RHETM
Review of the History of Economic Thought and Methodology

Rutherford, M 2024 Racism, Segregation, Acceptance: American Economics and Black Labor Studies 1885–1965. *Review of the History of Economic Thought and Methodology*, 1(1): 1–53. DOI: https://doi.org/10.16995/rhetm.17215

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Racism, Segregation, Acceptance: American Economics and Black Labor Studies 1885–1965

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This paper investigates the failure of American economists to engage positively with Black issues and Black students until recent times. The paper traces this history, beginning with the early American Economic Association and the overt racism to be found in the *AEA Publications* series and other major economics journals up to about 1910. It is noteworthy that during this time, W. E. B. Du Bois attempted to gain acceptance within the AEA, but his efforts ultimately failed. Following this, there was a long period of 30 years during which economic issues relating to the Black population were rarely considered at all by White economists, and this despite major events such as Great Migration of Black people to Northern cities. Issues having anything to do with race relations, including discrimination in labor markets, became seen as outside of the proper domain of economics. These issues were, however, dealt with by Black scholars working within Black organizations and Black colleges, mostly in sociology or history departments rather than in economics. They created what became known as Black labor studies, but the work they produced was largely ignored by the established economics profession. Other disciplines such as sociology developed different trajectories. It was only in the 1940s that a few works dealing with Black labor issues found acceptance in leading economics journals, and it was not until the mid 1960s that a more substantial literature developed.

JEL Codes: B10; B15; J15; J51; J61; J71; N01; N31; N32; Z13

Introduction

This paper came about as the result of an absence. In previous work on the history of American institutional economics over the inter-war period (Rutherford 2011), I read a great deal of the labor economics literature produced by leading economists at Wisconsin, Columbia, Chicago, Harvard, Berkeley and elsewhere. This included many of the standard labor economics texts. What struck me about this literature was the absence of any significant discussion of the issues facing Black Americans in the labor market. There are discussions of immigration, trade unions, labor unrest, settlement of disputes, unemployment, labor legislation, social insurance, and occasionally women and children in the labor market, but virtually no discussion of the issues facing Black people. John R. Commons' work on trade unions makes brief mention of craft unions discriminating against Black workers (Commons et al. 1918: Vol 2, 136–138), but little is made of it. This absence struck me as remarkable, especially given the Great Migration of Black labor from the South to Northern cities that began around the First World War. This migration developed from the demand for labor in the industrial North due to the War combined with the poor living standards and Jim Crow conditions in the South. But reading the labor economics authored by White academic economists in the North, one would not know of Jim Crow, discrimination and segregation in the South, or of the huge migration of Black people from South to North. Nor would one obtain any hint of the many race riots that targeted Black communities, destroying Black lives and businesses, such as those that occurred in the "Red Summer" of 1919.

In an earlier period, before the First World War, Black issues, in the form of "race problems," *were* discussed in economics but generally in terms of Black racial and/or cultural inferiority. There were exceptions to this, but the American Economic Association supported and promoted such publications. At the same time, W. E. B. Du Bois attempted to engage with the economics profession, but, despite some initial encouragement, his efforts to be accepted ultimately failed. What followed in the interwar period was a silence, an almost complete absence of work of any kind on Black issues published in major outlets in economics.

This pattern is at variance with what occurred in other social sciences, particularly sociology. In the interwar period, a number of prominent sociologists came to work on race relations, and they in turn sponsored Black students who worked on Black issues. Black researchers were at that time segregated, gaining positions in Black organizations or in Black colleges, predominately in sociology or history departments. These scholars created what became known as Black labor studies (Wilson 2006).

Economics did not begin again to include significant work on Black economic issues until after the Second World War and, even then, quite slowly. This paper seeks to lay

out in detail the history of the relationship between the American economics profession and the inclusion of work on Black issues and Black scholars up until the mid 1960s, a history that still has relevance to the profession today.

Economics and the Black Race: 1885–1910

The American Economic Association (AEA) was founded in 1885 thanks to the efforts of Richard Ely and other like-minded scholars who had been trained in Germany in the tradition of the German Historical School and who brought their methodological and reformist sensibilities back to the US. At this point, and following the German tradition, economics and sociology were not clearly separated and both were commonly taught within economics departments.[1] The original platform of the AEA explicitly adopted a reformist, anti-laissez faire, statement of principles. This platform was dropped after a few years in order to create a more general professional Association, but a significant proportion of the profession continued to identify with progressive and reformist ideals. However, as both Prasch (2007) and Leonard (2016) have pointed out, the profession as a whole adopted some very illiberal views. These included: support of eugenic programs, attacks on immigrants from Asia and Southern and Eastern Europe as undermining American standards of living,[2] and a negative view of Black people. As Prasch puts it: "Sadly, the tendency to champion social reform while maintaining an implicit or explicit commitment to white supremacy was an extensively held view in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" (Prasch 2007: 149).

In the period between 1885 and 1910, American economists certainly considered issues relating to "race problems" or "The Negro Problem" as entirely within the boundaries of the discipline, and a number of substantial pieces were produced and given wide circulation. Richmond Mayo-Smith considered the issue in his book *Emigration and Immigration* (1890) and significant papers were published in the *American Economic Association Publications* series by Frederick L. Hoffman (1896), Joseph A. Tillinghast (1902), and Alfred H. Stone (1902, 1906). Outside of the *AEA Publications*, Walter F. Willcox and Stone both published relevant papers in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*

[1] Economics and sociology departments gradually separated over the second decade of the Twentieth Century. The exception was the University of Chicago that began life with a separate sociology/anthropology department.

[2] Most notably in the form of the "race suicide" theory promulgated by F. A. Walker and E. A. Ross and others: that Anglo-Saxon Americans would have fewer children as a consequence of the competition from immigrants with lower living standards (Cherry 1976; Leonard 2016). The difference between immigrants and Black Americans was that immigrants threatened the standard of living of White Native-born Americans, but before the Great Migration Black people were not seen as a direct competitive threat to Whites. Indeed, Black people were often thought of as too unproductive to compete with White workers and themselves subject to population decline. The history and prevalence of this "Black Disappearance Hypothesis" is discussed by Darity (1994).

(Willcox 1905, Stone 1905) and co-authored a book, *Studies in the American Race Problem* (Stone and Willcox 1908). Further, John R. Commons published his *Races and Immigrants in America* in 1907, with its third chapter and a part of its conclusion specifically about "The Negro." In this period, economists did not ignore "race issues," but the bulk of the profession adopted ideas and arguments either assuming or purporting to show the racial or cultural inferiority of Black people relative to Whites.[3]

Columbia economist and statistician Richmond Mayo-Smith argued that the Black population by virtue of both race and the effect of slavery are "incapable of representing the full American capacity for political and social life," would always remain inferior to Whites, and would always be a social and political problem (Mayo-Smith 1890: 64–65; Aldrich 1979: 3; Prasch 2007: 130). Walter Willcox, discussed below, was his student.

Hoffman's 329-page article "The Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro" (1896) claims to be a statistical work. It does contain a great deal of statistical information on Black population, migration patterns, and health, but it also includes discussions of race amalgamation, education, crime, morality, and economic conditions that are full of racist ideas.[4] Hoffman's conclusion is that:

> All the facts brought together in this work prove that the colored population is gradually parting with the virtues and the moderate degree of economic efficiency developed under the regime of slavery. All the facts prove that a low standard of sexual morality is the main and underlying cause of the low and anti-social condition of the race at the present time. All the facts prove that education, philanthropy and religion have failed to develop a higher appreciation of the stern and uncompromising virtues of the Aryan race. The conclusion is warranted that it is merely a question of time when the actual downward course, that is, a decrease in the population, will take place. In the meantime, however, the presence of the colored population is a serious hindrance to the economic progress of the white race (Hoffman 1896: 329).

Hoffman originally intended to have the piece published by the American Statistical Society but was persuaded by Walter Willcox to send it to the AEA instead (Aldrich 1979: 8). Hoffman's article was generally well received, commented on in favorable terms, and extra copies were printed and sold. Jeremiah Jenks, then Secretary of the AEA, did

[3] This literature is also discussed in Aldrich (1979), Darity (1994), and Prasch (2007). As noted, there was a much broader concern with biology and genetics within the economics profession related to immigration and eugenics. See Cherry (1976; 1980), and Bateman (2003), as well as Leonard (2016). The term "race" was used variously to denote color, ethnicity, or culture.

[4] Hoffman's statistics in the light of the 1890 Census and other work were critically discussed by W. Z. Ripley (1899a). See also Darity (1994).

think the piece "unduly pessimistic" about the progress of the race, but that it was still "the most thorough and careful study of the subject" since the Civil War.[5] The major dissent came from Booker T. Washington who complained that Hoffman "sets out to prove the worthlessness of the race and he marshals all his figures with that in view."[6]

Tillinghast was the son of a Southern slaveholder and had been a student of Willcox's at Cornell. His article "The Negro in Africa and America" (1902) is also very lengthy at 231 pages and comes with a preface by Willcox. His thesis is that the African racial, environmental, and cultural origins of the formerly slave population must be taken into account, as well as the effects of slavery. When "suddenly released" from slavery the "Negro finds it surpassingly difficult to suppress the hereditary instincts that do not harmonize with American social organization." He is tending to "revert" (Tillinghast 1902: 226). As the Black population faces competition from superior Whites in America, it faces the possibility of "elimination" (Tillinghast 1902: 227).

According to Willcox's preface, Tillinghast shows that many of the adverse effects attributed to slavery are actually the result of African inheritance, putting a better light on slavery as an institution. Some readers expressed doubts about the depth of Tillinghast's research on Africa, but, as with Hoffman's article, the overall reaction received by the AEA was positive, and extra copies were printed for sale.[7] The major criticism came from Du Bois who scathingly remarked that the book "represents a modern view of the Negro and slavery as seen by the son of a slaveholder, and by one, who perhaps naturally, feels that there was much of good in slavery and much of bad in the Negro" (Du Bois 1903a: 697).

It is noteworthy that John R. Commons, very much the reformer in many other respects, agrees with much that Hoffman and Tillinghast have to say. His chapter "The Negro" (Commons 1907) refers to both Hoffman and Tillinghast. Commons does reverse Tillinghast's view of the relative importance of inheritance and of the conditions under slavery, but he is still of the view that the assimilation of the Black population into American civilization is unlikely to occur simply through education or efforts at uplift. Maintaining a biological view, but in stark contrast to Hoffman who felt that the intermixing of the races would have detrimental effects, Commons argues

[5] J. Jenks to Walter Willcox, January 23, 1897. American Economic Association Records, Correspondence of the Secretary Treasurer, 1888–1964, Box 6, Folder 3. Duke University.

[6] Booker T. Washington to J. Jenks, September 7, 1896. American Economic Association Records, Correspondence of the Secretary Treasurer, 1888–1964, Box 8, Folder 2. Duke University.

[7] See the correspondence between C. F. Adams and Willcox, and between Frank Fetter and Tillinghast in American Economic Association Records, Correspondence of the Secretary Treasurer, Box 9, Folder 9, and Box 10. Folder 1. Duke University. The Tillinghast piece required a great deal of editorial work done by Fetter. See the correspondence in Box 9, Folder 8.

that "amalgamation" through interbreeding, or "that mixture of blood that unites races in a single stock," is their "door to assimilation." [8] Commons sees the "mulatto" as differing very little from the White race (Commons 1907: 210), and "it is the tragedy of race antagonism that they with their longings should suffer the fate of the more contented and thoughtless blacks" (Commons 1907: 210).[9]

Walter Willcox presents a particularly interesting case. Willcox was an important figure within the AEA, serving at various times as Secretary and as President of the Association and closely involved with the 1900 Census. He publicly presented himself as an objective statistician and as a person with some sympathy for the economic condition of the Black population. He made modest financial contributions both to Atlanta University and to the Tuskegee Institute (Aldrich 1979: 3–4) and involved Du Bois in some of his projects (discussed below). Nevertheless, his racial attitudes appear in his support of both Hoffman and Tillinghast and in the nature of his statistical work. As Aldrich states: "the questions on which Willcox gathered his facts, and his tentative explanations of them, were often motivated and shaped by a deeply held conviction of the inferiority of Negroes" (Aldrich 1979: 3). An example is Willcox's work on "negro criminality" based on prison statistics (Willcox 1899). While he claimed he did not believe that all of the observed differences between the races were due to inheritance, and that the precise role of inheritance had not yet been firmly established, he clearly did believe that inheritance played a significant part. Like Hoffman and Tillinghast, Willcox thought that Blacks would fare badly in competition with Whites. Willcox's *QJE* article (Willcox 1905) and essays in his book with Stone (Stone and Willcox 1908) are based on his work on "The Negro Population" for the Census Bureau (Willcox 1904).[10] The repeated point was that Blacks are faring poorly in competition with Whites, and that this was due to the characteristics of Blacks themselves (and not due to discrimination or political repression). Willcox's many publications and conference papers making this argument, and his status within the profession, "mark Willcox as far and away the most important economist promulgating scientific racist arguments" (Aldrich 1979: 7).

Willcox also heavily promoted the work and career of Mississippi planter Alfred Stone. Stone's "Negro in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta" (1902) and his "A Plantation Experiment" (1905) are paens of praise for the conditions to be found in the Delta area

[8] Hoffman argues the mulatto is physically inferior to the "pure negro," and much more prone to disease (Hoffman 1896: 164–188). Despite views such as Commons' miscegenation was generally condemned.

[9] For an extended discussion of Commons on race see Ramstad and Starkey (1995).

