The Forgotten Lives of Sociology of Death: Remembering Du Bois, Martineau and Wells

Jyoti Puri¹

Accepted: 29 July 2021 / Published online: 31 August 2021

© The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Science+Business Media, LLC, part of Springer Nature 2021

Abstract

This article seeks to rewrite the genealogy of sociology of death by revisiting the history of sociology, from the 1830s to the early twentieth century. Providing an overview of sociological studies of death that consolidated into a subfield in the 1990s, it shows how recent attempts at including intersectional and decolonial approaches link with considerations of death in sociology's early history. Engaging sociological thinkers Harriet Martineau, Émile Durkheim, Ida B. Wells, and W.E.B. Du Bois, the article seeks to provide an alternate genealogy of the sociology of death and to make a case for mainstreaming the study of death within the discipline. It shows that questions of suicide and Black death were a significant part of these scholars' writings and that attention to loss and mourning shaped emergent understandings of the social, sociological frameworks, and methodologies. This view supplements efforts toward encouraging intersectional and geopolitical approaches to the study of death in sociology, approaches that are more needed than ever before to contend with the scale of loss and suffering that is filling lives.

Keywords Death · Sociology · History · Intersectionality · Geopolitics

On September 22, 2020, the COVID Memorial Project held a public remembrance for the approximately 200,000 deaths in the U.S. that were linked to the Covid-19 pandemic.¹ Organized by a group of friends in Washington DC, the event was marked by placing 20,000 U.S. flags on the National Mall facing the White House. The interfaith service was intended to commemorate the staggering losses and mark the absence of any national memorializations many months after the surge in deaths. Beginning in March 2020, reports of fatalities, unceremonious funerals, lines of

¹ My gratitude to the two reviewers and especially to Angela Fillingim and Zawadi Rucks-Ahidianna for their feedback on this essay. Thanks as well to the editor, Lawrence Nichols.

✉ Jyoti Puri
puri@simmons.edu

¹ Simmons University, 300 The Fenway, Boston, MA 02115, USA

coffined bodies awaiting disposal, and overwhelmed funeral homes in the towns and provinces of Italy and then Spain began flooding the daily news. Attention soon turned to the U.S. with cascading images of white-sheeted bodies in refrigeration trucks substituting for overfilled morgues in cities like New York and Boston, online funerals, and healthcare workers keeping vigil over those taking their last breath. Not since September 11, 2001 and Hurricane Katrina in August 2005 had loss and mourning occupied the national spotlight and then only to quickly surpass these earlier milestones in scale and intensity. Death, funerals, and bereavement came to occupy a central place, and even something of a spectacle, in the wake of the pandemic.

But as the devastating impacts of Hurricanes Katrina and Maria serve to remind, loss and suffering are not equally distributed and they are fundamentally related to pre-existing social inequalities. The pandemic exposed the vulnerabilities of Indigenous, Black and Brown communities to infections, resulting in their over-representation in Covid-19-related deaths due to a mix of reasons—the industries in which people work, where they live, inadequate access to healthcare, nutritious food, clean water, among others. The institutionalized racism underlying the pandemic's impact on communities of color concurrently manifested in the state-sanctioned killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, Rayshard Brooks, and others. Widespread protests for racial justice brought into fresh view the long arc of slavery and its aftermath, as well as the impacts of settler colonialism and migration on the lives and deaths of marginalized communities.

The churn of the viral pandemic and endemic racisms have once again exposed racial, class, gender, and national stratifications, aspects that the discipline of sociology is particularly well-suited to address. But it is less adept in dealing with questions of loss and mourning. These issues have been the preserve of the sub-field of death and dying, which has focused largely on palliative care, debates about whether death is a social taboo, notions of “good death,” and particular kinds of dying, such as from cancer. While other fields and disciplines—anthropology, political theory, feminist studies, queer studies—have taken more critical views of death and mourning, sociological scholars have emphasized the need for intersectional approaches only more recently (Amanik & Fletcher, 2020; Harris & Bordere, 2016). Highlighting racial, class, and gender disparities related to the study of death, they have too challenged the field's Eurocentrism by calling for its decolonization.²

At the same time, even a cursory look at sociology's early history, from approximately the 1830's to the early decades of the twentieth century, indicates that such critical interventions are not new. That is, matters of death and to an extent mourning were part of the discipline's formation in ways that have cleared the path for attending to social difference and social inequality. These histories indicate engagements with loss that extend well beyond Émile Durkheim's iconic study of suicide to include other early sociologists such as Harriet Martineau and W.E.B. Du Bois,

² <https://radicaldeathstudies.com/>. Other such initiatives include a conference on decolonizing disability and death studies, also organized by the Collective of Radical Death Studies, as well as a conference, “Decolonising Bereavement Studies,” hosted at Manchester Metropolitan University.

as well as Ida B. Wells, whose work offers a valuable resource to sociologists studying death. Although Martineau, Du Bois, and Wells are now recognized figures in sociology, their contributions to the study of death and for undoing its Eurocentrism from within have thus far gone unnoticed. These early writings reveal the contours of a critical approach, one that links with current efforts to contend with the social inequities of loss and suffering and foreground death's national and geo-political arenas—including the Covid-19 pandemic, but also police and other forms of state-sanctioned violence, the HIV/AIDS crisis, social death of incarceration, protracted war, ongoing genocides, among others.

In this essay, I seek to rewrite the genealogy of the sociology of death by revisiting the history of Euro-American sociology. Juxtaposing these two fields sheds fresh light on the discipline's formative years, the early 19th to the early twentieth century, by revealing the place of death and loss in its consolidation. The contributions of Martineau, Durkheim, Wells and Du Bois show that death and mourning were central to the emerging discipline's itineraries, thereby shaping its foundations. Focusing on some of their writings indicates that death and mourning helped innovate conceptual and methodological approaches and promoted understandings of the social that are grounded in difference and inequality.

Engaging their writings gives Martineau, Du Bois and Wells due recognition within the sociology of death, while also changing how its history is narrated going forward. Thus, rather than beginning primarily in the 1960s, or even with Durkheim's study of suicide in 1887, its antecedents would need to be dated to the 1830s. Equally importantly, the writings and reflections offer findings and insights in support of ongoing attempts to broaden sociology of death's purview—by centering social inequalities, stratification, and institutionalized difference from the lenses of marginalized communities. Encouraging intersectional, transnational and geo-political perspectives, this view foregrounds the social contexts of slavery, settler colonialism, empire as well as migration, wars, religious differences, nationalism and nativism, that is, the conditions that exacerbate death for some communities. Although the histories of sociology to which I turn in this article do not address this wide scope, I argue that they go a long way in promoting expansive and critical understandings of death and mourning.

