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|  | **For a Sociological Reconstruction: W.E.B. Du** |  |
|  | **Bois, Stuart Hall and Segregated Sociology** |
|  | **by** [**Les Back and Maggie Tate**](http://www.socresonline.org.uk/20/3/15/back.html) |
|  | **Goldsmiths, University of London; University of Texas at Austin** |
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|  | **Abstract** |  |
|  | Racism and intellectual segregation limit and divide the sociological tradition. The white sociological mainstream historically ignored the |
|  | contribution of black sociologists and today it confers the discussion of racism to a specialist sub-field. Black sociologists by contrast |
|  | have long been attentive to white sociology. Through a detailed discussion of the writings of W.E.B Du Bois and Stuart Hall and their |
|  | respective dialogues with figures like Max Weber and C Wright Mills, an argument is made for a profound reconstruction of sociology at |
|  | both the level of analysis and of form that changes the way sociology tells about racism and society as a whole. |
|  | ***Keywords:*** *Race and Racism, W.E.B Du Bois, Stuart Hall, Writing, Politics, Academic* |
|  | *Segregation* |
|  | **Introduction** |
| **1.1** | A storm is brewing around questions of race and racism within the Republic of Sociological Letters. It is |
|  | a gale that blows periodically through the journal stacks and conference colloquia when scholars of colour and |
|  | their allies are pushed to the limit. This storm can be found in the new critical writing on how academic authority |
|  | is colonized by white somatic norms in the university and how class, race and gender inequalities structure the |
|  | academy. Sara Ahmed ([2012](#_bookmark6)) deconstructs these forms of power and the racialised expectations that follow from |
|  | them to show how new knowledge emerges from a struggle to achieve real change. Also, Yasmin Gunaratnam |
|  | ([2015](#_bookmark28)) describes the consequences this has for black feminist scholars who, as a result of the racialised |
|  | expectations placed upon them, experience the physical and affective sensations of what she calls 'presentation |
|  | fever'. Nathan Richard's important films *Absent from the Academy* and *Why is My Curriculum So White* document |
|  | both the under representation of people of colour inside the universities and the enduring Eurocentric nature of |
|  | the curriculum ([Richards 2013, 2014](#_bookmark49)). |
| **1.2** | In the 1970s a similar storm coincided with Howard University Professor Joyce Ladner's book entitled, |
|  | with premature optimism, *The Death of White Sociology* ([1973](#_bookmark39)). The black scholars in this seminal collection took |
|  | white sociology to task over its distorted accounts of black history and pathological characterisations of black |
|  | communities. Ten years later there was another, in the UK this time coinciding with the publication of *The Empire* |
|  | *Strikes Back* ([1982](#_bookmark13)) by a collective of at the time young scholars at the Centre For Contemporary Cultural Studies |
|  | in Birmingham. Errol Lawrence argued that sociology in Britain was complicit in reproducing racial pathologies, |
|  | while at the same time unable to describe the rich and complex cultural experience that was before them (see |
|  | [Lawrence 1982](#_bookmark40)). The turbulence produced by each of these books related to the failure of the discipline to |
|  | conduct a profound intellectual reconstruction around issues of knowledge production and racism. As a |
|  | consequence, sociology in the US, as well as in Europe, remains haunted and constrained by its inability to |
|  | shake the colonising whiteness that continues to colour its imagination. |
| **1.3** | Gurminder Bhambra's recent review of American sociology, precipitated by its 100th anniversary |