[10] Willcox served as one of the Chief Statisticians for the 1900 Census. In a later, 1906, discussion about whether the Census should collect lynching statistics Willcox was opposed and sought to remove any explicit reference to lynching (Aldrich 1979: 12–13). Darity (1994) discusses what he calls the "Willcox School" of those who believed that Blacks could not compete with Whites.

and in his own plantation experiment. The former includes a maintenance of the pre-Civil War demarcation between the races in terms of position and occupation (there being no White laboring class in the area) that has, according to Stone, preserved harmonious race relations. The latter includes a system of tenancies that provide, via a detailed contract, for "absolute control" by the plantation management over "all plantation affairs" (Stone 1902: 265; 1905).[11] Stone denies that "motives of self-interest do not operate with the negro at all," but he "emphatically asserts" that they "do not intelligently control him" (Stone 1902: 260). Stone was not confident concerning the future prospects for the Black population, and, like Commons, he attributed "whatever successes Negro Americans had achieved to the infusion of white blood and pointed to both Du Bois and Booker T. Washington as leading examples" (Aldrich 1979: 9).

The particular nature of the work by Hoffman, Tillinghast, Willcox, and Stone is its clear relationship to the post-reconstruction period and the explicit effort to maintain notions of White supremacy, which, in the context of the professional and scientific standing of economics, was cojoined with what was claimed to be the objective methods of statistics and statistical analysis.

It is important to recognize, however, that there are some significant exceptions to this racist program among White economists of the period. Prasch (2007) mentions J. B. Clark as an exception, based largely on an early paper displaying Clark's Social Christian beliefs (Clark 1891). Clark expresses considerable optimism concerning the future progress of Black Americans based on his opinion that Blacks are showing gradually increasing interest in land ownership. Problems in the form of the existing psychology of Blacks were "not permanently in the blood" and could be eradicated (Clark 1891: 95). For Clark, owning land is the first step in a movement toward making Black land-owners full citizens, "competent voters," and good Christians (Clark 1891: 95–96). Land ownership was, of course, a major issue for Black people in the South.

Perhaps more significant is the case of Carroll D. Wright and his involvement with Black scholars such as W. E. B. Du Bois. Wright served as US Commissioner for Labor from 1885 to 1905 and was placed in charge of the 1890 Census. Despite opposition, Wright won approval to undertake a series of studies of Black communities, and his Department of Labor published a total of nine social and economic studies of Black populations in a variety of locations (Wilson 2007: 20–21). These were all published in the *Department of Labor Bulletin* as follows:[12]

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[11] Stone's experiment ultimately failed (Oliver 2014: 63). Stone was a lawyer, politician, and cotton planter and had no formal training in economics, but because of his plantation experience he became seen as a leading expert with personal knowledge concerning "the race question."

[12] Source: https://www.dol.gov/general/aboutdol/history/blackstudieslist.

1. Atlanta University, "Conditions of the Negro in Various Cities," (1897).
2. W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Negroes of Farmville, Virginia: A Social Study," (1898b).
3. W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Negro in the Black Belt: Some Social Sketches," (1899a).
4. William Thom, "The Negroes of Sandy Spring, Maryland: A Social Study," (1901a).
5. W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Negro Landholder of Georgia," (1901).
6. William Thom, "The Negroes of Litwalton, Virginia: A Social Study of the 'Oyster Negro'," (1901b).
7. J. Bradford Laws, "The Negroes of Cinclare Central Factory and Calumet Plantation, Louisiana," (1902).
8. William Thom, "The True Reformers," (1902).
9. Richard R. Wright, Jr., "The Negroes of Xenia, Ohio: A Social Study," (1903).

The first study with no named author was headed by George G. Bradford, a Trustee of Atlanta University. He won the approval of the University to initiate studies of Black city life, also involving Black researcher R. R. Wright Jr. and using data "gathered exclusively by representative colored men and women" (Grossman 1974). Three of the other studies were done by Du Bois and one by R. R. Wright Jr. Carroll Wright also consulted with Du Bois over the survey methods, and the overall design of the research was largely Du Bois' (Wilson 2007: 22–23). Du Bois remarked upon the "hopefulness" concerning the future of his Farmville subjects and R. R. Wright Jr. made a similar finding in his study. The four studies done by White researchers (Thom and Laws) reached different conclusions; Thom found little hopefulness, only "degeneration" or "reversion," while Laws found no progress and concluded that Blacks were "hopelessly inferior" (Grossman 1974). Nevertheless, the promotion of Black studies and the opportunities given by Carroll Wright to Black researchers were unprecedented.

W. Z. Ripley of Harvard reviewed both the Hoffman monograph and Du Bois' Farmville study, along with various other studies of Census information. One conclusion of Ripley's is interesting for its criticism of Hoffman:

> it seems to me far more probable that Dr. Du Bois is right in ascribing the relatively slow rate of increase of the average negro family to the fact that it is economically on the 'up-grade,' than to accept Hoffman's explanation that hybridity, vice and ignorance are accountable for it. . . . In short, not excessive mortality alone, but a decreased birth rate as well, due to the first glimmer of ambition to get ahead in the world, should be taken into consideration (Ripley 1899a: 47).

Ripley recommended further carful study. Unfortunately, the conditions favorable to Black studies at the Department of Labor were not to continue. Opposition from Southern politicians resulted in downgrades to the Department and budget problems. Carroll Wright left in 1905. A tenth study done by Du Bois, with the assistance of R. R. Wright Jr. and Monroe Work, on Black social and economic conditions in Lowndes County, Alabama, that he regarded as his best work, was never published and his manuscript destroyed (Grossman 1974).

Du Bois and the Economics Profession

The details of Du Bois' career are well known. What will be briefly covered here are his efforts to be accepted as a peer by White economists. After completing a second bachelor's degree in History and two years of graduate study at Harvard, Du Bois went to Germany where he attended Berlin University and worked with Adolf Wagner and Gustav Schmoller. He also took lectures from Max Weber,[13] then a visiting professor at Berlin, and participated in Schmoller's *Verein fur Sozialpolitik*. Both Schmoller and Wagner wanted Du Bois to be able to finish his PhD in economics at Berlin and made significant efforts to allow that to happen. Du Bois was in Berlin for three semesters (1892–1894), but then forced to return to the US due to the Slater Fund failing to renew his scholarship (Lewis 1993). Du Bois' PhD would eventually be in history from Harvard (awarded in 1895), but as Boston (1991), Prasch (2008), and Oliver (2014) all insist, Du Bois is best regarded not as primarily a historian or sociologist, but as scholar working in the German historical tradition.[14] In that tradition economics, sociology, and history are not clearly separated. Many American economists had gone to Germany for advanced training and Du Bois could have seen himself as fully a member of the large cohort of German trained American progressive social scientists, and as much an economist as anything else. At the same time, many of the supposed problems with the Black population were thought to be matters of health, family, morality, and social environment. Their low economic position being seen as either due to heredity or to sociological, cultural, factors, and Du Bois often described his investigations as sociological, as "social studies" of specific groups.

Du Bois' fist opportunities to apply his German training came from Carrol Wright at the Department of Labor and from the University of Pennsylvania. Du Bois was appointed as an assistant instructor in sociology at the University of Pennsylvania in

[13] Du Bois met Weber in Germany. They corresponded concerning the "color line" in America in 1904–5 when Weber was in the US and immediately afterwards. See Chandler (2006).

[14] Harvard was awarding degrees in Political Economy at the time (the first PhD in 1894), but did not have a separate Department of Economics until 1897. https://economics.harvard.edu/history.

1896. This opportunity came about due to Susan Wharton (of the same family that gave its name to the Wharton School). She was a Quaker and philanthropist who lived close to the Seventh Ward of Philadelphia, the center of the Black community. She wrote to University Provost Charles Custis Harrison suggesting that a study be done "as to the obstacles to be encountered by the colored people in their endeavor to be self-supporting."[15] This proposal was taken up by the University, funding for the study was raised, and by recommendation of Samuel McCune Lindsay, a Penn sociologist with an interest in labor economics, Du Bois was ultimately appointed to study the Black population of Philadelphia. Both Prasch and Oliver detail the close linkage between the research program Du Bois pursued in the Department of Labor, his Philadelphia work, and his German historical training. The Philadelphia study resulted in Du Bois' remarkable work *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899b).

In his 1898 article "The Study of Negro Problems,"[16] Du Bois lays out his hopes for the future and the properly scientific study of Black issues, arguing that: "The most baneful cause of uncritical study of the Negro is the manifest and far-reaching bias of writers" (Du Bois 1898a: 14). He argues for more studies "of the Negro as a social group," including the economic and social development and the conditions of life of many specific groups, as well as studies of "his peculiar social environment," including the environment of prejudice and discrimination. "The attempt should be made to isolate and study the tangible phenomena of Negro prejudice in all possible cases; its effect on the Negro's physical development, on his mental acquisitiveness, on his moral and social condition, as manifested in economic life, in legal sanctions and in crime and lawlessness" (Du Bois 1898a: 18–20). True to his word, in *The Philadelphia Negro*, Du Bois pointedly argues:

> No matter how well trained a Negro may be, or how fitted for work of any kind, he cannot in the ordinary course of competition hope to be much more than a menial servant. He cannot get clerical or supervisory work to do save in exceptional cases. He cannot teach save in a few of the remaining Negro schools. He cannot become a mechanic except for small transient jobs, and cannot join a trades union (Du Bois 1899b: 323).

After the completion of his Philadelphia research, Du Bois was not offered a further position at Pennsylvania and instead joined the faculty of Atlanta University in 1897,

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[15] Letter from Susan Wharton to Charles Custis Harrison (Provost of the University), May 30, 1895. https://penntoday.upenn.edu/news/times-and-life-web-du-bois-penn.

[16] This paper was published in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. The AAPSS had been founded by Edmund James with an interdisciplinary focus on pressing social problems. It was more open to Black scholars and discussion of Black issues than the leading disciplinary journals in economics or sociology.

taking over the Atlanta Conference program, which then became an important vehicle for continuing his research agenda.[17] What Du Bois hoped to see was the development of one or more of the Black colleges (such as Atlanta, Howard, or Fisk) as research centers to work in collaboration with a major Northern university.

Du Bois came to the attention of Walter Willcox, and Willcox involved Du Bois in some of his projects. In December 1899, Willcox agreed to Chair a "Committee on the Economic Condition of the Negro" to be established by the AEA.[18] One condition of his agreement was that he should select the other Committee members. He chose Du Bois, Harry T. Newcomb, Alfred Stone, and W. Z. Ripley. Newcomb was a specialist in railway economics and public regulation, while Harvard economist Ripley had previously reviewed work by Du Bois and Hoffman and had just published his *The Races of Europe* (1899b), a discussion of what he considered the three major racial types in Europe using geographic and anthropometric data. During the time this Committee existed, Du Bois was producing some of his most significant work: *The Negro Artisan* (1902) and *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903b). These were controversial works outlining both what he saw as the failings in Black culture and the prejudice and discrimination facing Black people leading to them being increasingly pushed out of artisan occupations. Willcox invited Du Bois to join him in a project concerning Black economic conditions for the Census Bureau and also to join the AEA. Du Bois did both. Willcox's contribution to the Census studies, "The Negro Population," was mentioned above. Du Bois' contribution "The Negro Farmer" is a presentation of statistics concerning Black owned or tenanted farms mainly concerned with proportions and trends in various areas of the country. Du Bois found a generally increasing trend of farm ownership except where the conditions of tenancy were adverse, land prices high, or educational opportunities lacking (Du Bois 1904).[19]

The Committee on the Economic condition of the Negro produced a preliminary report "The Economic Position of the American Negro," for the AEA conference in 1904 and published in 1905 (Willcox et al. 1905). The report begins as follows:

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[17] The Atlanta Conferences and their related studies had been begun by R. R. Wright Sr, father to R. R. Wright Jr. He was Vice President of the Atlanta University Trustees and instrumental in bringing Du Bois to Atlanta. For details of the Atlanta Conference program see Rudwick (1957).

[18] Letter from Charles H. Hull to Willcox, December 8, 1899, and Willcox to Hull, December 12, 1899. American Economic Association Records, Correspondence of the Secretary Treasurer, Box 8, Folder 9. Duke University. At this point Willcox was Secretary of the AEA and Hull was Treasurer. The Committee's work was linked to the 1900 Census.

[19] Du Bois' attempts to engage members of the AEA also included an invitation to E. R. A. Seligman, then President of the AEA, and other AEA members to visit Atlanta University on their way to the 1903 AEA convention in New Orleans. Seligman accepted, and according to Oliver (2014) this began a "long friendship" between Du Bois and Seligman. Seligman became a member of the National Negro Committee, predecessor to the NAACP.

> The committee was constituted in the hope that its members, two of whom were then connected with the Census Bureau, might aid in the presentation or interpretation of the important statistical results of the Twelfth Census bearing upon the economic position of the negro. . . . As three of the five members of your committee assisted in the preparation of that bulletin and as a copy of it has been mailed by the Census Bureau to each member of the Council of this Association, it will be treated as a part of our report (Willcox et al. 1905: 216).[20]

The Committee report did little more than summarize some of the findings of the Census Bulletin with respect to occupations, earnings, and wealth of Black households with essentially no analysis or commentary. Du Bois objected to Willcox's and Stone's estimates of Black wealth and property holdings in the report and considered not signing it.[21]

The Committee did continue and prepared a conference session for the 1905 AEA meeting involving papers by Du Bois and Stone with discussion. These appeared as Du Bois "The Economic Future of the Negro" (Du Bois 1906), and Stone "The Economic Future of the Negro: The Factor of White Competition" (Stone 1906), with Roscoe C. Bruce, Charles L. Raper, Thomas Marberg, M. B. Hammond, and H. W. Farnam as discussants. Du Bois used the opportunity to discuss the economic position of various differently situated groups of Black workers. Again, he weighs in strongly on the role of prejudice and discrimination in hindering the economic advance of Blacks:

> An American of Negro descent will find more or less concerted effort on the part of his white neighbors: (a.) To keep him from all positions of authority. (b.) To prevent his promotion to higher grades. (c.) To exclude him entirely from certain lines of industry. (d.) To prevent him from competing upon equal terms with white workingmen. (e.) To prevent his buying land. (f.) To prevent his defense of his economic rights and status by the ballot (Du Bois 1906: 224).