My purpose in this essay is primarily genealogical, and in order to show why it is necessary to revisit the discipline's formative years, the essay begins by reviewing the sociological field of death and dying, its limitations as well as the emergence of intersectional approaches to the study of death in recent years. This overview sets the stage for a (re)turn to Martineau and Durkheim followed by Wells and Du Bois. One way in which the genealogy of the sociology of death may be rewritten is to look to non-western sources, while another way is to complicate western sociological foundations from within. Taking the second path, I turn to figures who have influenced the formation of Euro-American sociology and whose work aids in centering the study of death and diversifying it. Drawing on the writings of these four figures, as well as existing scholarship on them, I reimagine the history of sociology of death and make the case that considerations of death and loss should be mainstreamed in the discipline.

Death and Dying: The Sociology of Established Histories

The sociology of death and dying consolidated as a field in the 1990s but its precursors are pinned to the 1940s and especially the 1960s when sociologists began systematically engaging matters of death and bereavement. Once interdisciplinary journals such as *Omega: Journal of Death and Dying* and *Death Studies* were established in the 1970s, they too enabled the emergence of a distinct area of study that is both identifiably sociological and interdisciplinary. Courses on death and dying were equally essential to the crystallization of the field and were offered early on, for example a course in the late 1960s at the University of Minnesota. By the 1990s the courses were becoming increasingly popular and being offered widely. Indeed, as a graduate student during that period at a university in northeastern U.S., death and dying was among the first courses on which I cut my teeth as an instructor.

Existing overviews of the sociology of death, or what are the field's histories, draw an arc that begins with Durkheim's studies of religion and suicide and foreground sociological considerations of death, dying and bereavement after the 1960s (Howarth, 2007; Walter, 1992, 2008). Although in his overview Walter (2008) also notes Max Weber's engagement with the afterlife in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Walter makes the case that after Durkheim sociologists stopped making death significant to their understandings of the social. Comparing sociology to other disciplines, particularly anthropology, history, and psychology, he aptly describes sociology's role in understanding the social reality of death as "decidedly patchy" (2008: 319).

Notwithstanding the difficulties of characterizing the field, the sociology of death coheres around several patterns. Foremost, it takes as axiomatic that death is a social construct and the experiences of dying and grieving are shaped by social factors. In *The Social Reality of Religion* Berger (1969) argued that all forms of human social order exist in relation to the imminent threat of death, even as theodicy attempts to make a pact with death's inevitability. Another early proponent of the view that death is socially mediated, Gorer (1965), broke ground by surveying British attitudes toward death and mourning among bereaved individuals. His central conclusion that death, grief and mourning are being increasingly denied and disavowed by British people as well as those in (north) America set the stage for what would become one of the central and most enduring debates in the field.

In a previous essay, "The Pornography of Death," Gorer (1955) as well as others (Becker, 1973; Berger, 1969; Kubler-Ross, 1970) advanced what became known as the death-denial thesis—that exacerbated by the decline of the role of religion, the increasing medicalization of life, and the role of the funerary industry in managing death, modern societies were death-denying and constricting social expressions of mourning in ways that shifted the burden of grieving onto individuals. Despite being criticized early on by a stream of scholars (Blauner, 1966; Kellehear, 1984; Lofland, 1978; Parsons et al., 1972; Walter, 1991), the idea that death and mourning are social taboos still echoes in popular discourses in the U.S.

Furthermore, concerns about the increasing medicalization of death in western contexts led to a focus on institutions, such as hospitals and hospices, and the

emergence of a related argument—that death in modern societies is sequestered. Glaser and Strauss’ book, *Awareness of Dying* (1965), and Sudnow’s *Passing on: The Social Organization of Dying* (1967) were field-defining interventions that turned attention to the role of hospitals in shaping the meanings and experiences of death and death-work. This expanded attention to the medicalization of death dovetailed with the view, following Ariès (1975), Giddens (1991) and Mellor and Shilling (1993), that death is increasingly sequestered under conditions of late modernity. Theorists such as Blauner (1966) argued that it is segregated to the margins of daily life, increasingly secularized, privatized, and bureaucratized. The growing involvement of medical sociologists in studying death and dying further consolidated the focus on hospitals, hospices, and palliative care.

In his famed review of the anthropology of death, Fabian notes that if the exotic “other” is anthropology’s remit, then studying the “we” is what defines sociology (1972: 553). Thus, as sociologists began to pursue the social construction of death, the emphasis remained on Western contexts, particularly the U.S. and the U.K, and the field took on a decidedly Eurocentric orientation that it is yet to shed. While there is little inherently wrong with studying one’s own social context, the problem as a long line of postcolonial scholars underscore is that the “we” is understood in relation to historical and cultural alterity. Consequentially, either non-western contexts were altogether ignored or key figures, notably Blauner (1966), analyzed social practices around death and mourning in modern contexts while continually comparing them to so-called simple, primitive, and traditional societies. But this viewpoint resonates “internally” too, for despite the diversity within western contexts, little attention to racial, religious, or ethnic difference is palpable. This is to say, what appears to be the “American” or “British” viewpoint is really a bourgeois white perspective masquerading as the national-universal.

Euro-US-centrism persists in the sociology of death and dying and nowhere is this more evident than in the textbooks assigned in courses. These texts are influential as syntheses of the field and key sources of information and education for students, some of whom are or will go on to become professionals and practitioners in aging and death-related industries. Widely assigned texts (Corr et al., 2006; DeSpelder & Strickland, 2005; Leming & Dickinson, 2006; Kastenbaum, 2006; Seale, 1998) survey the landscapes of death, dying, and bereavement and include references to non-Western contexts, but in ways that reinforce Euro-US-American perspectives. This tendency endures in recent editions, a point exemplified in the iconic text, *The Last Dance* (DeSpelder & Strickland, 2020). For example, even as it continues to include a brief discussion of Hawai’i, it still fails to consider colonialism and is still missing any meaningful engagements with social inequality or race. This is not to discount the modifications in texts such as the one by Stillion and Attig (2014) or the more prominent changes in Walter’s *Death in the Modern World* (Walter, 2020). Rather, it is to make the point that the field as a whole is undergoing incremental and additive changes in place of much-needed transformations.

