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# Toward a Single-Consciousness: Challenging "Un-American-ness" of People of Color

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TOWARD A SINGLE-CONSCIOUSNESS:  
CHALLENGING “UN-AMERICAN-NESS” OF PEOPLE OF COLOR

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Philosophy

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Bhawana Kamil

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TOWARD A SINGLE-CONSCIOUSNESS:  
CHALLENGING “UN-AMERICAN-NESS” OF PEOPLE OF COLOR

by

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## ABSTRACT

### TOWARD A SINGLE-CONSCIOUSNESS: CHALLENGING “UN-AMERICAN-NESS” OF PEOPLE OF COLOR

by Bhawana Kamil

Race is a major axis of social injustice in America. Social injustice is due to both maldistribution of material resources and opportunities and non-recognition or mis-recognition of people of color. One form of mis-recognition is the accusation that a person of color is not a *real* American, creating a conflict of identities (*i.e.*, racial and American): a double-consciousness. This accusation has its origins in faulty ideas about race, identity, and race-group membership.

This paper presents a new model of identity that addresses these faulty ideas and provides a conceptual structure within which one can consistently maintain a single-consciousness while maintaining identifications with various domains of identity. Also discussed are the ramifications of such a model, implications for group action, a case study of Muslim-Americans, and the ramifications of President Obama’s election.

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I owe a large debt of gratitude to my entire family, but particularly to my mother-in-law, Shehnaz Kamil, who cared for and nurtured my daughter while I went to class or spent hours researching and writing. Lastly, I thank my husband, Najeeb, for his support and inspiration in his role as my partner in life and in the path we have chosen - to dedicate our lives to the betterment of our society.

## DEDICATION

To Khadijah Arpita, and all daughters and sons - because parents fight for a better future not merely for themselves but most vehemently for their children.

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## INTRODUCTION

*Herein lie buried many things which if read with patience may show the strange meaning of being black here in the dawning of the Twentieth Century. This meaning is not without interest to you, Gentle Reader; for the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line. I pray you, then, receive my little book in all charity, studying my words with me, forgiving mistake and foible for sake of the faith and passion that is in me, and seeking the grain of truth hidden there. (Du Bois, Souls 34; The Forethought)*

W. E. B. Du Bois stated very simply, “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line.” Though the problem of race continues to be a global one even in the twenty-first century, its particular manifestation in America is as severe as it is unique in its nuances. The problem has two primary facets alluded to by their respective solutions: redistribution and recognition. Generally, “redistribution” aims to solve the real, socio-economic disparities that fall along racial lines. “Recognition” is the effort to address racist attitudes, both blatant and subtle, that not only help perpetuate disparities, but cause psychological and emotional damage in their victims. One such attitude is that which asserts that being a member of a racial or ethnic minority group - a person of color<sup>1</sup> - is somehow less or not truly American.

This paper is both descriptive and prescriptive in nature. In describing the historical and ideological context for the issue of “double-consciousness,” particularly the conflict that an American of color may feel with regard to her racial or ethnic identity and her American one, I show that the problem is based on faulty logic and misguided ideas.

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<sup>1</sup> I will frequently use the term, “person of color” or “American of color” to refer to someone who identifies with a racial or ethnic minority group. Though this term is in many contexts problematic, in that it posits “white” as a standard against which all others are “of color,” the usage is appropriate in the context of this paper.

I then propose a solution that is conceptual in nature; as Americans, we must change the way we think about identity, race, and American-ness. In so doing, we can move towards the elimination of the feeling of double-consciousness, and the establishment of an ideological framework and social consciousness that allows an individual to feel comfortable with all aspects of his identity and helps to allow groups the social mobility that justice requires.

After giving a brief survey of America's race problem and a detailed description of the problem of double-consciousness and the ways in which it is manifested, I explain why so much importance is rightly placed on public perception and consciousness in solving issues of social and personal identity, primarily through the lens of Charles Taylor's ideas about recognition.

I then deconstruct the foundation upon which "double-consciousness" is built. A brief history of the development of the race concept is given, followed by a review and critique of the ideas of W. E. B. Du Bois, Anthony Appiah, and Lucius Outlaw. Two other, more proximate, contributions to the problem are discussed in details: whiteness in America and the progressive racism that has accompanied the rise of modern multiculturalism.

I then propose a new comprehensive model of identity that not only illustrates the compatibility of both American-ness and racial or ethnic identification, but is also more consistent with how people behave. The new conceptual model, if adopted, would alleviate the struggles of many Americans who feel conflicted about their multiple "identities." Some additional remarks are made about group identity and group action, in

light of the new model of racial or ethnic identity. A case study about Muslim-Americans is included, which demonstrates the practical manifestations of the ideas expressed in this paper, and touches upon to what extent religion, and particularly Islam, functions like race in America. I anticipate objections to my proposal and respond to them, and make suggestion for further study. Finally, I comment upon the election of President Obama, what it means for race in America, and how it relates to my proposed model of identity and consequent group action.

## SETTING UP THE PROBLEM

### 2.1 AMERICA'S RACE PROBLEM

*And a little past Atlanta, to the southwest, is the land of the Cherokees, and there, not far from where Sam Hose was crucified, you may stand on a spot which is to-day the centre of the Negro problem,—the centre of those nine million men who are America's dark heritage from slavery and the slave-trade. (Du Bois, Souls 103; ch. 7)*

That America has a race problem is undisputed. One has only to compare the demographics of publicly elected officials, corporate board rooms, or prison inmates with those of the general population to see that race plays a role in how “successful” an American will be. Particular racial and ethnic minorities, predominantly Latinos and blacks, are overrepresented in the prison system and underrepresented in higher education. They are arrested more often and elected less often. They have less access to health care and receive more public assistance. Pure racism is certainly a contributing factor in these racial disparities. A racist cop may specifically pick out a person of color to whom to give a ticket and let a white person speed by. Some refuse to vote for a political candidate because of her skin color. However, these particular incidents, even if more prolific than we are privy to, are not the sole explanation of socio-economic conditions that fall along color lines. Institutional racism occurs when public and private institutions offer differential access to goods, service, and opportunities. It is institutional racism, created and maintained by general racist attitudes, that is most significant in perpetuating the social injustice experienced by Americans of color.

Though explicit racism is no longer publicly tolerated in America, our public discourse is teeming with racist attitudes. For example, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in August of 2005, many people desperate for essential supplies took food and other necessary items from flooded stores. Bloggers and independent media outlets claimed to have exposed the racial bias in news reporting by comparing the captions of two very similar pictures. One picture reproduced in the Huffington Post on September 1, 2005 showed a black man wading through chest-deep water captioned as having “looted” a grocery store while a similar picture of white couple described them as having “found” food (Jones). This scenario is an example of what I call “first-order” racism, in which the actions of two people are identical but are interpreted differently because of a perceived difference in race. First-order racism is common in education, for example, where blacks are more often labeled “troubled” and tracked into lower-level programs than their white counterparts. It is the operating factor in the phenomenon of “driving while black” or “flying while Muslim”; Blacks and Muslims are more often pulled over in the car or pulled off of an airplane for actions that would not elicit the same response were the agent white and Christian (Ahlers).

The conditions of racial groups are not always a direct result of “first-order” racism, blatant or subtle; differences in achievement can be linked to differences in performance. However, even performance is not immune to the racial attitudes of Americans. Though it is not impossible for Americans of color to succeed, the country’s historical racist legacy still has remnants in its social structures. I call this “second-

order” racism, in which racist attitudes or legacies create a social framework that systematically puts Americans of color at a disadvantage.

Second-order racism may occur through internalized racism, where racist attitudes are adopted by the victim, lowering self-esteem and damaging one’s self-image, creating a predisposition for lower performance. Mamie and Kenneth Clark’s 1940s experiments with dolls is one of the most famous demonstrations of internalized racism, as documented in "Skin Color as a Factor in Racial Identification of Negro Preschool Children." Black girls were shown white dolls and black dolls; they overwhelmingly associate positive descriptions, such as pretty and nice, with the white dolls and negative descriptions, such as ugly and bad, with the black dolls. The experiment was repeated in 2006 by Kiri Davis, with the same results.

Third-order racism can occur when racist attitudes may not be involved, but rather an insufficient consideration for existing race conditions allows policies to function in biased ways. For example, commissions in both New Jersey and Oregon raised concerns about the role of institutional racism in the policies of Drug Free zones (“New Jersey,” “Oregon”). Most cities have these zones within a certain radius of schools in which the punishment is more severe for those caught selling drugs. The purpose, of course, is to further prevent children’s victimization and access to drugs. Let us suppose that the law is applied equally to blacks and whites, and blacks and whites sell drugs at equal rates. When certain other real factors are taken into account, it will still occur that blacks are given, on average, harsher punishments when caught selling drugs.