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|  | celebrations, concluded that there are two enduring institutionally distinct traditions – one black and one white. |  |
|  | While Bhambra notes some exceptions – particularly the work of Robert Blauner and David Wellman – she |
|  | argues, white sociology: 'failed to address issues of race in the US or to make space for discussion of such |
|  | themes within sociology departments in historically white universities' ([Bhambra 2014A](#_bookmark9): 2). Omitting race from an |
|  | understanding of sociology as a discipline does a disservice to the complex 'minor geneologies of inclusion and |
|  | exclusions' evident in sociology's history in America ([2014A](#_bookmark9): 6).[[1](#_bookmark0)] For example, reputed Chicago urban |
|  | sociologist Robert E. Park worked for Booker T. Washington and the Tuskegee Institute between 1905 and 1912 |
|  | as a political publicist and yet there is little appreciation of how this experience shaped Park and his influential |
|  | work at the University of Chicago. |
| **1.4** | Biographer Winifred Raushenbush ([1979](#_bookmark48)) showed that, without Booker T. Washington's offer, Park is |
|  | likely not to have become a sociologist at all. When he met Washington he was involved in the Congo Reform |
|  | Association and was planning to take a position in an industrial school in Lovedale, South Africa. It is an |
|  | interesting detail that the position that Park accepted had been offered in 1902 to none other than William |
|  | Edward Burghardt Du Bois who turned it down. In the letter Robert Park wrote to Washington before he left |
|  | Tuskegee in 1912, he outlined the depth of his debt: 'I feel and shall always feel that I belong, in a sort of way, to |
|  | the Negro race and shall continue to share, through good and evil, all its joys and sorrows […]. I feel I am a |
|  | better man for having been here' (Du Bois in [Raushenbush 1979](#_bookmark48): 63). Park no doubt became a better sociologist |
|  | too as a result of the years he spent with Washington although he did not acknowledge it in his own sociological |
|  | writings, or cite extensively the work of key black sociologists like W.E.B. Du Bois ([Drake 1983](#_bookmark21)). |
| **1.5** | While Du Bois has largely been neglected by white, mainstream sociology, Robert Park is celebrated as |
|  | having been one of the discipline's founding figures in the study of race. From the influence of his time with |
|  | Washington and his felt belonging to the 'Negro race', Park enjoyed a legitimised position to develop the theory of |
|  | the 'race relations cycle.' Echoing earlier writing of Washington's, Park claimed that accommodation to an |
|  | unequal racial order was a necessary phase on the way to eventual and inevitable assimilation. These histories |
|  | matter because otherwise sociology's complex inter-racial formation is bleached and the contributions of black |
|  | sociologists continue to be erased or ignored. The deep unfairness is that, from the 19th century onwards, white |
|  | sociology looked away from issues of race and racism while the black sociologists were reading and being |
|  | attentive to developments within the mainstream. Rather than a core sociological analytic race and racism |
|  | became a mere topic lost within the proliferations of sub-specialisms ([Said 1996](#_bookmark50)). |
| **1.6** | Park's model of the 'race relations cycle' deflected sociological attention away from systemic racism and |
|  | racial oppression opting instead for the more benign term of race relations. It also prompted a perspective of race |
|  | research that focused on racial progress rather than racial oppression. This theory and its imprint on the |
|  | sociological study of race have been critiqued as a functionalist, ahistorical understanding of race that fails to |
|  | understand the systemic underpinnings of racism ([Lyman 1973](#_bookmark42)). In addition, Park advocated a sociology that is |
|  | detached and apolitical, asserting that sociology had no space for propaganda – a perspective that aligned with |
|  | the developing disciplinary culture of sociology. It has been on these grounds that the more radical traditions |
|  | within black sociology have largely been dismissed by the mainstream. Despite intentions, the legacy of the race |
|  | relations model has been the sociological construction of pathologised black communities that fail to assimilate |
|  | not because of systemic racism but because of internal cultural ineptitudes. Barnor Hesse argues insightfully that |
|  | 'sociology's narration of racism is white analytically when it forecloses historical and contemporary commentary |
|  | on the colonial-racial order of The West' ([2014](#_bookmark36): 143) In contrast, for Hesse, sociological perspectives are black |
|  | analytically when they interrogate the normativity of white domination and explore the racialised processes that |
|  | are at the centre of modern social formations. |
| **1.7** | Before returning to the tumults of the current situation we first show what can be learned from a serious |
|  | engagement with the founding figures of the black sociological tradition, particularly the activist and author W.E.B |
|  | Du Bois. As Bhambra notes, Du Bois is often mentioned in passing but seldom engaged with seriously as one of |
|  | sociology's founding figures. By looking at his writing career in some detail we explore how he worked both |
|  | inside and beyond the confines of academic sociology and wrote in a variety of styles depending on the context |
|  | and audience. We then explore the relationship between Du Bois and the more contemporary figure of Stuart |
|  | Hall. |
| **1.8** | There are several reasons to think about the relationship between W.E.B. Du Bois and Stuart Hall in |
|  | relation to their respective sociological thought and social activism. While in many respects their work and lives |
|  | were very different both thinkers operated within sociological contexts but were not confined to them. Equally, |
|  | they both critiqued the limits of sociology itself. They both argued that slavery, empire and racism were integral to |



