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ARTICLE

To Agitate a Southern Audience

Revisiting the Impact of Abolition on Tuskegee Institute's Institutional Interventions, Anti-Lynching Advocacy, and Sociological Contributions

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Abstract

Scholars have paid minimal attention to the political and practical objectives that guided Tuskegee Institute's sociological program and institutional interventions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Leveraging a multi-modal, historical sociological approach grounded in primary and secondary analyses of biographical data, narratives, and archival data, I show that Tuskegee's institutional interventions illustrate three abolitionist tactics: (1) building consciousness through research dissemination and place-based investment, (2) galvanizing Southern Whites and political elites to abolish lynching locally, and (3) countering the propaganda used to justify lynching to inspire divestment from lynching and carceral punishment. Booker T. Washington's commitment to eradicating structural racism and resource deprivation in the aftermath of slavery led to Tuskegee Institute's formation of the first department of applied rural sociology in the United States, and the Negro Farmers' conference and Movable School interventions supported a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy. Likewise, the research activism of Monroe Work, disseminated via *The Negro Year Book* and individual publications, sought to galvanize the abolition of lynching and carceral punishment. In the wake of re-emerged visibility of White supremacist terrorism and commitments to practicing Du Boisian sociology across the United States, I argue that reviving the memory of Tuskegee's institutional practices makes a case for reconsidering the place of abolition in academic sociology in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: Anti-lynching Movement; Abolition; Tuskegee; Historical Sociology; Black Sociology

Introduction

The word *lynching* communicates Black death and harkens back to a time when it was acceptable for private citizens to organize in small and large groups to deny innocent people of their rights to life and citizenship. The sophisticated efforts of Ida B. Wells-Barnett and the *Chicago Tribune*, James Weldon Johnson and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and Monroe Nathan Work[1] of the Tuskegee Institute allowed the American populace to monitor the emergence and rise of the "lynching era" in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries through popular media outlets. While there is an abundance of scholarship documenting the active participation of the NAACP (Francis

2014; Waldrep 2002; Zangrando 1980) and White political organizations like the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (Hall 1979; Reed 1968) in the U.S. anti-lynching movement, little is known about the motivations galvanizing Tuskegee's involvement in this movement. This is of particular importance since Tuskegee's consistent anti-lynching research activism started in 1914 (before the publication of the NAACP's landmark 1919 report; see NAACP [1919] 2010), and yet their organization is seldom credited for their work and was recently omitted from a list of Black political organizations inspiring the landmark Emitt Till Anti-lynching Act (2022).

Additionally, as a Historically Black College (HBCU) founded in the nineteenth Century, Tuskegee had a unique responsibility to proactively leverage its institutional resources to advance the interests of Black Americans within, and beyond, the U.S. South in the aftermath of slavery. Although existing research has noted the important contributions of HBCUs like Tuskegee to the discipline of sociology (Wright 2016, 2020), it has yet to fully examine the role that Southern Black sociologists at Tuskegee played in advancing the project of abolition in the United States through their institutional interventions or academic anti-lynching research. It is imperative to thoroughly evaluate the Tuskegee Institute in the twenty-first century to ensure that that their pioneering contributions are not permanently erased from the cultural memory of the American anti-lynching movement or sociological analysis (Brunsma and Padilla Wyse, 2019; Martin and Lynch, 2009). Thus, this article seeks to address one central question: What guided the Tuskegee Institute's sociological program and anti-lynching research activism?

Tuskegee Institute had a unique role to play in advancing the project of abolition in the United States that this article will further explore. This article draws on a historical sociological analytical approach using primary and secondary analyses of biographical data, narratives, and archival data. It identifies that Tuskegee Institute was an abolitionist organization whose institutional practices of (1) consciousness raising through research dissemination and place-based investment, (2) organizing social and political elites to abolish lynching locally, and (3) marshalling empirical evidence to abolish lynching and practices of carceral punishment exhibit an unwavering commitment to the cause of Black liberation. I argue that the establishment of the first department of applied rural sociology, Negro Farmer's conference, and Movable School interventions demonstrate Tuskegee's commitment to a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy to create conditions of prosperity for Black Americans in the aftermath of U.S. slavery. Likewise, I reveal that the Institute disseminated several volumes of *The Negro Year Book* (Work 1915) and numerous research articles that also made explicit calls to abolish lynching and practices of carceral punishment under the guidance of Monroe Work. These practices provide considerations for illuminating the place of Black sociologists and abolitionist thought in the discipline of sociology, historically, with practical implications for academic sociology in the twenty-first century.

Understanding the motivations undergirding Tuskegee's intellectual and research programs provides two benefits. First, it allows for recognizing the invaluable contributions of Monroe N. Work and Tuskegee Institute to the collective anti-lynching movement. Second, in comparing the politics and implications of these moments on Black life, we learn more about the role of Southern Black sociologists in advancing the project of abolition in the United States. My findings encapsulate these two domains. Independently, recovering the political and academic contributions of Monroe Work and the Tuskegee Institute in the twentieth century are matters of great sociological and historical importance given the underrepresentation of Black sociologists and Historically Black Colleges and Universities as academic subjects (Bonilla-Silva 2017; Brooks and Wright, 2020; Morris 2015; Stanfield 2016; Wright 2020). It is also important to study Tuskegee Institute because it was an abolitionist organization fully committed to the cause of Black freedom (Burden-Stelly 2019) and practices of locally-based care (Okechukwu 2021). Moreover,

these findings have implications for how we understand the disciplinary blind spots of academic sociology amidst its efforts to embrace the practice of the Black and Du Boisian sociological traditions (Clair 2022; Itzigsohn and Brown, 2020; Morris 2022).

The following article proceeds in four parts. First, I briefly discuss the importance of abolitionist logics to African American political movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that inform the emergence of Black sociology. Second, I review literature to situate the necessity of interpreting Monroe Work's anti-lynching research and the work of the Tuskegee Institute from an abolitionist lens, as the intellectual commitments of this practice (aka "praxis") directly influenced this institution's work. Third, I draw on my multi-modal archival work to demonstrate the political and practical objectives Tuskegee sought to accomplish through the development of its rural sociological program and anti-lynching research activism in the United States. In conclusion, I leverage the aforementioned historical findings to make an abolitionist call for transforming the ways professional sociologists respond to, and assist, individuals under threat of White supremacist terrorism in the United States.

Literature Review

Recovering Tuskegee as a Sociological Enterprise

Although Tuskegee is acknowledged as a formidable institution who made lasting contributions to historical social movements, dominant cultural narratives depict them as opposed to improving the welfare of Black Americans post-Emancipation. As political scientist Megan Ming Francis (2014) argues, Tuskegee was "the most influential African American organization in the early part of the twentieth century [who's work] did not actively address the host of social ills crippling the African American community on the national political scene" (p. 174). Although numerous publications also echo this narrative (particularly those documenting the work of the NAACP; see Waldrep 2002; Zangrando 1980), it is not reflective of all literature on Tuskegee Institute. One way to better examine the alignment of Tuskegee with the broader interests of Black communities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is to study their institutional interventions. But rather than relying on stories told about Tuskegee from the perspectives of competitors or unfamiliar audiences, scholars must turn to those who knew Tuskegee best for authoritative insights: those who witnessed its operations from the inside.

Much study on Tuskegee was written by its employees and affiliates. Several articles have been published on the important contributions of the Tuskegee Farmer's conference by former participants (Holsey 1922; Johnson 1896; Scott 1904). Longtime employee—and underappreciated sociologist—Monroe N. Work (1933) wrote about Tuskegee's broader institutional interventions during and beyond the tenure of Booker T. Washington. Other insights about Tuskegee Institute have been gleaned from the autobiography of Booker T. Washington ([1901] 1995) and biographical publications about Monroe N. Work written by employees (Guzman 1949) and historians (McMurry 1980, 1985; Tucker 1991).