Du Bois argues that the group of "independents" are making progress despite concerted efforts to "beat them back," particularly in the towns and cities. These are the farmers, teachers, clergymen, merchants and professional men. Much of their progress has come from economic activity within the Black communities they live in,

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[20] Bureau of the Census, Bulletin 8, 1904. It is not clear who the third contributor from the Committee was but likely Stone.

[21] Letter from Walter Willcox (American Economic Association) to W. E. B. Du Bois, November 17, 1904. Du Bois Papers, Series 1A General Correspondence. University of Massachusetts Amherst. https://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b001-i052.

what Du Bois calls "group economy." Others, such as artisans and tenant farmers are "struggling" due to trade union opposition in the industrial trades and oppressive tenancy arrangements in the country. Here Du Bois refers to his unpublished work on Lowndes County, Alabama:

> In this county, during the last ten years there has been carried on a scheme of cooperative land buying under the Calhoun School. It was asked for by a few Negroes who could not get land; it was engineered by a Negro graduate of Hampton; it was made possible by the willingness of a white landlord to sell his plantation and actively further the enterprise by advice and good will. It was capitalized by white northerners and inspired by a New England woman. Here was every element in partnership and the experiment began in 1897. It involved the buying of 3000 acres by 100 men. It encountered all sorts of difficulty. . . . And yet what are the results? Nine years ago not one of the 100 men had a deed to a single acre of land; today they hold 77 warranty deeds conveying to them over 3000 acres of absolutely unencumbered land (Du Bois 1906: 234–235).

In other places, the group of unskilled laborers remain in a "precarious" position. The laws of contract, wages, and vagrancy in the South continually push people into crime or pauperism; his condition is so intolerable that he is "running away to the cities." Better economic opportunities, legal changes, and educational facilities are necessary for further progress, and, for Du Bois, that requires that Black people be given the vote and a political voice (Du Bois 1906).

Stone's paper is in complete contrast. The problems of the Black population come not from prejudice and discrimination but from lack of efficiency, meaning that the Black of any occupation cannot compete with Whites. Stone even argues that White immigrant labor (particularly Italian) is out-competing Black labor in the area of sugar and cotton production in the South. Despite Du Bois' data, Stone sees only the opposite of economic progress. Moreover, for Stone, the foundation of real prosperity is to be found in moral qualities lacking in Blacks: pure domestic life, commercial integrity, high standards of moral worth, courage, uprightness, and soundness of judgement. Without these qualities, a race will always be "an inferior people" (Stone 1906).

Of the discussants, none agree with the degree of Du Bois' emphasis on the role of prejudice or his view of the importance of Blacks in the South gaining the vote. Roscoe does agree with Du Bois that conditions for Blacks are improving at least within the "Black Belt" and approves of the efforts of the Tuskegee Institute. Raper fully accepts Stone's position. Marburg considers Stone's point about White competition a "fundamental

consideration." While superficially agreeing with Du Bois' plea for greater equality of opportunity, Marburg characterizes Jim Crow as the outcome of a "natural tendency" and concludes that "the indications are that the negro, instead of acquiring greater social equality as time goes on, will be relegated to a still lower social position." Hammond agrees with Du Bois that race prejudice is a problem in the South, but not in the North where White workers and employers have simply found Blacks less efficient and reliable. He does dispute a number of Stone's assertions but argues that the Black worker must improve his efficiency if he is to compete with Whites and sees the Tuskegee program as the way forward. Farnam comes closest to Du Bois in praising his mention of "the land owning system at Calhoun." On the other hand, while he agrees that there is a restrictive caste system in place in the South, one that generates individual harms and race friction, Farnam turns Du Bois' point around and asks whether this might not provide "protection" in the sense of promoting a Black "group economy" (Bruce et al. 1906: 295–324). There was also some public discussion of this session with strong support for Stone's position coming from W. G. Leland of the Carnegie Institution. For Leland, Du Bois was a "blind optimist," and Stone "truly the friend" of Black people (Wilson 2006: 78). The significance here is that Du Bois hoped to obtain funding from Carnegie.

Prior to the conference session, Du Bois sent Willcox a copy of his paper. Willcox's response was non-committal, claiming it "was not possible to judge" how much the condition of Blacks was due to "persistent characteristics of the people" and how much to the "color line in society."[22] Du Bois responded angrily, bringing up Willcox's article on Black criminality and his support of Tillinghast: "How on earth any fair-minded student of the situation could have stood sponsor for a book like Tillinghast's and actually praised it is simply beyond my comprehension" (Wilson 2006: 74). Du Bois invited Willcox to Atlanta University to see the work being done by his students. Willcox accepted and attended the 10th Conference in 1905 and praised the work being done there (Oliver 2014: 59), but Willcox continued to promote Stone over Du Bois. In 1908, Stone and Willcox published *Studies in the American Race Problem* containing essays by both men, including Stone's 1906 *AEA* paper. Willcox wrote the introduction and contributed three previously published papers of his own. Willcox also promoted Stone for the Carnegie Foundation funding that Du Bois also had hopes for.

In 1906, Du Bois invited Franz Boas to attend the 11th Conference and also give the commencement address. Boas strongly argued against the notion of Black racial inferiority, spoke of the many technical and cultural achievements made by African

[22] Walter Willcox to W. E. B. Du Bois, March 13, 1904. W. E. B. Du Bois Papers, Series 1A General Correspondence, University of Massachusetts, Amherst. https://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b006-i174.

peoples, and advised the students he was addressing that they should not look to White people for encouragement or approval (Boas 1906). The student reaction was reportedly one of astonishment, having never heard of such African achievements. Boas' talk put him, like Du Bois, at odds with Booker T. Washington and cost him funding (Zumwalt and Willis 1906). Similarly, without Carnegie support, the Atlanta University Conference program became short of money and Du Bois was obliged to accept money from Stone in order to run the Conference in 1907 (Wilson 2006: 80). Stone was in charge and this infuriated Du Bois. On top of this, Du Bois had failed to interest any Northern university in co-operating with Atlanta University to create a research center there.

It is important to understand exactly the radical implications of Du Bois arguments relative to those of Hoffman, Tillinghast, Willcox, and Stone. For Du Bois, prejudice and discrimination against Blacks come not from innate inferiority of Black people, but from the deliberate efforts of white people to keep Blacks in an inferior position. This gave White people both economic and psychic benefits, an argument Du Bois makes very explicitly in his later book on reconstruction (Du Bois 1935). This is an argument that most White economists found impossible to accept, believing that the issue was not that Blacks were being prevented from competing with Whites, but that they could not do so.

Du Bois inevitably became disillusioned with the "American world of science and letters." In his autobiography he wrote, "we never belonged: we remained unrecognized in learned societies and academic groups. We rated merely as Negros studying Negros, and after all, what had Negros to do with America or science?" (Du Bois 1968: 228). He left Atlanta University in 1910 to take the position of Director of Publications and Research for the NAACP.[23] Du Bois' specific difficulties with economics as well as his description of his own work as "social studies" may have been factors in later Black social scientists tending to sociology and not to economics. Du Bois' loss to the economics profession must have played a role in the discipline's further lack of connection to Black scholars and Black issues, a lack that continued for the next thirty years.

Economics, Sociology, and Race Relations: 1910–1940

As we move into the second decade of the Twentieth Century and beyond, a number of significant changes occur. The first change is that explicit refences in the social sciences to inherited racial traits and a biological basis for Black inferiority decline, and although racist elements clearly remain, they come to be expressed differently. One important factor was the growing criticism of the scientific basis of the idea of stable

[23] Du Bois was one of the co-founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). It was first formed in 1909 and incorporated in 1911. Du Bois edited the NAACP journal *Crisis*.

biological "racial traits" that came from anthropology in the person of Franz Boas and from sociology in the persons of Robert E. Park, W. I. Thomas, and several others.[24] As Stanfield observes, Pre-World War I race research and theories of the sort produced by Hoffman, based on a strong view of inherited inferiority, "seem to abruptly and mysteriously disappear" from major journals (2011: 153). This shift resulted in the kind of explanations given by White commentors for the relatively poor economic position of Blacks moving from the biological to the cultural.

The second change is that the absolute volume of work on anything to do with "race issues" in major economics journals declines markedly, almost disappearing altogether. Work on issues relating to Black Americans moved very largely to other disciplines, such as sociology and history. This development came as economics and sociology were separating themselves into their own academic departments and disciplines and the emergence of a much greater interest in "race relations" in sociology. In the period before World-War I, leading sociologists showed relatively little interest in studying issues relating to Black Americans (Stanfield 2011: 154; Wilson 2006: 75),[25] but the move of Black people to the North and the social problems that the Great Migration created, including riots and racial strife, stimulated a demand for scientific work on the causes and impacts of the migration that sociologists such as Robert Park were able to respond to effectively. Park moved to the University of Chicago in 1914, and his "attitudinal theories of race relations—which exemplified conflict, change and accommodation in a biracial society" were well fitted to meet the demand. Park's stress on improving race relations through Black people adopting White behavior and values was also "ideologically acceptable" to other White sociologists and policy makers (Stanfield 2011: 154).

After Park moved to Chicago, he began to teach a course *The Negro in America*, described as "directed especially to the effects, in slavery and freedom, of the white and black race," and in which "an attempt will be made to characterize the nature of the present tensions and tendencies and to estimate the character of the changes which race relations are likely to bring about in the American system" (Raushenbush 1979). This was a pioneering course for a major Northern university and undoubtedly attracted

[24] Stanfield also mentions that Howard Odum, Guy B. Johnson, and Black scholars Franklin Frazer and Charles C. Johnson all fought against biological explanations of racial differences. This does not mean that racist elements did not remain in their work. For a discussion of the racial views of White sociologists such as Park, W. I. Thomas, Howard T. Odum, Guy B. Johnson, and T. J.Woofter Jr. see McKee (1993). Notions of inherited racial difference remained popular in broader White society.

[25] The major concern was with immigration. But see Ross (1901). Also, the *American Journal of Sociology* did publish a highly racist piece by A. H. Stone in 1908 (on which Willcox commented), but, unlike the economics case, had also published work by Black sociologist Monroe Work in 1900, and a piece critical of the idea of inevitable race prejudice by W. I. Thomas in 1904.

Black students. According to Stanfield, "Park and his students successfully made race relations a popular area of discussion in the American Sociological Society and in the major sociology journals" (Stanfield 2011: 154).

Outside of sociology, history departments commonly offered courses that included topics such as slavery and reconstruction, but these were usually taught from a Southern White point of view as found in the work of William Dunning or Ulrich B. Phillips.[26] Harvard appears to have been somewhat different. Albert Bushnell Hart, who supervised Du Bois, strongly defended the admission of Black students to Harvard and was a trustee of Howard University. While Hart believed in the racial inferiority of the average Black person, he allowed for exceptional and talented individuals who should have educational opportunities to match.[27] Within anthropology, Lloyd Warner promoted work on Black communities, first at Harvard and then Chicago.

Under the social circumstances created by the Great Migration, it is not surprising that sociologists and historians should become interested in race relations issues, but what is notable is that economists almost completely *stopped* discussing such issues, including such clearly economic issues as the relative economic position of Black people, their occupational distribution, the economic causes and consequences of the Great Migration, or the economics of "the color line" in industry. This occurred despite the interwar economics profession including many institutionalist labor economists with reformist ideals and interests in neighboring disciplines.

White Economists and Black Labor Studies: 1910–1940

The state of affairs within the dominant White economics profession can be seen in more detail through (1) a search of JSTOR economics journals between 1910 and 1940, and (2) a consideration of the experience of the newly formed Social Science Research Council in attempting to generate a project on the Great Migration.

A JSTOR search for economics articles with the word "Negro" in the title for the years 1910 to 1919 reveals only one article in the *AER* in 1914 concerning the trends in the Black population shown by the 1900 Census (Rose 1914) and only one article in the *JPE* in 1917 concerning the Great Migration (Scroggs 1917). There were 19 other results, all articles published in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, (much more of a sociology and political science journal than an economics journal),

[26] Phillips studied under William Dunning at Columbia but was also very much influenced by Frederick Jackson Turner and taught at Wisconsin for a few years. He was a co-editor with Commons and others for the *Documentary History of American Industrial Society* (Commons et al. 1910–1911).

[27] See *Harvard and the Legacy of Slavery*. https://radcliffe-harvard-edu-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/43444f4b-d5f6-4d71-963d-e667b548a58d/HLS-whole-report_FINAL_2022-09-14FINAL-ua2.pdf.

most of them in one special issue, "The Negro's Progress in 50 Years" published in 1913. The contributors to that issue included a number of Black authors including Du Bois, R. R. Wright Jr, Monroe Work, George Haynes, Kelly Miller, Booker T. Washington, and White sociologists Robert Park (then working with Booker T. Washington at Tuskegee Institute, and soon to move to Chicago) and Howard W. Odum (then at the University of Georgia). No well-known economist contributed to the issue. Alfred Stone and L. C. Grey[28] did contribute to earlier issues, both dealing with Southern agriculture and both taking highly critical views of the abilities of Black labor.