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| **1.9** | understanding the unequal societies that they lived and worked in. Both Du Bois and Hall also understood theconnection between racism and issues of gender and sexuality and both encouraged a less androcentric view of society. While we do not develop this theme, a variety of scholars have commented on the openness and relevance of the thought of Du Bois and Hall to black feminist scholarship and activism (see [James 1996](#_bookmark37); [Townsend Gilkes 199](#_bookmark54)6; [Gillman & Weinbaum 200](#_bookmark27)7; [Media Diversified 2014](#_bookmark43)). Finally, for the purposes of imagining what a reconstructed sociology would look like, we compare how these two intellectuals operated and expressed their ideas within a wide variety of modes of writing and telling about society.Du Bois was a sociologist who both used and broke free from the rhetorical conventions of socialscience. This was a bold practice given the attachment that US sociology had to the myth of objectivity. Sociology programs were new to the academic establishment and often relied on the artificial separation between politics and social science to find legitimacy in American universities ([Steinberg 200](#_bookmark52)7). Du Bois was also one of the first African American intellectuals to conduct extensive empirical research. In many respects Du Bois was tackling and resolving issues relating to sociology's public mission beyond the confines of academia over 100 years ago. In his work, we argue, some clues can be found as to how contemporary researchers might develop more creative strategies for thinking and telling. We argue that a reconstruction of sociology involve not just an intellectual de-segregation but also innovation in the literary forms of sociological writing.**0** In what follows we develop three key arguments regarding how an intellectual reconstruction might takeplace. Firstly, we suggest that through revisiting and re-thinking the discipline's tradition and history through the figures of W.E.B. Du Bois and Stuart Hall it is possible to construct an alternative vision of the discipline that works with other crafts of telling society across the boundaries of disciplines. Secondly, we identify how under a range of contemporary pressures – from professionalisation to cultures of academic audit - the sociological imagination is at risk of being narrowed and closed down. Then finally, we bring together some points of inspiration for what such a sociological reconstruction might include.**The Ghost of Sam Hose: W.E.B. Du Bois's Sociology**Du Bois was born on 23 February 1868 and died on 27 August 1963 on the eve of the first civil rightsmarch on Washington. In large part Du Bois has been left out of the canon of American sociology despite the influence he had on figures like Robert Park, Horace Cayton, St Clair Drake and Gunnar Myrdal. He was also a friend of Max Weber whom he met while studying in Germany. During his long life he wrote an immense amount, close to 2,000 bibliographical entries which span a wide range of genres including research monographs, social histories, novels, poems, pamphlets and newspaper articles. It is the heterogeneity of Du Bois's intellectual work that we want to address, particularly his switching of genres in order to make public interventions.Du Bois was exposed to the emerging forms of social inquiry that came to be associated with sociologywhile at Harvard where he graduated in history in 1890 and then the University of Berlin between 1892 and1894. He was one of five students to speak at the Harvard commencement exercises, where his chosen topic was the discussion of slavery through the figure of Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States. The *Nation* magazine reported that Du Bois spoke with 'absolute good taste, great moderation, and almost contemptuous fairness' ([1971](#_bookmark16): 18). In 1895 Du Bois became the first black person to receive a doctorate from Harvard. This was also the year that he began working on *The Philadelphia Negro,* the first serious social investigation of an urban community. His vision of social science was both utopian and pragmatic: 'The Negro problem was in my mind a matter of systematic investigation and intelligent understanding. The world was thinking wrong about race, because it didn't know. The ultimate evil was stupidity. The cure for it was knowledge based on scientific investigation' ([Du Bois 194](#_bookmark16)0: 58).*The Philadelphia Negro* was published in 1899 and was met with considerable acclaim and some disquiet from white reviewers. It is important to remember that this is just two years after Emile Durkheimpublished his classic study *Suicide*. Du Bois's book is an astonishing compendium of quantitative and qualitative information on black life and race relations in Philadelphia. In many respects the book provided a blueprint for the kind of urban sociology that was later developed famously at the University of Chicago under the guidance of Park and Burgess. What is striking is the way the text is couched within a rhetoric of pragmatism and scientific method.By the 1890s a range of black southern educational institutions had started to conduct research on the conditions of rural black communities. After finishing his work in Philadelphia, Du Bois was invited to head a research centre at the University of Atlanta, where he laid down an ambitious program for a hundred years of study. In his autobiography, he reflects 'I proposed gradually to broaden and intensify the study, sharpen the |  |
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| **2.5** | tools of investigation and perfect our method of work, so that we would have an increasing body of scientifically ascertained fact, instead of the vague mass of so-called Negro problems. And through this laboratory experiment I hoped to make the laws of social living clearer, surer and more definite' ([Du Bois 196](#_bookmark15)8: 217).For 18 years Du Bois oversaw the Atlanta studies. It is worth emphasizing that this sophisticated workwas conducted in a period when American sociology was in its infancy. Du Bois, at least initially, had faith that white scholars shared his vision of an intellectual culture that could move beyond the racial divide. He saw the University of Atlanta as having a cultural mission regarding the politics of academic freedom and social criticism. But in the violent years at the end of the century one incident had a lasting effect on Du Bois's faith in the role of science and reason in achieving social progress. It involved the plight of an illiterate black farm labourer in Georgia called Sam Hose. Sam Hose had killed his white employer, Alfred Cranford, and was accused of assaulting Cranford's wife.Du Bois committed to paper the appropriate evidence and mitigating circumstances of Hose's crime. In*The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois*he describes: 'I wrote out a careful and reasoned statement concerning the evident facts and started down to the Atlanta Constitution Office, carrying in my pocket a letter of introduction to Joel Chandler Harris. I did not get there. On the way news met me: Sam Hose had been lynched, and they said his knuckles were on exhibition at a grocery store farther down Mitchell Street along which I was walking. I turned back to the University. I began to turn aside from my work' ([1940](#_bookmark16): 222).This experience brought home the barbarism of white supremacy. He could not be a detached or even 'contemptuously fair' social scientist while people like Sam Hose were being lynched, brutalized and starved. The research he was conducting constituted 'so small a part of the sum of occurrences'; it was too far from the 'hot reality of real life'. He began to re-evaluate the role of science: 'I regarded it as axiomatic that the world wanted to learn the truth and if the truth were sought with even approximate accuracy and painstaking devotion, the world would gladly support the effort. This was, of course, but a young man's idealism' ([1940](#_bookmark16): 222). While these experiences shifted Du Bois away from his commitment to social science, this was not total. He would return to Atlanta in the 1930s to write perhaps the definitive history of the Black Reconstruction ([Du Bois 193](#_bookmark17)4). But it was at this point that he became a man of letters, an essayist and a contributor to popular journals. He was thrust into the realm of politics and leadership struggles within the emerging movement for the advancement of black Americans and in particular with Booker T. Washington who became his adversary. What is significant is that he did this through *writing* and *telling* about the realities of the colour-line*.*Du Bois developed ways of telling the black experience infused with a sociological sensibility that wasexpansive and able to speak to the personal pain of racism alongside political and cultural issues. He achieved a literary form and voice that was informed by historical and sociological insight but also was compelling and had a different kind of affective grip. On 18 April 1903 the Chicago-based company A.C. McClung published a collection of Du Bois's essays entitled *The Souls of Black Folk*. With the exception of one piece written especially for the book, these articles had appeared in a range of popular journals. The collection was consumed voraciously by readers hungry for what Du Bois had to say and between 1903 and 1905 there were no less than six printings of the book. The demand and admiration for the work was extraordinary, including from Max Weber who visited Du Bois in 1904. On returning to Heidelberg, Weber wrote to Du Bois on 30th March, 1905: 'Your splendid work: 'The Souls of Black Folk' ought *to be translated into German* '(Weber in [Aptheker 1997](#_bookmark7): 106). It would take almost a hundred years for this to happen but Weber did publish an essay from Du Bois a year later in the journal he edited Archiv fur Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik ([Du Bois 200](#_bookmark20)3). Following scholars like Aldon Morris ([2007](#_bookmark47)), we argue that Du Bois should not be treated as merely a student of Weber, but rather a peer of equal significance in the discipline of sociology.One striking aspect of *The Souls* is its multi-voiced nature and the variety of writing genres in the book,which combine fiction, history, sociology and autobiography. The aesthetic of the book is immediately engaging and Du Bois's use of language is nothing short of sublime, a sharp contrast to the sociological prose of *The Philadelphia Negro*.**0** As Lawrence Bobo has pointed out, at the heart of The Philadelphia Negro is an analysis of the centralrole of race prejudice structuring the experience of African Americans ([Bobo 2000; 2012](#_bookmark10)). Bobo foregrounds the ways in which Du Bois understood the relative autonomy of racial prejudice that could be both a coherent set of judgments and produce an irrational distorted view that could even be against the self-interest of white Philadelphians. Du Bois pointed out that race prejudice takes on 'unconscious' or 'half-conscious' forms ([du 1996](#_bookmark18): 396-397). An echo of this kind of perspective and attention to the power of unconscious feelings about race can |  |
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be found in the work of Stuart Hall as we will argue later.