Beyond this small literature, extant research on Tuskegee has been concerned with few topics. Scholars are overwhelmingly attuned to Booker T. Washington's perceived conservative political stances on race relations (Jagmohan 2024; Meier 1963; Wintz 1996) and his unique leadership style (Cox 1951; Frazier 1945; Gottschalk 1966; Thornbrough 1968), though Donald J. Calista (1964) emphasizes that Washington's character and politics have been incompletely rendered. Building on accounts from Tuskegee's affiliates, historian Allen Jones (1975, 1991) highlights how the Institute's interventions improved rural life for Black farmers in Alabama and across the U.S. South. In more contemporary literature,

researchers examine the legacy of the U.S. Federal Government's Tuskegee Syphilis Study on medical mistrust among Black Americans (see Alsan and Wanamaker, 2016; Brandon et al., 2005) and practices of student activism originating at Tuskegee that were central to the Civil Rights Movement (Jones 2018a). Furthermore, economist Lisa D. Cook (2012) briefly nods towards the sophisticated empirical records of Tuskegee's anti-lynching research program without substantively engaging with their intrinsic motivations for participating in the anti-lynching movement. This article takes a different approach by evaluating how the logics of abolition shaped Tuskegee's participation in the anti-lynching movement and their associated research activism.

How does studying Tuskegee benefit the contemporary discipline of sociology? First, it enriches ongoing efforts to document the multifaceted sociological contributions of W. E. B. Du Bois (Hunter 2013; Loughran 2015; Morris 2015; Wright 2016). Scholars have used creative modes of inquiry to demonstrate the prowess and relevance of Du Boisian methods and theories to enhance the utilization of descriptive quantitative methods (Conwell and Loughran, 2024; Battle-Baptiste and Rusert, 2018); cultivate more nuanced understandings of racism, racial identity, and the color line (Bobo 2000; Itzigsohn and Brown, 2015; Thomas 2021); and advance studies of rural communities (Jakubek and Wood, 2018). Researchers have also used Du Boisian frameworks to transform studies of families (Battle and Serrano, 2022), crime (Cabral 2024; Werth 2024), urban policing (Rocha Beardall et al., 2024; Tillman 2023), the criminal-legal system (Clair 2021), and immigration (Islam 2020; Yazdiha 2021), among others. In recent work, José Itzigsohn and Karida Brown (2020) and Charisse Burden-Stelly (2019) argue that Du Bois' global and comparative lens is essential for dissecting interlocking institutions of power. These burgeoning efforts continue to inspire a new generation of scholars in the twenty-first century to further engage Du Boisian methods and frameworks despite their historical under-utilization in the discipline (see Green and Wortham, 2015).

Second, studying Tuskegee also advances disciplinary efforts to highlight the contributions of Black sociology and Black sociologists, historically. Sociologist Earl Wright II has made tremendous strides in this effort. Wright and his students have collaborated to uplift the important public sociological practices of Augustus Granville Dill (Brooks and Wright, 2020) and the disciplinary contributions of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory (Wright 2009, 2016; Wright and Calhoun, 2006) and Fisk University (Wright 2010) to mainstream sociology. While some might posit that Du Boisian sociology and Black sociology are antagonistic intellectual traditions, sociologists have convincingly shown that the sociological methods and theories of these traditions are inseparable (Clair 2022; Hunter and Robinson, 2018).

Although more research is needed on Tuskegee's anti-lynching activism, there has been some attention given to their sociological contributions. Wright (2020) uncovers the seminal contributions of individuals and historically-Black educational institutions like Tuskegee Institute that practiced Black sociology. But his work leaves room to explore how the logics of abolition were linked to Tuskegee's sociological interventions or broader research efforts. In this way, studying Tuskegee also offers an opportunity to further examine how historical practitioners of Black sociology uniquely contributed to the cause of abolition.

Situating Abolition Within the Historical Practice of Black Sociology

Black sociologists have long subscribed to the logics of abolition and used this praxis to inform their sociological research and critique carceral systems (see Du Bois [1935] 2007; McHarris 2024; Tillman 2023). To make sense of this, we must understand what the

fundamental goals of Black sociology were at its inception. Likewise, we must examine how practitioners of Black sociology were responsive to the developments of Black political movements and creatively used their resources to fight to improve the material interests of disenfranchised populations across the world.

Fundamentally, abolition is—and has always been—a philosophy striving to completely eradicate mechanisms of social oppression. It is an affirmative political project to build a world where everyone has access to the resources they need to live healthy and prosperous lives. Since 1619, the fundamental mission galvanizing formerly enslaved Africans and Black people in the United States is the quest for *freedom*: freedom from enslavement and involuntary servitude (citizenship); freedom from state-sanctioned racial violence (safety); freedom from resource deprivation (opportunity); and freedom from censorship and the threat of retaliation (expression). As the bearers of these "freedom dreams" (Kelley 2002), Black people have always employed creative (and collaborative) methods to "work *within*, *against*, and *beyond* the state in the service of collective liberation" (Shangé 2019, p. 10) from oppressive systems that produce unjust outcomes for Black communities.[2]

Principles of abolition were also frequently used to inspire historical action on behalf of Black Americans in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Sociologist Amaka Okechukwu (2021) instructs that abolition is an evolutionary political practice whose champions strive to dismantle harmful systems and invest in new institutions that serve the material needs of Black people (among other disenfranchised populations). Historically, the politics of abolition catalyzed slave insurrections and the anti-slavery movement (Kendi 2016; Robinson 1997), the fight for Black women's suffrage (Blain 2018; Combahee River Collective 1995; Cooper [1892] 2016; Guy-Sheftall 1995), the pre- and post-emancipation origins of the American Civil Rights Movement (Du Bois [1935] 2007; Jones 2018b), the anti-lynching movement (Wells-Barnett [1895] 2015; Zangrando 1980), and the twentieth century continuation of the fight for African American citizenship (Francis 2014; McAdam 1982; Morris 1984). In this way, abolition was a vehicle used to reimagine the capacity of democratic institutions to deliver on promises of democracy. Furthermore, each of these historical movements relied heavily on the tactics of consciousness raising, community building, broad research dissemination, and the countering of carceral propaganda to achieve their individual aims (see Feimster 2009; Francis 2014; Haley 2016).

Today, the work of abolition continues. Contemporary abolitionist movements strive to dismantle the prison industrial complex and other "structures in which racism continues to be embedded" (Davis 2005, p. 29) by disseminating information and investing in local institution building to ensure communal vitality and wellness (Clair and Woog, 2022; Kaba 2021). Scholars and abolitionist organizers also routinely work to raise consciousness and inspire collective action by countering propaganda used to reify the harmful practices of the contemporary criminal legal system (see McHarris 2024; Purnell 2021; Ritchie 2017). Attentiveness to the positive capacity of abolition to eliminate poverty and invest in human prosperity is especially important when considering its historical manifestations. I will argue that even though they did not always explicitly use the language of abolition, Tuskegee Institute actively engaged in each of these practices in their sociological and anti-lynching efforts.

Considering the normalization of abolitionist logic in Black political movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it is unsurprising that there is substantive overlap between principles of abolition and the foundational tenets of Black sociology. Wright's (2020) exhaustive analysis of the pioneering sociological programs at HBCUs—at Atlanta University, Tuskegee Institute, Fisk University, and Howard University—has led him to ascertain five core objectives that ground Black sociological practices more broadly. This sociological work must (1) be led by persons of African descent (but not exclusively), (2) center the experiences of Black people using non-deficit frames (Stanfield 2016), (3) be

interdisciplinary, (4) produce findings that are generalizable, and (5) have broader social or policy implications that are of substantive interest to Black people (Wright 2020; also see Watson 1976; Wright and Calhoun, 2006).[3]

In order to locate and examine logics of abolition among Tuskegee Institute's practices, I remain attentive to the dual nature of abolitionist work which strives to eliminate harmful structures while also identifying opportunities for positive investment (Ben-Moshe 2018; Rocha Beardall et al., 2024). This analytical tool allows one to trace how HBCUs in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries sought to institutionalize communal vitality in the lives of minoritized populations through the active practices of recognition, reconciliation, relationality, and reparation. By considering the case of Tuskegee's sociological and anti-lynching research programs, I evaluate how the logics of abolition were engrained in the ethos and institutional practices of Tuskegee Institute historically. I will argue that even though they did not always use the language of abolition, Tuskegee Institute engaged in each of these principles in their anti-poverty and anti-lynching efforts. My aim here is connect the practices of Tuskegee to the logics of abolition rather than to essentialize Tuskegee as exclusively abolitionist (see Okechukwu 2021).