Not surprisingly, enduring absences and insufficiencies have given rise to critical interventions seeking to correct for middle-class research biases—for example the contributions of Howarth (2007)—and others emphasizing the relevance of gender, age, ethnic, and especially racial differences in scholarship as well as textbooks

(Brennan, 2019; Cox & Thompson, 2020; Kearl, 1989; Thompson et al., 2016; Walter, 1992). In their introduction to the book, *Till Death Do Us Part*, Amanik and Fletcher (2020) take a socio-historical approach to understanding the separation of the dead along racial, religious, ethnic, and socio-economic lines. Spanning regions within the U.S., the book speaks to the ways that the enslaved, immigrants, communities of color, religious minorities, and the rich and the poor observed burial practices. Indeed, in the hands of critical scholars the study of death is a matter of social justice, a point that is highlighted in *The Handbook of Social Justice in Loss and Grief: Exploring Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion* (Harris & Bordere, 2016).³ Seeking to trace the lineages of such critical approaches, the next two sections turn to forerunners in sociology.

Inventing Sociology and its Methodologies

Even though Durkheim is widely seen as the first sociologist to have contended with death through the study of suicide, that honor belongs more accurately to Martineau. She reflects on the subject in her book, *How to Observe Morals and Manners* (Martineau, 1838), more than fifty years earlier and, unlike Durkheim, is attentive to differences in power. Although Martineau was written out of the discipline due to sexism, that omission has since been corrected. Indeed, Martineau has been hailed as the first woman sociologist (Hoecker-Drysdale, 2003; Rossi, 1973) and though the claim is debated (Connell, 1997), she is indisputably now part of sociology's history. That *How to Observe Morals and Manners* (from here on, *How to Observe*) is the first exposition of sociological methodology is another point of agreement among scholars studying the history of sociology. The book draws on Martineau's growing body of publications and her two-year stint in the U.S., doing what is nothing short of fieldwork, to offer what Michael Hill succinctly describes as a "theoretically sophisticated yet practical guide to sociological observation" (Hill, 1991).

Martineau considers the subject of suicide in *How to Observe* in her larger quest to provide guidelines for apprehending the social. The treatment of suicide is located in a broader section on religion, which for her is a chief area of inquiry intended to yield insights into a nation's morals and manners, that is, the normative social codes and the patterns of social behavior (Hill, 1989; Lengermann & Niebrugge, 2007). Morals and manners become sign and substance of the social in Martineau's macro-sociological view and one of its defining aspects is investigation into how the moral codes are realized or modified in practice. Suicide, along with topics as wide-ranging as criminality, children, markets, popular culture, marriage, social classes, among others, showcases Martineau's central point that analytical observations about the morals and manners of a society are contingent on sound methodology. As Lengermann and Niebrugge (2007) note,

³ In this book, especially see Tashel C. Bordere's useful discussion offering concepts of disenfranchised grief and suffocated grief in understanding experiences among marginalized communities, and Judith F. Sayers' attention to social justice, loss and mourning among First Nations in Canada.

Martineau sought to create a science of society by grounding the analyses in systematic, empirically-based observation and making them accessible to a general audience.

To be sure the topic of suicide defies Martineau's commitment to empirical observation, but the discussion illustrates why and how suicide must be studied. Arguing that it is a pathway to understanding religious sentiment of a nation, she observes, "Every society has its suicides, and much may be learned from their character and number, both as to the notions on morals which prevail, and the religious sentiment which animates to or controls the act (Martineau, 1838)." Suicide, along with superstitions, which she notes exist among all nations, are among the manners or forms of beliefs and actions that shed light on the normative codes that shape every aspect of society, ranging from institutional orientations to individual conduct. In fact, the matter of death bridges the sections on superstition and suicide in *How to Observe* as she takes brief account of social practices and attitudes toward the dead.

A broad definition of suicide—the voluntary surrender of life from any cause (Martineau, 1838: 94)—lets her bring into view a wide scope of practices—self-inflicted death due to dishonor, under threat of sexual assault, in the form of martyrdom or soldiering, in the face of a dim future, under conditions of enslavement, among others. Not only does she then consider these disparate instances of suicide within the same field of analysis, but also she illustrates that mitigating ethnocentric biases is a requirement for a topic as sensitive as suicide. At one level, Martineau highlights the importance of suicide as a social mirror, and analyzes it by specifying types—related to principles of honor, duty, devotion, loss of hope, chastity, martyrdom. At another level, she addresses single acts of suicide as instances of collective beliefs, for example, sati among Hindu women reveals the power of Brahmins, and sees every voluntary martyrdom as a reflection of national culture. Linking suicide to enslavement, Martineau states that many Africans have preferred self-inflicted death over being reduced to property. Thus, the treatment of suicide allows her to draw clear links from the personal to the social, the individual to the collective, while gesturing toward differences in position and power.

Making the point that death is not a leveler of social hierarchies, Martineau engages it further in sections on the general notions of morals and the domestic state in *How to Observe*. Leading the segment on general notions of morals, the discussion on epitaphs and other forms of memorialization are intended to convey their usefulness in revealing the moral specificities as well as the meaning of loss and life in a society. Noting that, "The brief language of the dead will teach him (the observer) more than the longest discourses of the living" (1838: 105), Martineau underscores that the placing of cemeteries reveals the relationship of death to life, religion, and the possibilities of community, and inscriptions tell us about a nation's moral values and outlooks. Not surprisingly, in the section on the domestic state she considers death again, ruminating over what the health of a community indicates about its morals and highlighting the social conditions under which sickness and death are constantly present. Encouraging an analysis of death and demographics, she recommends a visit to cemeteries to ascertain ages and causes of death. Her reflections on death continue beyond *How to Observe* and she later modifies

typologies of suicide and correlates suicide to gender, intemperance, occupation, region, education, and personality (Hoecker-Drysdale, 2003).

In contrast to Martineau, Durkheim's study of suicide has been instrumental in assuring him a prominent place in sociology and a leading role in the history of the sociology of death. While Durkheim's book, *Suicide* (1997), is understood as the point of departure, the *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* too gives an important role to death and its rituals.⁴ In these texts, Durkheim takes on matters of death in order to decode the social, while patterns of suicide and religious and funerary rites become conduits for unearthing the collective nature of beliefs and institutions in ways that are not unlike what Martineau advocates. For Martineau as for Durkheim, suicide is a lens for theorizing and understanding the social, locating individual behavior in relation to institutions, structures, and nations, and articulating sociological methodologies, thereby helping crystalize the discipline.

