The Taney Theme in Du Bois's Political Rhetoric: Researching Textual Patterns as a Digital Political Theorist

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Project (full version):
www.webdubois.org/lectures/williams-spsasv23.pdf

Summary of Project:
www.webdubois.org/lectures/williams-spsasv23-summary.pdf

This presentation is a work in progress.

I. The Project

[1] Two goals guide my project and this presentation. The first goal is interpretive. I analyze an under-studied, critical tool that W.E.B. Du Bois wielded in his civil rights activism, namely his transgressive modification and application of Chief Justice Roger Taney's infamous statement in the 1857 (Dred) Scott v. Sandford Supreme Court decision (i.e., Blacks had "no rights which the white man was bound to respect"). Second, I specify and describe how to locate Du Bois's various uses of the Taney statement through techniques that I adapted from corpus linguistics and computer science: namely, regular expression (regex) search methods applied via concordancer software to a non-representative corpus of Du Bois's writings.

[2] The second goal is methodological and actually occurred first when I commenced my project. The techniques employed are unique among Du Bois scholarship. To research a corpus of digitized writings through regexing via concordancer, I argue, provides potential insights (and presents some challenges and caveats) that otherwise would be more difficult to explore with conventional printed materials studied via non-digital means. Indeed, to explore a corpus of Du Bois's works with digitally mediated techniques will allow us to locate possible Taney and Taney-inspired passages. We can accomplish this by searching for the component words—the textual patterns—of the Taney(-like) passages. If such patterns are located, we then can document potentially a recurring theme across the corpus.

[3] The starting point of my inquiry centers on the 1857 U.S. Supreme Court ruling on Scott v. Sandford, in particular on the "opinion of the court" delivered by Chief Justice Roger B. Taney. He wrote:

> <p>In the opinion of the court, the legislation and histories of the times, and the language used in the Declaration of Independence, show, that neither the class of persons who had been imported as slaves, nor their descendants, whether they had become free or not, were then acknowledged as a part of the people, nor intended to be included in the general words used in that memorable instrument.</p> [34]
>
> [. . . .]
>
> <p>They had for more than a century before been regarded as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race, either in social or political relations; and so far inferior, that **they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect**; and that the negro [<i>*sic*</i>] might justly and lawfully be reduced to slavery for his benefit. [. . . .] [36] [U.S. Supreme Court 1857]

I call the bold-face passage in the quotation above the Taney statement. Du Bois in several writings provided a nearly complete quotation of that Taney passage—nearly complete because he tended to write "a white man" instead of Taney's original "the white man".

[4] The sections of this paper cover the following:
• Section II provides a short exposition of what I am calling digital political theory.
• Section III overviews briefly the significance of the Taney Supreme Court decision, and the research tools by which I explored the Taney theme in Du Bois's writings.
• Section IV discusses corpus-related regular expression (regex) search techniques, and their associated workflow, as well as the results from the searches.
• Section V sketches an interpretation of my research results and their significance for Du Bois's social and political critiques of racial, class, and gender oppression across the world.
• Section VI suggests several ways that the re/search can be expanded by using differently configured regexes.

[5] Readers will encounter several conventions in this paper:
(a) The in-text citations to Du Bois's writings involve an abbreviated title and publication date. The "Works Cited" section (VIII) arranges those abbreviated titles alphabetically, and not by publication dates.
(b) Regular expressions (regexes), when numbered and located on separate lines, are designated as such:

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 {re-1}     (?i)bound to respect
```

(c) When discussed within the paper and not depicted as a numbered regex [(b) above], a regex or its components is indicated by paired guillemets: e.g., »bound to respect«.
(d) Search words or their matches, when discussed within the paper, not the regexes pers se, are indicated by double quotation marks, such as "bound to respect".
(e) To make converting this paper into a web-based document easier, throughout the paper I specify some formatting by paired HTML tags: for bold face, <i> </i> for italics, and <p> </p> for paragraph.

II. Researching as a Digital Political Theorist

[6] I have been studying Du Bois for many years via techniques aligned with close reading combined with some historical contextualization. Such techniques stemmed from my graduate training as a political theorist. Over the last three years I have studied Du Bois via techniques that I adapted from corpus linguistics and computer science. Such techniques allow me to search many of Du Bois's numerous texts at one time, a subset of which I have gathered together into one corpus.

[7] The subtitle of this presentation says digital political theorist. By that term I wish to evoke the image of digital humanities (DH) in conjunction with political theory. DH is a capacious term with many definitions (Drucker 2012; Eve 2022; Liu 2013). Based on such definitions, I will define DH as involving the use of computational techniques in the study of various humanities topics, especially topics that focus on human expressions of their understandings of the world.

[8] From a metatheoretical perspective, DH and digital political theory complement each other to some extent because, in their own particular way, each seeks patterns, or commonalities, among the evidence of human expressions (Bod 2013). In DH projects, a pattern might be studied by the use of a concept that is measured and statistically analyzed. Also in a quantitative way, a pattern could be an empirical generalization of actions or behavior in which, for example, persons of a similar socio-economic status espouse certain types of political values. As I am applying the term digital political theory, a pattern could be a recurring idea that the author conveys or applies, perhaps in similar or different contexts. If such patterns are located in the words of the documents, they thereby offer textual evidence for a theme. Admittedly, I am not suggesting a numerical threshold by which to assert the existence of a theme. I will make an argument for the existence of a theme based on the qualities of the passages located.

[9] Regardless of the different methodological approaches, each permits varied insights into the many dimensions of a topic or author. DH-oriented computational techniques have been employed in political theory already, and with great import, too (e.g., Basu & McQueen 2022; de Bolla 2013; London 2016; McQueen 2015). As we move from these more abstract levels, more concrete research practices characterize the similarities and differences between DH and digital political theory.

(II) A: Some Practical Similarities

[10] Digital political theory shares some practical similarities with DH in general.
(a) Regarding the study materials: Both study electronic texts and both can involve corpora.
(b) Regarding research goals in a general sense: Both seek to locate concepts and themes among vast numbers of documents.
(c) Regarding research techniques in general: Both utilize procedures involving some type of distant reading methods conjoined with some type of close reading—because the latter is still needed in order to understand the corpora being studied (Jin 2017; Jockers 2013; Piotrowski & Fafinski 2020; Rockwell & Sinclair 2016; Underwood 2019).

(d) Regarding the software tools: Both DH and digital political theory use software. I employ a concordancer and regular expression. DHers often will code their tools from programming languages.

(II) B: Some Practical Differences

[11] There are of course important differences between DH and my form of digital political theory. Here are two significant differences in research practices.

(a) Regarding the respective research goals: Computational approaches, like DH and Natural Language Processing (NLP), characteristically study texts in terms of mathematical representations of words. Digital Humanity techniques, like topic modeling, typically describe texts based on a bag-of-words model. This model removes the words from their immediate linguistic structures so that statistics can be generated to delineate topics (i.e., themes) based on the words found within delimited chunks of texts. NLP projects seek to predict patterns of words, often based on two- to five-word spans around any given word, via a computational process that generates probabilistic distributions of words in a sequence. In our everyday world, auto-completion functions, such as found in some electronic applications, exemplify this.

(b) Regarding word frequencies in the research process: Because DH in its primarily quantitative forms will seek patterns in the data, words with lower frequencies can mean there is less chance for patterns to be discovered and defined in statistical terms. Words appearing once in a corpus, called *hapax legomena* by linguists, are often removed by preprocessing. Also removed typically are stop words, such as "the", "a", "of", "not", "never", and "and", all of which are considered irrelevant for many DH purposes.

[12] Such computational approaches and assumptions, however, do not allow me as a digital political theorist to study Du Bois in the richness and interconnectedness of his thought as expressed in the documents. I seek patterns of a word or a phrase that point to a concept, to a companion concept, and/or to the definition or application of a concept. I am not mathematically describing or predicting sequences of words. Thus, my regexes pursue spans of 10, 20 or more words, and may even cross sentence boundaries. Moreover, a word appearing once or twice in a corpus of millions can be as important in its conceptual uniqueness as if appeared hundreds of times. Indeed, in my research on Du Bois's concept of the unknowable I would not be able to study his application of the idea without the inclusion of stop words like "not" and "never".

[13] For me, ideas and values are not merely data points, but also represent the agency and voices of the humans—here Du Bois—who author them, who embody and practice them. At the heart of numerous humanities disciplines, and I consider political theory to embrace those disciplines as much as political science per se, is this principle: we humans, in our myriad of ways and expressions, seek to make sense of the world around us and, by doing so, help to make the world itself.

[14] Moreover, while interpreting my fellow humans, I interweave myself into the research process itself and its objects via the scholarly mediations of assumptions and software tools. My

interpretations can be plausible, if grounded in textual evidence and reasonably argued, but my interpretations will never be final or finalized. My personal social positions and the different approaches of my compatriots who form my life communities both make finality impossible.