A similar search for the years following up to 1929 reveals *nothing* at all in the major journals in economics but 26 papers in the *Annals*, all but one[29] in a single special issue on "The American Negro" published in November 1928. The contributors to that issue included a good number of Black writers and White sociologists (Park, Ernest Burgess, and L. L. and J. S. Bernard) but again no recognizable economists. From 1930 to 1939, a few papers appear in *Science and Society* (mostly by Herbert Aptheker),[30] one two page note in the *Journal of Farm Economics* on the training of Black farmers, and article in the *Southern Economic Journal* (*SEJ*) on "The Negro in Southern Trade Unionism" by George Mitchell (1936). Thus, over this 30-year period, there were only three substantial papers in major economics journals dealing with Black issues.

Rose's 1914 paper on the 1900 Census appears to be mostly concerned with reassuring a White audience that the fears of a rising proportion of Blacks in the population and of growing "race amalgamation" are unfounded:

> We have now ten millions of negro inhabitants. They are, in the New Testament sense, our neighbors. It will not be easy to bring about a working adjustment between the Golden Rule and the deep-seated convictions, instincts, or prejudices of so many American white men. But the problem can be approached free from any apprehension that the darker race will ever be, in any considerable portion of the country, numerically predominant (Rose 1914: 286).

Scroggs' 1917 paper in the *Journal of Political Economy* is the *only* paper on the Great Migration published in a leading academic economics journal over the period.[31] The article

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[28] L. C. Grey was an agricultural/resource economist then at the University of Wisconsin.

[29] In 1921 by Black economist Sadie Alexander consisting of a summary of her PhD thesis, discussed below.

[30] Aptheker was a Jewish member of the Communist party who as a youth had been shocked by a visit to the South. He obtained MA and PhD degrees in history from Columbia and wrote on slave rebellions for his MA, which he was awarded in 1937. He obtained his PhD in 1943. He became a well-known Marxist historian. The Communist party was strongly anti-racist. He was chosen by Du Bois to be his literary executor.

[31] On the lack of work by economists on the great migration see also Collins (2021: n11) and Darity (1994).

opens by relating Black migration to the North as an aspect of some tendency of Blacks to "wander" and change location, often without very much advance planning or forethought, which suggests Blacks are relatively footloose and not entirely rational in their decision making. He goes on to locate the specific causes of the Great Migration Northward in "beckoning" and "driving" factors. The beckoning or "pull" factors are the better job opportunities and lesser discrimination in the North, while the driving or "push" factors are the "low wages paid farm labor, an unsatisfactory tenant or crop-sharing system, the boll weevil, the crop failures of 1916, lynching, disfranchisement, segregation, poor schools, and the monotony, isolation, and drudgery of farm life" (Scroggs 1917: 1041). Scroggs observes that the driving conditions are not new and have existed for decades, so the factor that has changed is the attractive job prospects in the North.

This argument is contrary to Du Bois' findings in earlier work such as *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899), as movement to the North on a smaller scale had been occurring for some time. It is also the case that the development of Jim Crow in the South had materially worsened the social condition of Blacks, so it could hardly be said that those conditions had not changed over decades. Scroggs agreed that the movement to Northern cities was likely to improve the economic condition of Blacks in the North, but this was because they could learn from Whites. In the South, migration could lead to shortages of labor that he suggests could improve not only economic but also, possibly, social and political conditions as well (Scroggs 1917: 1042). Scroggs also claimed that migration had its "debit side" in the creation of crowding, poor housing and other adverse conditions in the Black areas of Northern cities. These, according to Scroggs, worked against forming a stable family life and a solid foundation for "true" progress. Without quite saying so, Scroggs suggests that Blacks might be better off staying in the South, a view by no means limited to himself. Although Scroggs' paper does not refer to inherited racial inferiority in the manner of Hoffman, it still displays racist attitudes, and its publication in the *JPE* gave it particular visibility and status. The idea that the "pull" factors dominated during the years of the Great Migration itself became a common view among White researchers and one that served to downplay the causal role of Jim Crow and discrimination against Black people in the South.

George Mitchell's article on Southern trade unionism is a lonely publication from 1936 and the first significant economics article dealing with Black labor issues since Scroggs' some nineteen years earlier. It is important to understand that Mitchell was far from a typical economist. In the 1930s, he was an instructor in economics at Columbia University, but the other part of his career was as a labor leader and civil rights activist. He held decidedly left-wing views and corresponded with Du Bois concerning the history of prosecutions for lynching. His 1936 paper came out of a large

project on the "new" Southern unions headed by Black sociologist Charles S. Johnson, and his views were influenced by Black economist Abram Harris' criticism of White unions and emphasis on the common class interests of Black and White workers (see below).[32] In his SEJ article, he begins by observing that: "the Southern trade unionism of the last thirty-odd years has been in good measure a protective device for the march of White artisans into places held by Negros" (Mitchell 1936: 27). Mitchell details the racial division of jobs in the South and the inroads White unions have made in taking over previously Black occupations. White locals were "jealous of every skilled place held by Negros" (Mitchell 1936: 28). This paper represents perhaps the first article by a White economist that takes forward the arguments made by Du Bois concerning the displacement of Blacks from artisan employments, and it also clearly indicates an *economic* motive for White unions discriminating against Black workers (and not just racial prejudice). He then goes on to consider the effect of New Deal programs on Southern unionism, especially the positive effects of the National Industrial Recovery Act in promoting Black union membership. Many locals were segregated, but some had mixed membership, the latter resulting in significant shift in attitude on the part of White unionists. Given the significance of New Deal programs for Black workers (both positively and negatively), it is surprising to find only this single article on the topic.[33] Mitchell wrote several books on Southern unionism in which he makes many references to the Black labor studies literature discussed in the next section. He was one of very few White economists of the time who engaged with and contributed to that literature.

In contrast to the case with economics journals and in addition to the number of pieces published by sociologists in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* mentioned above, the leading *American Journal of Sociology* regularly published papers on Black issues throughout this period, although in modest numbers and mostly by White authors. However, the volume of relevant papers expanded dramatically with the founding of the *Journal of Social Forces* by Howard Odum in 1922 (*Social Forces* from 1925 onwards). *Social Forces* published large numbers of relevant pieces. Between 1920 and 1929, *Social Forces* published 24 articles on Black issues. Between the years 1930 and 1939, *Social Forces* published 27 relevant articles, the *AJS* 11, and other sociology journals 18. This literature included work by both White and Black scholars. The difference with economics is striking.

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[32] See Cayton and Mitchell (1939). Broadus Mitchell was George S. Mitchell's brother. He also was strongly anti-racist in his views and resigned from Johns Hopkins in 1939 over academic freedom issues and their failure to admit a Black graduate student. The student, Edward S. Lewis, became a leader in the Urban League and eventually did obtain a PhD from New York University in 1964. See https://finding-aids.lib.unc.edu/04141/ and https://archives.nypl.org/scm/20727.

[33] For discussion of the New Deal in relation to Black union membership, see Moreno (2006: 163–196).

It is also worth looking briefly at the Social Science Research Council project on Human Migration that was operating between 1924 and 1927 (Fisher 1993: 41). This project, the first undertaken by the newly formed SSRC,[34] grew out of a similar project on Scientific Problems of Human Migration being undertaken by the National Research Council. Within the NRC program, most of the projects considered were biological or psychological and focused on measuring and evaluating the "human traits" of different immigrant groups.[35]

The SSRC, once established, set up its own Committee on Human Migration with Edith Abbott as Chair. Members on the Committee were Abbott, three members from the NRC Migration Committee, and eight others including Wesley Mitchell, and John R. Commons. Funding was received from the Laura Spellman Rockefeller Memorial Foundation (LSRM). There was a shift from the NRC to the SSRC program away from the measurement of race traits and issues of intermixing that were prominent in the NRC program. The SSRC Migration Committee wanted to focus on social and economic factors, a view that became stronger as Franz Boas' critique of the idea of stable racial characteristics became more widely accepted. Boas' work was explicitly discussed by the Committee.[36]

There was a great deal of discussion over possible projects, with many considered and rejected for various reasons. There was clear interest in having a project dealing with Black migration from the South but finding a suitable proposal proved difficult. A proposal from labor economist Don Lescohier of Wisconsin involving the study of both "Negro and Mexican" migration within the US was considered, but it was felt to be too large and financially "impossible" (Walsh 1997: 16). In any case, Lescohier failed to get teaching release from Wisconsin. Harold Moulton and Edwin Nourse of Brookings' Institute for Economics also expressed interest in the topic of Black migration, but nothing definite developed.[37] So, some economists of institutionalist persuasion did

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[34] The SSRC was formally incorporated in late 1923. Wesley Mitchell became the second Chairman of the SSRC in 1927, after Charles Merriam. For a study of the SSRC see Fisher (1993).

[35] Rockefeller Archive Center, LRSM Series 3.6, Box 58, Folder 629. For example, the file contains a description of a project on eugenic lines from Harry H. Laughlin, presented at a Conference on Human Migration, called "The Measure of Specific Degeneracies in Immigrant and Native Population Groups of the United States," including such things as feeble-mindedness, insanity, criminality, epilepsy, inebriety, disease, blindness and deafness, deformity, and dependency. Both Laughlin and C. B. Davenport were involved in discussions with the NRC over projects. For a more detailed discussion of the NRC project see Walsh (1997). The NRC program did include two NBER projects concerning immigration and business cycles (Jerome 1926) and mechanization as a substitute for immigration.

[36] See the discussion of Boas in the Committee on Human Migration report of December 27, 1926. LRSM Series 3.6, Box 64, Folder 687. RAC.

[37] "Report of the Committee on Human Migration, November 28, 1924," LRSM, Series 3.6, Box 68, Folder 710, RAC. The Bookings Institution was not formed until 1928.

express interest in the topic, but none produced a viable project. Eventually, Wesley Mitchell encouraged his Columbia colleague, sociologist Frank A. Ross, to present a proposal to Edith Abbott. He did produce a proposal which was funded.[38]

Ross's outline promised a substantial and sophisticated statistical investigation of Black migration to the North, utilizing census and many other sources of information.[39] Ross involved four White graduate students, all of whom received PhDs in sociology from Columbia for their work. Along with Louise Kennedy, Ross produced a vast bibliography of relevant research, including both White and Black authors. Ross and Kennedy's bibliography and the other four volumes were all produced only after the SSRC Migration Committee had officially wrapped up.[40] They were:

1. Louise V. Kennedy: *The Negro Peasant Turns Cityward*, 1930.
2. Dean Dutcher: *The Negro in Modern Industrial Society*, 1930.
3. Edward E. Lewis: *The Mobility of the Negro*, 1931.
4. Clyde V. Kiser: *Sea Island to City*, 1932.
5. Frank A. Ross and Louise V. Kennedy: *A Bibliography of Negro Migration*, 1934.

Ross's own view was that Black migration patterns are to be seen as a part of the *general* population movement to urban areas (Ross 1931). Louise Kennedy's book makes frequent reference to Scroggs and takes a similar view, although poor economic conditions in the South are given some role.[41] Edward Lewis' book explicitly concentrates on economic factors and also explores the push/pull argument. He finds that the pull of industrial conditions in the North to be the dominant factor except for the South East section of the cotton belt where poor agricultural conditions also played a role (Lewis 1932; 1933). It is noticeable that although Lewis' 1933 paper explicitly concerned labor supply, it was published in the *Political Science Quarterly* and not in an economics journal. Lewis later became a faculty member in economics at Howard and a colleague of Abram Harris. Dean Dutcher's book examines changes in occupations of Black workers between 1910 and 1920, while Clyde Kiser's book examines the St Helena Island migrants after

[38] Other funded projects included "World statistics of Migration" by Walter Willcox (with the NBER), "Antecedents of Mexican Migration" by Manuel Gamio (to be conducted in Mexico), a small project on "Swedish Migration" by Florence Janson, and "The Mexican Labor Problem in California" by Paul Taylor, a Berkeley labor economist (DeWind 1999). For discussion of the Mexican projects see Walsh (1997) and Chapter 7 of Hendrickson (2013).

[39] Ross's outline is contained in "Report of the Committee on Human Migration," December 27, 1926, LRSM, Series 3.6, Box 64, Folder 687, RAC.

[40] Because of this, the project was classified as not having produced any publications in the 1930 report by E. B. Wilson (Report on Projects by President E. B. Wilson, SSRC, Accession 1, Series 9, Box 351, Folder 2083, RAC). This is repeated by Walsh (1997) and Hendrickson (2013: 260).

[41] See Marks (1985) and Schwartz (2020) for critical comments on Kennedy.

their move to Harlem.[42] A lot of this work was statistical, and the significant economic content of the Kennedy, Dutcher, and Lewis volumes should be noted.