Published in 1887, *Suicide* is a path-breaking study that models the use of sociological methodology to study suicide, a deeply personal act, as a social problem. Remarkable is its focus on rates of suicide as *sui generis*, and the highlighting of social differences, such as religion, nation, family, urban life, gender, race, marital status, social class, age, and war, by way of explaining the variations in suicide rates. A study of social causation, this work aims to show that suicide is the outcome of an eroding collective conscience and the social bonds that tie individuals to the collective as a result of industrialization, urbanization, and secularization. Seeking to reveal the "suicidogenic currents," or the forces that act on individuals, Durkheim identifies the types of suicides they produce—egoistic, altruistic, anomic (and fatalistic). Noting that these categories of suicide pivot around the twin axes of social integration and social regulation, Fournier (2012) emphasizes that Durkheim's purpose is to show the influence of social factors, rather than dwell on individual motives and intent.⁵ The study is consistent with his overarching interest in studying moral rules, stemming from social institutions, such as religion, and the social conditions that cause them to fray (Tomasi, 2000).

Inasmuch as Durkheim investigates suicide as a vehicle for understanding social life, it is also a means for specifying disciplinary itineraries. *Suicide* has been widely heralded as a paradigmatic text for defining disciplinary principles and orientations, and it is also noted for its methodological innovations (that echo Martineau's contributions). Unlike Martineau, though, Durkheim's approach to the study of suicide proceeds by stressing the interrelation between the various factors impacting suicide and by bringing to fruition the extant moral statistics tradition. Even though the use of statistics was well-established by the time, Durkheim's accent on studying social institutions and social facts has come to define the discipline (Fournier, 2012; Lukes, 1972; Thompson, 1982). While Durkheim explains social facts in the *Rules of Sociological Method*, what makes *Suicide* a watershed in the history of sociology (or, following Connell, how it gets written) is that it illustrates a positivist, empiricist vision for sociology (Connell, 1997; Fournier, 2012; Lukes, 1972). As Durkheim

⁴ Also see Walter (2008) on this point.

⁵ For a fuller discussion on the social causes of suicide, see Lukes (1972).

notes in the preface to *Suicide*, instead of metaphysical reflections, "...the sociologist must take as the object of his (sic) research group of facts clearly circumscribed, capable of ready definition, with definite limits, and strictly adhere to them" (1997: 36).

Taken together, Martineau and Durkheim's reflections on death reveal that: the study of suicide has been a central part of sociology's history and its emergence as a social science; sociological methodologies, especially the focus on the empirical and the factual, have been partly forged through the study of death; suicide has helped illustrate the now axiomatic links between the personal and the social; death as a social effect must be understood cross-culturally or cross-nationally; and the study of death has been a study of social difference, which in Martineau's case also gestures to disparities in position and power.

Underlying these convergences are differences, for while Durkheim's study of suicide heralds the potentials of a sociology grounded in statistics, tables, and multivariate analyses, Martineau's turn to systematic observations and fieldwork offers another methodological path. For her, sympathy—untrammelled and unreserved—is essential to sociological observation to gain access to a society, its animating spirit, and the hearts, minds, and the intimate spaces of its people in order to develop deeper understandings. Affect and sentiments are mixed with observational principles as instruments for social research, even as she cautions against hasty generalizations, biases, or what she calls narrowness of the mental vision.⁶ In contrast to Durkheim, Martineau openly advocates an activist vision of sociology (Lengermann & Niebrugge, 2007), one which is able to incorporate the point of view of the disadvantaged, take a public stand against social evils such as slavery, and articulate alternate visions of the social.⁷ Put another way, Martineau's study of suicide, religion, general morals, among other aspects forge a discipline that is attentive to social hierarchies, even while it would be left to other sociological thinkers to deepen understandings of power and highlight the geopolitics of slavery and racism in relation to death. In so doing, they would also decenter sociology's Eurocentrism from within.

The Racial Politics of Death

Perhaps no one offers a more valuable resource for advancing the understanding that death is not simply about life course but about entrenched social and, more precisely, racial inequalities than Ida B. Wells. In her magisterial biography of Wells, Giddings (2008) observes that she was primarily responsible for rendering lynching into a national and international issue and precipitating legal changes and the emergence of an interracial reform movement. While numerous such biographies have recovered Wells as an American icon, the task of highlighting the sociological significance of her writings and activism has been taken up by feminist sociologists

⁶ Other principles include: a certainty about the research question, principles that can lead to and test observations, virtues and vices are socially derived, among others.

⁷ For instance, see her statement on pages 104–105 of *How to Observe*.

(Hill Collins, 2000; Lengermann & Niebrugge, 2007). As studies of the social production of death, Wells-Barnett's pamphlets, *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in all its Phases* (1982) and *The Red Record* (1895), raise urgent questions about how social analysis and social theory are to be developed and to what effect.

Placed against the historical and political backdrop of slavery, Reconstruction, and Jim Crow laws and policies, her analyses of death show the emergence of intersectional thought and presage the use of personal and eyewitness accounts in challenging structures of domination. As the first such study of lynching in the U.S., *Southern Horrors* makes two important conceptual and methodological interventions that are taken forward in subsequent publications. Prefaced by Frederick Douglass' letter highlighting Wells-Barnett's contribution, it challenges commonplace understandings that lynchings are primarily due to Black men's sexual infractions against white women. Primarily addressing African American readers, Wells notes that only a third of the victims in cases of lynching were charged with rape, notwithstanding the fact that many of them would have been innocent of that charge. She recounts numerous cases in the pamphlet to highlight the complexities of white women's desire for Black men, while also indicting white men's sexual conduct toward Black women that makes them the true victims—"There are thousands of such cases throughout the South, with the difference that the Southern white men in insatiate fury wreak their vengeance without intervention of law upon the Afro-Americans who consort with their women (1982: 56)." Thus, from the start, the intersections and interactions of race, gender, and sexuality are a pivotal part of her analysis and indictments of lynching.⁸

Second, Wells also offers methodological innovations by repurposing available data and discourses. *Southern Horrors* and the pamphlet, *Mob Rule in New Orleans: Robert Charles and his fight to Death, The Story of his Life, Burning Human Beings Alive, Other Lynching Statistics* (Wells-Barnett, 1900), reproduce lynching reports published in dominant newspapers before going on to systematically discredit them. Indeed, Goldsby (2006) brilliantly notes, Wells parodies extant styles of news writing—their sensationalist, complicit, and even inflaming conventions—in order to make readers aware that what they know is the result of *how* they know about lynching. To this end, she reads these reports critically, highlighting anomalies and the historical context that leads to different conclusions, while bringing to bear autobiographical and eyewitness accounts to counter dominant white claims. Her intent is to appeal as much to Black American reading publics as to white audiences without masking her own passionate commitment.