Data and Methods

In this article, I take a multi-modal historical sociological approach to illustrate how the politics of abolition guided Tuskegee Institute's sociological program and empirical approach to studying U.S. lynchings. This approach is "multi-modal" in that it combines the methods of historical research with qualitative and quantitative analytical tools leveraged by contemporary sociologists to analyze biographical data, narratives, and archival data. This dynamic approach offers three clear benefits. First, analyzing *biographical data* enables one to understand how people and institutions become who they are to better evaluate the motivations behind their actions. Second, evaluating *narratives* is critical to discern the politics of problem definition and how we understand the processes individual or institutional actors use when making decisions about interventions to problems (Hacker et al., 2022; Jacobs 2006). Third, examining *archival data* not only provides an expansive view of the inner workings of institutions but also sheds light on the types of data leveraged to mobilize empirically informed policy interventions. As a sociologist trained in Black Studies, public policy, and numerous methodological approaches (including historical methods), I seek to apply the breadth and depth of my formal research training to enrich the overall analyses of the current investigation.[4]

In recent years, several social scientists (and notable sociologists) have used similar approaches to advance empirical research on numerous topics that are germane to the present study. To advance the empirical study of lynching, researchers have scrutinized Tuskegee Institute's archival data and incorporated data from other primary sources and newspapers to enumerate lynching records (Gonzales-Day 2006; Seguin and Rigby, 2019; Tolnay and Beck, 1995). Political scientist Megan Ming Francis (2014) evaluated the NAACP's internal documents, biographies, government records, archival data, and external publications (e.g., legislative proposals) to document the comprehensive motivations and tactics sustaining decades of lobbying efforts to enact federal anti-lynching legislation in the United States. A handful of prominent sociologists have independently examined W. E. B. Du Bois's known writings, publications, archival sources, and institutional records (among other sources) to unearth his underappreciated contributions to the discipline of sociology (Itzigsohn and Brown, 2020; Jakubek and Wood, 2018; Morris 2015; Wright 2016). Additionally, other historically trained sociologists have analyzed biographical data, narratives, and institutional records to shed light on the contributions of lesser-known Black scholars and HBCUs to sociology (see Brooks and Wright, 2020; Stanfield 2016;

Wright 2020). The current study forwards this dynamic tradition of sociological and social scientific inquiry to investigate the following research question: What are the political and practical objectives that guided Tuskegee Institute's sociological program and institutional interventions?

To answer this research question, I collected data for this article in three phases starting in June 2018. In the first, I consulted the Papers of Monroe N. Work at the Tuskegee University Archives in Alabama. This archival data collection includes drafts of major research studies, speeches, internal communications, external correspondences, newspaper clippings, and biographical sketches. These primary source documents were especially useful for explaining why Tuskegee's Department of Research and Records was created (section 1), the practical objectives that motivated Tuskegee's anti-lynching research activism (section 2), and the abolitionist interventions they fought for using a data-driven approach (section 3).

In the second phase, I wanted to understand how Tuskegee Institute represented its policy positions to the public. This interest led me to scrutinize narratives present in publications by the Institute and its affiliates. Institutional publications (e.g., volumes of *The Negro Year Book*) provided insights into Tuskegee's commitment to the self-determination of Black people globally (section 1) and the abolition of lynching in the United States (section 2). Publications by early affiliates of Tuskegee (i.e., faculty) also confirmed the Institute's commitments to Black economic liberation (section 1) and the abolition of lynching and practices of carceral punishment (section 3).

In the third phase, I employed a biographical approach using secondary sources to make sense of the key figures influencing Tuskegee's institutional interventions and research practices. I emphasized evaluating elements of professional biographies that are under-discussed in existing research. As Tuskegee's first university president, Booker T. Washington left an indelible mark on the culture of the institution and the functional purpose it sought to fulfill in Alabama and across the U.S. South. As the founding director of Tuskegee's Department of Research and Records, Monroe N. Work was responsible for the leadership of all research activities and the global dissemination of institutional publications from 1908 until his retirement in 1938. Certainly, Washington and Work are not the only contributors who made Tuskegee Institute's interventions and research practices possible. Yet, their positions as the inaugural employees in their respective institutional roles give them unique insights that are particularly relevant for answering the key research question guiding this study (sections 1–2).

Although individuals are extremely influential in shaping institutional priorities and practices, institutions embody the strategic decisions that individuals make and represent their policy positions in public. The policy positions of Tuskegee University today are not emblematic of the priorities of Tuskegee Institute in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thus, I also examined institutional biographies to capture Tuskegee Institute's sustained interest in cultivating an anti-poverty program to catalyze the economic liberation of Black Americans in the aftermath of U.S. slavery (section 1). These institutional commitments led to not only the cultivation of public-facing outlets (i.e., practical educational platforms) but also to the development of novel areas of disciplinary study within the university.

To effectively navigate these disparate data sources, I grounded my fieldwork in the theoretical orientation that sociologist Marcus Hunter (2018) calls "Black Logics, Black Methods." This framework is ideal because it starts with the basic premise that Black people are human agents deserving of the right to respect, life, and freedom on their own terms. Moreover, as an analytical frame, it enables researchers to understand how the intuitions driving Black political thought (i.e., Black logics) are expressed through media or vernacular that are accessible to Black people (i.e., Black methods). Taking an inductive and

interpretive approach of this nature is essential for the current study because the actors I am studying are no longer living (Hunter 2013; Vaughan 2004). Likewise, using historical documents to illustrate Tuskegee's commitments to interventionism and principles of abolition requires knowing how Tuskegee might talk about these subjects to Southern (or national) audiences in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries using subtle and explicit language cues (Anderson et al., 2012; Geertz 1983). This led me to search for overt references to "abolition" and to triangulate covert references to logics of abolition (see Rocha Beardall et al., 2024; Clair and Woog, 2022) with documented practices across the myriad biographical, narrative, and archival data sources consulted for this manuscript.

Additionally, a portion of the data sourced for this study were presented numerically in lists or tabular formats that followed early twentieth century research conventions. Thus, to make this data more intuitive for contemporary audiences, I used twenty-first century visualization techniques to re-render important quantitative information that Monroe Work represented in 1913 and 1915 about documented slave insurrections (section 1) and practices of carceral punishment (section 3). This methodological decision allowed me to demonstrate the influence of abolitionism on the Institute's work and show how Monroe Work and Tuskegee sought to undermine racist arguments about Black criminality by marshaling the original empirical data they used to substantiate their arguments (see Conwell and Loughran, 2024). Cumulatively, this careful multi-modal approach enabled me to highlight the political and practical reasons why Tuskegee Institute desired to (1) raise consciousness through research dissemination and place-based investment, (2) organize social and political elites to abolish lynching locally, and (3) marshal empirical evidence to abolish lynching and practices of carceral punishment.

The empirical findings of this study are organized into three distinct sections. The first section evaluates the professional formation of Monroe Work and the abolitionist values that he and Booker T. Washington used to inform Tuskegee Institute's institutional interventions. Building on these insights, the second section illuminates how the transformative potential of abolition in the South anchored Tuskegee's practical approach to anti-lynching research activism. Finally, the third section explicates the influence of abolitionism on Tuskegee Institute's research and showcases how the Institute used a data-driven approach to dispel myths about Black criminality and advance explicitly abolitionist policy interventions.

Building Consciousness through Tuskegee's *Negro Year Book* and Rural Sociology Program

In this section, I will demonstrate how Tuskegee Institute sought to build consciousness and expand access to communal vitality for Black people in the post-Emancipation U.S. South through the dissemination of *The Negro Year Book* and the establishment and the recurring activities of the Institute's rural sociology program. These pioneering efforts were spearheaded under the institutional leadership of Booker T. Washington and research oversight of Monroe Work with critical support from Florence Work, Jessie Guzman, and their colleagues at Tuskegee.

