information about health (birth and death records) and wealth (deeds and wills). This project will eventually trace the history of the Center City neighborhoods in the Old Seventh Ward through the 20th century. The major forces of urban change—industrialization, deindustrialization, large-scale black migration, development of public housing, expressways, urban renewal, white flight, and gentrification—all play into the story of this area. It is now home to a large number of childless professionals and empty-nesters living in upscale apartments and condos and families in expensive row houses while. Nearly all of the low and middle-income black residents have moved out of the area since DuBois's time. By building a GIS based on primary sources such as the housing inspections conducted by the Octavia Hill Society in the early 1900s, interviews conducted for William Fuller's Negro Migrant Study in 1923, and newspaper clippings from newspapers, these efforts will provide a data infrastructure that can support years and years of new research and learning.

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