Wells-Barnett's subsequent pamphlet, *A Red Record* (1895), is more surely anchored in the conventions of sociological empiricism. It begins with a clarion call to sociologists: "The student of American sociology will find the year 1894 marked by a pronounced awakening of the public conscience to a system of anarchy and outlawry which had grown during a series of ten years to be so common, that scenes of unusual brutality failed to have any visible effect upon the humane sentiments of

⁸ Although the atrocities of lynching disproportionately impacted African Americans, people from other marginalized communities too died at the hands of mob violence.

the people of our land” (1895: 76). Weaving historical context, lynching statistics, and specific chilling accounts of mob violence with recommendations for stopping the violence, *A Red Record*, despite the remove of historical and social contexts, reads like a familiar sociological text, which is itself a testament to its originality. Compiling the numbers of lynching deaths reported in the *Chicago Tribune* for the years 1892–1894, Wells uses the power of statistics to sway her readers. At the same time, cataloguing the cases by strategically emphasizing the crimes committed by the white mobs, she militates against white supremacy and white domination. Providing narrative detail on the specifics of twenty-one cases, Wells calls attention to the injustices and oppressions of racialization that manifest in lynchings even as she points to their gendered and sexualized underpinnings.

Undoubtedly, it's the horrors of lynching, the vulnerability of Black communities in the South that lead Wells to sociology and its potentials. It is too, as Goldsby (2006) notes, a form of parodying the genre of American social sciences and the authority of empiricism and objectivity. This allows her to innovate a form of non-Eurocentric public sociology aiming to bring social wrongs to light and creating awareness directly tied to social change. As Lengermann and Niebrugge (2007) argue, it lets Wells (and Anna Julia Cooper) construct a sociological analysis of society as a dynamic of power and (hierarchical) difference, an analysis that derives from the standpoint of the oppressed and is directly tied to the project of social justice. What emerges from this stance is an unrelenting focus on Black death as a consequence of white supremacy and critiques of a discipline that is indifferent to the plight of marginalized communities. It is an understanding of death that is acutely aware of racial, gendered, and sexual power differences as well as the possibilities of intellectual activism (after Hill Collins, 2013).

Much like Wells, Du Bois engaged questions of death as a barometer of geopolitical histories, social conditions and racial inequality. Although, unlike Wells, Du Bois worked squarely within the field of sociology, they shared a commitment to bending the discipline's Eurocentric arc toward preventing untimely death in African American communities and ensuring their life, dignity, and social justice. Du Bois's landmark study, *The Philadelphia Negro* (Du Bois & Anderson, 1996), has played a prominent role in securing his position as a pioneer of American sociology and the founder of the first scientific school of sociology at Atlanta University (Lewis, 2009; Morris, 2015; Wright II, 2002, 2016). Various described as the “first great work of American urban ethnography,” “the first sociological study done in America,” and “America's first major empirical sociological study,” it has come to be seen as pivotal to the emergence of scientific frameworks in sociology and allied fields (Du Bois & Anderson, 1996; Hunter, 2015; Morris, 2015; Wright II, 2002; Zuckerman, 2004). But this and Du Bois's other writings are yet to be granted a place in genealogies of the sociology of death.

Considerations of death become increasingly pronounced in Du Bois's oeuvre, most pointedly in the collection, *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (Du Bois, 1920), which includes essays on lynchings, the crisis of Black death, the aftermath of the 1918 pandemic, as well as fictional writings. Death, for Du Bois, is the leveler and the revealer. This view's foundations are laid in *The Philadelphia Negro*, which showcases the need to understand death as a racialized social problem. Published

in 1899, *The Philadelphia Negro* is a study of the Seventh Ward of Philadelphia, which was residence to the largest Black community in the North at the time. Ground-breaking in its precepts on race, history, and the conditions of Black urban life as well as its adherence to systematic research, the book seeks to understand the many problems faced by African American communities. It aims to instate practical reforms to alleviate the problems from a scientific lens, while offering what Hunter describes as “... generalizable theories about race, space, and place at the dawn of the twentieth century” (2015: 220).

The book’s Chapter X is entitled, “The Health of Negroes,” but is more precisely about disease and death. For Du Bois, health is fundamentally a question of life and death, not least because high birth rates and high death rates were considered to be signs of “low” civilizations. van der Woude (2007) notes that at the time not only were death rates for African Americans soaring but that this disproportionate increase was also promoting racial theories of mortality and, as Du Bois observes, white fantasies about the dying out of African Americans. Speaking to such racist intransigence, Du Bois observes, “So, recently, when attention has been called to the high death-rate of this race, there is a disposition among many to conclude that the rate is abnormal and unprecedented, and that, since the race is doomed to early extinction, there is little left to do but to moralize on inferior species” (Du Bois 1995: 163).

Seeking to dispel these biologized ideologies of race, Du Bois carefully deploys historical narrative and statistics in this and other chapters. He notes the impact of the middle passage and enslavement on death rates, the uneven effects of emancipation and subsequent large-scale migration, and lack of historical data. This, even as he marshals mortality statistics in Philadelphia to make the point that they are high, “but not extraordinarily so” (Du Bois 1995: 150). Du Bois takes account of social differences within African American neighborhoods to highlight the variations in death rates according to gender and age. But, underscoring the comparisons with white and immigrant residents allows him to build toward the argument that the sources of the problems of death and disease lie not in hereditary characteristics, but in the historical and social conditions that afflict indigent Black communities. He shows that the diseases from which African American residents suffer and die systematically point to the constraints under which they are forced to live, work, clothe and nourish themselves. Thus, he concludes that the most pernicious social problems of Black life and death are racial prejudice, discrimination, and the indifference of white society.