Within economics, what we see in this period, then, is (1) some movement away from arguments about inherent racial inferiority and towards a focus on cultural and economic conditions and incentives; but at the same time (2) a general abdication of investigation and discussion of Black labor issues by White economists, with only a very small number of exceptions. The lack of a significant economics literature on Black labor issues in this period has been remarked upon before by Robert E. Prasch (2007) and, more recently, by William Collins (2021). The fact that even institutional economists with their frequently expressed concerns with economic and social reform, empirical investigation, and interest in neighboring social sciences failed to produce work dealing with the economic position of Black people speaks volumes as to the distancing between the economics profession and Black studies.[43] Only a very few on the far left of the profession (such as George Mitchell or Scott Nearing) concerned themselves with Black issues in a substantial way or allied themselves with the interests of Black people.[44]

The Great Migration raised many purely economic issues relating to the demand and supply of labor and the functioning of the American labor market generally which might have attracted economists. Collins notes the "comparatively little" attention to the Great Migration in economics (Collins 2021: 6), but White sociologists did produce work on such subjects, Frank Ross and his students being a case in point. Indeed, a great deal of the work by Ross' students used Scroggs' "push/pull" framework and dealt with the economic incentives for migration, and Edward Lewis obtained employment in the economics department at Howard.

Also, as Prasch points out: "it is difficult to understand on purely intellectual grounds why the dynamics of racial inequality, conflict, and discrimination would be anything other than a compelling subject of research" (Prasch 2007: 158). Again, these subjects were being discussed in sociology under the heading of "race relations." Issues involving the Black population generally tended to be left to White sociologists, such as Park and W. I. Thomas at Chicago, and Odum, T. J. Woofter Jr., and Guy B. Johnson in North Carolina, and to the Black researchers working in Black colleges, mostly in sociology or history.

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[42] Kennedy and Kiser married. He became an expert on population for the Millbank Memorial Fund. Louise Kennedy served for a number of years in the research division of Princeton University. Dutcher became a faculty member in social science at Millersville University.

[43] It is interesting that Paul Taylor, an institutional labor economist, did produce many volumes on Mexican migrant labor in California, as a part of the SSRC migration project.

[44] In 1929 Scott Nearing published his searing indictment of racism against Blacks: *Black America*. Nearing was a student of Simon Patten's and had been a faculty member at Wharton until let go due to his anti-business writings. By 1929 he was outside of the academic world writing for the Communist paper *The Daily Worker*.

The Development of Black Labor Studies: 1910–1940

Over the same period during which White economists largely ignored Black labor issues, a cohort of Black scholars embarked on the serious study of the economic and social issues facing Black people. Up until the First World War, W. E. B. Du Bois was by far the most prominent Black scholar working in the social sciences, but his example inspired many others to take advanced degrees and to make contributions to the field of Black labor studies.

As shown in **Table 1**, the majority of the major Black contributors to the field of Black labor studies obtained doctoral degrees in sociology or history. Park directly supervised Black sociologists Charles S. Johnson and Franklin Frazier, while Hart supervised Black historians Carter Woodson and Charles Wesley. In the years up to 1943, Greene (1946) lists 77 Black PhDs over all social sciences: 22 in history, 17 in sociology with a few more in combined fields with sociology, and 16 in economics[45] again with a few more with combined degrees. However, in the long list of names of those who most contributed to race relations research between the wars, Stanfield names only one person—Robert Weaver—trained in economics (although Abram Harris should clearly be added to that list) (Stanfield 2011: 159–187). Harvard was by far the leading school for Black students in history with 7 PhDs and Chicago in sociology with 6 PhDs. In economics, only Harvard, Columbia, and Wisconsin list more than one Black PhD, with Harvard leading the way with three.[46]

In her impressive book on the history of Black labor studies, Wilson (2006) calls this group "the segregated scholars" as they did not obtain appointments in predominantly White universities. Instead, they worked at Black colleges or for organizations such as the National Urban League, and their work was funded through various committees such as the LSRM sponsored National Interracial Conference, or the Southern Commission for Interracial Cooperation, that generally consisted of reform minded Whites, such as Jane Adams, Paul Kellogg, Edward Devine, Frances Kellor, and Mary Ovington (Wilson 2006: 83). At the Rockefeller Foundation, Leonard Outhwaite was an important advocate of research on Black issues in the 1920s, and Rockefeller money for that purpose went to the SSRC and other organizations. The SSRC created an "Advisory Committee on Problems Related to the Negro" in 1925, and a year later changed its name to "The Advisory Committee on Interracial Relations." The Committee consisted of White sociologists Howard Odum and Frank Ross, economist F. S. Deibler, and anthropologist

[45] Greene lists 16 in economics as a single subject. One entry is incorrect but there is one more in the appendix.

[46] The two Black PhDs from Wisconsin (both in 1942) were Mabel M. Smythe and Samuel Enders Warren (Greene 1946). I could find little information on Warren. Smythe (later Smythe-Haith) taught at black colleges and later at Brooklyn College and Northwestern University specializing in in African Studies. She had a distinguished career in the State Department as a diplomat https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/smythe-haith-mabel-murphy-1918-2006/.

Clark Wissler. This Committee funded Howard Odum's studies of St. Helena Island, other White sociologists working on Black issues, such as Thomas J. Woofter Jr., and Black researchers Charles S. Johnson and Franklin Frazier (Fisher 1993: 54). Other sources of funding came from the Rosenwald Fund and the Russell Sage Foundation (Stanfield 2011: 99–120). The limits of this model were significant:

W. E. B. Du Bois	Graduate work, Germany	PhD 1895 Harvard	History
Monroe Work	AM 1903 Chicago	–	Sociology
R. R. Wright Jr.	AM 1904 Chicago (Div)	PhD 1911 Pennsylvania	Sociology
George E. Haynes	AM 1904 Yale	PhD 1912 Columbia	Social Econ[48]
Carter G. Woodson	AM 1908 Chicago (Soc)	PhD 1912 Harvard	History
Charles S. Johnson	PhB 1917 Chicago[49]	Graduate work, Chicago	Sociology
Sadie T. M. Alexander	AM 1919 Pennsylvania	PhD 1921 Pennsylvania	Economics
Charles H. Wesley	AM 1913 Yale	PhD 1925 Harvard	History
Henderson H. Donald	AM 1920 Yale	PhD 1926 Yale	Ec/Gov/Soc[50]
Abram L. Harris	MA 1924 Pittsburgh	PhD 1930 Columbia	Economics
E. Franklin Frazier	MA 1920 Clark	PhD 1931 Chicago	Sociology
Robert C. Weaver	MA 1931 Harvard	PhD 1934 Harvard	Economics
Ira De Augustine Reid	MA 1925 Pittsburgh	PhD 1939 Columbia	Sociology
Lorenzo Greene	MA 1926 Columbia	PhD 1942 Columbia	History

Table 1: African-American Contributors to Black Labor Studies Graduate Degrees and Disciplines, 1895–1940.[47]

> The foundation sponsorship of the career development of black social scientists succeeded by conforming with the Jim Crow racial attitudes and policies that maintained formal segregation and restricted Blacks to clearly circumscribed roles and occupations (e.g. "Negro jobs," "race leader," and "Negro sociologist")…. Foundations did not encourage Blacks to "get out of their place" by developing careers in non-racial areas. (Stanfield 2011: 106).

[47] This information is culled from Greene (1946). The MA dates give a better indication of generational cohorts that the PhD dates.

[48] Greene (1946) lists Haynes' PhD as in "Social Economy." This was part of the sociology program at Columbia focused on social work. His thesis came from studies he did while at the New York School of Philanthropy and he led the school of social work at Fisk from 1910–1918. https://www.irwincollier.com/columbias-first-african-american-ph-d-social-economics-ph-d-alumnus-george-edmund-haynes-1912/.

[49] Most sources say that Johnson received a PhD from Chicago in 1917. This is not correct. His highest degree was a PhB (Bachelor of Philosophy). His graduate studies in Chicago were interrupted by World War 1 and then by the Chicago riots. See Wilson (2006: 145–146), and Greene (1946).

[50] Wilson (2006: 122) describes him as an economist, but according to Greene (1946) his degree was in "Economics, Government and Sociology." Correspondence with Yale Archives suggests a mix of economics and sociology. He became chair of the sociology department at Howard.

White dominated committees concerned with Black issues tended to think that Black researchers would be better able to connect with the subjects of such research both in terms of data gathering and knowledge of Black life (Stanfield 2011: 105), but there was no doubt who was in overall control of the projects and the money. Black scholars tended to soft pedal the role of White prejudice. Because Black scholars did not have access to White universities, the foundations did help create greater social science teaching and research capacity at Black colleges such as Atlanta University, Howard University, and especially Fisk University (Stanfield 2011: 106), but this simply institutionalized their segregation.

The major African American contributors to Black labor studies were listed in **Table 1** above. Du Bois was discussed previously. As mentioned, both R. R. Wright Jr. and Nathan Work collaborated with Du Bois on the Department of Labor studies developed under Carroll D. Wright. R. R. Wright's thesis was on "The History of the Pennsylvania Negro," and he wrote the section on Black steel workers in the *Pittsburg Survey* (R. R. Wright Jr. 1914). Contradicting the views of Willcox and Stone, he found them perfectly efficient and capable of supervising both Black and White workers. In 1928, he returned to his previous interest in the ministry.

Monroe Work's thesis related the proportion of Black people living in slums to their rates of crime, very much in contrast to the earlier work on Black crime by people such as Willcox. His article on this subject became the first published by a Black social scientist in the *Journal of Sociology* (Work 1900). For many years he worked at the Tuskegee Institute and edited the *Negro Yearbook*.

Haynes, Johnson, Reid, and Woodson, all worked on the Great Migration and their careers intersected in many ways, forming something of a network, with Johnson and Woodson as the two major poles around which this network formed. George Haynes was the first Black PhD to graduate from Columbia. He helped found the National Urban League, served as its first Director (1911–1918), and co-edited its journal *Opportunity*. He taught at Fisk and was involved in establishing the social work training center there. It is worth noting that the NUL was generally anti-union in attitude due to union restrictions on Black membership.[51] Haynes' research focused on the conditions for migrant Blacks in cities (Haynes 1913). He sees Black migration based primarily on economic considerations both in terms of Northern employment opportunities and the economic conditions in the South. His thesis focused on the situations of the migrant Black wage earner and businessman in New York. The problems they faced included the difficulty of adjusting to urban life, lack of skills, and discrimination on the part of unions and employers. In

[51] For a detailed study of the attitude of black organizations to trade unions see Moreno (2006). Black workers were not infrequently used as strike-breakers, something that added to the hostility of unions to Black membership.

Haynes' view, this discrimination was due in part to the lower skill level of many Black migrants but also to a view of Blacks as properly occupying a place "fixed by a previous condition of servitude" (Haynes 1913: 112–113). However, Haynes is recognized as being a "moderate" when it came to issues of race relations (Stewart 1991; Wilson 2006: 120–127).

In 1918, Woodrow Wilson appointed Haynes to head the new "Division of Negro Economics" which had the job of organizing "cooperative committees of white and colored citizens in the States and localities where problems of Negro labor had arisen, due to the Great Migration" (Haynes 1921: 12–13). Initially, the proposal for the Division had come from a Black opponent of the migration of Black people from the South. His appointment to lead the Division was prevented by a campaign of opposition by Du Bois and other leaders of "black and interracial organizations" (Wilson 2006: 129). While leading the Division, Haynes worked to smooth labor relations and encourage Black employment. The Division set up "Negro Workers Advisory Councils" to deal with employment issues, and Haynes always selected a prominent White businessman as the Chair of such Councils. He published (with difficulty) a report "The Negro at Work in World War and Reconstruction" (Haynes 1921) that discussed his findings concerning Black wages, employment, and adjustment to urban life (Stewart 1997). Haynes noted the wartime concentration of Black workers in certain jobs, such as foundries and meat packing, and argued that Congress should investigate race riots and lynching. Despite his efforts, Democratic Party opposition led to the funding for the Division being deleted, and Haynes left in 1921 (Hendrickson 2013: 229–238).[52]

Charles Johnson's graduate work was in Chicago. While still a graduate student, he was involved in a study of the Great Migration also involving Monroe Work and supported by the Tuskegee Institute, the NUL, and Carter Woodson. This project was led and written up by Emmett J. Scott (1920).[53] Johnson left Chicago after the Chicago riot for New York without completing his PhD. He took a position as research director at the NUL and co-editing *Opportunity* with Haynes. Johnson's moderate philosophy of promoting interracial cooperation reflected that of Haynes and the NUL. While at the NUL, Johnson wrote about the Chicago riot for the Chicago Commission on Race Relations (Johnson 1922; Hendrickson 2013: 239–246). Once in New York, he involved himself with the Harlem Renaissance, encouraging Black writers and artists. In 1926, he took the position of Chair of the Department of Sociology at Fisk University, later, in 1946, to become President. Johnson was appointed as research secretary in a project

[52] The Wilson administration re-segregated the Federal Civil Service resulting in a significant downgrading of Black employment and a huge blow to the developing Black middle class in Washington DC. See Yellin (2013).

[53] Scott had been a special advisor for Black affairs to the Secretary of War, working on the mobilization of Black Americans (Moreno 2006: 123). He had previously been closely involved with the Tuskegee Institute and after the War became Secretary-Treasurer of Howard University.

created by the National Interracial Conference, organized by Haynes, to review and summarize contemporary scholarship on African Americans. The SSRC Committee on Interracial Relations funded research assistants, and the result appeared as *The Negro in American Civilization* (Johnson 1930). Wesley Mitchell strongly supported this project:

> There seems to be no group of social problems in which men's attitudes have been characterized by a larger measure of emotion and a smaller measure of science than the problems with which the National Interracial Conference is dealing. Whatever the Conference can contribute towards raising the discussion from the level of feeling to the level of knowledge will be a gain. The surest way to promote social progress is to seek clearer insight into human behavior.[54]

The book was descriptive and was criticized for its lack of interpretation. Johnson distinguished between the migrations of 1916–1919 and 1921–1924. The first arose from extremely poor economic conditions in the South combined with a growing demand for labor in the North. It was "a leaderless mass movement" (Johnson 1930: 22). In other work, Johnson outlined how changing conditions in the South had led to Black people being pushed out of more skilled artisan employments, leading to fewer economic opportunities. Combined with worsening crop yields, this created a restless pool of surplus labor. Restrictions on immigration and then the War created a new demand for labor in the North (Johnson 1928). The new arrival of Blacks in the North prompted the race riots of 1919. In contrast, the second migration occurred "without excitement" as they were absorbed into already established Black communities. Why had the migrations not occurred before? In the earlier work published by Scott (1920) and in his own 1928 article, an answer is provided: even before 1916, Blacks in the South desired better conditions, but Northern employers and unions were opposed, preferring immigrants from Europe to Southern Blacks and actively working to keep Black labor out of the North. The treatment of the Great Migration here is in marked contrast to that found in Scroggs, and it became the accepted narrative among Black authors. This message is softened in Johnson's 1930 book, although he does list the unions then still opposed to Black membership.

