Chapter 12

Unveilings Through Transformative Pedagogy: Striving for Realization of Du Bois’ Educational Paradigm

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ABSTRACT

The following theoretical, reflexive investigation traces founding American sociologist, Civil Rights activist, and educator Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois’ intellectual evolution from his initial propositions provided within “The Talented Tenth” into what Du Boisian intellectual Reiland Rabaka terms the “Guiding Hundredth.” Whereas Du Bois is typically seen as only advocating for a liberal arts education, his revised paradigm really sought access to both liberal arts and vocational training curricula. He especially wanted youth to have viable options for pursuing either. The primary author provides reflexive insights into how the course of this investigation shaped her own understanding of her relationship to academia, her advocacy for underrepresented students, and her commitment to pursue secondary licensure and a Master’s degree in education within a formal teacher preparation program. The investigation furthered her social justice-oriented commitment to strive for equity working toward the realization of Du Bois’ emancipatory, transformative educational paradigm.

INTRODUCTION

The following theoretical, reflexive investigation traces the primary author’s own engagement with founding American sociologist, Civil Rights activist, and educator Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois’ intellectual evolution from his initial propositions provided within “The Talented Tenth” where he proposed that that the leaders and educated among the African American community should go back and uplift the race into what he later revised into what Du Boisian intellectual Reiland Rabaka, terms the “Guiding Hundredth” (2010, p. 283) in “The Talented Tenth Memorial Address” (Du Bois, 1995, pp. 347-353).

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Initially, within the Talented Tenth (1996, pp. 842-861) Du Bois indicates that once a person has experienced the consciousness-altering power of transformative critical education (see hooks, 1994), they would act upon an obligation to return to their community, as John Jones does within the parable “Of the Coming of John” (1996, pp. 186-203).

Later, in the theory of the Guiding Hundredth (see Alridge 2008; Rabaka 2010) Du Bois proposed that everyone should have access to the means by which to uplift the African American community – such as educational opportunities, viable employment, and access to the civic and political arenas. Whereas Du Bois is typically seen as only advocating for a liberal arts education, he really wanted both access to liberal arts and vocational training curricula (Alridge, 2008, p. 103) and especially wanted youth to have a viable option of pursuing both. In his writings and spoken addresses (see Du Bois, 2001, 2002), he was critical of those who solely advocated for vocational and industrial training. He thought that those, such as Booker T. Washington, that advocated for the latter were giving into the wants of conservative Whites in the South (see Du Bois, 2002, pp. 123-131) and would lead to increased separation between Black and White America. Moreover, Du Bois was adamant that the sole option of these forms of training would not entail emancipatory pedagogy nor lead to ending the strife caused by double consciousness. In The Souls of Black Folk (1996) Du Bois provides a parable “Of the Coming of John” (1996, pp. 186-203) which illustrates how the strife caused by double consciousness can be reconciled, and what pursuing a life versus simply making a living entails. (Coffey, 2011).

Double Consciousness and The Souls of Black Folk

To live is to suffer, but to survive, well, that’s to find the meaning in the suffering (DMX as cited in Simmons and Fontaine, 2002, p. 1)

In his watershed work, The Souls of Black Folk, Du Bois (1996) outlines his concept of “double consciousness,” which was reflexively described as: “[o]ne ever feels his two-ness, -- an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings in one dark body, whose dogged strength keeps it from being torn asunder” (1996, p. 5). Moreover, Du Bois theorized that an ability – the “second-sight” – came with the formation of double consciousness. This concept can be explained as the “particular sensation…of always seeing one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (Du Bois, 1996, p. 5). Within his third autobiographical text, Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept, Du Bois revised his original conceptualizations of both double consciousness and the second sight, writing that “I lived in an environment which I came to call the White world. I was not an American; I was not a man; I was… a colored man in a White world; and that White world often existed primarily, so far as I was concerned, to see with sleepless vigilance that I was kept within bounds. All this made me limited in physical movement and provincial in thought and dream” ([1986] 1996, p. 653). Just as Du Bois’ original conception of the second sight included seeing oneself through the eyes of others, so did the revision. Yet, when rearticulating the concepts, Du Bois clarified where the reflection was coming from, noting that “I could not stir, I could not act, I could not live, without taking into careful daily account the reaction of my White environing world” (1996, p. 653).

Throughout his lifetime, Du Bois sought an unveiled world wherein an African American would be able to “merge his [or her] double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the former selves to be lost” (1996, p. 5). Years later, within Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Au-