Considerations of death and life are part of Du Bois’s endeavor to overturn white supremacist ideologies through the use of social scientific methodologies. Lewis (2009) observes in his biography of Du Bois that the book is at once intended to placate the sponsors of the study, motivated by the desire to understand the afflictions of Philadelphia’s African American communities, and to reeducate the world about race. Therefore, inasmuch as Du Bois’s elitism prevents him from absolving Black communities for sharing responsibility in their own afflictions, the book “... speak(s) calmly yet devastatingly of the history and logic of poverty and racism (Lewis, 2009: 135). These arguments were all the more convincing based as they were in cutting-edge social research methods. Among the study’s triumphs are its

anchoring in systematic empirical research, conducted primarily by Du Bois, the gathering of qualitative and quantitative data, and the innovation of triangulation. As Morris remarks, “Indeed, Du Bois emerged from *The Philadelphia Negro* as the first number-crunching, surveying, interviewing, participant-observing and field-working sociologist in America” (2015: 47).

If Du Bois’s motivations in *The Philadelphia Negro* are to document the realities of racism that manifest in life, death and disease, then the subsequent book, *Souls of Black Folk* (hereafter *Souls*), gives death and especially mourning an even more prominent place in the African American experience. Published in 1903, this collection of essays highlights entrenched racial inequalities and sources of Black resilience located in culture and religion. While much of the book is a compilation of previously-written essays, Du Bois wrote five additional chapters. Taken together, their tone and content and the musical notations derived from Black spirituals, or what Du Bois calls, “Sorrow Songs,” read as elegies to Black communities. It is a book which takes death as a most significant aspect of the African American experience and is marked by metaphors of loss and mourning (van der Woude, 2007). Written against the backdrop of overwhelming loss beginning with the middle passage, slavery, and its aftermath, it is a deeply emotional response to death’s ubiquity among African Americans. More immediately, it is a response to the lynchings, especially the stunning impact of Sam Hose’s lynching in 1899, followed by the tragic death of his son (Capeci & Knight, 1996; Lewis, 2009). As Du Bois subsequently remarked, “...one could not be a calm, cool, and detached social scientist, while Negroes were lynched, murdered and starved” (Lewis, 2009: 163), a point that marks the difference between the scientific treatment of death *The Philadelphia Negro* and the affective and overtly political narratives on loss in *Souls*.

Zamir (1995) suggests that *Souls* is structured by cultural and political commentaries, thereby making the deeply personal quality of the chapter on the death of his son all the more unexpected and overwhelming. “Of the Passing of the First-Born” weaves a moving account of his son’s birth, which Du Bois poignantly welcomes with “a hope not hopeless but unhopeful” given the life that awaits a Black child, and his tragic demise. For Du Bois his son’s loss is inseparable from the collective Black experience, for as Mariotti (2009) notes the circumstances of Burghardt’s death derived from the material conditions of the color line. It also perhaps accounts for why Du Bois seeks comfort in the belief that untimely death has set his son free from the problems of the veil, the founding metaphor for racial segregation, inequality, and invisibility.

At the same time, death and grief are not confined to this chapter, and while suffering, the harsh realities of Jim Crow, and lynching are woven into the essays, the elegiac quality of *Souls* is most evident in the juxtaposition of musical notations from Black spirituals with excerpts from poets—the likes of Byron and Elizabeth Barrett Browning and The Song of Solomon. Perhaps inspired by Frederick Douglass’ treatment of Black spirituals in his autobiography, “Those musical notations stand as mute ciphers,” for the immense chasm between Black and white experiences, according Donald Gibson (Du Bois 1989: xvi). “The Sorrow Songs,” one of the newly written chapters in *Souls*, offers insights into the sound and lyrics that are unique to enslavement and its aftermath. For Du Bois, “They are the music of an unhappy people, of

the children of disappointment; they tell of death and suffering and unvoiced longing toward a truer world, of misty wanderings and hidden ways (1989: 207). Born of death, suffering, fugitivity but also hope, these sorrow songs and the essays that make up this seminal book can be seen as dirges that speak as much to what is absent (light frivolous love songs for example) as they do to “...a faith in the ultimate justice of things” (1989: 213).

Thus, Du Bois decenters the Euro-American sociological paradigm by offering a geopolitical view of death and mourning and undoing presumptions of white supremacy. In contrast to Durkheim and even to Martineau, but much like Wells, death and loss are treated with urgency and as manifestations of longstanding social inequities. While there is no trace in Martineau’s writings that she contemplated suicide or indications in *Suicide* of Durkheim’s distress at the self-inflicted loss of his friend (Fournier, 2012; Lukes, 1972; Pickering et al., 2000; Taylor, 1982), Du Bois and Wells purposefully dissolve the difference between the personal and the collective to illuminate the social and racial imperatives of life and death. Personal/collective loss are traced directly to the impacts of racial stratification, whether because of the lack of adequate medical care available in the South to families like his, lynching, or other effects of enslavement and Jim Crow conditions. For Du Bois, then, mourning is not only about the registers of personal loss and grief or about something that must be individually overcome. Rather it is about contending with a collective and historical experience, one that is embedded into African American communities and cultures. Thus, death and mourning turn the lens onto the social conditions from which they derive, serving as tools for coming to grips with the righting of racial wrongs and understanding the sources of strength and resilience of a people who have survived against all odds.

Coda: Rewriting Histories

This selective review of sociology’s early history and formative years reveals death as a means for studying the social in ways that surface the undersides of industrialization, urbanization, secularization but also entrenched racial inequalities. While critical sociological scholars have begun the work of bringing to bear intersectional and decolonial lenses to the study of death, the foundations were laid by early sociologists and sociological thinkers. Revisiting the contributions of Martineau, Durkheim, Wells and Du Bois stands to supplement ongoing efforts to study death and mourning in ways that would better contend with the geopolitics of death, racial and national differences, gender and sexual inequalities as well as the narrowness of our disciplinary and sub-disciplinary frameworks. In so doing, their contributions point to the blurring of boundaries between sociology “proper” and the sociology of death, paving the way for mainstreaming the study of death in sociology.

Focusing on Martineau, Durkheim, Wells and Du Bois reveals that considerations of death were foundational to an emergent discipline, leading to crucial insights about how to theorize the social as well as methodological innovations for studying it. Studies and reflections on death helped forge a disciplinary orientation that emphasized social context and causation to address what seemed to be deeply

personal problems, such as suicide, and to promote the need for positivist and empiricist approaches for understanding Black death as a social problem. These considerations as well led to sociological methodologies, not only ones deriving from statistics and surveys in the work of Durkheim and Du Bois, but also from sympathy and other affective strategies innovated by Martineau and honed by Wells and Du Bois.