[15] Such is the close reading I was involved with when I was working on my political theory courses. Such are the close reading techniques that I seek to further by joining them to techniques and software that allow access to millions of words across scores or hundreds of files during one pass of the search through the corpus.

(II) C: Interpretive Goals for Digital Political Theory

[16] For me, interpretive goals for digital political theory involve seeking patterns in general as well as tracing concepts in particular that Du Bois defined and applied to societal examples (R.W. Williams 2022). I do not frame either of those goals in statistical terms. It is sufficient for me to discern that a concept is expressed as a word/phrase or its variants in several texts. If the concept appears across time it can be interpreted as a long-standing idea for the author. If it appears in a few documents or during the specific circumstances of a time period or topical area, then the concept is a more narrowly focused pattern. The concept may not be explicitly designated as such by the author, but scholars might find expressions of what we would call an implicit concept and then make our arguments in favor of the concept's presence. In cases like this, concepts are textual patterns that we can construct through our interpretive process. A concept qua construct allows us to gather together the ways that an author (or authors) conveys something about the world. The relative paucity of the textual patterns constituting an interpretive construct does not limit its importance or ramifications (Section V below).

[17] The Taney statement and its variations occur relatively infrequently within my non-representative corpus of Du Bois's writings when compared with some of his well known ideas, like the "Talented Tenth" or the "color line". The Taney theme would be textually identified by the 1857 quotation and Du Bois's own modification to it. Because Du Bois did not explicitly specify something he called his "Taney theme", my use of that term can be understood as an interpretive construct based on textual evidence. In short, the construct permits us to discuss one particular way that Du Bois challenged oppressive social relationships.

[18] My interpretive goals are more akin to what Beckstein and Weber delineated in their book, *Modeling Interpretation and the Practice of Political Theory* as the **oeuvre-centered model**: "it is assumed that the targeted text is best understood if read alongside other texts by the author." (Beckstein & Weber 2022: 3-7; also Blau. 2017). Regarding their other models: (a) Accordingly, the techniques I cover in this paper do not inquire directly into the historical context of mid-19th Century America, except insofar as the techniques allow us to find documented evidence of how Du Bois textually conveyed his understanding of the Taney judicial statement in the Dred Scott case. At this point I do not have a corpus that includes Du Bois's contemporaries, although that would generate interesting projects when comparing their ideas with Du Bois's.

(b) My techniques do not address the propositional content of a text, although in the interpretation section (Section V) below I delineate the analogical dimensions of the Taney variants.
(c) I also do not address the reception by readers of Du Bois's ideas. Such a might be possible if one had a corpus of secondary sources, whether current now or contemporaneous with Du Bois.
(d) My techniques do not specifically consider Du Bois's life experiences or biography as factors explaining why he wrote what he did. However, many of his autobiographical works are included in the corpus and might help us to understand a bit better his thoughts.
(e) My techniques do not cover specifically the addressees of Du Bois's application of the Taney statement or its variants, although in the interpretation section (V below) I discuss briefly that Du Bois might have been addressing the Taney theme to those organizing for justice as his attempt to promote solidarity among movements challenging oppression.
Others have written about interpretive approaches in the sub-discipline of political theory; read Bevir & Rhodes 2015; Walsh & Fatovic 2017; Yanow 2006, among others.

[19] For the sake of time I have not included the assumptions and caveats underpinning digital political theory. I do cover them in other presentations (R.W. Williams 2021 & 2022). The techniques examined herein have proven valuable to me. I wish to suggest that they also might be worthwhile for others.

III. The Project and Its Research Components

[20] Because I have been reading Du Bois's writings for many years, I am not exactly certain when and in which text I first noticed the phrasing of the Taney quotation or its variations. For the sake of this presentation, I will say that I noticed Taney in *Darkwater* (DARK 1920). In Chapter II, "The Souls of White Folk", I read the Taney statement with slight alterations of the original's "the" and "was":

> <p>This theory of human culture and its aims has worked itself through warp and woof of our daily thought with a thoroughness that few realize. Everything great, good, efficient, fair, and honorable is "white";.... [. . . .] [A] White Man is always right and **a Black Man has no rights which a white man is bound to respect.**</p> [DARK 1920; emphasis added]

In Chapter VI, "Of the Ruling of Men", I found a Taney variant:

> None have more persistently and dogmatically insisted upon the inherent inferiority of women than the men with whom they come in closest contact. **It is the husbands, brothers, and sons of women whom it has been most difficult to induce to consider women seriously or to acknowledge that women have rights which men are bound to respect.** [DARK 1920; emphasis added]

Such passages sparked my interest, especially due to the fact that Du Bois repeated the terms "rights: and "bound to respect" in relation to two different sets of social relationships. At the time, however, I did not pursue an exploration of the possibility of Du Bois's thematic usage of Taney. Over the course of the last three years I began to accumulate experiences with research

tools, like regular expressions and concordancers, that have enabled me to conduct research on a corpus of Du Bois's works.

[21] In this section, I very briefly situate Du Bois's research on slavery and relate that to the Taney ruling. I then sketch the research questions pertaining to Du Bois's usage of the Taney statement and its variants. This will lead into coverage of my research tools (also brief): the corpus, the concordancer software, and the regex search protocols, all of which form the vertebrae of my project.

(III) A. Significance of the Taney Decision for Du Bois

[22] The history and consequences of slavery, not only in the Americas, but across history, long occupied Du Bois (e.g., BFTN 1939; SAST 1896. SLV-1 through SLV-4 1905). Du Bois studied the history of slavery in the America's and its consequences. He challenged the injustice of slavery itself, but also wrote and analyzed the agency of enslaved persons that promoted their own emancipatory efforts (e.g., *Black Reconstruction* [BREC 1935]).

[23] In particular, the Dred Scott case, which the U.S. Supreme Court decided in 1857 (19 How. [60 U.S.] 393 [1857]) is one of the more important rulings in the Court's history (Ehrlich 1979; Fehrenberger 1978; Finkelman 2007). Du Bois did not extensively cover the Dred Scott case among the writings in my corpus. Figure 1 displays those texts where he specifically mentioned Dred Scott or Taney by name.