Johnson's book was about much more than the Great Migration. It discussed segregation and discrimination in employment, housing, health, education, law and administration, and citizenship. Mary van Kleeck wrote in her Preface that the importance of the book was in its clear undermining of the claims of the racial inferiority of Blacks.

Ira Reid joined the NUL in 1924 and worked alongside Johnson, succeeding him as director of research and editor of *Opportunity*. Johnson also headed a project that resulted in

[54] Quoted in Mary van Kleeck's Foreword to Johnson (1930: vii).

Negro Membership in American Labor Unions (NUL 1930), researched and "largely written" by Ira Reid. Johnson and Reid collaborated on other projects. Du Bois, newly returned to Atlanta University, hired Reid in 1934, and, five years later, Reid produced his own major book *The Negro Immigrant* (Reid 1939), focusing on issues of adjustment to urban life.

Carter Woodson founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) and *The Journal of Negro History*. Both provided outlets for younger Black scholars, and Woodson was instrumental in helping them get into graduate school and publish their work. Woodson himself wrote the first detailed treatment of the long history of migration of Blacks to the North (Woodson 1918). Woodson argues that economic motivations are primary and that free Blacks respond to economic incentives as do Whites. He claims that Scroggs "is wrong in thinking" that the persecution of the blacks in the South had little to do with the Great migration as it created the willingness to leave once the opportunities in the North arrived: "It is highly probable that the Negroes would not be leaving the South today, if they were treated as men, although there might be numerous opportunities for economic improvement in the North" (W00dson 1918: 67).

In a point of sharp difference with Haynes and Johnson, Woodson develops a highly critical interpretation of the role of the Southern Black elite. He sees them as becoming co-operators with Southern segregation, as "assistant oppressors" (Wilson 2006: 123). Woodson also published extensively on the wage earner and other Black occupational groups and on how the educational system mis-educates and indoctrinates Black students, creating a lack of ambition and dependency (Greene and Woodson 1930; Woodson 1933).

Woodson mentored and helped many young Black Scholars. In 1925, Charles Wesley became the third Black man, after Du Bois and Woodson, to obtain a PhD from Harvard. He was mentored by both Haynes and Woodson and later became a colleague of Woodson when they were both at Howard University. Wesley wrote *Negro Labor in the United States, 1850–1925* (1927) and published several articles in the *Journal of Negro History* with a strong international orientation. Much later, he took on the job of Director of Research of ASNLH. Woodson was also associated with Lorenzo Greene who obtained an MA in History from Columbia in 1926 and, much later, a PhD in History in 1942 also from Columbia (Wilson 2006:139–144). In addition, Woodson arranged for the publication of Henderson Donald's work on the early phase of the Great Migration (Donald 1921) based on his 1920 MA thesis from Yale. This took up a whole issue of *The Journal of Negro History*.[55]

Franklin Frazier dealt mostly with different issues, focusing on the sociology of the Black family (Frazier 1928; 1939). He published an early provocative piece in which he claimed that racial prejudice was abnormal behavior involving delusion, projection, and

[55] Much later Donald published *The Negro Freedman* (1952).

paranoia: a form of insanity (Frazier 1927). He also wrote many articles on aspects of Black family life, including topics such as the effect of "urban civilization" on the Black family, and on the effect of the Great Depression on Northern urban Blacks (Frazier 1938). In a later work, he discusses the Black middle class (Frazier 1957) dealing with its emergence, especially in the North, and with its failure to obtain White recognition and resulting feelings of inferiority. He worked at Fisk (1929–1934) and Howard (1934–1962). He became the first African American President of the American Sociological Society in 1948.[56]

Turning to economists, Sadie Mossell Alexander was the first Black PhD in economics in 1921,[57] but being both Black and a woman she was not able to establish a research career after her PhD (Malveaux 1997) and moved to law, using her position to bring civil rights cases (Banks 2008). Her thesis "The Standard of Living Among One Hundred Negro Migrant Families in Philadelphia" (Mossell 1921) must have been inspired by Du Bois. She opens with a discussion of the Great Migration, referring to work by Scott and Woodson as well as Scroggs. She does not prioritize the pull factors. Following Scott and Woodson, she indicates that conditions in the South had created a pool of dissatisfied labor "ready to abandon it for the first opening elsewhere." The War cut off immigration, and Northern industries "were forced to turn to the Negro as their only immediately available supply of labor" (Mossell 1921: 173). Her work on consumption was a part of the "Standards of Living" approach that had developed among women economists of institutionalist orientation, but in her case, it also provided information concerning the families' adjustment to urban life and the impact of discrimination on income and consumption. Alexander's writings and later speeches have recently been published (Alexander and Banks 2021). She criticized racist ideology and race laws, including New Deal legislation that had adverse effects on Black farm tenants and domestic workers, and spoke forcefully on many civil rights issues throughout her career (Banks and Whatley 2022).[58]

Abram Harris was the "first Black American economist to gain academic prominence" (Darity and Ellison 1990). He began by working for the NUL and Charles Johnson in New York. At this time, he wrote an article in *Current History* (Harris 1923) critical of the attitudes of Black leaders associated with Tuskegee, considering them too conservative. Even Haynes he considered as sharing the Tuskegee philosophy, signaling his shift to a more radical position. Harris moved to Pittsburg for his MA, giving him

[56] Arthur Lewis was the first Black President of the AEA in 1983. Lewis had a Caribbean/British background.

[57] Haynes 1912 degree was not in economics. Greene (1946) lists a W. G. Henry as receiving a PhD in Economics from Boston University in 1918, but this is an error as Henry was White. https://www.irwincollier.com/boston-university-mistaken-racial-identity-economics-ph-d-alumnus-waight-gibbs-henry-1918/.

[58] In 2023 the AEA recognized her as a Distinguished Fellow (the first ever posthumous award).

exposure to conditions in local industry and giving rise to his MA thesis "New Negro Worker in Pittsburgh" (1924). Harris began to focus on the rift between White and Black in the workplace and the role of unions in creating division (Harris 1926) and attacked the stereotypical White view of Blacks (Harris 1927). He was to move further from the moderate NUL position during his time at Columbia. Harris was the first Black PhD from Columbia's Economics Department and only the second Black PhD from any specialized economics graduate program in the US. Harris took history of economics courses from Wesley Mitchell and became interested in Veblen and Marx. Harris's PhD work on the American labor movement in its relation "to the segregated, circumscribed, and restricted Negro minority" (Spero and Harris 1931: vii) was supported by a Columbia research grant arranged by Wesley Mitchell and Franz Boas and supervised by Henry Seager.[59] It was published in 1931, combined with contributions from Sterling Spero (a PhD student in Political Science): *The Black Worker: The Negro and the Labor Movement* (Spero and Harris 1931). Influenced by his reading of Veblen and Marx, he argued for the development of a class solidarity between White and Black labor, attacking both the anti-union attitudes of the NUL and the anti-Black policies of the Unions. According to William Darity Jr., the book "provided the definitive study of white labor's attempts to exclude blacks from the workplace" (Darity 1997: 233). He was involved in an attempt to establish a working-class political party. In 1927, and while still a graduate student, Harris became a faculty member at Howard University where he was in the company of Franklin Frazier, as well as such distinguished scholars as Alain Locke in philosophy and Ralph Bunche[60] in political science (Holloway 2003; Johnson 2020). Harris, Frazier, and Bunche strongly attacked the older generation of Black leaders at the NAACP conference in 1933 for not taking a more activist approach (Holloway 2002). With the onset of the Great Depression, Harris developed a critique of Black businesses based on his class analysis. He disputed that Black businesses could provide a way out of Black poverty and discrimination. The Black "masses" have no greater "exploiter than the black capitalist" (Harris 1936; Darity 1997). This argument led to serious divisions with other Black leaders such as Woodson who wholeheartedly supported Black business development (Wilson 2006: 221–225).[61]

Harris also continued to work on the history of economics and published two papers in the *JPE* dealing with institutionalism, Veblen, and Marx (Harris 1932; 1934). The *JPE* did not

[59] Committee members included Robert Chaddock and Paul Brissenden. The only other Black PhD in economics from Columbia up to 1943 was Brailsford R. Brazeal who graduated in 1942 with a thesis on the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. His career was at Morehouse College where he became Dean. He wrote on voting rights and other civil rights issues. See: https://www.irwincollier.com/columbia-economics-ph-d-alumnus-brailsford-reese-brazeal-1942/.

[60] Bunche was America's first Black Nobel Prize winner in 1950. He won the Peace Prize for his mediation in Israel.

[61] For further discussion of Harris and Woodson see Peart and Levy (2022: 63–75).

publish any of Harris' work on Black labor. Harris' work on institutionalism brought him to the attention of Frank Knight, then editor of the *JPE*, who also had an abiding interest in issues of institutional change and taught a course "Economics from an Institutional Standpoint" that included discussion of Veblen, Sombart, and Weber. This course soon included Harris's critique of Veblen (Rutherford 2015). Harris was not uncritical of Veblen and Marx even then, but he remained clearly on the political left for his time at Howard. The contact between Knight and Harris later resulted in Harris being given a position at Chicago in 1945 but not in the graduate department. As has been discussed by Darity (1987), Harris' move to Chicago was accompanied by a shift in ideological position to one critical of all forms of paternalism and more in line with orthodox economics.[62]

Robert Weaver's career transitions between the period of the segregated scholars and the more desegregated world that emerged after the Second World War. Weaver obtained his PhD in economics from Harvard in 1934,[63] supervised by W. Z. Ripley and dealing with the high wage theory. Weaver went directly into government service during the New Deal, becoming Advisor on Negro Affairs under Harold Ickes in the Department of the Interior and a consultant on housing issues in the Public Works Administration. He became a leading member of Roosevelt's "Black Cabinet" that worked to increase the participation of Black groups in New Deal Programs. Ralph Bunche was also a member of this group. Weaver and Haynes successfully opposed the racial "dual wage" system of the National Recovery Administration, and Weaver drafted the 1937 U.S. Housing Program for the Roosevelt administration. At the same time, he was publishing in the house journals of the NUL and NAACP on issues involving the training and employment of Black workers and housing (Weaver 1921; 1935; 1938). Later, he moved to wartime administration and was Chief of the Negro Employment and Training Branch of the War Production Board. This work was the basis of his publications in the *JPE* and *QJE* (Weaver 1944; 1945) discussed below. After the War, he left the Federal Government and taught and wrote mainly on urban housing issues. His academic appointments were usually short-term summer or visiting positions.[64] He worked for the State of

[62] Frank Knight visited Harris at Howard early in their relationship. In his eulogy for Harris, Knight criticized American racism and expressed anger at the discrimination that had hindered Harris' career. See Levy and Peart (forthcoming).

[63] See Myers (2017) for a discussion of the Black PhDs in economics produced by Harvard from 1905 to 1955. Other early Black PhDs in economics were William Dean and B. T. McGraw. Dean was a highly regarded student and obtained his PhD in 1938. He worked on location theory but committed suicide in 1952. McGraw obtained his PhD in 1939 on French monetary policy. He was a minority consultant on housing during World War II, and later worked with Robert Weaver.

[64] 1947 Summer, Visiting Professor, Columbia University Teachers College; 1947–8, Lecturer, Northwestern University; 1948–51, Visiting Professor, New York University, School of Education; 1949, Summer, Visiting Professor, New School for Social Research, Summer Session in Europe. In 1970 he became Professor of Economics at City University of New York, and a year later Distinguished Professor at Hunter College in New York. Source: Robert C. Weaver Papers, New York Public Library: https://archives.nypl.org/scm/20790.

New York on housing and in the 1960s was appointed by the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, becoming the head of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in 1966 (Conrad and Sherer 1997).

Before leaving the topic of Black social scientists, it is worth mentioning the work of Allison Davis in anthropology. Davis found a mentor in Lloyd Warner, first at Harvard and later at Chicago, and was placed in charge of an anthropological study of a Southern community (Natchez, Mississippi) along with two White anthropologists and a Black research assistant. This resulted in the publication *Deep South* (Davis, Gardner, and Gardner 1941) that characterized the social structure of the town as consisting of a combination of caste distinctions between Black and White citizens, with class distinctions within each caste. Not dissimilar studies were also undertaken by White anthropologists and psychologists such as John Dollard (1937).[65] Davis later worked on the issue of cultural bias in IQ tests.