At the same time, Wells and Du Bois's scholarship shine a light on what remains attenuated in Martineau's work and absent in the overtly Eurocentric "Durkheimian sociological" (after Lukes, 1972) by foregrounding the geopolitics of slavery, entrenched racial ideologies, and white supremacist practices. Grappling with premature and in some cases violent death, Wells and Du Bois offer a vision of sociology anchored in the perspectives of the marginalized, with an overtly activist orientation, and purposed toward social justice. Their sociological contributions underscore the urgencies of attending to death to reveal profound racial disparities, violence of institutionalized racism, and most pointedly in Wells' analysis, the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality. Taken together, Wells and Du Bois model intersectional understandings of the social, while locating death and mourning in historical, social, and geopolitical contexts. Considerations of death too are a means of restoring dignity and life to Black communities and it is possible to see their writings and activism as the work of mourning. In Du Bois's reflections, mourning takes on new meanings about collective loss as well as resilience and hope, about grieving among marginalized communities but also about community formation and social change. For Wells and Du Bois, death (and therefore life) is fundamentally an effect of power and an avenue for social justice.

Engaging these sociological genealogies of death and suffering raises the question: when the issues are reconsidered after decades of quiet why are they far more narrowly framed? As matters of death are taken up by (north) American sociologists in the mid-1960s they are focused around hospital settings and interpersonal imperatives of dying and grieving.⁹ Even as Lofland (1978) usefully intervenes into debates on whether death in the U.S. is considered taboo, she sidesteps pressing questions of which groups and constituencies are disproportionately exposed to death and suffering. That is to say, for communities beleaguered by the histories of colonialism and slavery death could not be a taboo. In the many textbooks that give rise to and popularize the sub-field of death and dying, exceptions notwithstanding, a medical sociology viewpoint dominates to the exclusion of intersectional, transnational, and geopolitical perspectives on death and mourning. This explains why even authors who seek to depart from such conventional accounts of death and bereavement are more likely to include discussions of reincarnation but not racism, Indigenous beliefs about death but not colonialism or colonial genocide.

Sociology's engagement with settler colonialism, colonial rule, the holocaust, among other geopolitical and transnational formations require much more attention and this essay joins the efforts of those who have begun this work. To take it forward would mean re-engaging the margins of the discipline as well as looking outside of

⁹ For an exception, see Blauner's (1966) exploration of the bureaucratization and rationalization of death in modern societies against the backdrop of preindustrial societies and the U.S. bombing of Japan.

its established pasts to include theorists such as Frantz Fanon. While this seems to go against the grain of disciplinary histories, it entails a kind of mourning which rethinks the past and reimagines what is still to come. As a form of intellectual and political activism, mourning is about coming to grips with the past in ways that are future-oriented. It is difficult but also deeply imaginative work that speaks to how we might rewrite the future of sociology's history.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest As the author of this paper, I confirm that there is no conflict of interest.

References

- Amanik, A., & Fletcher, K. (Eds.). (2020). *Till Death Do Us Part: American Ethnic Cemeteries as Borders Uncrossed* (Illustrated). University Press of Mississippi.
- Ariès, P. (1975). *Western Attitudes toward Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present*. Translated by Patricia Ranum. Sixth (Printing). Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Becker, E. (1973). *The Denial of Death* (Main). The Free Press.
- Berger, P. L. (1969). *The Social Reality of Religion* (1st ed.). Faber.
- Blauner, R. (1966). Death and Social Structure. *Psychiatry*, 29, 378–394.
- Brennan, M. (2019). "Social Death." In D. L. Harris (Ed.), *Non-Death Loss and Grief: Context and Clinical Implications* (pp. 36–49), Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429446054-5>
- Capeci, D. J., & Knight, J. C. (1996). Reckoning with Violence: W. E. B. Du Bois and the 1906 Atlanta Race Riot. *The Journal of Southern History*, 62(4), 727–766. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2211139>
- Connell, R. W. (1997). Why Is Classical Theory Classical? *American Journal of Sociology*, 102(6), 1511–1557. <https://doi.org/10.1086/231125>
- Corr, C., Nabe, C. M., & Corr, D. (2006). *Death and Dying - Life and Living* (5th, Fifth Edition). 5th edition. Wadsworth Publishing.
- Cox, G. R., & Thompson, N. (2020). *Death and Dying: Sociological Perspectives* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- DeSpelder, L. A., & Strickland, A. L. (2005). *The Last Dance (Text Only) 7th (Seventh) Edition*. 7th edition. McGraw-Hill Humanities/Social Sciences/Languages.
- DeSpelder, L. A., & Strickland, A. L. (2020). *The Last Dance: Encountering Death and Dying, Eleventh Edition*. 11th Edition. New York: New York: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Du Bois, W. E. B., & Anderson, E. (1996). *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Du Bois, W. E. B. (1920). *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil*. Social Theory. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe. <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.FIG:001438120>
- Du Bois, W. E. B. (1989). *The Souls of Black Folk*. Penguin Classics. New York, N.Y., U.S.A.: Penguin Books.
- Du Bois, W. E. B. (1995). *The Philadelphia Negro: A social study*. University of Pennsylvania Press, Inc.
- Durkheim, E. (1997). *Suicide: A Study In Sociology*. Edited by George Simpson. Translated by John A. Spaulding (Reissue). Free Press.
- Fabian, J. (1972). How Others Die—Reflections on the Anthropology of Death. *Social Research*, 39(3), 543–567.
- Fournier, M. (2012). *Émile Durkheim: A Biography* (1st ed.). Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity.
- Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (1st ed.). Stanford University Press.
- Giddings, P. (2008). *Ida: A Sword among Lions : Ida B. Wells and the Campaign against Lynching* (1st ed.). Amistad.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1965). *Awareness of Dying* (1st ed.). Aldine.
- Goldsby, J. D. (2006). *A Spectacular Secret: Lynching in American Life and Literature*. University of Chicago Press.