[24] The fact that Du Bois adapted the Taney statement by modifying it into Taney variants caught my attention. What is Du Bois doing by changing the original statement by inserting different dominating and subordinated groups? I suggest that Du Bois critically appropriated the Taney statement to criticize other types of social relations beyond those of slavery, all the while preserving its normative import. I imagine that some of Du Bois's contemporaneous readers would have recognized such passages as deriving wholly or in part from the Dred Scott decision. Du Bois as a public intellectual/activist could build on this recognition of the Taney ruling as one way to sharpen his arguments against injustices in the U.S.A. and abroad. (For valuable books describing and analyzing Du Bois's life, thought, and activities, read Alexander 2015; Gooding-Williams 2009; Horne 2010; D.L. Lewis 1993 & 2000; Marable 1986, among others).

[25] **The Project's Two Research Questions:** I could not find scholarly sources on Du Bois that thematically analyzed his thoughts on Taney. This intrigued me and prompted me to formulate two straight-forward research questions:
(a) **How did Du Bois apply the Taney statement and its modifications to various social relationships and conditions?** That is to ask: what were the ways and cases, if *Darkwater* were not the only case, that Du Bois applied the Taney quotation and its variants? If more examples were located, then a pattern perhaps would exist, and accordingly, I could argue that Du Bois sometimes wielded the Taney thematic as part of his repertoire of social critique.

(b) **How might I interpret a Du Boisian critique based on Taney?** That is to ask: how did the critique function in terms of its scope of application, both historical and geographical, as well as its normative edge?

[26] But an enormous logistics problem loomed: how would I explore the possibility of a theme? My answer emerged from the efforts I put into creating a corpus of Du Bois's texts and then studying regex searching protocols that I could execute with a concordancer. In the remainder of this section I will briefly describe corpus creation, the concordancer, and regexes. Sources on those topics will be listed in the subsections. I will also refer interested readers to my previous presentations in which I discuss these research tools and techniques in more detail (R.W. Williams 2021 & 2022).

(III) B. The Wellspring of Evidence: The Corpus and Its Creation

[27] Any scholar of Du Bois must contemplate how to approach his 2,000 pieces of published writings (Aptheker 1973), not to mention the thousands of his unpublished materials. But creating a corpus is a time-consuming process. As an interim step I created a corpus of about 235 items, including 19 of his published books, numerous articles of his social science research, and scores of his political commentary printed in periodicals and newspapers. This, however, is not a representative collection of his works as a whole because it leans towards his philosophy of social research. My small corpus contains about 3,000,000 words.

[28] A corpus of an author's or authors' texts entails the arduous process of converting words in all of the documents to a form that is machine readable. Such a process has all of the positive and negative qualities that obtain to things in the world that can be reduced to a form represented by bits and bytes (Dobson 2019; McCarty 2005). A corpus is not a neutral archive of documents because it incarnates all of the decisions made by scholars during the digitalization and compilation phases (Davies. 2015; Reppen 2010; Tognini-Bonelli 2010). Such mediating decisions include:
(a) How do we render characters in the corpus' file format? [For ASCII files, how do we render non-Latinate alphabets and writing systems, as well as extended Latinate alphabets?]
(b) How do we address typos, misspellings, and spellings that did not become conventional [e.g., spelling "though" as "tho"; "expressed" as "exprest" (Simplified Spelling Board 1906)]? I often designate them by means of "[*sic*]" or other editorial notation. Also, I typically and editorially add conventional spellings: for example, in the Du Bois corpus I might find "coöperate" [*sic*: cooperate]. This increases the possibility of locating those words via regular expressions.
(c) How do we address photographs, line drawings, tabular data, and so forth? Once we omit them, then they disappear as such from the corpus. As an editorial practice, I typically retain the caption or description, or add them via editorial notation.
(d) There are more concerns, of course (read R.W. Williams 2022).

(III) C. The Dauntless Explorer: Concordancer Software

[29] A concordancer is a piece of software designed to explore a corpus as an assemblage all at one time. Corpus linguists, language translators, and language instructors utilize concordancers. From the perspective of academic scholarship, concordancers allow us**. . .**
(a) to search for a word, phrase, or anything in between, and then view any matches within its co-text, or surrounding passage, within KWIC-view (Keyword in Context) window;
(b) to run regexes or more conventional style search protocols.
(c) to locate the collocations, or words adjacent to a search term (node words);
(d) to list n-grams in the corpus (sequentially arranged words in groups of 2, 3, 4, or more); and
(e) to count the frequency of words or characters within a document or corpus, among numerous other functions.
In addition, concordancers typically include statistical tools for studying a corpus quantitatively (e.g., Bradley 2004; Tribble 2010).

[30] Well regarded concordancers are available for free or pay, both for Windows and Apple computers (Berberich & Kleiber 2022; Weisser 2022). For my research I run AntConc, a popular and widely accepted free concordancer that the linguist Laurence Anthony created and continues to maintain. I am using the earlier AntConc version 3.5.9 (Anthony 2020a), because at the time of this presentation, the latest release, version 4.x, no longer can apply the regexes needed for my research (Anthony 2022). Figure 1 displays the interface of the AntConc 3.5.9 concordancer for Windows computers (displaying the matches of a regex for "Dred" or Taney").

Figure 1: The Interface of AntConc 3.5.9 (2020) [Regex {re-0}: `(?i)taney|\bdred`]
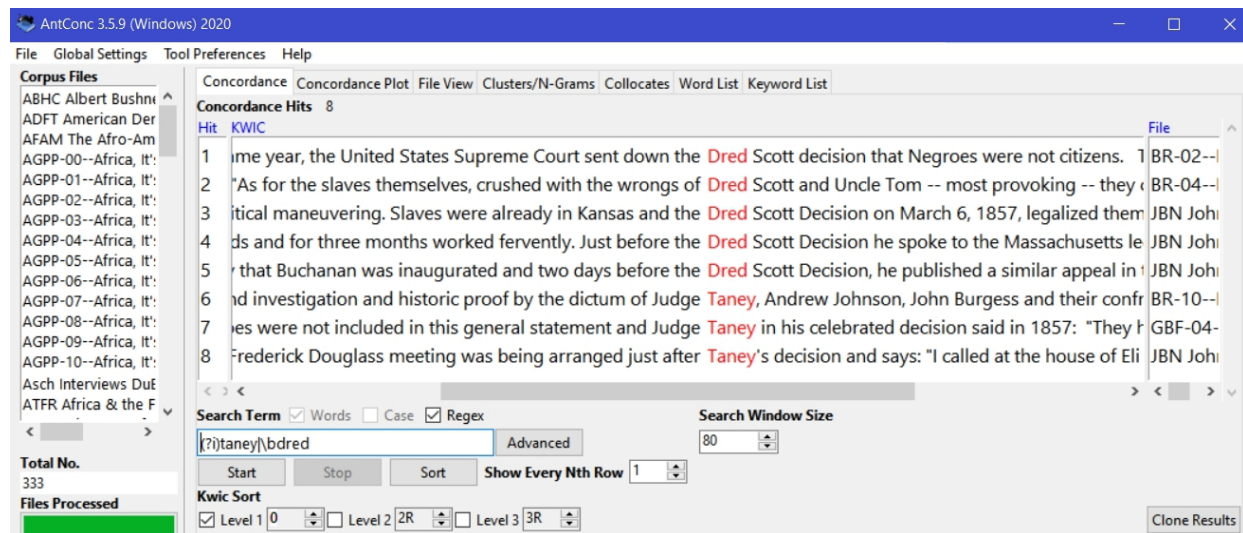
[31] In Figure 1, the KWIC-view window displays the matches for regex {re-0}:

{re-0}   `(?i)taney|\bdred`

This regex, via the »(?i)«, matches the lower case strings of "taney" or "dred"; the »\b« is a word boundary that avoids matching "hundred". The KWIC-view window is a valuable way to quickly grasp how authors have used the word or expression among all of the texts in the corpus. The text that surround the search term (or node word) in this window is the co-text. A concordancer can be likened to a Find feature in a word processor, but instead of proceeding one match at time through a document, the concordancer arranges all the matches in rows within the KWIC-view window. From that window I can also disambiguate the matches in order to exclude homonyms and words not applicable to my research. Sometimes, disambiguation requires more details than the co-text can provide; reading the document becomes necessary. If I need to read the entire document, many concordancers like AntConc allow us to click on the search term, and another window, the File-view window, will open at the spot in the document that contains that word or expression.