Monroe N. Work was born August 15, 1866, in Iredell County, North Carolina, to parents who were formerly enslaved. He spent his childhood living in North Carolina until his family relocated to Cairo, IL, and he eventually enrolled in an integrated high school in Arkansas City, KS, to pursue formal education in his early twenties (Chandler and Ferguson, 2010).[5] As an adult, Monroe N. Work pursued advanced religious and sociological education—at Chicago Theological Seminary and the University of Chicago, respectively—to discover solutions to some of the intractable social issues facing twentieth-century African Americans (McMurry 1980, 1985; Wright 2009). Under the mentorship of

sociologist William I. Thomas at the University of Chicago's Department of Sociology, Work cultivated a global diasporic perspective about the Black community and developed a critical consciousness for how to combat racial prejudice in America using social scientific tools (McMurry 1985),[6] a passion that drew him to W. E. B. Du Bois and the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory as a graduate student (McMurry 1980; Wright 2009).

W. E. B. Du Bois was a pioneering sociologist and transdisciplinary mixed-methodologist whose organizing efforts and collaborations with numerous research-trained scientists and community-embedded researchers led to the creation of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory (aka the "Atlanta School")—"the first American school" and "Black school of sociology" (Wright 2002, 2016, 2020). Work was fascinated by the work of Du Bois and the Atlanta School, and after graduating from the University of Chicago with his master's degree in 1903, he moved to Georgia to take a job at Savannah State University and maintained involvement with the research program of the Atlanta School. According to Wright (2020), Work contributed to Atlanta School research through four publications, covering the Black church in Chicago, Black Americans' involvement in the criminal legal system, and the importance of Black business ownership and patronage for addressing the material needs of Black people after WWI (Wright 2009). In 1908, Work was poached by Booker T. Washington to help Tuskegee Institute build a sociologically informed research program that eventually filled the void of Black sociology following the departure of Du Bois in 1913 (Wright 2020). As fellow faculty member James Preston recounts, Work infused at Tuskegee a pride in Africa and its achievements which, in turn, led to the development of Tuskegee and Booker T. Washington's involvement in the African continent.[7] Despite its ambitious nature, establishing such a research program was part of Booker T. Washington's vision for how to practically lead Black people "up from slavery" in a post-Emancipation U.S. South.

It is necessary to appreciate that Booker T. Washington's praxis and entrepreneurial prowess were rooted in genuine desires to materially realize Black freedom and economic autonomy and improve race relations in the United States (Work 1933; Wright 2020). Read another way, Washington was invested in identifying the root of historical inequities among Black Americans, addressing and reducing how they manifested in everyday life, and building a curriculum for collective community care-building that could thrive within —and beyond—the context of a White supremacist racial caste system in the United States. This motivation led him to develop an institution—Tuskegee Institute—dedicated to promoting Black social and economic mobility as a part of a more comprehensive *anti-poverty strategy*. Washington was astutely aware of how the material conditions of resource deprivation originating in slavery remained a permanent feature in the daily life of African Americans, most notably those imposed by the "color line" (Du Bois [1903] 2003). Yet, he remained confident that Black people would not—and did not have to submit—to these impositions if they had *adequate resources* to circumvent their circumstances. Booker T. Washington understood that mitigating cycles of intergenerational trauma within Southern Black communities post-Emancipation meant developing practical solutions to deal with the lingering consequences of slavery that people faced in everyday life: (including, but not limited to) agricultural scarcity, economic precarity via inadequate access to home or business ownership, pervasive unemployment, and lack of access to vocational or technical educational programs (Washington [1901] 1995). Thus, the rural sociology program was cultivated at Tuskegee Institute to address these needs and mobilize Booker T. Washington's anti-poverty strategy through the 1) applied rural sociology program; 2) Tuskegee Negro Farmers' conference; and 3) Movable School interventions.[8]

As sociologist Earl Wright argues, Tuskegee Institute was the home of the second prominent Black school of American sociology. It was the second HBCU to follow the example of Atlanta University to establish a sociology program "whereby its students were

taught to use their sociological imagination to analyze, investigate, and understand the social, economic, and physical conditions impacting Blacks" (Wright 2020, p. 77). However, the fundamental purpose of Tuskegee's sociological program was different from that of its peers at the Atlanta or Chicago Schools. In the spirit of reducing inequities in everyday social life, Tuskegee Institute established the first applied program of rural sociology in the United States, meaning that Tuskegee "was the first academic entity to engage in an institutionalized and annual research inquiry on the social, economic, and physical condition of rural folk with the objective of developing solutions to address the problems discovered" (Wright 2020, p. 95).

Within this emphasis, Booker T. Washington used Tuskegee's institutional resources to lead the university in establishing a renowned annual conference series: the Tuskegee Negro Conference (aka Tuskegee Negro Farmers' Conference). The conference's purpose was to "show the masses of colored people how to lift themselves up in their industrial, educational, moral and religious life" by convening "the representatives of the common, hard-working farmers and mechanics—the bone and sinew of the Negro race—ministers and teachers" (Johnson 1896, p. 5). It also allowed for facilitating important discussions among attendees about how they might approach some of the most pernicious agricultural, economic, and health-related problems facing rural Black communities (Holsey 1922; Johnson 1896; Jones 1991; Scott 1904; Work 1933; Wright 2020). Another core purpose of the Tuskegee Farmers' Conference was to serve as "one (annual) day of practical sociology." As Wright (2020) notes:

> Practical sociology…included taking personal accounts from multiple sources on a specific topic (i.e., data collection), teasing out the most salient and viable practices (i.e., analysis), then implementing that best practice in one's local community (i.e., application). Essentially, the Worker's Conference was where Black agricultural workers listened to speakers from every southern state, and some from the North; discussed best practices in the profession; and learned the methods of implementation (p. 89).

While the evidence marshaled to support the annual Tuskegee Negro Conferences was produced using rigorous social scientific methods, Tuskegee ensured that the educational materials and proceedings of the conferences were accessible to all attendees (or others who could not make the journey). This practice not only reflects Tuskegee's innate commitment to creating communities of care but also reveals its interest in creating safe spaces for restorative care-building among socioeconomically diverse Black Americans. It was no secret that Washington and Work believed that Tuskegee Institute and its graduates should be of "so much service to the country that the President of the United States would one day come and see it" (Washington [1901] 1995, p. 148).[9] Washington's fervent commitment to having Tuskegee graduates use sociological tools to create practical social interventions to ameliorate resource inequities exceeded his commitment to merely using those tools to produce academic research on populations impacted by resource deprivation for its own sake (or to simply advance interests of higher education institutions more generally vs. the collective interests of Black Americans; Work 1933).

From launching the "one day of practical sociology" program, Booker T. Washington recognized there was a need for the information disseminated at annual conferences beyond the rural county where they were situated in Alabama. Thus, as demand for the Tuskegee Negro Conference grew around the U.S. South, Washington created a mobile university in 1906—aka the "Movable School"—for Black communities across the South to access the timely research, curriculum, and agricultural interventions being cultivated (Wright 2020). Although the Movable School was an effective intervention for mobilizing

the research generated by Tuskegee's applied rural sociology program across the South, an opportunistic grant awarded by the Carnegie Foundation led Booker T. Washington and Monroe N. Work to consider how the institution could disseminate Tuskegee's research beyond these three targeted interventions—the applied rural sociology program, Tuskegee Negro Farmers' conference, and Movable School—to benefit Black people across international borders. They were determined to use their entrepreneurial prowess to extend the rich empirical research tradition of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory by procuring and disseminating "so many interesting facts" about Black populations across the diaspora. Washington and Work believed that this would allow "(people) to draw proper conclusions" about interventions needed to improve the social, economic, political, and cultural welfare of Black people in America and across the world in the twentieth century (Washington [1901] 1995, p. 119).