* 1. The tone of the writing is sociologically evenhanded and careful. Here Du Bois exemplifies the rhetorical value of neutrality. In his insightful book *Telling About Society* Howard Becker ([2007](#_bookmark8)) calls this 'chaste prose'

that: 'helps convince the reader who might not have fully made up their minds on these questions that the author who produced these results has no axe to grind' ([2007](#_bookmark8): 147). Du Bois mastered the art of chaste sociological prose during his studies in Berlin and at Harvard. However, in the face of brute racism embodied in the fate of Sam Hose, chaste prose had obvious limitations.

* 1. The combination of fact and moving testimony stimulated *The Times* reviewer in England to write that

*The Souls of Black Folk* 'is an extraordinary compound of *emotions* and *statistics*' ([Gates 1989](#_bookmark24): xviii, emphasis added) In a chapter entitled 'On the passing of the First Born' Du Bois reflects on the funeral of his son. In this passage we not only see the 'sociological big picture' but also the searing criticism of the hatred of the pale-faced onlookers who view the death of a black infant less deathly while their racism makes the mourners less than human. Du Bois's rage is captured tenderly when he writes of the 'awful gladness' he feels that his lost son will be spared a life constrained by The Veil of colour and the 'studied humiliations' of Jim Crow – 'Not dead, not dead, but escaped'. The passage communicates the raw violence of racism and the living death of black folk as more than a ledger of dispassionately compiled statistics.

* 1. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., has argued that no other text – except possibly the King James Bible – has had more impact on the shaping of the African American literary tradition. Du Bois as a master craftsperson of

language manages to rise above the 'veil of colour' to communicate the violence and injustice of segregation and racism. Gates suggests that rather than reflecting history, *The Souls* makes history: 'How can a work be 'more history-making than historical?' It becomes so when it crosses the barrier between mainly conveying information, and primarily signifying an act of language itself, an object to be experienced, analysed and enjoyed aesthetically' ([1989](#_bookmark19): xvi). As a result, history is made through the formation and organization of the historic experience of African Americans, while making the articulate voice of the free slave audible across the colour line.