In highly urban areas it is common that, because of population density, schools are so close together that entire districts or cities are completely covered with overlapping Drug Free zones. Therefore, anyone caught dealing drugs in the city, even if not with the purpose of involving children, is dealt a harsher punishment because they were inadvertently in the inescapable Drug Free zone. In suburban areas, however, there are larger spaces between schools and their accompanying drug free zone; there are many opportunities for drug deals outside of Drug Free zones. Urban drug dealers will get, on average, stronger punishments than suburban drug dealers. Add to this situation that, statistically, urban areas have a higher black population than suburban areas which are more white. If urban drug dealers get stronger punishments than suburban drug dealers, and if blacks are overrepresented in urban areas, blacks will get, on average, harsher punishments than whites for dealing drugs. Racism may not play a part in the arrest or punishment of these racial groups, but race certainly does. In not adequately taking real racial factors into consideration, an epidemic of perceived black criminality is allowed to continue and worsen.

The next step of inquiry would be to ask why there are more blacks in urban areas than suburban ones. Why are blacks poorer than whites? At some point, one may point to slavery and its aftermath as a root cause of racial inequalities in America. But this only begs the question, "Why were black Africans, and not another group, enslaved by white Europeans?" As with most inquiries of this type, it is difficult, if not impossible, to identify the primary and fundamental cause in a seemingly infinite chain of regress.

We may, however, identify two general causes and corresponding solutions for the problem of racial and ethnic inequity in America. As with those seeking to explain the causes of slavery, some focus on the socio-economic structures in place that made slavery advantageous; those who engaged in the slave trade were simply interested in economic benefit and were not concerned with whom they had to exploit to achieve their goals. Others emphasize the racist worldview that made the situation possible; positing Africans as less-than-human made it possible for slave traders to treat them as commodities without having to confront and negotiate burdensome moral questions. It is clear, however, that the two are inseparable. History has shown that a simple prejudicial worldview does not manifest itself outwardly unless there is some tangible benefit to doing so. Similarly, an unjust system cannot endure without changing the prevailing beliefs and social consciousness to those that will allow it to survive.

So we see in America that there are socio-economic structural problems that contribute to racial and ethnic inequity; but there are also problems of prejudice and racism that allow the structural problems to perpetuate. The solutions proposed by contemporary intellectuals focus on solving both problems. On the one hand, some theorists assert that the injustice experienced by groups of people have their origin in socio-economic structures and policies. Accordingly, the focus is on *redistribution*. Others claim that the primary cause of social injustice is non- or mis-recognition of groups and the solution, therefore, must lie in *recognition*. Though most theorists may emphasize one strategy over the other, they accept the intimate connection between redistribution and recognition and the ultimate inseparability of the two particularly in the

realm of policy making. The redistribution-recognition problem will be addressed in depth in the next chapter, but it is necessary to first give a fuller account of why it is that, within the struggle against injustice, attention has shifted toward recognition.

## 2.2 RECOGNITION AND IDENTITY

*...the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, -- a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. (Du Bois, Souls 38; ch. 1)*

Identity politics, or the politics of difference, is the term that has come to encompass the general political movement of those who advance the interests of groups of people who are oppressed due to a common and shared “identity.” It is predominantly accepted among identity politics discourse that mis-recognition of the oppressed by the oppressor is a major, if not the predominant, weapon of subjugation. As such, faithful recognition is required to advance the agenda of social justice for all for both instrumental and intrinsic reasons. To make sense of this proposition, the ideas of recognition (and mis-recognition) and identity must be detailed, as well as a brief history of the origin of the politics of difference.

### 2.2.1 Hegel and Recognition

Hegel’s Phenomenology of the Spirit, and the master-slave dialectic in particular, is often relied upon to make the case for the centrality of the need for recognition in order for oppressed peoples to achieve equality. Saul Tobias reminds us that Hegel’s master-servant dialectic has been used in different ways to vindicate contemporary political theories and agendas.

The master-servant dialectic in the Phenomenology occupies a privileged place in these interpretations of Hegel’s work, where it is sometimes invoked as the philosophical model par excellence of recognition as the

underlying mechanism in the struggle for political autonomy and dignity...

For a long time, Kojèveian and Sartrean readings dominated political interpretation of the *Phenomenology* but fell into disrepute with the general abandonment of the socialist project that they defended.... In repudiating this type of reading, contemporary theorists of identity politics have refocused attention on recognition as a psychological and social process located in the space of intersubjective communication. (102)

Though Tobias accurately describes the role Hegel has played in political philosophy, particularly in the realm of identity politics, his implication is that Hegel's work, rather than being a philosophical or theoretical foundation for political theory and strategy, is an a posteriori justification for them. Hegel's work was once interpreted to legitimize Marx's theory of historical materialism, but the failure of the implementation of Marx's project allowed this reading of the Phenomenology to be replaced by one which legitimized new political agendas. Furthermore, using Hegel in this fashion was only made possible by the changes in our thinking about identity and recognition brought about by the rise of the idea of authenticity.

In the same article, Tobias further argues that Hegel has been used to privilege inter-subjective recognition as the primary tool against political oppression, but that a careful reading of Hegel also reveals the importance of the relationship between the self and the environment and self-determination. Though it is true that large portions of Hegel lend themselves to these ideas, and therefore could lend support to a two-pronged approach in battling political oppression, Tobias's argument itself is still not an a priori foundation for political strategy. That the usage of Hegel is a posteriori was already established.

This is not to say that the two-pronged approach is wrong, or that “philosophical valorization of moral-psychological categories of respect, dignity, and self-worth [do not] obscure the economic, institutional, and structural factors that determine a person’s identity” (107). It is true that if we all recognized each other faithfully starting tomorrow, the struggle for justice and equality would not be over.

However, recognition is of great importance for many reasons. Firstly, it seems to be instrumentally important as a pre-requisite to structural and policy change. In a democratic society, prevailing opinion should, and often does, influence and precede legal and political change. Public recognition is important for large groups which suffer from misrecognition, so that they may be the beneficiaries of large-scale policy changes. Secondly, group recognition can positively influence individual identity for those associated with the group. However, even if universal recognition is not yet achieved, inter-subjective recognition, particularly between people who play significant roles in each other’s lives, can have a grand positive effect on the psyches of those individuals. In this sense, recognition is intrinsically important, not just instrumentally.

That recognition is of primary importance, and that “nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being” (Taylor, Politics 25) is widely accepted and empirically corroborated. Some feminists argue that women who have been pressured by their patriarchal societies to adopt and internalize an image of their inferiority, besides suffering from low-self esteem and its associated ailments, can be rendered incapable of seizing new opportunities for success or advancement. Similar arguments are made

regarding enslaved and colonized people. Further, as it relates to the current discussion, the argument has been made to illuminate the importance of faithful recognition of Americans of color, who have been subjugated and oppressed, in most part, due to their perceived race. What exactly “faithful” recognition entails will be elaborated upon in chapter three. However, that talk of identity and recognition is now so common and obvious among those interested in issues of social justice, whereas it was not so obvious a couple hundred years ago, requires some explanation.

### 2.2.2 Identity in the Intimate Sphere: Recognition

In “The Politics of Recognition” Charles Taylor gives an account of recognition that predates Hegel, while giving a narrative that elucidates the origins of identity politics and its theoretical background. Rather than being an originator of the idea of the importance of recognition for a satisfactory identity, Hegel’s dialectic was allowed to be understood in this manner by earlier social and political developments in Europe. Taylor credits the “modern preoccupation with identity and recognition” to two changes: “the collapse of hierarchical societies [and] the new understanding of individual identity that emerges in the late eighteenth century” (Taylor and Guttman 26, 28).

In hierarchical societies, one’s social identity, as we now call it, was primarily determined by one’s social position. What people considered important regarding themselves was informed by fixed social roles and categories. With the collapse of hierarchical societies and the rise of democracy, people could define themselves outside

of their social roles, in part due to the rise of the ideal of “authenticity,” a usage Taylor borrows from Lionel Trilling.

The ideal of authenticity developed starting at the end of eighteenth century with a notion that rivaled prevailing views that morality was a matter external to human beings, determined either by an association with divine rewards and punishments, or by dry calculation. The new notion, which comes to be known as the theory of moral sentiments, asserts that human beings have an intrinsic moral sense, “an intuitive feeling for what is right and wrong” (Ethics 26). This connection with one’s inner self is not a means of connecting with God, for example, but rather an intimate connection to a source of morality within one’s very own nature. It is a path to moral salvation, using the language within which Rousseau framed the notion, helping to bring about the change in thinking about morality.