Therefore, Tuskegee Institute went to great lengths in the early 1900s and 1910s to maintain a pro-Black sociological research agenda that was mindful of these political commitments through its dissemination of *The Negro Year Book*. Its topics ranged from the history of slavery in the U.S./European colonies to local elections in Southern counties to historical or contemporary electoral politics on the African continent to disparities in educational outcomes for Black Americans, making *The Negro Year Book* an extremely important publication. Not only was this publication known for the extraordinary richness of its content, but it was also known for the depth and breadth of its bibliography. While the first edition of *The Negro Year Book* in 1912 had a bibliographic reference list of 408 classified references, this list grew to 2875 classified references by 1925–1926.[10]

It would be dishonest to say that Monroe Work, as the inaugural Director of Research and Records at Tuskegee Institute, was solely responsible for the success of *The Negro Year Book*. Biographical accounts mention that his wife, Florence Work (aka Florence Henderson), played an active role in all of his research projects and gave him space to do his work without interruption. As Jessie P. Guzman, a Black woman whom Work first employed as a research assistant in 1923 and who became Director in 1946, recalls that "(Florence always) helped him in all of his endeavors. In preparation of the manuscripts for the early editions of *The Negro Year Book*, she worked as steadily as he" (Guzman 1949, p. 459). Likewise, historian Linda McMurry notes that Florence often "aided his research by reading through various materials and marking what he needed to see. One colleague remembered frequently passing by the house at night and seeing both of them sitting under a lamp reading. In addition, Florence Work actively participated in the larger research projects…" (McMurry 1985, p. 58). Unfortunately, we know very little about Florence Work outside of second-hand accounts like these, which draw on correspondences between Monroe and his wife. While some primary source data on Jessie P. Guzman exist at the Tuskegee University archives, she also has received scant attention in biographical accounts about Monroe N. Work or the incredible research produced by Tuskegee Institute under his leadership (see Beck and Tolnay, 1986; McMurry 1985; Wright 2020). Nonetheless, the lack of attention Guzman has received does not distract from the incredible feats that Work was able to help Tuskegee reach with the support of these brilliant Black women while serving as the inaugural and longstanding editor of *The Negro Year Book*.

In addition to the aforementioned topics, Work used *The Negro Year Book* as a vehicle to 1) democratize information about the positive achievements and perennial challenges of Black communities globally, 2) spread awareness of the incidence and prevalence of lynchings across the United States to audiences within (and beyond) the South, and 3) contribute to Black freedom movements by disseminating information about global abolition and resistance movements led by diasporic Black populations against slavery or colonialism. Tuskegee's sustained commitment to these three objectives reflects a sustained commitment to fundamental aims of abolitionism: creating sites of collective

Table 1. Slave Insurrections by U.S. State and Insurrection Type, 1526–1859

State	Rumored Attempts	Failed Attempts	Planned Attempts	Successful Attempts
Georgia		1768	1819	
Louisiana				1811
Maryland	1853, 1857, 1859, 1859	1739		1845
Massachusetts				1723
New Jersey	1741	1734	1772	
New York				1712, 1741
North Carolina				1775, 1802, 1805
South Carolina		1822		1526, 1720, 1730, 1740, 1816, 1818
Virginia	1859	1710, 1722, 1800, 1816	1664	1687, 1730, 1831
West Virginia				1859

Source: Work (1915, pp. 96-100)
Note: The data presented in this table is in alphabetical order by state and chronological order by type of slave insurrection. In the archival documents, Monroe Work documents these insurrections chronologically and details the names of specific counties or localities where they transpired.

resistance among Black people across the African diaspora to protect them from historical and contemporary state-sanctioned violence. For instance, evidence from Tuskegee Institute's detailed records suggest that Africans began revolting and resisting their newfound enslavement on America's shores as early as 1526 in what is now South Carolina. Likewise, the Institute discovered that additional slave insurrections (see Table 1)—inclusive of rumored, failed, planned, and successful attempts—occurred in Virginia, New York, South Carolina, Massachusetts, Georgia, New Jersey, Maryland, North Carolina, Louisiana, and West Virginia (Work 1915).

Another characteristic of Tuskegee Institute that is discernible from its archival records is its interventionist inclinations. Tuskegee Institute desired to be an institution of higher education that could create liberatory Black futures with Black people in it. As an interventionist subscribing to this mission, Work took great care in creating "racial data storms" (Bell [1992] 2018; Bobo 2006) that might inspire policymakers or concerned audiences to deploy progressive policy interventions to address perennial health and safety concerns of Black Americans. He understood that the predicate of eliminating the abject poverty facing Black Americans in rural and urban communities was *abundance*; it would be impossible to address the inequities facing resource-deprived Black populations across the United States without first investing resources in interventions that might fundamentally transform their social condition.

By championing and disseminating *The Negro Year Book* publication, Washington and Monroe N. Work sought to build on the legacy of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory by becoming the authoritative source for objective, scientific data on Black Americans and populations across the African diaspora. With the support of his wife Florence Work, Monroe was able to fully commit himself to these objectives. Despite Washington and Work's genuine interest in using *The Negro Year Book* publication to contribute to national and global Black freedom and resistance movements, they recognized that getting traction on these goals might require a more nuanced, local approach. They knew that it would take tremendous effort to move from the engrained resource deprivation facing Black communities across America to transform them into collectives of resource abundance. For them,

the cultivation and perpetual maintenance of these resources would ensure that Black people would survive and thrive in the future. Both men were aware that Black Southerners were often unconsciously "enmeshed in an environment of systematic repression in the land of White supremacy" (McMurry 1985, p. 30) where lynching was a normalized and tolerated social practice. Thus, Monroe N. Work, Florence Work, Jessie Guzman, and their colleagues at Tuskegee Institute took it upon themselves to reach audiences that they believed were capable of changing the status quo.

Galvanizing Southern Whites and Political Elites to Abolish Lynching Locally

A threat to community safety, lynching was engrained in the American "status quo" (Cox 1945) in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the words of pioneering anti-lynching advocate and citizen sociologist Ida B. Wells-Barnett (1995), lynching spread from the West to the South on a self-fulfilling quest to fabricate "…a reason to condone its own behavior, and when finding none, it operated extrajudicially through 'shooting, drowning, hanging, and burning [its victims] alive'" (p. 71). Although lynching was actively contested since its inception, the strategic efforts of Black women and civic organizations across Black communities were instrumental in mobilizing Whites (White women in particular) to demand an end to lynching and rape in Southern society (Feimster 2009).

The singular organizing efforts of Ida B. Wells-Barnett to confront the atrocity of lynching are largely responsible for provoking the U.S. anti-lynching movement. As Wright (2020) notes, "Wells-Barnett knew the inroad to making substantive impacts on anti-lynching legislation rested first on the basic acknowledgement that a problem existed" (p. 110) through the presentation of "objective facts" produced by White reporters. She leveraged this empirical data to galvanize initial support for the anti-lynching movement (Francis 2014; Giddings 2008). Following the example of Wells-Barnett, numerous university- and community-based researchers and civil rights organizations began compiling their own statistical records of U.S. lynchings—comparing data from White and Black-owned newspapers—to contribute to the elimination of lynching as a social practice (Lewis 2021). These anti-lynching advocates believed it was possible to appeal to the anti-lynching sensibilities of White Americans across the United States by highlighting "the absolute unreliability and recklessness of mobs" (Wells-Barnett ([1895] 2015, p. 37) to punish criminals for their social transgressions. These logics were carried forth by civil rights organizations and anti-lynching advocates in the twentieth century like the NAACP, which actively lobbied for federally sponsored anti-lynching legislation.

Black political organizations targeted federal legislative processes to build multiracial coalitions around the elimination of racial violence in the early to mid-twentieth century. Unfortunately, despite filing over 200 pieces of proposed anti-lynching legislation with the U.S. House of Representatives from 1909–1950, the NAACP was unsuccessful in passing federal anti-lynching legislation (Zangrando 1980). However, the experiences it accumulated while pursuing these efforts led to an eventual recognition (by the NAACP and others): "Despite the federal government's previous support of African American rights, the legislative process would no longer be the most productive venue to pursue an agenda focused on the protection of equal citizenship for African Americans" (Francis 2014, p. 99). Thus, anti-lynching advocates like Ida B. Wells-Barnett, James Weldon Johnson, Jovita Idár, Mary Talbert, and Monroe N. Work re-dedicated themselves to promoting anti-lynching values through multifaceted public awareness campaigns targeting political elites and White Americans. From within this broader context of the U.S. anti-lynching movement, *The Negro Year Book* and Tuskegee's empirical research on U.S. lynching was born, as Monroe Work and the institution sought to use the vehicle of research activism to galvanize conscious anti-lynching collectives at the local level.