* 1. This is not to suggest that *The Souls of Black Folk* is simplistically just a better book than *The Philadelphia Negro*. Rather, the different literary modes he used had varied capacities to tell about society

producing different affective grips. Each chapter starts with a poetic quotation and a melody represented by music notation that set the key of the discussion. Paul Gilroy describes the interdisciplinary structure of the book: 'Chapters one to three are mostly historical, chapter four to nine are basically sociological in focus, and chapters ten to fourteen leave these fixed perspectives behind to explore the terrains of black arts, religion, and cultural expression with a variety of voices including biography, autobiography, and fiction' ([Gilroy 199](#_bookmark26)3:125).

* 1. Following the public lynching of Sam Hose, W.E.B Du Bois made a choice to change the rhetorical

nature of his writing, putting to one side social science and using a range of representational strategies to convey social criticism, outrage and humane conscience that possessed a power to affect the reader. Sociological writing that appears neutral and restrained runs the risk of turning the pain of social divisions and inequities into calmly described lines of societal objectification ([Steinberg 200](#_bookmark52)7; [Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva 200](#_bookmark55)8).

* 1. In summary, Du Bois's example shows us the advantages and limits of 'chaste sociological prose' and 'contemptuous fairness' in telling racism. There is also something in Du Bois's extraordinary career as a writer that points to the advantages of an approach to sociological training open to literature and a broader notion of humanities scholarship. The capacity of Du Bois to use other modes - from history to autobiography – to narrate the black experience of racism and modernity provides an example to follow in the spirit of Howard Becker's suggestion that sociologists might learn something from how others tell. Du Bois also provides an example of what Paul Gilroy calls a departure from 'fixed perspectives'. However, he himself reflected that sociology simply paid little attention: 'so far as the American world of science and letters was concerned, we never 'belonged'; we remained unrecognised in learned societies and Academic groups. We rated merely as Negroes studying Negroes, and after all, what had Negroes to do with America or science' ([1968](#_bookmark15): 228)? While these words still chime true, there have been shifts or opportunities that link to Du Bois's example. We want to explore them now through a discussion of the work of Stuart Hall.

**The 'Du Bois of Britain': Stuart Hall**

**3.1** Amongst the tributes following the news of Stuart Hall's death on the 10th February, 2014 was one by African American critic Henry Louis Gates, Jr., who commented that Stuart Hall was 'the Du Bois of Britain'

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|  | ([Edwards 2014](#_bookmark22)). While Du Bois and Hall belonged to different historical moments, they shared a capacity to tell |  |
|  | race in a compelling way in a variety of forms and modes. This is evident in Du Bois's literary experiments with |
|  | fiction and journalism but also with Stuart Hall's ability to address issues of race and racism through television, |
|  | film and the arts. Both black intellectuals had an ambiguous relationship to the mainstream of the discipline but |
|  | their ideas are inherently part of the sociological tradition. As such their work points to a reconstructed sociology |
|  | of the kind we want to argue for. |
| **3.2** | Stuart Hall came to Britain from Jamaica in 1951 on a Rhodes scholarship to Merton College, Oxford. |
|  | He started a PhD on Henry James but never finished it. Hall made his life in Britain through the period of de- |
|  | colonization, contributed to the emergence of the New Left and became a founding figure within cultural studies. |
|  | Hall's work documented both the experience of the black diaspora within the changing shape of class-divided |
|  | British culture and the enduring reservoir of racism at the heart of British society. |
| **3.3** | Between 1995 and 1997, he was President of the British Sociological Association and, after leaving the |
|  | Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in Birmingham in 1981, was Professor of Sociology at the |
|  | Open University until his retirement in 2002. He commented with his characteristic humour and humility: 'So |
|  | when the Vice Chancellor of the Open University said, "But you've been in literature, you've been in cultural |
|  | studies, are you willing to profess sociology?" I said, "I'm willing to profess anything if you'll only give me a |
|  | job'''([Hall and Back 2009](#_bookmark34): 665). Sociology was more than an intellectual home of convenience or necessity. |
| **3.4** | At the Open University Stuart Hall made sociologically inspired educational television programmes on |
|  | the nature of British culture for the distance learning courses offered to working people – particularly women – |
|  | who wouldn't otherwise be able to access higher education. He was British culture's interpreter to millions of |
|  | viewers tuning into the Open University in the early hours of the morning or in the middle of the night. Hall's work |
|  | at the Open University and the CCCS – often produced in collaboration with graduate students – focused on |
|  | relevant sociological themes including the mass media, youth culture and national identity and racism. His |
|  | prominence as a public intellectual is captured in John Akomfrah's film *The Stuart Hall Project*, which shapes an |
|  | account of his life from these television and radio appearances ([2013](#_bookmark35)). At the Open University, Hall continued |
|  | and transformed the strand in Cultural Studies that was grounded in the workers' education movement. |
| **3.5** | As a young graduate student Ben Carrington heard Hall deliver his Presidential address at the British |
|  | Sociological Association annual conference in 1996. Carrington recalled: 'Stuart Hall remarked that he found it |
|  | surprising that he had been given this honour as he had never considered, and still did not consider, himself to be |
|  | a sociologist. No doubt many others would have agreed. Hall then outlined the starting-point for the work done at |
|  | the CCCS during his time at the Centre. 'We went to Talcott [Parsons]', he said, 'and whatever he rejected, we |
|  | read'' ([2009](#_bookmark34): 287). Hall had a capacity to speak to the experience of black students and working-class people – |
|  | too often sociology's objects. To them Hall's version of sociology was both relevant and powerful. Carrington later |
|  | called this an 'anti-sociology sociological approach' ([Carrington 201](#_bookmark11)4: 3). Or, perhaps we should just simply call |
|  | this Hall's sociology. |
| **3.6** | One of the key aspects of Hall's sociology is the insistence on the centrality of an historical |
|  | understanding – particularly in relation to race and empire – in what he referred as understanding conjunctural |
|  | aspects of any social formation. Hall commented towards the end of his life that in Britain and specifically |
|  | England: 'this culture does partly live off a reservoir of unconscious feelings about race, and in particular those |
|  | feelings remain unconscious because they're about race' ([Hall and Back 2009](#_bookmark34): 677). There is an echo of Du Bois |
|  | here too. For Hall it was only possible to understand British culture through an appreciation of the imperial traces |
|  | that were everywhere in the culture and yet seemingly dissolved like the sweetness of plantation sugar in the |
|  | bottom of the quintessentially English cup of tea ([Hall 1997](#_bookmark30)). |
| **3.7** | Inspired by Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, Hall also foregrounded the ways in which political |
|  | hegemony is struggled over precisely through the medium of race. His study *Policing The Crisis* ([2013](#_bookmark35)), first |
|  | published in 1978 and conducted with a group of graduate students at Birmingham, showed how the moral panic |
|  | during 1970s about 'mugging' - as a racialised crime – played into an authoritarian form of crisis policing. Hall's |
|  | notion of the 'law and order' society anticipated the emergence Thatcherism – which combined free marketeering |
|  | and nationalistic authoritarian populism – which he identified as a historic shift in the British social formation. In |
|  | the 35th anniversary edition of the book Stuart Hall and his co-authors reflected that*Policing the Crisis*: 'unlike |
|  | [many great works of sociological analysis, it was genuinely and, on the whole, accurately predictive' (Hall et al](#_bookmark35) |
|  | [2013: xviii).](#_bookmark35) |