Johann Herder further developed the idea, proposing that “each of us has an original way of being human: each person has his or her own ‘measure’ ” (Ethics 28). Herder’s articulation gives the differences between human beings a new moral significance. The point is not just that human beings can or should live in their own way; it is that living in a way that is true to oneself is the point of one’s life. It becomes, therefore, not a luxury or option to connect with one’s inner self, but an obligation to do so in order live one’s life in the way it was meant to be lived, and to protect against the dangers of being lost due to pressures of outward conformity or an incapacity to listen to one’s inner voice. These thoughts culminate in the idea of originality: that each of us has



something unique to say.<sup>2</sup> Living in a way that is faithful to that unique message is the meaning of *authenticity*.

Though this original way of being demands that it be inwardly generated, as opposed to the socially determined identity of older hierarchical societies, one's identity cannot be created purely individually. The idea of originality and authenticity must be understood in conjunction with a very real, "crucial feature of the human condition that has been rendered almost invisible by the overwhelmingly monological bent of mainstream modern philosophy. This crucial feature of human life is its fundamentally dialogical character" (Politics 32). Our development into full human agents requires human languages of expression, with language being understood broadly as not only manners of speaking but also all other modes of expression and communication; these languages can only be understood through interaction with others. It is also human society that provides a context, "background of intelligibility... a horizon" (Ethics 37) against which one's opinions, desires, and values - elements which constitute one's identity - have meaning. This is not to say that one's identity is socially determined, but it is certainly socially influenced and dependant. It is for this reason that recognition becomes so important in modern discourse. Mis-recognition is not only instrumentally harmful in its contribution to economic and political inequity; it is also harmful because it necessarily affects one's own self-perception.

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<sup>2</sup> Worth mentioning, though not crucial for the current argument, Herder applied his conception of originality to groups of people (Volk) and their cultures, not just individuals, a notion that is echoed in the writings of Du Bois.

The need for recognition did not originate with the idea of authenticity, as human society has always been dialogical in nature. However, recognition was not problematic until it was no longer “built into socially derived identity by virtue of the very fact that it was based on social categories that everyone took for granted” (Politics 34). Recognition was no longer enjoyed *a priori*, it had to be *won*. Therefore, the modern age did not signal that recognition could now be gained, but rather that the attempt for recognition could fail; this is why it is now so important.

### 2.2.3 Recognition in the Public Sphere: The Politics of Difference

While the modern age encourages, even if it can not secure, recognition on an intimate level un-problematically, recognition in the public and political spheres poses some complications. At the heart of these complications is a conceptual conflict between the notion of equality and universalism on the one hand, and faithful recognition on the other. Taylor first gives the story of the politics of universalism citing, again, the decline in hierarchical societies and the rise of democracy.

The notion of honor was intrinsically built into social hierarchies and linked to inequalities. “For some to have honor in this sense, it is essential that not everyone have it” (Politics 27). Honor and its necessary unequal application are replaced in the modern age with dignity and its universal application. We talk of dignity not as something selectively conferred upon people, as honor is, but as something intrinsic and inherent to all human beings. This accompanies a new politics of universalism, emphasizing the inherent equality of all people. In the political realm, this translates to equal rights and

benefits, though the particular implementation of this principle has varied greatly across time and place. “But through all the differences in interpretation, the principle of equal citizenship has come to be universally accepted” (Politics 38)

The politics of universalism, however, does not only imply equal rights. It encourages difference-blind policies, and is accused of encouraging same-ness at the cost of suppressing difference. In his “Against the Grain of Modernity,” Lucius Outlaw follows a similar vein as Taylor and describes the relevant challenges the politics of universalism poses for a demand for recognition. In doing so, he first describes the intellectual and historical origins of liberalism:

The definitive conceptions of “Man” and society that form the core of liberalism are central conceptions from the Enlightenment that became driving forces of the project of modernity: liberalism’s individualism “asserts the moral primacy of the person against the claims of any social collectivity”; its universalism affirms “the moral unity of the human species” and accord “a secondary importance to specific historical associations and cultural forms”; the conviction of egalitarianism “... confers on all men the same moral status and denies the relevance of legal or political order of differences in moral worth among human beings.” And through the belief in meliorism, liberalism affirms “the corrigibility and improvability of all social institutions and political arrangements.” John Gray expressed it well: “Liberalism... is the political theory of modernity.” (457)

As Taylor describes it, liberalism has required that we look beyond accidental difference among humans toward their shared essence; humans are *essentially* identical. This shared essence is *reason*, a supposedly neutral, difference-blind human capacity. Differences, such as race, ethnicity, and gender, are accidental and non-essential and a focus on these differences threatens “modern political communities formed on the basis of universal principles” (Outlaw, “Grain” 457).

It is because of this perspective that “in previous eras, in many nations struggles against injustices stemming from racism and perverted ethnocentrism has as their goal the integration – in some case even the assimilation – of victimized groups into a nation’s social, political, economic, and cultural life according to the terms of universal principles” (Outlaw, “Grain” 449). There were two problems with this goal.

First, some contended that the universal principles were really particulars clothed in rhetoric of universality.

The celebration of universal principles has often turned out to be rhetoric – rather than the realization – of liberal-democratic, socialist, or communist principles of universality and equality in the midst of the domination of political, economic, and cultural life by a particular race and/or ethnies. (Outlaw, *Grain* 449)

The universals had been determined by a particular group with a particular history, perspective, and agenda. Though true for any society, Outlaw asserts that in America and Europe particularly this particular group has been White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs); feminists would add “males.” Taylor also refers to this type of contention. “The claim is that the supposedly neutral set of difference-blind principles of the politics of equal dignity is in fact a reflection of one hegemonic culture. As it turns out, then, only the minority or suppressed cultures are being forced to take alien form” (Politics 43).

Secondly, even if the enumeration of truly neutral principles were possible, it would contradict the also-modern notion of authenticity. Taylor shows that the age of modernity has given rise to both the politics of universality and the politics of difference, and that the former actually gives rise to the latter, despite their apparent contradiction.

That one's identity is dialogically determined, through interaction with people and values that are, at some point, most definitely different than one's own, means that these differences contain meaning for the person and are elemental to one's identity or way of being. These differences are not "accidental" or "inessential" as opposed to the shared human essence of the capacity for reason; rather, they are essential to one's identity, even if not shared. The idea of authenticity requires that she remain true to this aspect of her identity, and that others recognize and validate it. At the same time, the principle of universality requires that recognition is conferred universally upon people. When part of this recognition includes recognition of a meaningful difference, the politics of universality inevitably gives rise to the politics of difference. "The universal demand powers an acknowledgment of specificity" (Politics 39).

The difference between the perspectives of liberalism-based universality and recognition-requiring difference is even more pronounced in their manifestations in policies. Difference-blind policies that were fought hard for are threatened to be replaced by policies, such as affirmative action, that once more invoke differences albeit for opposite purposes. The argument that such temporary measures are necessary to level a playing field made uneven by historical discrimination is a cogent one. That differences should be forcefully maintained, for the *sake* of difference, is a matter that will be contented with in chapters four and eight.

#### 2.2.4 Public Recognition and Intimate Identity

Identity and recognition has been discussed thus far on two levels: the individual or intimate and the group or public. Outlaw does not make clear the connection between the two levels and Taylor briefly discusses it when describing the dialogical nature of identity formation. If the modern age has called for individuals to discover and assert their own way of being, why is recognition of particular social groups to which they “belong” so important not just for broad social policy but for individual justice, self-esteem, and freedom. For the purposes of this paper, it is important that one can answer the question: why is group recognition for “identity”-based groups such as racial and ethnic minorities in America important to individual identity and the resolution of identity conflicts? Philosophical discussions of identity often focus on either collective identity in the realm of political philosophy, or individual identity in the realm of philosophy of the mind or metaphysics and epistemology; the two realms seem separate and disconnected. Philosophy, and the problems philosophers hope to solve, would be better served in making a strong connection between the two, drawing upon ideas from social psychology and other fields if necessary.

Anthony Appiah, in his essay “Identity, Authenticity, Survival” commenting upon Taylor’s “The Politics of Recognition,” spells out the relationship between public and intimate identity and recognition. He asserts that Taylor’s essay provides strong framework for answering certain questions regarding this relationship and perceived conflict:

As has often been pointed out, however, the way much discussion of recognition proceeds is strangely at odds with the individual thrust of talk

of authenticity and identity. If what matters about me is my individual and authentic self, why is so much contemporary talk of identity about large categories – gender, ethnicity, nationality, “race,” sexuality – that seem so far from individual? What is the relation between this collective language and the individualist thrust of the modern notions of the self? How has social life come to be so bound up with an idea of identity that has deep roots in Romanticism, with its celebration of the individual over society? (149-50)

If, as Taylor suggests, the modern self has fought against the imposition of an identity that is socially determined with built in recognition of what is meaningful to it, it seems paradoxical that the same self requires public (social) recognition of aspects of its “identity” that have their roots not in individuality, but in collectivity. As Appiah points out, Taylor’s essay provides the resolution to this perceived contradiction in his discussion of the dialogical nature of identity formation.