Tuskegee Institute strategically targeted political elites and White Americans in the U.S. South with *The Negro Year Book's* empirical research on U.S. lynchings to practically involve White audiences in divesting from lynching as a social practice. Because Tuskegee knew that most lynchings occurred in the South and targeted members of the Black community, it focused on mobilizing these audiences, who were familiar with the horrors of lynching. Despite the pressure that Tuskegee and Monroe N. Work consistently faced to adapt their definition of what constituted a "lynching" in the United States, they held to a strict definition[11] that was intelligible to Southern audiences in a comprehensive effort to "hold the South to the main issue, 'the eradication of the lynching evil within its own borders.'"[12] According to Monroe Work, Tuskegee's lynching records brought awareness of objective facts about U.S. lynching to "[give] the opportunity for agitation concerning lynching to originate in the South."[13] This was important to the anti-lynching movement because it facilitated "[giving] opportunity for organized efforts to originate and operate in the South *for the eradication of the lynching evil*" (emphasis added).[14]

Therein, the purpose of the research agenda on U.S. lynchings in *The Negro Year Book* must be seen in concert with the expressed interventionist motivations of Tuskegee Institute and the 1) applied rural sociology program; 2) Tuskegee Negro Farmers' conference; and 3) Movable School interventions. Tuskegee recognized that "the eradication of the lynching evil"—aka the abolition of lynching—had multiple benefits. Abolishing lynching would allow creating not only tangibly liberatory Black futures with Black people in it but also safe spaces for restorative care-building among socioeconomically diverse *Americans*—the same Americans who had been exposed to the mutually reinforcing traumas caused by White supremacist domestic terrorism, lynching, and resource deprivation across the United States.[15] To achieve these goals, Tuskegee sought to use its empirical research to inspire White Southerners and political elites to eliminate contemporary practices of lynching through debunking frequently cited myths that justified carceral punishment.

Exposing Crime Myths to Abolish Lynching and Practices of Carceral Punishment

The myths that Tuskegee aimed to disprove through its research on U.S. lynchings questioned the legitimacy of the twentieth-century U.S. prison-industrial complex. Ample social science research illuminates the foundational anti-Black logics of the U.S. criminal-legal system in its efforts to criminalize Black Americans (Alexander 2010; Haley 2016; Hinton 2016; Hinton and Cook, 2021; Muhammad 2010; Murakawa 2014) and other racially minoritized populations (Lytle Hernández 2017; Martinez 2018; Ross 1998). Sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois ([1899] 1996) acknowledged that allegations of criminality were monopolized in the nineteenth century, noting "(Black people) were arrested for less cause and given longer sentences than Whites. Great numbers of those arrested and committed for trial were never brought to trial so their guilt could not be proven or disproven" (p. 239). Although some might think of crime and criminality as matters concerning solely the contemporary U.S. criminal-legal system, they are also essential for understanding lynching as a historical social practice.

Crime is a salient issue for understanding histories of lynching in the United States because the mere allegation of "criminal behavior" often was sufficient grounds to lead a person to be 1) lynched or 2) incarcerated and subsequently lynched at the hands of a few (or many) accomplices. Despite the promulgation of false narratives about the incorrigible licentiousness and criminal tendencies of Black people (Black men in particular; Muhammad 2010), these narratives were not empirically verifiable. Work and Tuskegee Institute were attuned to this discrepancy, so it became the foundation of their empirically driven

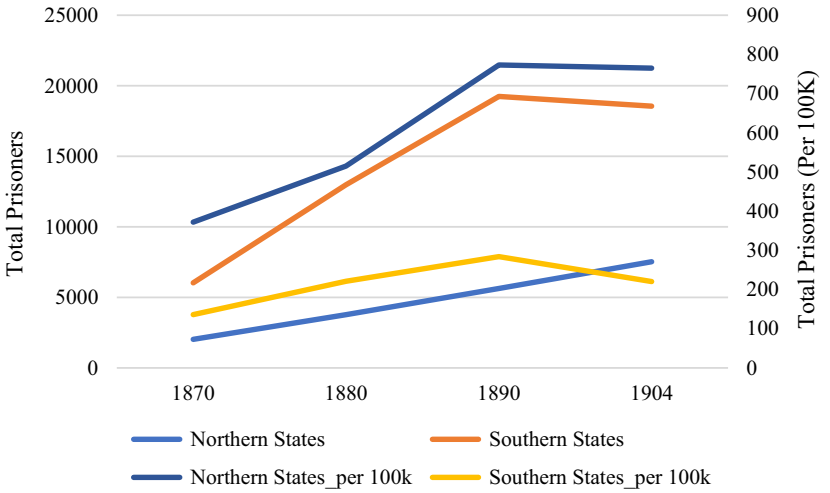

Figure 1. Number of Black Prisoners in Northern and Southern States
Sources: Work, Monroe N. "Negro Criminality in the South." TUA 97.001, Box 5 Folder 7. *Papers of Monroe N. Work (1866–1943)*, Archives, Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, AL, p. 2; Work (1913, p. 75).
Note: No formal names associated with original data tables in source materials. The word "Black" was substituted for "Negroe" at the author's discretion in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

research activism around lynching in the United States. Monroe Work astutely observed that the persistent phenomenon of "Black crime" in the South was actually non-existent prior to the civil war.[16] Furthermore, while many people assumed that crime and the imprisonment of Black people occurred more frequently in the South than in the North, the reverse was true; as Work argued using data re-rendered in Figure 1, crime rates among African Americans in the North surpassed those in the South. Today, this evidence wouldn't be evidence of crime, but evidence of imprisonment. But this was the best data Monroe Work had to dispel Black criminality in the early nineteenth century.

This evidence reveals additional insights. Not only were Work and the Tuskegee Institute aware of how to differentiate the fallacious and substantive connections between crime, lynching, and incarceration, but they also knew that Black people were being exploited more than other groups that had close proximity to the criminal-legal system.

Generally, Black people in the North and South were known to commit more crimes than "Whites," but disaggregating "White"—which allows for comparison of individual U.S. emigrant groups—produces a different result (Muhammad 2010). Here, Work found that despite the higher number of African Americans in the U.S. population entering the criminal-legal system, Black people were allegedly being incarcerated less frequently than members of various U.S. emigrant groups (see Figure 2).

Effectively, Work discovered in the early twentieth century that the proportions of Russians, Canadians, French, Austrians, Italians, and Mexicans who were incarcerated in the United States in 1904 were reportedly higher than that of African Americans, even though numerically more Black Americans were behind bars (23,698 to be exact) than all other populations across ethnic groups (9,808 in total). However, he adroitly attributed these racially unequal incarceration rates to the presence of the convict leasing system in the post-war South and the ability of prisons (particularly in the South) to leverage their able-bodied Black detainees to meet labor shortages. As Work (1913)[17] articulates:

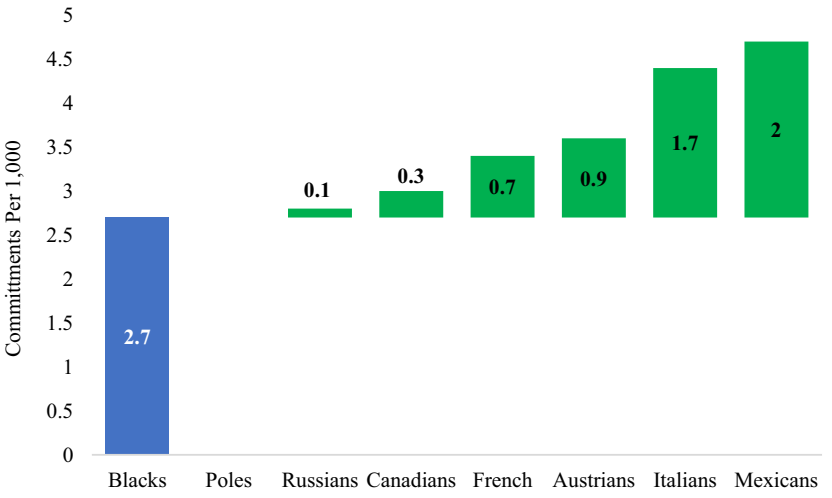

Figure 2. Net Difference Between 1904 Imprisonment Rates (Per 1000) of Polish, Canadian, French, Austrian, Italian, and Mexican Emigrants Relative to Black Americans
Sources: Work, Monroe N. "Negro Criminality in the South." TUA 97.001, Box 5 Folder 7. *Papers of Monroe N. Work (1866–1943)*, Archives, Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, AL, p. 3; Work (1913, p. 77).
Note: Author's tabulations. Net difference measured as difference between Non-Black and Black imprisonment rates per 1000 (for each individual group). The net difference for the incarcerated Polish population is 0 because their imprisonment rate is also 2.7 per 1000, and the net differences for other emigrant groups are positive because they are *greater than* the imprisonment rate of Black Americans.