- Gorer, G. (1955). The Pornography of Death. *Encounter*, 5, 49–52.
- Gorer, G. (1965). *Death, Grief, and Mourning in Contemporary Britain*. Cresset.
- Harris, D. L., & Bordere, T. C. (Eds.). (2016). *Handbook of Social Justice in Loss and Grief: Exploring Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Hill Collins, P. (2000). *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. Routledge Classics. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203900055>
- Hill Collins, P. (2013). *On Intellectual Activism*. Philadelphia. Temple University Press.
- Hill, M. (1989). “Empiricism and Reason in Harriet Martineau’s Sociology.” In *How to Observe Morals and Manners by Harriet Martineau*, xv–lx. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/sociologyfacpub/451>
- Hill, M. (1991). “Harriet Martineau (1802–1876).” 289–297.
- Hoecker-Drysdale, S. (2003). Harriet Martineau. In G. Ritzer (Ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Major Classical Theorists* (pp. 41–68). Blackwell Publishing.
- Howarth, G. (2007). Whatever Happened to Social Class? An Examination of the Neglect of Working Class Cultures in the Sociology of Death. *Health Sociology Review*, 16(5), 425–435.
- Hunter, M. A. (2015). W.E.B. Du Bois and Black Heterogeneity: How ‘The Philadelphia Negro’ Shaped American Sociology. *The American Sociologist*, 46(2), 219–233. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12108-014-9249-2>
- Kastenbaum, R. J. (2006). *Death, Society, And the Human Experience* (9th ed.). Taylor & Francis.
- Kearl, M. C. (1989). *Endings: A Sociology of Death and Dying* (Illustrated). Oxford University Press.
- Kellehear, A. (1984). Are we a ‘death-denying’ society? a sociological review. *Social Science & Medicine*, 18(9), 713–721. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536\(84\)90094-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536(84)90094-7)
- Kubler-Ross, E. (1970). *On Death and Dying*. Tavistock.
- Leming, M. R., & Dickinson, G. E. (2006). *Understanding Death, Dying, & Bereavement* (6th ed.). WadsworthPubCo. 2006.
- Lengermann, P. M., & Niebrugge, G. (2007). *The Women Founders: Sociology and Social Theory 1830–1930* (1st ed.). Waveland Press.
- Lewis, D. L. (2009). *W.E.B. Du Bois: A Biography. 1st Holt* (paperbacks). Henry Holt and Co.
- Lofland, L. H. (1978). *The Craft of Dying: The Modern Face of Death*. Sage.
- Lukes, S. (1972). *Emile Durkheim: His Life and Work- A Historical and Critical Study*. 1st U.S. edition. New York: Harper & Row.
- Mariotti, S. (2009). On the passing of the first-born son: Emerson’s ‘focal distancing’, Du Bois’ ‘second sight’, and disruptive particularity. *Political Theory*, 37(3), 351–374. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591709332328>
- Martineau, H. (1838). *How to Observe Morals and Manners*. Charles Knight and Co.
- Mellor, P. A., & Shilling, C. (1993). Modernity, Self-Identity and the Sequestration of Death. *Sociology*, 27(3), 411–431. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038593027003005>
- Morris, A. D. (2015). *The Scholar Denied: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Birth of Modern Sociology*. Oakland, California: University of California Press.
- Parsons, T., Fox, R. C., & Lidz, V. M. (1972). The ‘gift of life’ and its reciprocation. *Social Research*, 39(3), 367–415.
- Pickering, W. S. F., Walford, G., & British Centre for Durkheimian Studies. (2000). *Durkheim’s Suicide: A Century of Research and Debate*. Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought 28. London ; New York: Routledge.
- Rossi, A. (1973). “The First Woman Sociologist: Harriet Martineau (1802–1876).” In A. Rossi (Ed.), *The Feminist Papers: From Adams to de Beauvoir*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Seale, C. (1998). *Constructing Death: The Sociology of Dying and Bereavement*. Cambridge, England ; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Stillin, J., & Attig, T. (Eds.). (2014). *Death, Dying, and Bereavement: Contemporary Perspectives, Institutions, and Practices* (1st ed.). Springer Publishing Company.
- Sudnow, D. (1967). *Passing On: The Social Organization of Death*. 2nd Printing edition. Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Taylor, S. (1982). *Durkheim and the Study of Suicide*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Thompson, K. (1982). *Emile Durkheim*. Key Sociologists. Chichester, Sussex : London ; New York: Horwood ; Tavistock Publications.
- Thompson, N., Allan, J., Carverhill, P. A., Cox, G. R., Davies, B., Doka, K., Granek, L., et al. (2016). The case for a sociology of dying, death, and bereavement. *Death Studies*, 40(3), 172–181. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2015.1109377>

- Tomasi, L. (2000). "Emile Durkheim's Contribution to the Sociological Explanation of Suicide." In W. S. F. Pickering, & G. Walford (Eds.), *Durkheim's Suicide: A Century of Research and Debate* (11–21). Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203459270>
- Walter, T. (1991). Modern death: Taboo or not taboo? *Sociology*, 25(2), 293–310.
- Walter, T. (1992). "Sociologists never die: british sociology and death." *The Sociological Review*, 40(1_suppl), 264–295. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.1992.tb03396.x>
- Walter, T. (2008). The sociology of death. *Sociology Compass*, 2(1), 317–336.
- Walter, T. (2020). *Death in the Modern World* (1st ed.). SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Wells-Barnett, I. B. (1895). *A Red Record: Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynchings in the United States, 1892–1893–1894*. Black Women Writers Series. Chicago: Donohue & Henneberry. http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.ebookbatch.ASP_batch:ASP1000399149blww
- Wells-Barnett, I. B. (1900). *Mob Rule in New Orleans: Robert Charles and His Fight to the Death*. Chicago, Chicago. <http://www.proquest.com/pq1lit/docview/2138587530/citation/6FD00F76E0294B3APQ/1>
- Wells-Barnett, I. B. (1982). *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All It's Phases*. New York, New York. <http://www.proquest.com/pq1lit/docview/2138587088/citation/10AC9B4E3A584DD2PQ/1>
- van der Woude, J. (2007). "Rewriting the Myth of Black Mortality: W.E.B. Du Bois and Charles W. Chesnutt." Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351150248-7>
- Wright II, E. (2002). The Atlanta sociological laboratory 1896–1924: A historical account of the first American school of sociology. *Western Journal of Black Studies*, 26(3), 165.
- Wright II, E. (2016). *The First American School of Sociology: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Zamir, S. (1995). *Dark Voices: W.E.B. Du Bois and American Thought, 1883–1903*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Zuckerman, P. (2004). *The Social Theory of W.E.B. Du Bois*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Sage Publications.

Publisher's Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.