Before delving into how collective identity recognition affects the assertion of one’s individual identity, however, it is necessary to make an important digression to ascertain why it is that certain features of one’s identity are completely personal while others are seen as participants in a larger collective identity.

Each person’s individual identity is seen as having two major dimensions. There is a collective dimension, the intersection of their collective identities, and there is a personal dimension, consisting of other socially or moral important features – intelligence, charm, wit, cupidity – that are not themselves the basis of forms of collective identity. (151)

Appiah depends partly upon our “intuition” to see this difference, and fails to give a full account of why the distinction exists. In fact, there are several causes for the distinction between the personal and collective dimensions of identity. Appiah gives one such reason, and the one that is perhaps most relevant to racial and ethnic identity:

In our current situation in the multicultural West, we live in societies in which certain individuals have not been treated with equal dignity because they were, for example, women, homosexuals, blacks, Catholics. Because, as Taylor so persuasively argues, our identities are dialogically shaped, people who have these characteristics find them central – often negatively so – to their identities... One form of healing the self that those who have these identities participate in is learning to see these collective identities not as sources of limitation and insult but as a valuable part of what they centrally are. (161)

Thus, because certain people were treated unjustly because of personal features, these features came to gain some significance, albeit negative. Two options consequently arose. Firstly, a group could assert the insignificance of such a trait. Given the political and economic dynamics, however, this was inevitably useless in mitigating the discriminatory attitudes and practical ramifications of prejudice. Even if one were to deny that his being black was a significant feature, he could not escape being discriminated against because of it.

A second strategy was adopted. Instead of denying its significance, the normative value of the features was reversed. These positive features became part of one's way of life, asserting themselves in one's authenticity, and consequently demanding recognition.

These old restrictions suggested life-scripts for the bearers of these identities, but they were negative ones. In order to construct a life with identity, it seems natural to take the collective identity and construct positive life-scripts instead. (161)

This strategy has been accompanied by its own pitfalls, some of which are discussed by Seyla Benhabib in her criticism of Taylor's essay in "The Claims of Culture," and by Appiah himself. The major hurdle is the problematic nature of the content of positive life scripts. Though the topic will be discussed in detail in chapter six in the section about thick and thin racial and ethnic identity, the crux of the problem is



that a positive life script is accompanied by demands and expectations of behaviors and attitudes; this poses a serious problem for autonomy. There are two responses. Firstly, this supposed conflict is not necessary; it is contingent upon the existence of a life-script and its content, something we will detail later. In short, it is conceivable that a positive life-script entails such minimal content that it is rendered unproblematic for one's autonomy. Secondly, it may be asserted, as Appiah does, that this extreme oppositional reaction – i.e., the construction of a positive life script which is in fact content heavy - is perhaps “historically, strategically necessary” to balance the scales in favor of equilibrium. Both responses are accurate. In any case, because the now-positive feature is not merely an individual trait, but one shared with others and used to discriminate against an entire group, recognition is demanded for the group. Each participating group member will consequently share in the recognition of the group identity.

Social psychology provides more explanations of how collective identities are formed, besides their employment in discriminatory attitudes and policies. Maykel Verkuyten identifies three such explanations:

[1] Political classifications, for example, can lose their predominant legal status and start to function as categorizations in everyday social life. An example is the term Hispanic in the USA. Originally used for statistical and political reasons, it gradually evolved into a social identity for some of those categorized by it....

[2] Clearly distinguishable behaviours can also be a starting point for identity formation. People can do particular things together and have reciprocal expectation. Recognizable shared activities are conducive to the development of a social identity. An obvious and important example is the language spoken. The observation that a number of people do the same thing in the same way, or speak the same language, easily leads to the conclusion that it is a distinguishable group of which the members differ in a certain way from other groups. But this observation is by no

means self-evident. It is not enough to assert or claim an identity. The fact of doing thing differently or of speaking a particular language has to be recognized and validated by the wider society; it has to be turned into a social identity.

[3] The starting point for identity formation can also originate from the idea or feeling that one is basically a different kind of person. For example, on the basis of shared interests or preferences, one can try to establish common activities with like-minded others and use symbols to differentiate and distance oneself from others. In that case, the commonality is socially stated, 'proved', and a social categorization and the ontological judgement can follow. For instance, the identification with certain musicians and music (such as rock and rap) is typically accompanied by a characteristic behavior and appearance. (55-6)

These contributing factors are compatible with Appiah's explanation, and for any given social identity one or more of these factors may be at play concurrently. The conclusion, however, is that individuals derive meaning for their personal lives – the object of their authenticity – in part from the social categories to which they belong or ascribe. For this reason, recognition of these collective identities is necessary for faithful recognition of an individual's assertion of authenticity.

Two important questions still remain following the previous discussion. (1) What exactly do people need to "recognize" with respect to collective identities? and (2) is there a meaningful and relevant difference between those social identities which are ascribed to a group by others, and those which are self-asserted?

To answer the latter question, Verkuten's work is again useful. He describes the difference and relationship between assigned and asserted identities, particularly with respect to ethnic identity.

Among other things, identity formation has to do with the question of who is able to construct socially relevant categorizations. A familiar distinction that is often used in this respect is between ascription and self-

ascription. This distinction is sometimes used to distinguish between an ethnic category from an ethnic group. In the former case, people are put together by others on the basis of assumed common characteristics, as in political and legal classifications. In the latter case, people see and define themselves in ethnic terms and their own norms, rules, and goals are involved. Ascription and self-ascription, or assignment and assertion, are of course strongly related to each other. Ethnic minorities are not simply the passive recipients of imposed identities, but rather actively respond to unwanted and negative images. Individuals and groups act in response to how they are being classified, and this in turn leads to reactions by the original classifiers. There are many looping effects here. (56)

He describes the one feedback mechanism which has already been discussed, that in which the “ascribed” negative life-script is transformed into a positive one and “asserted” back towards the “original classifiers.” Though he does not make the point explicitly here, the opposite situation is feasible and actually occurs. A group may assert a particular identity based on shared interests. This asserted identity is then perceived in a certain way by outsiders, who could in-turn recognize the features of the identity faithfully or ascribe normative judgments to them. Often, the two situations’ eventual outcomes are similar. The group itself asserts positive features of its identity; outsiders view the group negatively insofar as it is asserting and emphasizing difference.

This can be the case even with a group that is not a numerical minority. Women who assert their feminine or feminist identity are criticized for making gender an issue when it is not. Feminists see this as blindness, intentional or otherwise, to the illusion of gender-neutrality in a society that is highly patriarchal. For other groups that are in the minority, the assertion of difference not only threatens the illusion of shared universal values, but also faces the numerical strength of an opposing majority.

A meaningful difference between ascribed and asserted identities may arise when making conscientious decisions about the direction a group should take in setting its agenda. Though this point will be developed further in chapter 9 about group action, a summary of the salient arguments is useful here. If a group identity originates in ascription, it is natural that the agenda was initially set in combating or negotiating with the ascribed identity. At some point, the group must decide if its “reactionary” agenda is still useful, if the agenda needs to change to accommodate its new positive life-script, or if group identity is necessary at all in the absence of current, active external ascription of that identity. If a group’s identity originates in assertion, the group will decide if its agenda needs to account for new features ascribed to it from outsiders, or whether those features which provided the foundation for the asserted identity are still the pertinent ones.

The history of the formation of a group illuminates its original purpose. Given the changing nature of social groups, this purpose may become more or less relevant or necessary. Thus, the agenda of the group needs to be reevaluated based upon which features are currently relevant to the group, and which actions are necessary for the well-being and aspirations of its members.

As for the first question of exactly what we are asking to be recognized in collective identities, the answer depends on the nature of the group. As Appiah mentions:

The identities whose recognition Taylor discusses are largely what we can call collective social identities: religion, gender, ethnicity, ‘race,’ sexuality. This list is somewhat heterogeneous; such collective identities matter to their bearers and to others in very different ways... That they matter to us for reasons so heterogeneous should, I think, make us careful not to assume that what goes for one goes for the others. (Guttman 151)

However, it is possible to make one simple claim regarding all these collective identities. The recognition they require is recognition that would bridge the gap between how a group sees itself and how others see the group. This is obviously not always easy, particularly when this recognition may require validation of viewpoints that actually threaten the well-being of others. But in the context of this paper, it requires mitigating the affects of those erroneous viewpoints, and the foundations upon which they are built, that assert that there is a conflict between one's being a member of a racial or ethnic minority, and being a full and true American.