(III) D. The Algorithmic Tracker: Regular Expression Searches

[32] Computer programmers regularly create regexes because of their powerful and versatile pattern-matching capabilities. Regexes are put to many tasks, including validating customer input in program interfaces or within the coding process itself in the form of search and replace functions. Corpus linguists also code regexes for their work (Sinclair 1991, 2003; Stubbs 2015 Tognini-Bonelli 2010).

[33] Different computer programming languages implement regexes in different ways. These are called the various flavors of the regex engines that do the searching of the text. The concordancers I have worked with are often based on PCRE implementations (Perl Compatible Regular Expressions). In the paper I will describe the regexes executed as part of this project. For more detailed explanations, please consult print sources that have proven their worth to me, including Goyvaerts & Levithan (2012) and Friedl (2006). Two excellent web-based tutorials and guides are <rexegg.com> and <regular-expressions.info>. I have found that the PCRE documentation (I'm not joking) makes for interesting reading (Hazel n.d.)

[34] Now let us foray into the research process itself.

IV. Researching Textual Patterns, or Regexing via Concordancer

[35] Given the original Taney statement and Du Bois's slight paraphrase [in brackets] "they had no rights which the [a] white man was [is] bound to respect", for what do we search? We could search for longer or smaller portions of the statement. In fact, and this is what I often do, we can experiment with different amounts of text segments (i.e., patterns) and then examine the matches in the KWIC-view window of the concordancer. After disambiguating the matches, I then can

determine if the relevant results helpfully address my interpretive-oriented research goals. This is all part of my reiterative work flow.

[36] In this project, I am exploring texts in order to discover what Du Bois wrote and how he wrote it, so that I can better understand his modes of social critique. Obviously, this is not hypothesis-testing or quantitative research. I do include a few numbers qua frequencies in this section, but they are descriptive and do not serve any statistical purpose. The subsections below are one of the various possible work flows.

(IV) A. Regex Pattern {re-1}

[37] Given that the Taney statement includes "bound to respect" let us initially look for it. Here is the regex that I deployed:

{re-1}   (?i)bound to respect

This is a straightforward pattern to match; indeed, we would not need a regex to seek it. Regexes will shine in more complex pattern marching. The »(?i)« is a regex flag in PCRE that designates that the searching will ignore case. Note that other regex implementations might encompass the overall pattern with forward slashes (»/« and »/i«). Regexes, at least in English language usage, process the text/document to be searched (i.e., the sting regardless of the number of characters composing it) from left to right.

[38] In addition, because it is a regex, the last word of regex {re-1} is not technically a discrete word, such as we have with conventional, non-regex searching. If a string in the document contained "bound to respectfully", then regex {re-1} would match it. The regex engine would return success after matching "respect" regardless of whether there were more alphanumeric characters or punctuation placed after the "respect". A conventional search would not match "respectful" unless, for example, a wildcard were used (e.g., »respect*«). This also holds true with regular expressions, except that the asterisk is called a metacharacter. A metacharacter is not a literal alphanumeric character, but assists the regex engine in governing the operations of the search.

[39] In Figure 2 we view a screen capture of "bound to respect" within AntConc 3.5.9.

Figure 2: All 18 Matches for Regex {re-1}: (?i)bound to respect
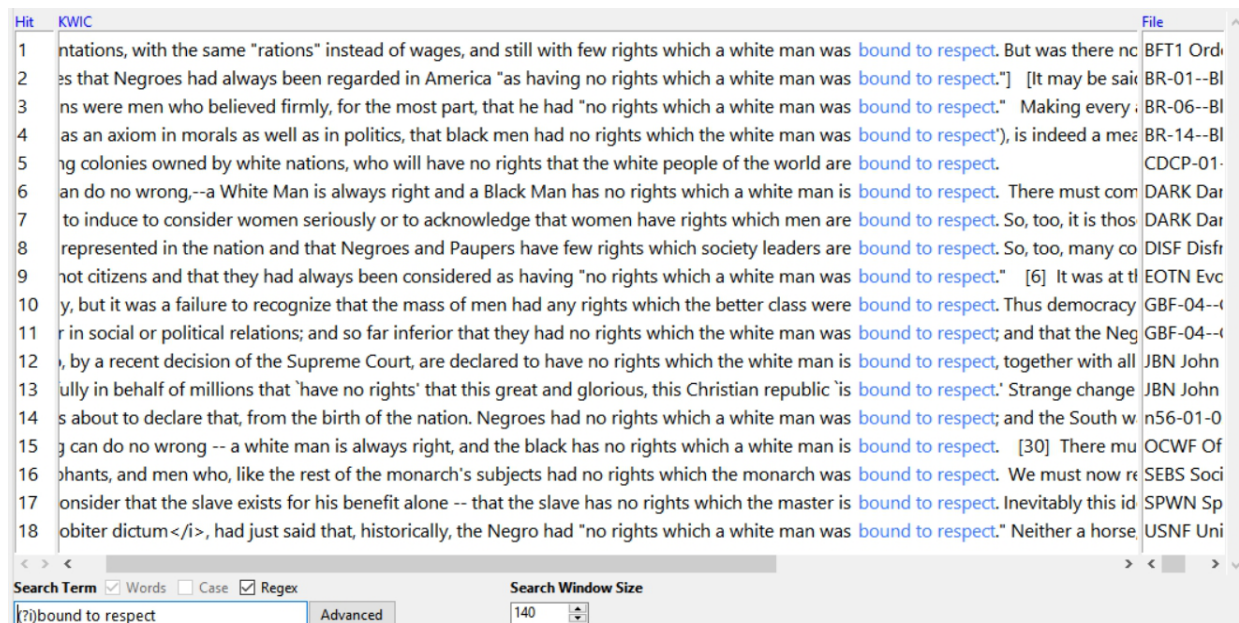
[40] For the results of regex {re-1} we can view Figure 2. Within the non-representative corpus, the regex returned 18 results found in 13 different texts spanning six decades of his career from "The Spawn of Slavery" (1901) and <i>John Brown</i> (1909) and 1910 "Evolution of the Negro" through <i>Darkwater</i> (1920) and <i>Black Reconstruction</i> (1935) until the first volume of his Black Flame trilogy, the novel <i>The Ordeal of Mansart</i> (1957) and "The United States and the Negro" (1961). Here is a summary of the types of texts which contained "bound to respect":

Du Bois's own books 6
Periodical articles: 4
Pamphlets and organizational monographs: 2
Newspaper article: 1

[41]   How did Du Bois use the Taney statement? Certainly, he criticized slavery, but as Table 1 illustrates, he covered other forms of oppression in different historical contexts and social relationships.

Table 1: Du Bois's Texts containing »bound to respect«

	Books		Periodicals	Pamphlets & Organizational Monographs	Newspapers
	Non-fiction	Fiction			
U.S. slavery [Taney statement –WDB directly quoting Taney]	GBF BREC		SPWN EOTN USNF		n56-01-02
Reconstruction Era	BREC	BFT-1			
White supremacy	DARK		OCWF		
Democracy (general)	GBF				
Men / women	DARK			DISF	
Monarch / subjects				SEBS	
Colonizers / colonized	CDCP				
Taney refs by others as cited by WDB	JBN (2) BREC				

[42] The writings presented in Table 1—Du Bois's works containing »bound to respect« as part of the Taney statement or its variants—are listed here chronologically by publication year.

   1901: SPWN: "The Spawn of Slavery: The Convict-Lease System in the South" [p.742]
   1909: JBN: *John Brown* [ch.IX=p.264; ch.XI=p.373]
   1910: EOTN: "Evolution of the Negro" [¶ 5]
   1911: SEBS: "Social Evolution of the Black South" [p.3]
   ca.1911-12: DISF: "Disfranchisement" [Section 6]
   1917: OCWF: "Of the Culture of White Folk" [¶ 29]
   1920: DARK: *Darkwater* [ch.II; ch.VI]
   1924: GBF: *The Gift of Black Folk* [ch.4=p.136, p.143]
   1935: BREC: *Black Reconstruction* [ch.1=p.10; ch.6=p.167; ch.14=p.593]
   1945: CDCP: *Color and Democracy: Colonies and Peace* [ch.1=p.9]
   1956: n56-01-02: "Let's Restore Democracy to America" [p.947]
   1957: BFT-1: Black Flame Trilogy, v.1: *The Ordeal of Mansart* [p.110]
   1961: USNF: "United States and the Negro" [p.11]

For 60 years Du Bois used Taney in his critiques of various types of oppression.

(IV) B. Regex Pattern {re-2}

[43] Regex {re-1} only finds an exact phrase of 3 words in a sequence of one after another. What about other possible arrangements? What about situations where "bound" and "respect" might be present but spaced farther apart? Would such possible word spans also point to Du Bois's modifications of Taney that cannot be located with the three-word phrase?

[44] To match other possible variants we can create a proximity regex: we will seek to match two words near each other. This will help us locate the various ways that Du Bois wrote "word#1" and then "word#2" after an intervening set of words.