The Black social scientists considered in this section were trained within the Northern White academic system, primarily in sociology or history departments. After they graduated, they found themselves in a segregated world of race-relations committees, organizations such as NUL, Tuskegee, and the NAACP, and Black colleges such as Atlanta, Fisk, and Howard. Despite this, they built a network of individuals and institutions that provided the support required for them to create the discipline of Black labor studies. White economists and economics departments played a secondary role in this development, and the work of Black scholars was very largely ignored by the bulk of the economics profession.[66]

The Economics Profession Rediscovers Black Issues

In 1937, the Carnegie Corporation commissioned Swedish economist Gunner Myrdal to write a book about America's race problem. The choice of a non-American outsider was a deliberate attempt to bring in an unbiased view. Black scholars George Haynes, Franklin Frazer, Ira Reid, Charles Johnson, Allison Davis, and Ralph Bunche all contributed to Myrdal's research effort, as did White sociologists T. J. Woofter and Guy B. Johnson. Louise Kennedy Kiser also contributed:[67]

> The project brought together collaborators representing different values and schools of thought, social science scholars and reformers, black and white representatives of

[65] The application of caste distinctions to US race relations was controversial. See Varel's (2018) biography of Davis.

[66] I also did a JSTOR search for book reviews of the Black labor studies literature between 1910 and 1940 in major American economics journals, but apart from a couple of reviews of Spero and Harris' book I found very little.

[67] Source: https://www.nypl.org/sites/default/files/archivalcollections/pdf/MicroR323.173C_-Micro_F_13242.pdf.

> major civil rights and reform organizations. Edwards Shils, Charles Dollard, William F. Ogburn, Samuel A. Stouffer and Dorothy S. Thomas among others contributed to the project, as did a number of black intellectuals, Sterling Brown, Doxey Wilkerson, Franklin E. Frazier and Kenneth Clark among them. With one man in particular, Ralph Bunche. . . . Myrdal formed a long-lasting personal relationship. Bunche wrote four manuscripts for the report, including a major report on Southern politics, and his contributions were the more influential as far as the final work was concerned (Lyon 2004: 205).[68]

An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and American Democracy appeared in 1944 (Myrdal 1944). Myrdal used the concept of cumulative causation to argue that Black Americans were caught in a vicious cycle of a negative view of Blacks leading to their poor economic and health conditions that in turn confirm and reinforce the prejudice. In a manner similar to Allison Davis, Myrdal analyzed the racial divisions in America as matters of "caste and class," with Whites and Blacks occupying different castes within society, each with their own class structure (Myrdal 1944). The prejudice against Black people is taken to be a moral problem among Whites and one that requires state intervention to overcome. Myrdal's book has been credited with changing Americans' perspective on race, and Prasch (2007) discusses the book in terms of its role in the "postwar revival of interest in the economics of race and discrimination."[69] Myrdal's book did, in a variety of ways, inspire and promote work on Black issues, but other 1940s contributions stemmed more directly from the Black labor studies tradition. Within economics, Robert Weaver and Herbert Northrup illustrate these two trajectories.

Weaver and Northrup led the way in publishing on Black issues in the *JPE* and *QJE*. Weaver was introduced in the previous section: a Black scholar and closely connected to the tradition of Black labor studies. A considerable amount of his work throughout his career appeared in *The Journal of Negro History* and the *Journal of Negro Education*. He wrote most widely on the educational and housing issues facing Black people, but his work related to his wartime involvement in Black training and employment led to his publications in the *QJE* and *JPE*. His 1944 *JPE* paper concerns the relationship between unions and Black workers (Weaver 1944), and his 1945 *QJE* paper discusses Black employment in the aircraft industry during the War (Weaver 1945b). In these papers, Weaver reviews the history of the color line in industry and the history of union discrimination against Black workers. Weaver's point is that these problems continued

[68] Neither Woodson nor Harris were involved with the Myrdal study. Woodson was skeptical of Foundation involvement and Harris may have been thought of as too radical (Peart and Levy 2022).

[69] Peart and Levy (2022: 74) see a lack of reviews by economists, an indication a continued lack of interest by economists in racial issues. But see Fleury (2012) for a different view.

and interfered with wartime production. During the War, efforts were made to break down the barriers to Black employment with some success, and the rise of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), with its more open policies, helped to introduce Black workers to unions in a positive way. This had potentially large effects:

> Certainly, the fact that tens of thousands of Negroes are working in plants under the jurisdiction of these unions will strengthen the hands of those who would remove barriers to Negro membership in them. Conceivably, it may also become the occasion for the rise of a strong movement for the removal of color lines and second-class membership based on race (Weaver 1944).

Weaver also wrote two widely reviewed books: *Negro Labor: A National Problem* (1946a) and *The Negro Ghetto* (1948). The former also goes over the efforts at wartime mobilization of Black labor and the successes that were made after Pearl Harbor but counters his previous optimism by detailing the subsequent post-War reconversion with a tendency to previous patterns of discrimination (Weaver 1946a: 266–305). The latter, as the title indicates, is a detailed and penetrating study of housing discrimination against Blacks and its many deleterious effects.

Weaver was joined in his analysis of discrimination by unions by Herbert R. Northrup. As a White scholar, Northrup came from a very different background with initially no contact with Black labor scholars. Northrup first became interested in issues involving Black labor due to time spent in Duke University:

> I noticed the great increase of the union movement in this New Deal period, and I also noticed that in the tobacco factories the racial factor was very strong with separate local unions and a racial-occupational segregation pattern whereas the textile industry excluded blacks almost entirely. That fascinated me. I switched my major from accounting to economics (Kaufman 1998: 671).

Northrup then moved to Harvard to study with institutionalist labor economist Sumner Slichter. Northrup states that Slichter "had not given serious thought to black employment problems before I came along, which was typical among labor economists and most others" (Kaufman 1998: 671–672). All the same, Slichter arranged for his student to take a position "during the summers of 1940 and 1941 with the Negro in America Survey under the direction of the Swedish economist, Gunnar Myrdal." Northrup drove down the East Coast and then "went up the East side of the Mississippi River" through Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, and Kentucky. Northrup "learned a great deal" and "obtained volumes of notes and ideas and materials" for his dissertation (Kaufman 1998: 672).

Northrup's PhD thesis work became the basis for his publications in the *QJE* (Northrup 1942), *JPE* (Northrup 1943a), *SJE* (Northrup 1943b; 1943c), and his 1944 book *Organized Labor and the Negro.* Clearly, Northup had become familiar with the Black labor studies literature and cites Du Bois, Haynes, Johnson, Reid, Spero and Harris, and Weaver. Northrup's investigations found a variety of union responses to Black labor depending on the pre-existing pattern of employment, the industry structure, the philosophy of the union, and the state of the labor market. Northrup was highly critical of those unions resisting Black membership on equal terms and suggested a comprehensive anti-discrimination policy (Northrup 1944: 237–238, 250). In his criticism of discriminating (usually craft) unions, Northrup is clear that the color bar works to the economic advantage of the White union members: "the color bar results not only from race prejudice, but also from a desire to monopolize job opportunities for the unions' white membership" (Northrup 1946: 45). Northrup included race relations in his labor economics textbook with Gordon Bloom (Bloom and Northrup 1950).

Wartime issues involving the mobilization of Black labor clearly sparked significant interest among economists and also promoted broader changes that tended to break down old patterns of discrimination.[70] In addition to the items mentioned above, Robert Weaver published in special issues of the *Annals* dealing with wartime problems for minorities and postwar problems for veterans in 1942 and 1945 (Weaver 1942; 1945a). Black economist and labor mediator Lloyd Bailer[71] published on the Negro worker in the automobile industry in the *JPE* in 1943, detailing the increased race friction with the upgrading of Black employees during the war (Bailer 1943). Another special issue of the *Annals* on group prejudice in 1946 contained papers by Weaver on housing segregation (1946b) and Northrup on discrimination by unions (1946).

It is interesting that despite his success Northrup still faced pushback from the profession, due both to his critical views on unions and his general area of study. His response to criticism of his view of unions (liberals were supposed to be pro-union) was that a "disaffected and discriminated against minority" was not consistent with the ideal of the free market. On his job market experience, he recalls one interviewer telling him: "don't fool around with this stuff it will never get you anywhere." He

[70] In 1941, A. Philip Randolph founded the March on Washington Committee, promising that unless President Roosevelt issued an executive order ending racial discrimination in hiring by unions and employers, thousands of Americans would march through Washington demanding an end to segregation. Roosevelt gave in and issued the Executive Order. The color bar in major league baseball was broken in 1947, and the armed forces desegregated in 1948. https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1997/summer/american-labor-movement.html.

[71] Bailer was a 1943 PhD in economics from the University of Michigan. He was for a time a colleague of Abram Harris' at Howard and Bailer thanks him for input into the paper. The paper is based on his thesis. At the time Bailer was also serving with the War Production Board. His career was primarily as a labor arbitrator.

indicates that attitudes only really changed with the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act (Kaufman 1998: 673).

The Myrdal study also inspired a reaction from Donald Dewey. Writing in 1952, Dewey commented on the lack of work on job discrimination in the South done by economists:

> In the South, of course, a rigid division of labor is a striking feature of the everyday business of life in almost every town from Maryland to western Texas. I believe it no exaggeration to say that most southerners view their economy as divided into "white" and "Negro" jobs. Certainly these categories are invoked whenever Negro employment problems are under discussion. Nevertheless, this phenomenon has been largely ignored by economists both in the South and elsewhere. *The Southern Economic Journal* has never carried an article analyzing the racial division of labor; and I wonder whether the editors have ever received one (Dewey 1952: 280).

Dewey explains the lack of work by economists in terms of data problems and the difficulty in applying standard marginal theory in the face of a labor market characterized by racial discrimination. He is aware of the work that has been done by Black sociologists, but he complains that this work has not "systematically examined the interaction of competition and color prejudice in the American economy" (Dewey 1952: 279). He includes Myrdal's work in this as: "Myrdal's formidable staff of experts apparently included only one American economist, Herbert R. Northrup." The "Carnegie studies which went into American Dilemma were almost wholly tour de force by sociologists" (Dewey 1952: 279, n.3).

For Dewey, what the economist can add is an analysis of the terms on which the competition between White and Black workers takes place. The first task is to define the nature of the constraints that racial discrimination place on competition between Black and White workers in the labor market. The exact pattern of discrimination varies significantly over the South, but Dewey finds two common elements: (1) Black workers are not placed above White workers in the chain of command, and (2) Blacks and Whites do not work together at the same jobs.

Despite his criticism of Myrdal, Dewey shares with him a view of the source of prejudice in social norms as a kind of moral failing among Whites. These norms limit direct personal competition for jobs between Whites and Blacks to those jobs that are "isolated" in nature and also "dead-end" with no possibility of promotion over Whites. For most other purposes, Whites and Blacks can compete only as alternative "work groups," and this greatly hinders employers' ability to "upgrade" Black workers. Individual Black workers cannot be introduced into White groups to gain experience in new tasks. A whole new

Black work group would have to be created and trained up to substitute for a White group. Employers have little incentive to substitute Black groups for White due to training costs and the ready availability of White unskilled labor. This leads to great stability in the racial patterns of hiring, a stability that becomes "petrified" with the arrival of unions that adopt a policy of "segregated locals for each organized plant" (Dewey 1952: 290).

The observed result is a lack of economic progress for Black workers in the South except for those in isolated and dead-end occupations. Dewey's analysis is economic in that he does explicitly consider the employers' costs and benefits of switching employment patterns or retaining the racial status quo, but he is also including sociological factors in the two common features of employment discrimination he references. What his analysis does do is to treat the employers' decision about upgrading Black employment as one driven by cost and not by the racial prejudice of employers or concern about adverse reaction from other employees (except in the case of unions) or the community at large (Dewey 1952: 281). Dewey has said that he believed that he had "done something to show how racial discrimination 'really' operated in American labor markets before 1965,"[72] but his inclusion of the two rules of discrimination in his analysis seems to have had no immediate follow up either in his own work or elsewhere in economics.

Becker's (1957) treatment of discrimination provides a more purely neoclassical approach to discrimination. His book was a revised version of his Chicago PhD thesis, but the thesis spends time discussing the background in Myrdal's work which the book does not (Fleury 2012).[73] In his thesis, Becker observed that previous work on race relations had been descriptive, by which he meant it looked only at describing the results of racial prejudice. Becker applied neoclassical theory to "Negro-White differences" in the economy (Fleury 2012: 13) and stressed the economic over the social. In his basic model, Becker considers discrimination primarily a matter of individual employers having a preference for certain types of employee. If there are many employers discriminating against some group such as Black workers, their wages will be depressed relative to others. Provided there are a sufficient number of non-discriminating employers and workers have similar levels of productivity, market competition should work to gradually reduce discrimination. His analysis focuses on the *costs* to employers of engaging in discrimination. Becker does talk also about prejudice on the part of employees and customers and "pre-market discrimination" such as in education that can affect productivity, but his model is focused on the hiring decisions of employers and on the costs of discrimination to them.

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[72] https://prabook.com/web/donald_jefferson.dewey/953382.

[73] Fleury's article provides a great deal of information on the background to Becker's work in terms of the fight against discrimination in the 1950s that reached its climax in *Brown vs Board of Education* in 1954.