#### 2.2.5 Recognition versus Redistribution

Tobias made the argument that the Marxist reading of Hegel's Phenomenology as a theory of class struggle has been replaced by a new reading focused on the demand for recognition. Nancy Fraser echoes this observation:

The "struggle for recognition" is fast becoming the paradigmatic form of political conflict in the late twentieth century. Demands for "recognition of difference" fuel struggles of groups mobilized under the banners of nationality, ethnicity, "race," gender, and sexuality. In these "postsocialist" conflicts, group identity supplants class interest as the chief medium of political mobilization. Cultural domination supplants exploitation as the fundamental injustice. And cultural recognition displaces socioeconomic redistribution as the remedy for injustice and the goal of political struggle. ("From Redistribution," 68)

Redistribution and recognition are inseparable; in practice one cannot address one without contending with the other. They are also independently diverse; there are many methods and aims that fall under the broad guise of redistribution or, likewise, recognition. Yet, as Fraser astutely suggests, the two can be distinguished as separate

conceptual paradigms for analytical purposes. She gives a detailed account of the relationship between the two in “From Redistribution to Recognition?” which I will present and critique here in part to justify my focus on recognition.

Fraser contends that there is a spectrum of experiences of social injustice, some of which should almost purely be addressed through redistribution agendas and others through struggles for recognition. Gender and race, however, are bivalent collectivities; “they suffer injustices that are traceable to both political economy and culture simultaneously” (70). For these bivalent collectivities, Fraser initially argues that there is an inherent conflict between the redistribution and recognition agendas. Redistribution promotes “group dedifferentiation,” while recognition promotes “group differentiation” (70). However, the assertion of an inherent conflict, even in these particular bivalent cases, is misguided. Fraser herself admits that “redistributive remedies generally presuppose an underlying conception of recognition” (69). If they are mutually dependent, it seems wrong that they are necessarily conflicting.

Both redistribution and recognition aim for equity, or wealth and moral value respectively. Equity of wealth requires equitable distribution; equity of moral value requires the equitable valuation of differences. Recognition of difference does not necessarily imply its promotion or emphasis. What Fraser unwittingly alludes to is not a necessary, ideological conflict between redistribution and recognition, but rather a historical, methodological one between the politics of difference and universalism.

The politics of difference, concerned primarily with recognition, not only recognized differences but emphasized and propagated them in prescriptive measures,

albeit after revaluing them. The politics of universalism, which was primarily concerned with redistribution, did not de-emphasize differences, which would at least require their recognition, but ignored them (e.g., third order racism) and therefore denied their role in prescriptive measures. Though each group emphasized one aspect of the redistribution-recognition duality, they did not ignore the other aspect and their attitudes regarding difference applied across the board. Neither strategy effectively dealt with the problem of injustice, which requires recognition of difference and the role it plays in inequality, but then a dramatic change in the ideological and institutional frameworks that allow difference to continue to be an axis of injustice.

In an effort to solve her asserted dilemma, Fraser introduces two methodologies by which each aim can be fulfilled: affirmation and transformation. Affirmation aims at “correcting inequitable outcomes of social arrangements without disturbing the underlying framework that generates them” whereas transformation aims at “correcting inequitable outcomes precisely by restructuring the underlying generative framework” (73). The affirmation approach arguably describes the politics of difference. However, she fails to address the politics of universalism approach, which does not seek to deconstruct or restructure anything but rather ignores difference. Transformation is an approach outside of these two paradigms, one which she supports as the most promising in addressing issues of social injustice and that would accurately describe my approach. It also coincides with the aforementioned required “dramatic change.”

The following table (see table 1) delineates the real nature of the relationship between the politics of difference and the politics of universalism in their descriptive and

normative approaches to difference. It also clarifies Fraser’s conflation of each politics with its primary concern (i.e., recognition and redistribution, respectively) in her analysis of the phenomena.

Table 1. Recognition versus Redistribution, including Fraser's labels.

	Primary Concern	Descriptive approach to difference	Prescriptive approach to difference	Fraser’s first label (vis-à-vis agendas)	Fraser’s second label (vis-à-vis methodologies)
Politics of Difference	Recognition	Acknowledgement	Emphasis and propagation	Recognition	Affirmation
Politics of Universalism	Redistribution	Ignorance	De-emphasis	Redistribution	(None)
New approach (including mine)	Both	Acknowledgement	Addressing foundational paradigms that subject differences to injustice	(None)	Transformation

This paper focuses on recognition for several reasons. Firstly, to address both redistribution and recognition comprehensively is a major undertaking, one that is broader in scope than the purposes of this paper. Redistribution is certainly not unimportant; on the contrary it is indispensable. It is simply not the topic upon which I chose to focus.

Secondly, from the perspective of Fraser’s transformation, a transformative approach to redistribution requires a restructuring of the ideological frameworks that give rise to inequitable distributive social institutions. These ideological frameworks inevitably embody non- or mis-recognition.

In Fraser’s description of the spectrum of social injustice, she describes those groups who require primarily redistributive solutions. Her example is Marx’s working class, though even its members “suffer serious cultural injustices, the ‘hidden (and not so



hidden) injuries of class” (70). Therefore, though their primary aim may be redistribution, they can not dispense with claims of recognition. At the other end of the spectrum are those experience of injustice is rooted “wholly in culture, as opposed to in political economy,” such as homosexuals (71). Because they are distributed throughout the economic spectrum, they do not constitute an exploited class; “the injustice they suffer is quintessentially a matter of recognition” (71). In the middle are bivalent collectivities, gender and race, which suffer both cultural and political-economic injustices. The following figure illustrates her conceptualization of groups’ needs for varying amounts of recognition and redistribution (see fig. 1):

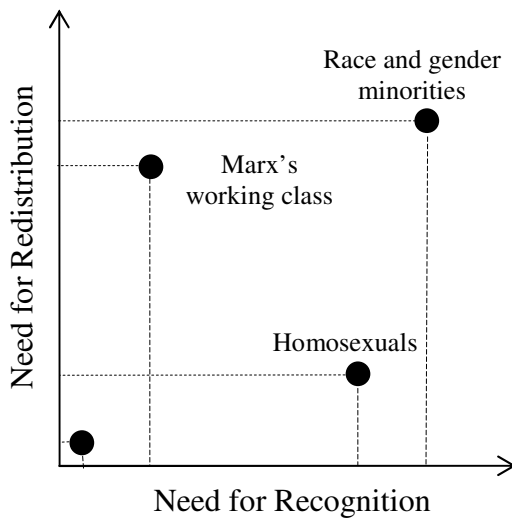


Fig. 1. Group needs for redistribution and recognition according to Fraser.

Though Fraser’s description of race as a bivalent collectivity is accurate, a more nuanced description of the position of race with respect to redistribution and recognition is necessary. Fraser’s aforementioned distribution can be seen within the context of race,

as well (see fig. 2). Blacks and Latinos most certainly suffer from both socio-economic and cultural injustices. However, “model minorities” suffer more from recognition than redistribution. Jewish and Asian-Americans are on the average more educated and wealthier than the rest of Americans; however, they are still subject to vicious prejudice, suspicion, and hate crimes. This lack of full recognition can also explain the “glass ceiling” that model minorities experience; they may be wealthier than their white Anglo-Saxon counterparts, but they are excluded from high-level position of power. On the other hand the “working-class white” may stand to benefit more from redistribution than recognition, though even they are not immune to cultural injustice (e.g., being labeled as trailer trash, red-necks, hicks).

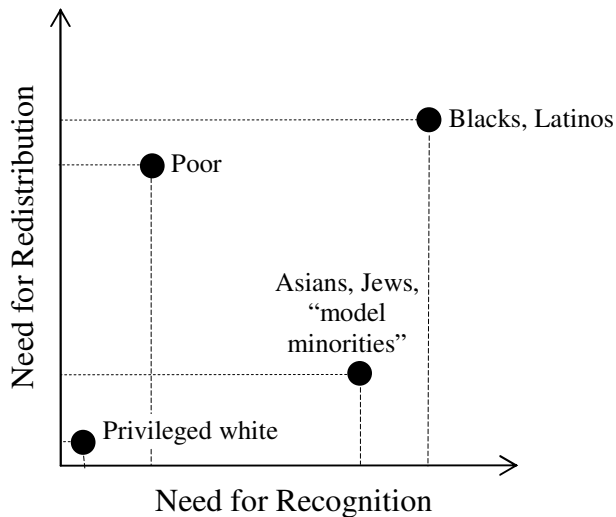


Fig. 2. Racial group needs for recognition and redistribution.

Recognition, then, is a pervasive problem for social injustice generally, and race particularly.

Thirdly, mis-recognition has profound affects on individuals on a very regular and direct basis. Though a person may not be aware of the socio-economic structures that helped to create his present life circumstances, he is most keenly aware of the petty racism or sexism he must face on a daily basis. This influences his emotional and psychological make-up, which can in turn affect his success. Collectively, individuals' attitudes contribute to the collective cohesiveness, or lack thereof, of the nation. Lastly, a focus on recognition is important because it is within the power of an individual to change attitudes - her own and those of people close to her.

