1. du Bois and Durkheim, through Fields
2. Critical Distance and Objectivity
3. Social Facts and Social Problems
4. Bonilla-Silva, “Racism Without Racists”
5. Georg Simmel
duBois as a General Social Theorist

Durkheim finds in “the Negro” of Souls an unwarranted particularism. Du Bois finds in the qualité d’homme of “Individualism” an unwarrantable generality.

—Fields, 437
...they would have had much to say to one another about the complexities and the perplexities of living out one’s own creative intellectual life amid the constraints of having not one but two pregnant identifications: in Durkheim’s case, French and Jew; in Du Bois’s, American and Afro-American.

—Fields, 440

Note the return to Kantian enlightenment and Marxian anti-alienation here. Fields: “I maintain my position the peoples have to battle their way into common humanity, tribe by tribe.” Fields, fictionalizing Du Bois, 454
How is it that humans come to hold on to beliefs about cosmic nature that cannot possibly be true — and that, besides, cosmic nature unceasingly contradicts? He finds the answer in their social being, which is also the course of the most fundamental human capacity: reason itself.... Durkheim studies the collective alchemy by which reason converts bald-faced inventions into external and constraining facts of nature, capable of resisting individual doubt.

—Frieds, 438
Marginality and Intellectuals

Intellectuals, i.e., people who build big ideas and consider the world from unusual perspectives, are often marginal in some way.
The irony of critical distance: objectivity means separation
This is a piece of the “how do we know” part of social theory: critical distance can help with objectivity.
Marriage patterning; educational ideas and aspirations; wearing clothing
Question: Why do we observe racism's effects in the world, but few people holding racist views?

One possibility: “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.” (Edmund Burke)

Racism Without Racists: Racism is a social fact patterned but not (mostly) intentional.
Georg Simmel

- Born 1858, “Heart of Berlin”
- Died 1918
- Very famous in Germany and the US
- Never really central to the university system
- Ironically, more important to American than European social theory
- The “great link” to American sociology
Societal connection immediately occurs in the... individuals... Societal unification needs no outside its own component elements, the individuals... Each member of society... is absorbed in innumerable, specific relations and in the feeling and knowledge of determining others and being determined by them.

“How is Society Possible?” (1908)
How is Society possible when people are so individual?

What is the relationship between groups (e.g., religions, ethnicities, interests, classes, etc.) and society?

Answer:

- individual and society are dialectically related
- individuals are constituted by group affiliations
- modern life (particularly urban) provides enough group affiliations for the net of them to be individually unique
...a relation, which is a fluctuating, constantly developing life-process, nevertheless receives a relatively stable external form.

The form thus comes to constitute a more or less rigid handicap for the relation in its further course, while the form itself is incapable of adapting to the vibrating life and the more or less profound changes of this concrete, reciprocal relation.
“The sociologist is concerned with King John, not with King John.”

—Coser 1977 (180), on Simmel
Social Forms (Selections)

- The Stranger
- The Poor
- The Miser and the Spendthrift
- The Adventurer
- The Nobility
The fundamental unit of human behavior is the group, but...

We observe individuals behaving in ways that can’t be predicted by looking just at their groups.

How do we explain the relationship between individuals and groups?

People behave differently because of the groups they’re in, but also carry behavioral tendencies from group to group.
Emergence in the natural sciences

Water’s properties, such as wetness or fire retardance, can’t be reduced to properties of Hydrogen or Oxygen.
Questions of Emergence

- Brain $\rightarrow$ Mind
- Individual $\rightarrow$ Group