```
{re-2}      \bbound\W+(?:\w+\W+){0,10}?respect\w*
```

Although this regex may appear a bit daunting at first, it is easier to comprehend when we divide up the components of the regex. (Learning regexes involves a somewhat steep learning curve).

[45] Regex {re-2} contains three subpatterns.
```
\bbound\W+
(?:\w+\W+){0,10}?
respect\w*
```
Table 2 describes what the regex matches, not the specific steps by which a regex engine processes text. We can read the table from top left cell to top right cell, going from table top to bottom.

Table 2: Description of Regex {re-2}: `\bbound\W+(?:\w+\W+){0,10}?respect\w*`

`\b`	is the start of the first subpattern, which contains. . .
`bound`	formed by 5 characters "b","o","u","n","d", followed by. . .
`\W`	which matches punctuation (i.e., non-alphanumeric characters). . .
`+`	at least once (more matches would be allowed by this plus quantifier).
	[End of the first subpattern which matches only "bound".] [The next subpattern seeks to match any literal word(s) between "bound" and "respect".]
`(?:`	starts the second subpattern as a non-capturing group [i.e., if something is matched, then the match is not stored in memory], that contains. . .
`\w+`	which involves two metacharacters (»\w« and the »+«) that match alphanumeric characters at least once, which in turn is followed by the metacharacters . . .
`\W+`	that match punctuation at least once (but perhaps more), after which a. . .
`)`	closes the non-capturing group and ends the regex notation for a literal word. Next. . .
`{0,10}`	is another type of quantifier indicating that what preceded it is to be matched from zero to ten times maximum, while. . .
`?`	is called a reluctant (or lazy) quantifier indicating that the search for any literal word will stop as soon as the literal word "respect" (third subpattern next) is matched.
	[End of the second subpattern.]
`respect`	The third subpattern starts with 7 characters "r","e","s","p","e","c","t" to be matched, followed by. . .
`\w`	the metacharacter to match alphanumeric characters, which is governed by
`*`	the star quantifier, that matches either zero or more times—finding, for example, "respect", "respected", and "respectfully"—until a character other than an alphanumeric one is encountered.
	[End of the third subpattern and the end of the entire regex.]

[46] The regex engine needs to match all three subpatterns in regex {re-2} in their sequence to be successful. The second subpattern allows for the possibility of zero to ten words between "bound" and "respect". If none of the subpatterns match according to their order within the file, then the regex has failed. At the end of the file, the concordancer will open the next file in the corpus and apply the regex to it. Eventually, no files remain to be searched and the concordancer then will display any results in the KWIC-view window.

[47] In Figure 3 we view a screen capture of "bound" near "respect" within AntConc 3.5.9.

Fig. 3: All Results for Regex {re-2}: `\bbound\W+(?:\w+\W+){0,10}?respect\w*`

[48] Note that regex {re-2} and also other proximity regexes potentially can cross sentence and paragraph boundaries. This, however, did not happen with regex {re-2}. Such boundary crossing might be valuable under some circumstances, such as when two concepts are spaced apart. But when part of a phrase or sentence, as is the Taney statement, then the regex might yield false positives, so to speak, when matches are made across such boundaries.

[49] Regex {re-2} finds those matches located via the phrase "bound to respect" with two exceptions (Matches 3 and 4: Figure 3, where Du Bois quotes the same source in two different books. Nonetheless, those two cases are not relevant to the Taney statement or variants. In short, this regex actually was not any better than regex {re-1}. Of course, we would not have known this until after running regex {re-2}.

(IV) C. Regex Pattern {re-3}

[50] Let us try another proximity regex. We can base our word choices on the Taney statement; I will choose "rights" and "respect", but other choices of course could be made, such as "right" or word forms based on "respect".

{re-3}   \brights\W+(?:\w+\W+){0,10}?\brespect\w*

The discussion of regex {re-2} in Table 1 (above) will hopefully suffice to explain the overall pattern and its three subpatterns of regex {re-3}.

[51] In Figure 4 we view a screen capture of "rights" within 10 words of "respect" (and possible variants) within AntConc 3.5.9. Seven matches are not part of the screen capture, but were not relevant to Taney.

Fig. 4: Results for Regex {re-3}: \brights\W+(?:\w+\W+){0,10}?\brespect\w*
      [First 16 of 23 Matches]

[52] Considering the list of results for regex {re-3}, as displayed in Figure 4, we will observe that most of the matches are the same as were matched by regex {re-1}. Although such is predictable given the regexes employed, sometimes something new is found. However, there are two notable exceptions that demonstrate Du Bois varying the Taney variant. In his *Color and Democracy* he substituted "need respect" for "bound to respect"—with the same normative impact. Match 8 displayed in Figure 4 reads:

> <p>Where the white resident contingent is relatively large, as in South Africa and Kenya, the caste conditions are aggravated and the whites become the colony while the natives are

ignored and neglected except as **low-paid labor largely without rights that the colonists need respect**.</p> [CDCP 1945: p.22 (Ch.2); emphasis added]

In this match Du Bois was discussing the colonizers vis-à-vis the colonized.

[53] Consider match 9 displayed in Figure 4:

<p>Such discrimination turns 13,000,000 Americans into second-class citizens, with **rights which the rest of the nation need respect only in partial and limited degree**. Nothing like this has happened among other civilized peoples except in colonies and in quasi-colonies like the Union of South Africa.</p> [CDCP 1945: p.91 (Ch.4); emphasis added]

In this example of the Taney variant Du Bois was relating contemporary African American oppression to South African apartheid and colonization.

[54] With proximity regexes we must continue to disambiguate the results. For example, examine Match 16 of Figure 4, which does not apply to my project:

[....] towards maintaining their own freedom, and securing their **rights as citizens of the United States.**

      Whenever three respectable [....] [GBF 1924: p.196]

In this match the proximity regex found a match that cut across a sentence/paragraph boundary. Often, and especially with phrases, such boundary crossing will produce a false-positive result.

(IV) D. Regex Pattern {re-4}

[55] It is easy for me to imagine Du Bois writing "respect" and "rights" in reverse order from the original Taney statement. As an hypothetical example we can seek something like this:

GroupD does not respect GroupS because the latter have no rights.

Because it is always possible that Du Bois could have reversed the direction of the word order, we can reverse the word subpatterns, via this regex:

```
{re-4}     \brespect\b\W+(?:\w+\W+){0,20}?\bright\w*
```

[56] I ran this regex and found no relevant matches, but I did find several affirmations about respecting the rights of other people, or nations. or persons. In addition, the matches were not framed by a denial of rights by a dominating group.

[57] Many more regexes can be created. I will mention several in a later section.

V. Interpretations

[58] Based on the results of regex {re-1} and {re-2}, as displayed in Figure 2 and Table 1, and as articulated in my associated commentary, I argue that there is sufficient evidence to warrant me to interpretively construct and designate as a theme Du Bois's usage of the Taney statement and its variations.

[59] How did Du Bois convey his social critiques via using Taney's original statement and applying it to other circumstances and social relationships? In general, the Taney theme demonstrated how Du Bois re-purposed the Taney statement in order to challenge oppression by expressing, within different historical contexts, negative evaluations of the social relationships that he penned in the form of Taney-like wordings.

[60] Du Bois, I argue, repeated the (near) quotation or elements of it as part of his critique of dehumanization, marginalization, and terrorizing of enslaved persons and their descendants over the generations. He wrote:

> <p>The Negro's access to the land was hindered and limited; his right to work was curtailed; his right of self-defense was taken away, when his right to bear arms was stopped; and his employment was virtually reduced to contract labor with penal servitude as a punishment for leaving his job. And in all cases, the judges of the Negro's guilt or innocence, rights and obligations were men who believed firmly, for the most part, that he had **no rights which a white man was bound to respect."** </p> [BREC 1935: p.167 (Ch.6); double quotation marks in the original; emphasis added]

But Du Bois did not stop with the Taney statement as part of his criticism of oppression.

[61] To better understand how the Taney variants were applied critically, let us look at their linguistic structure. Although I am not arguing that the Taney theme functions exactly the same way as substituting words with multiple meanings in an utterance, I nevertheless would argue that the linguistic structure does have an important role in critique, which I will discuss in this section.

[62] Henry Louis Gates, Jr. analyzes the process of "signifyin(g)" in African American language usage, a process that subverts standard English usage and thereby challenges dominant meanings and dehumanization (Gates 1998: 54-55). One linguistic framework employed by Gates involves studying how an utterance generates meaning (signification). The framework structures a written and/or spoken utterance along two axes. The horizontal, or syntagmatic, axis contains a series of signifiers (here words) arranged according to the language's syntax and grammar, all of which together contribute to making the utterance meaningful. Any word/signifier potentially can be substituted by another, insofar as that choice comports with language's rules (which can be broken), at its place in the utterance. Such substitutions occur down the vertical, or paradigmatic, axis. Because not all substitutions follow conventional vocabulary or rules, an utterance can be created in ways that change, even subvert the original signification of the utterance. The substitution of words that sound or are spelled the same or similarly, but with double (or more) meanings, results in changing the original conventional English utterance in ways that poke fun at, or are critical of, some aspect of the world to which the utterance is referring.

[63] I would argue that in a similar way Du Bois changed certain signifiers of dominance and subordination within a historical referent that had justified slavery and oppression (Table 3).

Table 3: Taney: "they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect"
        — With four examples from Du Bois

	SYNTAGMATIC AXIS						
	Subordinated Group(s)			Dominating Group(s)			
P A R A D I G M A T I C A X I S	[Taney :: enslaved persons] they had	no	rights	which	the white man	was	bound to respect
	[DISF] Negroes & paupers have	few	rights	which	society leaders	are	bound to respect
	[GBF] failure to recognize that the mass of men had	any	rights	which	the better class	were	bound to respect
	[CDCP] colored & black folk inhabiting colonies owned by white nations, who will have	no	rights	that	the white people of the world	are	bound to respect
	[DARK] It is the husbands, brothers, & sons... [who do **NOT**]... acknowledge that women have	➡	rights	which	men	are	bound to respect

[64] Referring to Table 3, we see how Du Bois, with the Taney variants, substitutes words signifying different social groups (along the paradigmatic axis), while keeping "rights" and "bound to respect" in place as part of the syntagmatic chain. By changing the dominating group—Whites in America—to others (monarchs, men, colonizers) and changing the subordinated group—enslaved African Americans and their descendants—to monarchial subjects, women, the colonized), Du Bois maintained a normative critique grounded on human equality and rights, as well as the denial of such equality and rights in ideology and practice.

[65] Such a shifting of dominating and subordinated groups**. . .**
(a) expanded the historical and geographical scope of the original Taney statement beyond its U.S. ambit, circumstances, and tremendous political and social consequences;
(b) implied that various forms of social relationships could be criticized as unjust by means of an analogous argument, which held that, in ways similar to slavery being heinous and dehumanizing

(but not necessarily in the same manner or to the same extent), some social groups were denied rights based on human equality, and thereby subordinated;
(c) implicated, or at least might suggest to readers, that there was a basis for cross-national and inter-group solidarity among and between oppressed groups and communities; and thereby
(d) might motivate readers and audiences to challenge oppression (via its rhetorical appeals to logos and pathos).

[66] From the standpoint of understanding the Taney theme in its fullness, it would help if we understood the intertextual reference (Allen 2000). Of course, not knowing the Dred Scott court ruling would not undermine Du Bois's critique of oppressive social relations. But not knowing the reference to Taney and U.S. history might not drive home the cross-national and cross-group similarities that Du Bois was making with the Taney theme.

[67] But I wonder: as I have interpreted the Taney theme, was this American case as a starting point of Du Bois's normative critique persuasive to some in other countries? Readers in other places might not appreciate a call for cross-national solidarity deriving from a country that historically oppressed others around the world. I do not have an answer.

[68] Mine is only one interpretation among other possible interpretations. Other scholars will bring their own insights and experiences into their respective research processes. As a scholar I am working in community with others, gaining from their interpretations of Du Bois.

VI. Further Re/Searching

[69] I can extend the project on Du Bois's Taney theme by creating and deploying other regexes that seek matches for related, but different textual patterns. I present three such project extensions.

[70] **As a first extension:** we can search for different word forms: seek not only "rights", but also "right" or even "rightful"; seek not only "respect" but also "respected" or "respectful". Broadening the word forms might increase the number of both relevant and irrelevant matches. For example, we could modify an earlier regex such that we are searching for "right" and its word forms, then "respect". A slight modification to regex {re-3} produces:

{re-5}   \bright\w*\W+(?:\w+\W+){0,10}?\brespect\w*

Among the matches, which find many of the matches from previous regexes, is the following:
> [....] Granted that government should be based on the consent of the governed, does the consent of a majority at any particular time adequately express the consent of all? Has the minority, even though a small and unpopular and unfashionable minority, no **right to respectful** consideration? </p>[DARK 1920: Ch.VI; emphasis added]

Is this a Taney variant? It is very close, so perhaps we could argue that.

[71] **As a second extension:** we can increase or decrease the number of intervening words between the words sought. For example, changing the »10« in »(?:\w+\W+){0,10}?« to

perhaps »15« or »20« might yield some positive matches. However, in my experience there is a upper limit to opening the window of words wider, a limit beyond which the matches become less relevant.

[72] **As a third extension:** we can utilize synonyms of the words in the Taney(-like) passages. Recall that I located "need respect". What are other possible synonyms? We could seek potential synonyms in the co-text of Du Bois's sentences expressing the Taney theme. And/or we could choose a thesaurus-based approach, selecting "must", "should", "ought", and so forth. For example, the following regex can be run standalone or included as a subpattern in regex {re-2}.