While misrecognition can occur based on many demographical factors, the scope of this paper is limited to racial or ethnic misrecognition, and more narrowly focused on one aspect of this recognition problem: the allegation that there can be, and sometimes is, an inconsistency in being American and a person of color.

## 2.3 DOUBLE-CONSCIOUSNESS

*It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,--an American, a Negro; two warring Souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.*

(Du Bois, Souls 38; ch. 1)

While a person may be a victim of social injustice due to any one (or several) of demographic factors, a unique feature of racial prejudice is the accusation that an American of color is somehow less “American.” Du Bois expressed the struggle between black and American, the “double-consciousness,” in The Souls of Black Folk. But before examining the causes of the problem of “double-consciousness,” a fuller account of the nature of the problem is necessary. There are sometimes direct accusations that a person of color is, to a lesser or greater extent, not fully American. A person of color is also made to feel such accusation when interpreting actions and policies affecting him, or when reflecting critically upon particular situations in which he is placed.

### 2.3.1 Direct Accusations

“Direct accusations” is used to indicate rhetoric that implies that a person of color is not truly or fully American. Such rhetoric can take a variety of forms: from intentional and malicious, to unintentional and (seemingly) benign.

At one end of the spectrum is blatant racist rhetoric, including statements such as “America is for white people” or “Go back to your own country!” or “You and your people don’t belong here!” This manner of thinking and speaking certainly deserves no

response, primarily because it is motivated by hate, which no measured, logical response can mitigate. Such rhetoric is also founded upon the belief that being American means being “white,” a belief that while few may espouse openly, is engrained in the thinking of many people, white and non-white.

Problematic rhetoric is also used and passed down within a racial and ethnic minority group. One particularly troublesome, and equally common, example is the use of the words “American” and “white” synonymously. Immigrant parents often refer to their children’s white friends as “American,” as opposed to their own children who are “Indian” or “Chinese.” Children raised with this type of language internalize the notion that only their white friends are really American, and to be American one must be white. Often, children start using the same rhetoric, particularly at home or when with people of their same racial or ethnic background. People of color, however, are identified primarily with their racial or ethnic affiliation or are, at best, hyphenated (e.g., Indian-American, Chinese-American).

A much discussed phenomenon is the subtle accusation that accompanies questions and wonderments such as “Where are you from?” or “Wow, your English is so good!” or “How long have you been here?” The implication is that the person of color is “from” somewhere else, from which they came to America a certain amount of time ago, and adopted foreign and new practices such as speaking English. Such questions are often the product of real and genuine curiosity, or even a welcoming and genial attitude, and are defended as being simply an attempt to understand the other person better. One problem is that it is often the first question a person of color is asked, implying that it is

the “racial” feature of the person that is most important, fundamental, and urgent – an implication with which the person may whole-heartedly disagree. More importantly for our present purposes, the erroneous presumption upon which they are based can, and often does, offend.

Such questions are not directed towards “white,” European new immigrants, unless the other person has a reason to suspect recent immigration or foreign-ness, such as the presence of a heavy accent. Non-immigrant whites are certainly never subject to such questions, but a fifth-generation American with Japanese ancestry is inevitably asked the question even if they have no real ties to Japan and can identify no home outside of America. The fact that such questions are directed exclusively at people of color reveals the perception that all people of color are seen as newcomers or outsiders. “Whites” are not subjected to such questioning because they are assumed to be American because of their skin color and other physical features.

While people of color are often aware of the direct accusations made towards them, either blatantly or subtly, there are other indirect ways in which an American of color is made to feel less American.

### 2.3.2 Indirect Accusations

A phenomenon that minorities, particularly racial and ethnic minorities, face in America is the inability to be treated as individuals but rather as representatives of their entire cultural group. Non-white criminals are often identified by their racial or ethnic background, where white criminals are not. It is presumed, and expected, that political

leaders from minority groups will defend the interests of their cultural group more than their overall constituency. When a person of color makes a mistake, it is often explained by her affiliation with a racial or ethnic minority, or at least reflects negatively upon the “race” as a whole. In short, actions of Americans of color are expected to be limited by, and judged in accordance to, the interests and culture of the minority group.

The same is not true for the unencumbered self which in America is a white person, and arguably a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant male. The actions of the unencumbered self represent individual motivations and intentions only. Timothy McVeigh was not primarily or immediately identified with his race, unlike Seung-Hui Cho soon after the Virginia Tech bombings in 2007. He was seen as a lone terrorist and treated as a criminal. In Seung-Hui Cho’s case, however, being identified with his ethnic background implied that his actions had something to do with his cultural principles or beliefs. Actions of the Ku Klux Klan do not instigate a demand for apologies and denouncements from white Protestant entities because it is seen as an outcast group that has perverted the teachings of Christianity to justify terror. On the other hand, actions of “Muslim” terrorists immediately incite demands for denouncements from even mainstream, progressive Islamic entities because there is a suspicion that perhaps all Muslims think the same way as the terrorists who happen to be Muslim.

Explanations for this type of behavior, many psychological, have been put forth. When faced with an unusual behavior or act, one seeks an explanation. The human mind will produce an explanation based on broad categories it has set up to identify general trends; this is the only way humans know to make sense of a complex and intricate world.

This is much easier than investigating the particulars of a situation to discover its true cause or chain of events. If something unusual happens, and the agent appears “different,” the unusual occurrence is immediately associated with the “unusual” appearance. A correlation, but also a causal relationship, is established in the observer’s mind.

The “encumbered” self faces two problems. Firstly, he is identified with her racial or ethnic affiliation first, whether or not he considers this the most important aspect of his identity. Secondly, he is not treated as an individual. He somehow represents all others of his race, and has to simultaneously answer for all those others as well. A person of color may be asked for *the* (not *an*) opinion or perspective of his particular race or ethnicity about a certain matter. Not only is it a daunting task to have to represent and speak for a group of people, but it is also naïve, presumptuous and problematic to think that an entire “race” can have a single opinion about anything.<sup>3</sup>

What does the encumbered-ness of a person have to do with her American-ness? To be seen as strange and monolithic, and to fail to be seen as an individual with intricacies and nuances, is to be seen as the “other.” To be seen as the “other” in America is to be seen as less American, one who does not fully belong. This is compounded by the fact that racial and ethnic minorities are often connected to foreign countries and foreign “cultures.” Simply by virtue of one’s perceived attachment to another country she is disallowed from participating fully in American-ness, as if American citizenship is an all or nothing enterprise. “You’re either with us or against us.”

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<sup>3</sup> The same argument can be made about “gender,” by the way, or any other collective identity considered a minority, regardless of its numerical presence in America.



In The Namesake, a book about a son of immigrants who struggles to define himself, Jhumpa Lahiri describes a scene featuring the main character, Gogol:

At dinner he is asked by his neighbor, a middle-aged woman named Pamela, at what age he moved to America from India.

“I’m from Boston,” he says.

It turns out Pamela is from Boston as well, but when he tells her the name of the suburb where his parents live Pamela shakes her head. “I’ve never heard of that.” She goes on, “I once has a girlfriend who went to India.”

“I don’t know. All I remember is that she came back thin as a rail, and that I was horribly envious of her.” Pamela laughs. “But you must be lucky that way.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean, you must never get sick.”

“Actually, that’s not true,” he says, slightly annoyed... “We get sick all the time. We have to get shots before we go. My parents devote the better part of a suitcase to medicine.”

“But you’re Indian,” Pamela says, frowning. “I’d think the climate wouldn’t affect you, given your heritage.”

“Pamela, Nick’s American,” Lydia says, leaning across the table, rescuing Gogol from the conversation. “He was born here.” She turns to him, and he sees from Lydia’s expression that after all these months, she herself isn’t sure, “Weren’t you?” (157)

The conversation is an accurate reflection of many experiences of Americans of color. Firstly, Pamela identifies Gogol primarily with his racial or ethnic background. She then tries to relate to Gogol by invoking her friendship with someone who happens to be of the same minority background. She makes assumptions about Gogol’s physical constitution based on his ethnic “heritage.” And even Lydia, who has known him closely for months, pegs his American-ness not on his feelings, actions, or “allegiance,” but presumed birthplace, which is then doubted.