> Inside the prisons were thousands of able-bodied Negroes. Offers were made to the states by those needing labor to lease these prisoners, and so it was discovered that what had been an expense could be converted into a means of revenue and furnish a source from which the depleted state treasuries could be replenished. Thus, it came about that all the Southern state prisons were, either by the military governments or by the reconstruction governments, put upon lease. The introduction of the convict lease system into the prisons of the South, thereby enabling the convicts to become a source of revenue, caused each state to have a financial interest in increasing the number of convicts. It was inevitable, therefore, that many abuses should arise. (p. 77)

These findings are significant for two reasons. First, the excuse of pervasive "criminality" was given by White people as a justification of the practice of lynching used against Black Americans and other racially-minoritized populations across the United States. Monroe Work understood that the criminalization of Black Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was being actively exploited both by everyday citizens (via lynching) and state governments (via convict leasing and peonage) because it was profitable. These practices were tolerated because they furthered private economic and White supremacist interests (Bonacich 1972). Today, scholars of the U.S. convict leasing system have compellingly highlighted specific mechanisms that were used to promote these interests at the state level (Muller and Scharge, 2021) and nationally (Muller 2021),[18] over 100 years after Monroe Work and his contemporaries illuminated their existence (see also Du Bois 1904). Second, this evidence empirically demonstrates that Tuskegee Institute's data-driven approach to anti-lynching advocacy also led to its substantive questioning of the fundamental purpose of the criminal-legal system and the United States of America's twentieth-century incarceration practices.

As Figures 1 and 2 show, Monroe Work created important associations between lynching and crime to delegitimize normative practices of carceral punishment in an effort to divest from these institutional practices. However, it is also possible to analyze Work's empirical research to detect how multiracial coalitions had successfully utilized abolition to transform the material realities of communities where "racism continues to be embedded" (Davis 2005, p. 29). In monitoring the abolition of the convict lease system across the United States, focusing on Southern states, Monroe N. Work (1913) writes:

> Five states, LA, MS, GA, OK, and TX have abolished the lease, contract, and other hiring systems (due to circumstances of convicts being worse off than under slavery). All other southern states still sell convict labor to some extent, but in each of these strong movements are on foot to abolish the custom (p. 78).

This short passage provides important epistemological clarity. It reinforces that the genuine motivation of Monroe N. Work and Tuskegee Institute's research agenda was the material realization of freedom and economic autonomy for Black Americans and others subject to resource deprivation following slavery's dissolution in the United States. Additionally, it extends conventional understandings of Tuskegee Institute's role as a historically Black institution of higher education actively using research activism to further the aims and purposes of abolitionist freedom and resistance movements in the twentieth century. Although this excerpt does not specifically reference capital punishment in the same way as others might expect of actors espousing contemporary abolitionist politics (Davis 2005), Work's consciousness about the efforts of—and possibilities being created by—(presumably) multiracial organizing coalitions abolishing convict leasing in Southern states demonstrates an optimism about the feasibility of abolition more broadly (see Bell 2019).

Said differently, Work believed in the political feasibility of abolition in the South because it was a practice that the South was already actively sustaining. As a practical method of process improvement, abolition was helping states steeped in legacies of White supremacist domestic terrorism to unite across traditional race and class boundaries to divest from harmful practices that prevented those same states from engaging in processes of restorative care-building. Since Black and White women in the South were central to dismantling the cis-heteropatriarchal forces actively suppressing women's suffrage (Feimster 2009) and the South—along with the United States—was learning abolition through actively divesting from the institution of slavery (Du Bois [1935] 2007), Monroe Work and Tuskegee Institute reasoned that the South could also lead in the abolition of lynching from within its own borders. Although relative perceptions of Black social mobility led White people to embrace racism, criminalization, and resource deprivation as active practices post-Emancipation (Bonacich 1972; Blumer 1958; Du Bois [1935] 2007; Haley 2016), they also led Black people to openly resist the material consequences of these impositions (Cohen 2004; Kelley 1994). Recognizing this, Monroe Work and Tuskegee sought to galvanize White southerners to abolish lynching and carceral punishment practices locally because they believed no one was absolved from the violence caused by White supremacist domestic terrorism. However, if Southern states, steeped in ongoing legacies of White supremacist domestic terrorism, were able to fully divest from these harmful practices, Tuskegee believed that the processes of institutional divestment and restorative communal care-building might be replicated elsewhere across the United States.

Through a dynamic approach, Tuskegee Institute used the empirical research analyses embedded in the annual *Negro Year Book* and the publications of Monroe N. Work to

challenge White (Southern) Americans—White women in particular—to imagine new possibilities for the social and cultural traditions upheld by all Americans. Beyond merely conceding to the will of Southern Whites, Tuskegee Institute used its abolition-oriented, interventionist approach to lynching to inspire the *abolition* (synonymous with eradication) of lynching and carceral punishment from the South. The Institute's research and insider knowledge of the social and material realities facing the South—in addition to its knowledge of Black history inside and outside of the United States—led Work and the Institute to the intuitive understanding that abolition was not foreign to the South because it was a practice that the South was actively sustaining. They fundamentally believed in the capacity of abolition to create liberatory Black futures with Black people in it and to mitigate cycles of intergenerational trauma experienced by White people (among other audiences) exposed to the ongoing violence of White supremacist domestic terrorism and resource deprivation. Thus, Tuskegee Institute and Monroe Work used the vehicle of empirically driven research activism to contribute to the creation of safe spaces for restorative care-building among socioeconomically diverse Americans in rural and urban environments across the United States.

Discussion and Conclusion

This article has documented how Tuskegee's practices of community building, consciousness raising, broad research dissemination, and the evidence-based countering of harmful propaganda advanced abolitionist efforts to eradicate lynching in the United States and eliminate harmful mechanisms of social oppression to enhance the vitality of Black communities in the nineteenth and twentieth Centuries. In so doing, it responds to critical calls posed by two distinct fields of academic sociology.

First, it extends an important body of research demonstrating the contributions of southern Black sociologists to the development of the discipline of academic sociology (Bonilla-Silva 2017; Brooks and Wright, 2020; Daniels and Wright, 2018; Stanfield 2016; Wright 2020). Additionally, it builds on a body of burgeoning scholarship using creative applications of Du Boisian modes of inquiry (Burden-Stelly 2019; Conwell and Loughran, 2024; Islam 2020; Itzigsohn and Brown, 2020; Battle-Baptiste and Rusert, 2018; Rocha Beardall et al., 2024) and abolition-inclined methods and frameworks (Bell 2019; Cabral 2024; Clair 2021; McHarris 2024; Okechukwu 2021; Tillman 2023) to study the social world and improve the material conditions of populations being denied the fundamental investments needed to promote communal vitality. A re-rendering of Tuskegee Institute shows that the Institute—under the leadership of Booker T. Washington and Monroe N. Work—recognized long ago that "scientific sociology [was] at its best when it combine [d] rigorous, critical scholarship and emancipatory activism" (Morris 2022, p. 14). Therein, this study illuminates how the practices of Black Southern sociology and applied rural sociology from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries inform contemporary sociological practices.