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| **3.8** | Stuart Hall said he didn't consider himself a sociologist, however, he had long followed the currents ofsociology in America. As a young man of twenty-seven Hall attended a series of lectures given by C. Wright Mills at the London School of Economics in the late 1950s.[[2](#_bookmark1)] We are not foregrounding this as way of legitimating Stuart Hall as sociologist. Rather, we want to use this little known story to recover intellectual and political links that invite us to think about the development of sociological ideas differently. For in these intellectual threads, we find an early realisation of a de-segregating sociological imagination.Mills had been invited to London by his longstanding friend and supporter Ralph Miliband ([1960](#_bookmark45)), whowas a member of the British New Left alongside Hall. Following the first New Left produced book *Out of Apathy*, which was edited by Edward Thompson ([1960](#_bookmark53)) and included an essay by Stuart Hall, Mills published an article in the New Left Review and Hall was one of its editors. The article, entitled 'Letter to the New Left' was initially addressed directly to Miliband.[[3](#_bookmark2)] On the 3rd June, 1960 Stuart Hall replied to Mills apologizing that it had arrived just too late to meet the publication deadline but included feedback on how to revise it for future publication.1. Accounts of the correspondence have tended to exacerbate the differences in perspective between Hall and Mills, particularly on the political efficacy of the working-class as an agent of change. In the letter Mills

suggests that intellectuals might be a more immediate source of radical change. Mills's biographer Daniel Geary commented on these differences as revealing that his new friends in the New Left in London 'were more rooted in the Marxist tradition than he was' ([2009](#_bookmark25): 185). Notwithstanding these differences, we wish to stress the points of convergence between Mills's maverick sociology and the New Left.1. The young Stuart Hall begins the correspondence: 'I like the piece very much and find all the comments

central. The point about our thinking being explicitly 'utopia' is what we all feel: and it has a pretty effect, too, with presenting these ideas to younger people who as you say, feel the need for a political philosophy and who have not been corrupted by the end-of-ideology'.[[4](#_bookmark3)] Hall also mentions an appreciation of Mills's famous statement regarding the promise of sociology to link biography and history ([Mills 2008](#_bookmark46)). In the revised version of 'Letter to the New Left', which appeared in September 1960, Mills wrote: 'Is not our utopianism a major source of our strength? 'Utopian' nowadays I think refers to any criticism or proposal that transcends the up-close milieu of a scatter of individuals: the milieu which men and women can understand directly and which they can reasonably hope directly to change. In this exact sense, our theoretical work is indeed utopian – in my own case, at least, deliberately so'.[[5](#_bookmark4)]1. When Mills writes 'Of course we can't 'write off the working class'' he is answering Hall's criticism