Daily and presumably insignificant occurrences are nonetheless constant reminders of a minority member's otherness. Peggy McIntosh, in her article "White Privilege and Male Privilege" makes a "crude" list of

special circumstances and conditions I experience that I did not earn but that I have been made to feel are mine by birth, by citizenship, and by virtue of being a conscientious law-abiding 'normal' person of goodwill. I have chosen those conditions that I think in my case *attach somewhat more to skin-color privilege* than to class, religions, ethnic status, or geographical location, though these other privileging factors are intricately intertwined. (97)

Included on the list are things such as:

I can turn on the television or open the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely and positively represented.  
I can easily buy posters, postcards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys, and children's magazines featuring people of my race.  
I can choose blemish cover or bandages in 'flesh' color and have them more or less match my skin. (98-100)

Some respond that these types of white privilege are really just economic realities, that when it is impossible to accommodate everybody, it makes economic sense to cater to the majority. The situation is complicated by several factors. Firstly, these examples are understood in conjunction with less benign examples such as, "I can swear, or dress in secondhand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race" (99). When race functions as a personal trait that carries with it so much normative value, then any decision concerning race inevitably is interpreted in such a framework. Secondly, and more importantly, there is no public acknowledgment that it is easier for whites to accomplish simple daily tasks (as well as complex and more important ones) than their counterparts of color. That the "flesh" in flesh-colored bandages is unqualified

constitutes an assertion that the color of the bandages are for standard or normal flesh, all other colors being abnormal to the extent they differ. A simple recognition that “flesh” colored really means “Caucasian flesh” colored would at least allay the insinuation that all flesh is supposed to look Caucasian.

Other critics of the notion of white privilege say that calling attention to minor things such as flesh-colored bandages and greeting cards featuring white people make an issue of race when it is not there. To have a range of multicultural flesh colored bandages would draw attention to the issue of race, inflating its prominence rather than diminishing it. However, as will be established when examining development of the politics of difference as opposed to politics of liberalism and universalism, skin-color and race have already been made issues in much more direct and caustic ways. These supposedly “minor” things, therefore, are daily reminders of the larger issue, and pointing them out will not make race a bigger issue than it already is. However, addressing the minor issues can affect how we approach race, helping us to recognize that our society also has major structural and institutional issues to address. Mamie and Kenneth Clark’s 1940s experiments with white and black dolls illustrated that simple choices regarding the skin color of one’s doll can indicate and perpetuate internalized racism (Clark, “Skin Color”). Racial facets of dolls and bandages are indicators of negative attitudes, and, if addressed properly, can be the harbingers of better future ones.

It is prudent to remind ourselves that the accusation of un-American-ness is not simply harmful rhetoric. Unchecked attitudes of this sort were what made Japanese internment camps possible, where every “ethnically” Japanese person was held

accountable for the actions of a few others, and the suspicion that they would harbor un-American feelings was given free-reign. Modern versions of these attitudes allow the illegal and unconstitutional detention of hundreds of Muslim Americans domestically and in Guantanamo Bay based on secret evidence and other modern legal “innovations.” Positing a group as an “other,” or even a “lesser,” makes it much easier to arrest, detain, oppress, and be suspicious of them without popular backlash.

A transformative approach to recognition with respect to Americans of color requires a deconstruction of race, whiteness in America, and racial and ethnic identification, the primary focus of this paper. We now turn our focus to race.

## DECONSTRUCTING THE PROBLEM

### 3.1 RACE

*...no mere physical distinctions would really define or explain the deeper differences – the cohesiveness and continuity of these groups. The deeper differences are spiritual, psychical, differences – undoubtedly based on the physical, but infinitely transcending them.*

(Du Bois, Reader 22; Conservation)

W. E. B. Du Bois's 1897 essay, "The Conservation of Races" was instrumental in bringing to the forefront of America's consciousness its race problem and developing a serious proposal for how it should be deal with. Today, this landmark essay is still looked to for inspiration and insight on how we do and should think about ourselves vis-à-vis race and "multiple identities." Du Bois's "Conservation" is seemingly modern in its definition of race, but further scrutiny by those who are still inspired by his life and work (such as Anthony Kwame Appiah) reveals some deep flaws in his ideas about race. Lucius Outlaw believes that the criticism lodged at the essay is mostly misguided, and supports Du Bois race definitions and consequent prescriptive proposals. But Du Bois's definitions and policies are problematic for the resolution of America's "race problem," as shall be shown.

America has grappled with the problem of race for hundreds of years, yet there is no consensus about what race is. At one end of the spectrum of views, different races amongst humans have been viewed as analogous to species among animals. Though

many scholars today will agree that race has *more* to do with socio-historical differences than biological ones, there is still a debate regarding whether species has a real basis in biology. There are those who say that race is an illusion, a purely social construct, while others are not willing to concede fully that racial categories have no “natural” justification whatsoever. Barring the old race-as-species view, current views about race are more in agreement than is acknowledged by scholars. Confusion, rather, stems from unclear usages of terms such as “biology,” “natural,” “real,” and “construct.” There are also pronounced differences about the merit of the concept of race, if and how the concept can be deployed, and whether we should continue using the term.

### 3.1.1 Race as Species

Though many ancient civilizations distinguished groups of people based on culture, language, and appearance, and often acted in prejudicial ways, theories surrounding race as a category for peoples around the world were not popularly introduced until the fifteenth century at the beginning of the Age of Exploration. As European explorers encountered populations of people that not only looked different but also behaved differently, they sought an explanation for the difference. At the same time, human beings have an instinctive tendency to categorize and differentiate; it is psychologically taxing on the human mind to be in a state of constant encounter with the unknown. For this reason, people learn early on to categorize items into groups of similar objects according to varying criteria.

The combination of people's natural curiosity about new people and their instinctive desire to categorize and differentiate gave rise to the popularity of the use of the term "race" to delineate groups of people that shared physical characteristics and a broad particular geographical location. As Michael Banton notes, the folk usage of the term "race," and the first documented use of the term, was used to refer to a group of people descended from a common ancestor, as in the "race of Abraham." This usage accommodated the emerging need to create the idea that people of different geographical locations and appearances are distinct races that differ not only in their physical features or location, but also biological lineage.

Race theories were given much greater potency when combined with political and economic interests and new scientific perspectives and theories of the seventeenth and eighteenth century. About 66% of the slaves were traded in these two centuries; with the increased activity within the Atlantic slave trade, there existed a real and powerful impetus to justify the subjugation of a group of people. To sustain such a momentous project required a theoretical or moral justification and inspiration, especially with respect to an act that was so heinous in its treatment of its victims. Theories that existed regarding the various origins and divisions of races were used to promote normative claims about the inherent value of the groups. Africans were posited as inferior humans, or even sub-human or non-human, in order to justify their capture, subjugation and domination by the "superior" white race.

Unfortunately, contemporary scientific developments provided the basis for just such racist rhetoric. Though Charles Darwin himself never referred to races as species,

and had no intention of likening the two, his ideas were abused to construct what has become known as Social Darwinism, which dominated the “scientific racism” rhetoric for a very long time. Using the common “race as lineage” concept as the starting point, it was proposed that the variety human races were essentially the result of natural evolution, and that whites had naturally evolved into a superior sub-species than blacks, thereby making possible and naturally condoning the enslavement of blacks by whites.

Treating races as separate evolutionary groups, be they species or sub-species, meant that there was a significant and meaningful biological distinction between the various races, developed and reinforced through the passage of time by evolution. At the heart of this argument was that those traits used on a daily basis to identify races, namely facial and other physical features, were simply external indicators of many other, much more profound, differences in intellect, character, and predisposition, all of which were genetically inherited by succeeding generations. Therefore, the perceived primitiveness of Africans had to do with inherited ability and character traits which coincided with other racially distinct physical features. The converse could also be inferred, that by virtue of one’s physical appearance, his race could be determined, and then conclusions regarding intellectual aptitude and emotional predisposition could be adopted.

Such beliefs, though not innocuous - especially when used to justify racist, but primarily economic or political, policies - were made more caustic when used as the foundation of new social policies. The Eugenics movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is now strongly associated with brutal treatment of populations of people, including Nazi Germany’s racial policies. The intellectual premise for the



movement, as expounded by Sir Francis Galton - who took his inspiration from his cousin, Charles Darwin - was not only that intelligence and other praiseworthy traits were inherited, but also that selective mating could increase the incidence of such traits, just like survival-features of plants or animals can be genetically nurtured. Galton added a normative claim that such selective mating should occur in order to ensure the progression of the human species (1). Just as animals progress and become more “fit” over time, so would humans if they had not interfered with evolution by protecting their “weak.”

Perceived “unfit” or “weak” qualities were not limited to race. Disabilities and personal behaviors were often targeted. But when an entire population of people was seen as inferior and weak, and the common feature that bound them was race, race was targeted as a casualty of Eugenics. Because of Eugenics’ dire effects on social relationships, personal attitudes, and public policies, it was emphatically opposed by many, particularly its normative claim. Its intellectual foundation, however, has its remnants in the thoughts of even those who opposed racist policies, as will be shown.

More recently, Carleton S. Coon, in his famous 1962 The Origin of Races, alleged that the five human races evolved into homo-sapiens independently of each other. Though this claim was problematic on its own in denying even a common origin of all people, more problematic was his assertion that the various races evolved into homo-sapiens at different times. This meant that a particular race (Caucasoid, or whites) had become human before another (Congoids, or blacks) and so were further along in their evolutionary development, making them more fit for positions of leadership and power.