Becker's book presented itself as "interdisciplinary," but the approach taken and the model used owed little to other disciplines. It was interdisciplinary primarily in the sense that the treatment of discrimination crossed into an area that had become seen as belonging to sociology and not to economics. This did create controversy. Both economists and sociologists argued that the topic of discrimination did not belong in economics, meaning that it was a social phenomenon that had economic consequences and not an economic phenomenon that had social consequences. Becker himself remarked on the slow uptake of his approach, commenting that "most economists did not think racial discrimination was economics."[74]

Interestingly, both Northrup and Dewey criticized the book. Dewey argued that the idea of discrimination as a result of rational maximizing on the basis of a given preference function had serious limitations. He claims that Becker's approach works against the explicit examination of such preferences (as his own work did) and the "irrational behaviors" they create. Dewey warns against "treating irrational behavior *as if* it is rational behavior" (Dewey 1958: 495). Northrup, in turn, points to his own and other earlier work on discrimination in labor markets and to the economic motivations of unions. Northrup also attacks what he sees as Becker's "naïve assumptions" and failure to consider much of the empirical evidence about discrimination (Northrup 1958: 298). Fleury states that "despite the growing acknowledgement of the economic nature of discrimination, Becker's approach continued to provoke skepticism until the mid 1960s." It was only from then on, when economists "benefited from a renewed interest in race relations," that the number of economic studies of discrimination began to increase significantly (Fleury 2012: 29), some following Becker's approach and some not (Phelps 1972). From this point on, economics began to include the discussion of racial discrimination, Black employment, wages, housing, health, and more as an uncontroversial part of the discipline's subject matter.[75] This large and rapidly growing literature is beyond the scope of this paper and has been discussed elsewhere.[76] However, one very recent development is worth mentioning here in that it brings Du Bois' specific perspective back into economics: the "stratification economics" of William Darity Jr. (Darity 2005; Stewart 2022).

Darity's objective is "to perform bypass surgery on the argument that groups in a subordinate position are so ranked because of their own deficiencies or self-defeating

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[74] https://www.chicagobooth.edu/review/how-gary-becker-saw-the-scourge-of-discrimination. The University of Chicago Press initially rejected publishing Becker's thesis as too controversial (Fleury 2012: 19–21).

[75] One can debate whether this development is an "acceptance" by economists of the relevance and importance of Black labor issues or simply an "appropriation" by largely White economists of some aspects of what had previously been the purview of Black scholars.

[76] For a history of the treatment of racial discrimination in economics leading up to Becker, see Chassonnery-Zaïgouche (2024). For other surveys of more recent literature see Arrow (1998), Lang and Lehmann (2012), and Lang and Spitzer (2020) and Francis, Hardy, and Jones (2022).

behaviors" (Darity 2022: 401). His analysis is of a society stratified into a hierarchy of groups, with each group concerned with maintaining or improving its relative position. Darity draws on Veblen's theories of emulation and the importance of relative social position, theories of group identity, sociologist Herbert Blumer's work on race prejudice as a matter of group position (Blumer 1958), as well as work by Du Bois (1935) and Franklin Frazier (1957). In Darity's view:

> The key point is that group-based systems of hierarchy, accompanied by bias against and denigration of subaltern groups, are effectual. Their design fulfills a redistributive objective on behalf of the group on top. Race (or ethnic or religious or class) prejudice is not an arbitrary taste, nor a matter of whim or ignorance, nor an atavistic throwback to a more primitive or backward stage of human civilization. Race prejudice is instrumental for the promotion and perpetuation of dominance of one group over another; it is purposive and functional. There is a collective rationality to race prejudice, given a dominant social group's desire to maintain and harden their position of dominance (Darity 2022: 406).

Conclusion

This history of the economics profession in relation to Black labor studies indicates three periods: (1) a period of overt racism, during which the perspective of Du Bois was explicitly rejected by the profession; (2) a period of neglect and silence in which Black economic studies was very largely left to sociology and a cadre of Black "segregated scholars" working largely outside of the institutions of academic economics; and (3) a period of gradual acceptance that the study of Black labor issues did belong within the discipline. The first phase has been discussed to a small extent by historians of economics (Aldrich 1979; Darity 1994; Prasch 2007; 2008), but none of this work has appeared in places prominent to most economists and is not widely known in the profession at large. Discussions of this research with colleagues, however, has made it clear that even fewer people know about the second phase. This ignorance persists despite the vast literature on the history of Black labor studies that exists in sociology and history, and the fact that a secondary literature on George Haynes, Sadie Alexander, Abram Harris, and Robert Weaver has been produced since the 1990s by Black economists such as Nina Banks, Thomas D. Boston, William A. Darity Jr., Julian Ellison, Julianne Malveaux, James B. Stewart, and others.[77] In the third phase, Economics has gradually come to include substantial amounts of work on many issues relating to the economic situation of Black people produced by both White and Black

[77] Little of this has been published in the major journals in the history of economics.

economists. These periods reflect shifts in the way in which the discipline has defined itself over time.

The evident and widespread racism in the economics literature in the first period is not surprising given the degree of prejudice concerning Black people that existed throughout American society in the decades immediately after emancipation and reconstruction. Within the academic world, the notions of racial inheritance and racial hierarchy were widespread and, at the time, seemed to be supported by scientific measurement and statistics. What undoubtedly made the prejudice against Blacks particularly strong and deeply entrenched was the association of Blacks with slavery. As is made clear in Willcox's introduction to Tillinghast, to argue for the inherent inferiority of Blacks was to both cast a better light on slavery and to justify continued racial inequality. In this literature, the biological deficiencies of Black workers means they cannot compete with Whites, even leading to their possible elimination. There was prejudice against various immigrant groups as well, but they were for the most part relatively quicky absorbed into White society.

In many ways, it is harder to understand the very slight degree of interest and involvement of economists in issues relating to Black labor in the second period. In this period, the belief in the inherited inferiority of Blacks was under attack from people such as Park and Boas and, while far from eliminated, was gradually becoming less scientifically respectable, and there is an important shift in attitudes occurring in this period in that respect. However, if the problems of the Black population are considered a matter of culture and social environment and not of inheritance, then one might think that there should be *more* interest in studying the economic issues involved and not less. There were a significant number of committees and organizations set up that worked to promote Black studies as well as sources of funding, and a lot of work was being done along these lines, just not by White economists. Despite Dewey's attempt to explain the lack of work by economists on racial discrimination in terms of data difficulties and problems of applying marginal theory to racialized labor markets, there is nothing in the analysis Dewey produced that could not have been accomplished previously. This absence of interest produced not just very little work on Black issues by White economists themselves but a lack of involvement in encouraging or publishing Black studies, especially as compared with neighboring disciplines such as sociology. Economists essentially defined Black labor studies as outside of the discipline.

A key difference between economics and sociology was that there was a significant cohort of sociologists who were vocal in their objection to biological theories of racial difference. Economics had been an important host to these theories, but it was sociologists and anthropologists who led the academic objection to them. Racist views

of Blacks were common in American society throughout the interwar period, and it is unlikely that in overall terms economists were significantly different than those in other social sciences, but what economics did lack were public champions for Black studies and Black students, such as Park in sociology, Hart in history, and Lloyd Warner in anthropology, or professional journals such as *Social Forces* willing to be open to black authors and studies. It is hard to find public statements explicitly rejecting ideas of Black racial inferiority or expressing interest in Black issues in the interwar economics literature. This surely played a part in attracting Black students to disciplines other than economics.

Sociology had a number of very well-known White scholars studying Black issues as well as a good number of Black scholars working in Black colleges and contributing significantly to the field. Economics had none of the first and relatively few of the second. This difference in response is remarkable, particularly as many of the issues facing Black people were clearly economic in nature. Northrup's comment about Slichter not having given serious thought to such issues is extremely telling, especially as it applied to Northern White labor economists quite generally, including institutional labor economists such as Slichter himself. The profession in the interwar period included a substantial number of institutional labor economists who faced no obvious methodological constraints on including consideration of sociological variables, and yet even they did not venture far into the area. Among well-known institutional economists, Lescohier suggested a project on the Great Migration, Seager supervised Abram Harris, and Mitchell was sympathetic and encouraged projects via the SSRC, but that is about all one can find. Their concern with social reform did not extend to improving the economic condition of Black people.

Collins has argued that the problem in economics was one of a lack of diversity in the profession. In terms of the Great Migration, he argues, "it is surely possible that a more diverse economics profession would have engaged the study of the Great Migration differently, more intensively, or more continuously over time" (Collins 2021: 6). While that is true, the lack of diversity within economics must itself have been a result of the lack of clear interest in Black issues on the part of established economists.

The third period is one in which an acceptance that Black labor issues, such as discrimination by unions or employers, do belong within the economics discipline had gradually developed. This development, however, was slow and sometimes partial. The work by Weaver and Northrup on discrimination against Blacks led the way, but the work published in the leading economics journals initially focused exclusively on discrimination by trade unions and its effects. However, in these pieces it is recognized that White workers gain from the discrimination against Blacks, so there is an economic

motive that both uses and reinforces prejudice. Dewey's article refers to broader patterns of discrimination in the South, but for the most part, these are taken as a given result of a general Southern prejudice against Blacks working with or having authority over Whites. Employers are presented as responding both to these prejudices and to the training costs of upgrading groups of Black workers and not themselves as necessarily wishing to discriminate. Unions, again, are a different matter. Their economic interests reinforce the existing pattern of employment. In contrast, Becker treats discrimination primarily in terms of individual taste on the part of employers, and this approach, based on individual preferences, aligns better with orthodox theoretical approaches.

As indicated, the further uptake of these efforts within economics was not immediate and only seems to have occurred once the civil rights movement and Civil Rights Act created some significant broader change in attitude (and policy) in the mid 1960s. This led to a redefinition of the boundary of the discipline. However, the individualistic approach of Becker that was adopted quite widely in economics has limitations. One can argue that the neoclassical methodological commitment to the individual level of analysis, lack of consideration of social factors, and positive view of market efficiency militated against a full view of the problem. In Becker's model, competition should undermine discrimination, at least if Blacks and Whites are similarly efficient. This point of view is well displayed in Milton Friedman's discussion of the issue (1962: 108–119). However, if one believes in this way, any continuing economic problems facing Black people come to be seen as largely of their own making. For example, George Stigler can be found arguing that Blacks lack purpose and willingness to work and that the Black family is morally lax and a source of crime. As a result, for Stigler, the only solution to "the problem of the Negro" is self-improvement (Stigler 1965).[78] This brings back arguments concerning the "cultural inferiority" and lower productivity of Black people. Moreover, for those economists with strong beliefs in individualism, freedom of association, and market competition there was (and is) antipathy to legislative efforts to combat racial discrimination. Such attitudes have been described as "laissez-faire racism:" an opposition to policy designed to counter the historical effects of discrimination (Bobo, Kluegel, and Smith 1997).

Furthermore, work in economics has not always engaged with the full range of discrimination against Blacks that is discussed by the likes of Du Bois or other Black scholars. They are talking about a set of social norms, conventions, and, in the South, laws that were widely accepted by the White population and clearly *intended* to keep

[78] Black libertarian Thomas Sowell can be found making similar arguments (Sowell 2005). Sowell's PhD came from Chicago in 1968. His major works engaging with Black issues and critical of government programs date from the 1970s. For criticism of Sowell's views see Stewart (2006).

Black people as a whole in a lower, subordinate position. As pointed out by Du Bois (1935), the benefit to the higher status group is both psychic (in terms of status) and material. Discrimination affects not only employment but access to housing, education, health, politics, and the behavior of police and the justice system. For a people subject to such prejudice and discrimination, established institutions, *including markets*, are inevitably seen and experienced not as impartial or efficient but rather as the channel through which prejudice and discrimination find concrete expression. Darity's stratification economics can be seen as a response to this shortcoming.

This history, with its various omissions and blind spots, reveals the shifting perspectives on race that have occurred within economics. Although economics has come to accept that topics such as discrimination do belong within the discipline, the bulk of its history is of a profession lacking openness to Black issues or Black students. One consequence of this is that there has been no proper recognition of the contribution of the earlier Black scholars to economics until very recently. For example, history of economic thought journals have published nothing on Du Bois[79] and very little on other Black contributions to economics. In introducing his subject, Northrup's interviewer, a leading historian of industrial relations, felt he could say of Northrup that: "he was one of the first scholars to devote serious attention to the economic position of the Negro in both the organized labor movement and American industry" (Kaufman 1998: 669) despite Northrup's own citation of earlier contributions by Black scholars.

More significantly, the profession historically has not been attractive to Black students. Since the late 1960s and 70s, organizations and journals aimed towards Black scholars in economics have emerged—The National Economic Association was founded in 1969 and *The Review of Black Political Economy* was established in 1970 (Handy 2008)[80]—and Black economics faculty did begin to be hired at the leading universities. But the numbers were small, and Black faculty are still badly underrepresented. In 1994 the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* identified only eleven Black economists in the top 25 economics departments. In 2006 it found only two more.[81] The fact of a "hostile climate" towards Black researchers in economics was recognized by the AEA in an announcement in June 2020. The roots of this hostile climate are to be found in the history outlined in this paper.

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[79] Prasch's (2008) paper on du Bois was published in the *Du Bois Review*, Oliver's (2014) in *American Studies*. Boston's (1991) paper appeared in a proceedings issue of the *AER*.

[80] For more of this history see the several papers in the June 2020 issue of the *Review of Black Political Economy*. See also Banks (2022).

[81] https://www.jbhe.com/news_views/50_no_black_economists.html.

Acknowledgements

Malcolm Rutherford thanks to Cléo Chassonnery-Zaïgouche, William A. Darity Jr., John Davis, Merwan Engineer, Donn Feir, David Levy, Steve Medema, Mary Morgan, Sandra Peart, Joseph J. Persky, the participants in workshops/seminars given at the Department of Economics, University of Victoria, the Center for the History of Political Economy, Duke University, and the Cercle d'epistemologie, University of Paris, and anonymous referees for helpful comments and suggestions.

Funding Information

This research was supported by a University of Victoria Faculty Research Grant.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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