Given these findings, it is easy to see how the foundational abolitionist tenets of Black sociology naturally encompass the justice-inclined commitments of the twenty-first century practices of emancipatory sociology (Feagin et al., 2015; Embrick and Hendricks, 2014). But early practitioners of Black sociology also recognized that the global systems of power impacting all human groups were inextricably linked (see Cox 1945; Stanfield 2016; Watson 1976). Thus, the tactics of consciousness raising, community building, broad research dissemination, and the countering of carceral propaganda that Tuskegee Institute and Monroe Work embodied have long galvanized Black sociological works to be generalized "beyond the particular circumstances of Black people" (Watson 1976, p. 122).

On this front, we as sociologists can learn a lot from Monroe Work, too. He attended the prestigious University of Chicago for graduate school and dedicated his entire career to advancing the mission of two young Historically Black Colleges and Universities that thrive today, Clark Atlanta University and Tuskegee University. He built a rigorous, career-long research agenda in the twentieth century around achieving abolition through the elimination of structural racism, health disparities, lynching, and carceral punishment practices for Black people in America and across the world. These are commitments that individual sociologists have made and continue to make as they navigate the ranks of the ivory tower in the twenty-first century, so abolition is effectively not a stranger to our discipline despite how the mainstream treats it. In the era of coronavirus and Black Lives Matter, non-academic and community-based audiences have demanded that sociologists revisit how sociological research can help to "destabilize, deconstruct, and demolish oppressive institutions, and practices" (Cullors 2019, p. 1686) because the histories of harm that many of us study theoretically are actively threatening or claiming the lives of racially minoritized or resource-deprived populations (Allen et al., 2025; Lewis 2021). Thus, one may look to the legacy of public sociology that Monroe N. Work epitomized to discern how to heed this calling.

Furthermore, centering the organizing principles of abolition and Black sociology in our sociological research agendas is a critical step towards the full realization of a discipline that respects the autonomy and vitality of Black life. Matthew Clair (2022) reminds us that embracing the practice of Black sociology requires making explicit political commitments beyond merely studying Black populations using sociological methods:

> Black sociology past and present remind us that we cannot fully, and should not aspire to, separate fundamental moral commitments to equal human dignity from empirical investigations of social life. Black sociology reminds us to pay special attention to the unique struggles, hopes, and joys of those occupying intersecting axes of oppression, such as Black women, Black queer people, disabled Black people, and working-class and poor Black people…And Black sociology teaches us that the most rigorous knowledge useful for positive social change is often produced through collective efforts of co-creation within and beyond the academy (p. 378).

At its core, research is a process of illumination—the promotion of objective empirical facts (Thomas 1904). But research is also a practice that is amenable to improving the material conditions facing the real people that we research, whose "lives are hanging in the balance" (Lewis 2021, p. 11; see also Becker 1967). And the practice of Black sociology Clair describes above is open to all who are willing to actively commit to these practices even if they are not racialized as Black (see Wright 2020). Thus, for those of us called to continue the practice of Black sociology in the twenty-first Century, our task is to follow the lead of Tuskegee Institute and Monroe Work—original practitioners of Black sociology—while encouraging our colleagues, students, and allies within the discipline and across the academy to find the audience(s) they are meant to agitate.

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Notes

[1] Monroe N. Work was a pioneering Black, Chicago school-trained sociologist responsible for managing Tuskegee Institute's research operations from 1908 to 1938, following his departure from W. E. B. Du Bois's Atlanta University-based Sociological Laboratory.

[2] Here, Savannah Shangé (2019) argues that "the state" should be understood "as a set of practices that exceed any single apparatus or even a collection of them" (p. 6).

[3] This does not mean that practitioners of Black sociology were not also called to fight for Black liberation (Watson 1976); however, this commitment was not embraced in the same way at all institutions (Wright 2020, pp. 139-144).

[4] As sociologists Stuart Tolnay and E. M. Beck famously note in their classic text on lynchings in the U.S. South, "Nonetheless, we realize that we are straddling a substantial chasm that separates the more 'narrative' tradition of historical research from the more 'empirical' orientation of sociologists and criminologists. Being quantitative social scientists by training, we cannot abandon the habits of decades of combined experience; therefore… we place heavier emphasis on description and interpretation of data" (Tolnay and Beck, 1995, p. xi). The current study emulates this practice of blending historical methods with social scientific analysis, albeit with a stronger qualitative emphasis.

[5] Work, Monroe N. "His Early Life." TUA 97.001, Box 1 Folder 1. *Papers of Monroe N. Work (1866–1943)*, Archives Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, AL, 2-3.

[6] Work, Monroe N. "Monroe Nathan Work, Director of Department of Research and Records, Tuskegee Institute, 1908." TUA 97.001, Box 1 Folder 1. *Papers of Monroe N. Work (1866–1943)*, Archives Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, AL, 4.

[7] Work, Monroe N. "Monroe Work: A Black Scholar at Tuskegee Institute, 1908-1945." TUA 97.001, Box 1 Folder 2. *Papers of Monroe N. Work (1866–1943)*, Archives, Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, AL, 21-22.

[8] According to archival records, the research agenda of Tuskegee Institute was intended to address fundamental sociological questions concerned with the advancement of the Black community in the United States: "*What has the Negro accomplished?* What can he do? Does it pay to educate him? Morally and physically, is he not deteriorating? *Has his emancipation been justified?*" (emphasis added). Work, Monroe N. "His Early Life." TUA 97.001, Box 1 Folder 1. *Papers of Monroe N. Work (1866-1943)*, Archives Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, AL, 3.

[9] See also Work, Monroe N. "Monroe Work: A Black Scholar at Tuskegee Institute, 1908-1945." TUA 97.001, Box 1 Folder 2. *Papers of Monroe N. Work (1866–1943)*, Archives, Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, AL, 22.

[10] Recalling the initial publication of Tuskegee's *Negro Year Book*, Work recounts that only a fraction of the bibliographic sources were ever published. By the end of his career, his bibliographic library contained more than 70,000 selected references. See Work, Monroe N. "Citation—Howard University, June 4, 1943." TUA 97.001, Box 1 Folder 5. *Papers of Monroe N. Work (1866–1943)*, Archives, Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, AL, 1; Work, Monroe N. "Preface." TUA 97.001, Box 1 Folder 8. *Papers of Monroe N. Work (1866–1943)*, Archives, Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, AL.

[11] Reflecting on this matter, Work writes: "…*in my list of lynchings I have endeavored to include only those cases in which individuals charged with offenses which made them amenable to law are put to death without due process of law, whereas the law should have been permitted to take its co[urse] the victims of lynching should have been accorded a trial and punishment, if any, should have been meted out according to the law*…. Despite the extreme pressure that was brought to bear on Tuskegee Institute to compel her to change her policy with reference to what shall be included under lynchings I continued to exclude from the record victims of riots and strikes whether North or

South" (emphasis added). Work, Monroe N. "When is a Lynching a Lynching." TUA 97.001, Box 1 Folder 1. *Papers of Monroe N. Work (1866–1943)*, Archives Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, AL, 2-3.

[12] Work, Monroe N. "Some Significant Effects of the Tuskegee Lynching Record." TUA 97.001, Box 1 Folder 1. *Papers of Monroe N. Work (1866–1943)*, Archives Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, AL, 3.

[13] *Ibid.*

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] Although Monroe N. Work frequently referenced lynchings and racial violence happening in "the North" and "the South," my analytical methodology leads me to inductively ascertain that Work is referencing the "North" and the "South" broadly. For example, Tuskegee's tabulated lynching records captured cases across forty-three U.S. states. Additionally, Work's rigid research design underreported cases of lynching and racial violence (which Tuskegee did not qualify as "lynchings") transpiring across the United States.

[16] Work, Monroe N. "Negro Criminality in the South." TUA 97.001, Box 5 Folder 7. *Papers of Monroe N. Work (1866–1943)*, Archives, Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, AL, 1-3.

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] As sociologist Chris Muller (2021) notes, "In short, Black men faced the lowest risk of imprisonment in counties where people who could influence the incarceration rate sought to exploit them and the highest risk of imprisonment in counties where such people sought to exclude them" (p. 283). Muller's empirical finding from his analysis of GA in 1880 also sheds light on an empirically testable hypothesis to advance future research on causes (and consequences) of U.S. lynchings beyond 1880.

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