directly. 'But we must *study* all that, and freshly. Where labour exists as an agency, of course we must work with it, but we must not treat it as The Necessary Lever – as the nice old Labour Gentlemen in your country and elsewhere do.' The reference here to 'nice old Labour Gentlemen' is not directed at Stuart Hall who was just twenty-eight years old at the time. Also Mills is appealing for forms of inquiry that would later become the hallmark of Hall's version of cultural studies.1. There are two important points of convergence we want to stress between Mills and Hall. Firstly, the

linkage of private troubles with issues of public political importance becomes a key theme in Stuart Hall's writing. This comes through particularly in his writing about culture identity and the influential 'new ethnicities' essays on this subject ([Hall 1987, 1988, 199](#_bookmark32)2). It also resonates with Hall's openness to the value of psychoanalysis and in particular the writings of Franz Fanon ([1980, 1986](#_bookmark23)). Secondly, their thought converges around the insistence on understanding the relationship between biography and history, which is key to Hall's notion of conjuncture and the primacy of historical understanding ([Hall and Back 2009](#_bookmark34)).1. Although Stuart Hall's critical imagination is broader because it addressed the limitations within sociology around issues of race and racism. What is distinctive in Stuart Hall's thought is the centrality of understanding of the legacy of slavery, empire and racism. At the same time he remained attentive the new ways in which difference is defined and marked in global capitalism. For Hall the capacity 'to live with difference' is the key

question of the twenty-first century ([Hall 1994](#_bookmark31): 361). In his convocation address in 1989 on receiving an honorary degree from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Hall outlines the nature of this challenge: 'I have tried to hold together in my own intellectual life, on the one side, the conviction and the passion of devotion to objective interpretation, to analysis, to rigorous analysis and understanding, to the passion to find out, to the production of knowledge, which we did not know before. But on the other hand I am convinced that no intellectual worth its salt and no university which wants to hold up its head in the face of the 21st Century can afford to turn its dispassionate eye away from the problems of race and ethnicity which beset our world' ([2006[1989]](#_bookmark33): 10). |  |
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|  | **Conclusion: The Storm this Time** |  |
| **4.1** | We want to come back to the storm that is brewing in the sociological world. The reason for this is |
|  | because the discipline is failing – in the terms Stuart Hall outlines – to be worth its salt. As Gurminder Bhambra |
|  | argues, the sociological imagination remains segregated in two traditions – one black, one white. White |
|  | sociologists operate largely within the self-assured comfort that issues of race and racism are not 'really in my |
|  | area'. Black colleagues from Robert Staples ([1976](#_bookmark51)) to Patricia Hill Collins ([2000; 2007](#_bookmark14)) have argued for an |
|  | alternative vision of the sociological tradition. Writing in an unapologetically impassioned voice, Collins has |
|  | argued that part of the epistemological limitation of sociology has been its failure to incorporate the creative |
|  | knowledge production of black women writers and artists who, while denied access to educational institutions, |
|  | developed a tradition of experientially informed critiques of the interworkings of race, gender, and class |
|  | oppressions. |
| **4.2** | As we have shown, black sociologists have long been attentive to their white counterparts, illustrated |
|  | here in our account of W.E.B. Du Bois's relationship to the scientific vocation of Max Weber and Stuart Hall's |
|  | engagement with the maverick sociology of C. Wright Mills. As white sociologists our work has been profoundly |
|  | shaped by the writings of black scholars as well as the wider traditions of black literature, music and vernacular |
|  | culture. We have argued that engaging with the legacy of black intellectual figures like Du Bois and Hall offers the |
|  | opportunity to foster an expanded sense of what sociology might become both politically but also aesthetically. |
|  | The proto-inter-disciplinarity of Du Bois as a writer pointed to the possibility, over a century ago, of doing |
|  | sociology differently. His example adds an important precedent for our argument because he demonstrated the |
|  | value of doing sociology with other disciplines and intellectual crafts. Du Bois and Hall's example invites the |
|  | possibility of a reconstructed sociology conducted artfully with and through associated disciplines within the arts |
|  | and humanities. However, this prospect and possibility seems limited by shifts within the academic culture in |
|  | which professional sociology is situated. |
| **4.3** | Under pressure from the audit culture and the narrowing processes of professionalization, these |
|  | divisions are hardening. Ben Carrington comments: 'Hall's sociological approach is directly at odds with what |
|  | passes for sociological enquiry today […]. Despite being one of the most widely read, cited and influential |
|  | sociologists of his generation, Hall would never likely have been hired by an American sociology department' |
|  | (2014: 3). |
| **4.4** | For Carrington this tells a great deal about how processes of measuring academic value are excluding |
|  | important voices and insights from the sociological world. Paul Gilroy's departure from the London School of |
|  | Economic's Anthony Giddens Chair of Social Theory for a future in English literature is perhaps an indication of |
|  | the hardening of disciplinary boundaries. We asked him about his sense of the direction of sociology in Britain. |
|  | He commented 'because I was drummed out of writing about crime by the realists during the 80s I have always |
|  | been sensitive to political changes in the institutional climate. Sociology seems once again to be in a crisis.'[[6](#_bookmark5)] |
| **4.5** | Gilroy continued: 'The ever-tighter policing of disciplinary boundaries is not a sign of good intellectual |
|  | health. The wholesale importation of narrow, US-oriented definitions of excellence, knowledge and |
|  | methodological probity have also been damaging. Are sociologists still nurturing the curiosity of those they teach |
|  | or are they pressuring them to write strictly to templates and formulae? All I can say is that a humanities |
|  | environment has proved to be a more stimulating one for me. There is a great respect for 'sociological' thinking |
|  | there too.' Black graduate students -particularly ones with complex biographical journeys not unlike Stuart Hall's |
|  | – are increasingly unlikely to get a footing in the neoliberal environment of today's academy ([Richards 201](#_bookmark49)3). This |
|  | is a shameful set of circumstances that should outrage all sociologists. |
| **4.6** | Our argument is that the legacy of figures like Du Bois and Hall offers a sociological opportunity that can |
|  | either be embraced or dismissed. The desegregated sociology that they practiced, along with their heterogeneity |
|  | in method and writing, provide a model for reopening the possibilities of sociological practice. What is at stake is |
|  | a sociological reconstruction that produces an alternative understanding of what the discipline can include, |
|  | starting with augmented modes of telling and writing that attract a broader and more inclusive audience and have |
|  | a wider range of affective tones. |
| **4.7** | The sociological reconstruction we are arguing for has in many respects arrived already. We see this |
|  | kind of artful quality of thinking, researching and writing alive in the work of people like Avtar Brah ([1999](#_bookmark12)), Yasmin |
|  | Gunaratnam ([2013](#_bookmark29)), Gail Lewis ([2012](#_bookmark41)) and Nasar Meer ([2015](#_bookmark44)). A number of key elements provide the pivot |
|  | around which this reconstruction needs to be fostered. The first is the centrality of dealing with the legacy of |