```
{re-6}    \b(bound|ought|need|ha[ds]|should|must)\b\s(to\s)?respect\b
```

[73] Regex {re-6}would match the following strings:

bound to respect	
ought to respect	ought respect
need to respect	need respect
have/had to respect	have/had respect
should respect	
must respect	

Note that this regex would also match "should to respect", "bound respect", or "must to respect", if they appeared in the corpus.

[74] Regex {re-6} contains some familiar regex metacharacters and some new ones.
(a) The »\b« word boundaries prevent matching "sought", "musty", "respects" and even "boundary", but also will not match contractions like "shouldn't" which might be relevant.
(b) The square brackets within the pattern »ha[ds]« are a character class, which will match only a "d" or "s" at that one spot.
(c) The »(to\s)?« is a subpattern that will match "to" plus a space (»\s«), if such is present in the text.
(d) The vertical bar »|« designates alternation, as it is called in regex terms; it indicates an inclusive "or". The regex engine would first try to match "must", and if that were absent, then the engine would proceed through the list sequentially trying to match one of the remaining words/strings listed with the grouping parens. If no matches resulted, then the regex has failed.

[75] Exploring a corpus is as much about experimenting as it is about treading a well marked route. Moreover, I have discovered that serendipity, a chancy phenomenon at best, sometimes favors the persistent.

VII. In Closing

[76] Digital political theory does not seem to be common term, but tools from the digital humanities are being used in political science. One goal of this presentation was to demonstrate

the value of one such set of tools: regular expression searching of a corpus by means of a concordancer.

[77] Digital political theory, as I have framed it here, is valuable, but has its own limitations. Deciding on the concepts to choose, and any nuances of those ideas, may be elusive. Failing to find a concept in the texts does not necessarily mean that the corpus lacks the concept at all. Indeed, concepts do not always inhabit one uttered word, but can animate synonyms, metaphors, and other modes of expression (Gunnell 2011; Richter 1995; Skinner 1989).

[78] Accordingly, regexes match what we code them to match, if that pattern exists among the texts. Because they are literal, regexes will not match any or all of the possible alternate ways by which the idea may be present in the corpus. For example, studying Du Bois's concept of the "color line" via the regex »`color line`« will not locate "color-line" or "colour line", which are two other forms found in Du Bois's writings. (Note that the regex »`colou?r[\s\-]line`« will match all three of the spellings.)

[79] Because this project's scope was limited to locating Du Bois modification of Taney's words, regexing was helpful. Such a technique allowed me to trace the phrase across various texts and in the several ways that Du Bois used the expression. Du Bois's application of the Taney theme, I suggest, is part of his repertoire of tactics by which he, as a public intellectual, challenged White supremacism and sought justice. The Taney theme was a normative critique by which he promoted and argued for cross-national, cross-racial, and cross-group solidarity. The importance of such types of solidarity still resonate in the 21st Century, a time of continuing oppression in various forms, and also a time of social movements motivated by justice, buoyed by hope, seeking structural changes that enhance democracy.

<p align="center">—)/^—</p>

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