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| **4.8** | slavery, empire and racism in our understanding of the project of sociology. Secondly, attentiveness is required tothe global dimensions of how the question of difference operates in the context of the new phase of capitalism and how this is also articulated across the formation of class, gender and sexuality. Thirdly, following the example of Du Bois and Hall to conduct sociology with other crafts and across academic fields in a desire to address problems that are homeless in disciplinary terms. Finally, we are arguing for the promotion of creative forms of knowledge production that transcend the limiting instrumentalism that operates – particularly in the UK – in the auditing of public value and 'impact' (see [Holmwood 2011](#_bookmark38)).Missing this opportunity will simply leave intact the binarism of segregated sociological imaginations thathave long been dominant despite the periodic turbulence of stormy struggles. Sociological segregation weakens the field as a whole, not only for those to whom it offers a racially unequal place at the table of ideas. It diminishes the intellectual lifeblood of the discipline itself and its capacity to comprehend the key problems of the twenty-first century.**Notes**See also Stephen Steinberg: Race Relations: A Critique, Chapters 1 & 2.The lectures took place on 12th, 13th and 15th January, 1959 and are reprinted in John H. Summers: ed. The Politics of TruthRalph Miliband: Letter to Charles Wright Mills, June 4th, 1960. Stuart Hall: letter to Charles Wright Mills 3rd June, 1960.C Wright Mills: Letter to the New Left, («Is not our utopianism») p. 261, («writing off the working-class») p. 263.Personal Communication October, 2014.**References**AHMED, Sara (2012) *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.APTHEKER, Herbert (ed) (1997) *The Correspondence of W.E.B. Du Bois. Volume 1. Selections 1877-1934*.Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.BECKER, Howard (2007) *Telling About Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.BHAMBRA, Gurminder (2014a) *Connected Sociologies*. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic. BHAMBRA, Gurminder (2014b) A Sociological Dilemma. Race, Segregation and US sociology. In: CurrentSociology, ( <http://csi.sagepub.com/content/early/2014/03/19/0011392114524506>– 2.4.2014).BOBO, Lawrence (2012) An American Conundrum: Race, Sociology, and the African American Road to citizenship, In: Henry Louis Gates Jr, Claude Steele, Lawrence D. Bobo, Michael C. Dawson, Gerald Jaynes, Lisa Crooms-Robinson and Linda Darling-Hammond (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of African American Citizenship, 1865-Present*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, p. 19-70.BOBO, Lawrence (2000) Reclaiming a Du Boisian Perspective on Racial Attributes. In: Annals of the American Academy, AAPSS, 568, March, 2000 p. 186-202.BRAH, Avtar (1999) The Scent of Memory: Strangers, Our Own, and Others. *Feminist Review*, 61, p. 4-26. CARRINGTON, Ben (2014) Stuart Hall. Socialist and Sociologist.*Racism Review*, 17th February, p. 1-6 ( |  |
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