Over the course of the last century, besides the occasional anomalous biology-based explanations for perceived races of human beings, such biological treatments of race have been broadly denied and systematically refuted. It has become quite standard to claim that race is not real or not biological, but rather a social construct. The following section details not only what the reasoning behind this sort of statement is, but what this sort of statement is meant to convey.

### 3.1.2 Rejecting Scientific Racism

In the opening paragraph of “Conservation,” Du Bois explained why one was prone to a priori and categorically reject biological definitions of race.

The American Negro has always felt an intense personal interest in discussions as to the origins and destinies of races: primarily because back of most discussions of race with which he is familiar, have lurked certain assumptions as to his natural abilities, as to his political, intellectual and moral status, which he felt were wrong. He has, consequently, been led to deprecate and minimize race distinctions, to believe intensely that out of one blood God created all nations, and to speak of human brotherhood as though it were the possibility of an already dawning to-morrow. (20)

Because race distinctions were used to justify oppression and subjugation of those deemed inferior, Du Bois considered it natural that a victim of such discrimination would reject the very foundation of racial oppression. Fortunately, in this case, science is also on the side of the rejection.

Before proceeding, it is important to delineate the exact proposition that should be rejected: that features such as political, intellectual and moral capabilities are co-inherited with other features that differentiate races from one another. This is a significantly

different proposition than claiming, for example, that intelligence is inherited and physical features are inherited but with no necessary correlation.

In this respect, the powerful influence of Eugenics' hereditarian ideology can be seen even in the writings of Du Bois. He clearly did not necessarily reject that intelligence can be inherited. In an essay entitled "Black Folk and Birth Control" Du Bois accepted the notion that birth control was exercised more often by "the more intelligent class," and so it is inevitable that "the increase among Negroes... is from the part of the population least intelligent and fit... (166)" In "The Talented Tenth," Du Bois calls upon the "Best" of the race to be developed in order to train the "Mass." That the Best needs yet to be developed and trained indicates that they are not the Best by virtue of their training, but rather by some innate, *inherited*, ability. And in Souls he says:

They forgot, too, just as their successors are forgetting, the rule of inequality: -- that of the million black youth, some were fitted to know and some to dig; that some had the talent and capacity of university men, and some the talent and capacity of blacksmiths; and that true training meant neither that all should be college men nor all artisans, but that the one should be made a missionary of culture to an untaught people, and the other a free workman among serfs. And to seek to make the blacksmith a scholar is almost as silly as the more modern scheme of making the scholar a blacksmith; almost, but not quite. (87; ch.5)

As for the inheritability of physical features of race, or the accuracy of other natural features of race, Du Bois also stated that particular physical characteristics identified broad racial categories:

Many criteria of race differences have in the past been proposed, as color, hair, cranial measurements and language. And manifestly, in each of these respects, human beings differ widely. They vary in color, for instance ... Men vary, too, in the texture of hair ... In measurement of heads, again, men vary ... or, again in language ... All these physical characteristics are patent enough, and if they agreed with each other it would be very easy to

classify mankind. Unfortunately for scientists, however, these criteria of race are most exasperatingly intermingled... The final word of science, so far, is that we have at least two, perhaps three, great families of human beings—the whites and Negroes, possibly the yellow race. That other races have arisen from the intermingling of the blood of these two...

We find upon the world's stage today eight distinctly differentiated races, in the sense in which History tells us the word must be used. They are, the Slavs of Eastern Europe, the Teutons of middle Europe, the English of Great Britain and America, the Romance nations of Southern and Western Europe, the Negroes of Africa and America, the Semitic people of Western Asia and Northern Africa, the Hindoos of Central Asia and the Mongolians of Eastern Asia...

The question now is: What is the real distinction between these nations? Is it the physical differences of blood, color and cranial measurements? Certainly we must all acknowledge that physical differences play a great part, and that, with wide exceptions and qualifications, these eight great races of to-day follow the cleavage of physical race distinctions. (Reader 21; “Conservation”)

Though Du Bois admitted that physical features cannot be used to make specific characterizations of smaller groups of people, they certainly could be used to identify, generally, broad races of people. Therefore, he accepted that certain mental characteristics were inherited by individuals, and members of a race inherited common physical characteristics. What Du Bois rejected was the coincidence of the two; individuals of a physical similar race varied in their inheritance of intelligence, and intelligence and talent could be inherited amongst blacks as well as whites.

Du Bois admitted to apparent common physical characteristics of races, while acknowledging that even these criteria have its limits. In the above passages, he makes sure to add pointed caveats such as, “these criteria of race are most exasperatingly intermingled” and “[these eight great races of to-day follow the cleavage of physical race distinctions] with wide exceptions and qualifications... (21)” While general physical

characteristics may apply to a race as a whole, individuals often can not be identified, or are mis-identified, by using these features as criteria. If it is possible that members of a race do not have one or more of these features, physical characteristics certainly can not be defining characteristics of a race.

Recent rejections of the “reality” race have focused on other propositions, that members of a racial group have unique and common genes, or that they are bound by lineage. In measuring how similar a chosen pair of individuals, and populations, are likely to be in the 0.1% of their genes that actually *can* differ, biologists have found that the chance for any two humans is 85.2%, whereas for two Caucasoids it is 85.7%. In his article criticizing Du Bois’s race argument, Anthony Appiah concludes from this data that “given only a person’s race, it is hard to say what his or her biological characteristics will be, except in respect of... ‘morphological differentiation’ ” (Appiah, “Uncompleted” 31) Most biologists agree that besides the genes that control these large-scale, “gross” physical differences, the genetic similarity of two people within a race are the same as the similarity between any two people, regardless of race.

Arguments have also been given that races are separated by their different historical lineages. This, again, is akin to evolutionary thinking, even if proponents do not explicitly conclude that races are, therefore, different species or sub-species. The race as lineage argument is refuted by the combination of two pieces of evidence. Firstly, if one traces his lineage and keeps count of those who contributed to her genetic make up, it does not take long to arrive in the millions - only 20 generations or roughly 400 years. Combined with a second fact that human populations have always been highly mobile

and have greatly intermingled, one can not conclude that a particular race finds its essential quality in a common lineage. Incidentally, this is also why human genes are largely similar to each other.

Traditionally, the effort to find the quality that defines race has been an essentialist search: what is the essence of race? The resultant strategy is then to find those features which define a particular race and therefore distinguish it from others. This essentialist approach to race is interestingly similar to the essentialist methodology of early taxonomy, which in turn has its roots in Plato's theory of knowledge.

Though evolution was used as the unifying principle for taxonomists, and to make the case for race as different biologically distinct species, the theory of evolution itself undermined both projects. The fundamental problem of taxonomy in defining what a species is reveals much about the race debate as well. David Hull sets out the full argument succinctly:

The only basis for a natural classification is evolutionary theory, but according to evolutionary theory, species developed gradually, changing one into another. If species evolved so gradually, they cannot be delimited by means of a single property or set of properties. If species can't be so delineated, then species names can't be defined in the classic manner.  
(320)

Though races are not species, it is easy to see how the same argument applies to human races. Human populations blend one into another, in lineage, genes, physical attributes, and history. Lucius Outlaw summarizes:

Human groupings are *historically* dynamic, *culturally* ordered, contingent *social* realities. This presents a particular challenge to efforts to delimit, define, and classify human groupings, a challenge that is both old and recurrent: how to name something that changes and by the naming provide a "handle" for dealing with it, intellectually and practically, in a way that

is more or less stable, if not permanent, over time. But, as human groups can and do change in their composition over time, whatever the rate, what is it that the name is a “handle” on? Racial and ethnic classification and identification, as ventures involving efforts to relate *logically* ordered classificatory terms to *historically* dynamic social realities and have the names be appropriate objectively and subjectively, are no simple tasks. (“Against the Grain” 446)

It can finally be concluded, then, that race has no biological or natural basis, and any definition that draws inspiration from either notion is false. What, then, is race?

### 3.1.3 The Reality of Race

After minimizing morphological features, Du Bois described what he thinks are the “real” markers of race.

Although the wonderful developments of human history teach that the grosser physical differences of color, hair and bone go but a short way toward explaining the different roles which groups of men have played in Human Progress, yet there are differences – subtle, delicate and elusive, though they may be – which have silently but definitely separated men into groups. While these subtle forces have generally followed the natural cleavage of common blood, descent and physical peculiarities, they have at other times swept across and ignored these. At all times, however, they have divided human beings into races, which, while they perhaps transcend scientific definition, nevertheless, are clearly defined to the eye of the Historian and Sociologist.

...no mere physical distinctions would really define or explain the deeper differences – the cohesiveness and continuity of these groups. The deeper differences are spiritual, psychical, differences – undoubtedly based on the physical, but infinitely transcending them. The forces that bind together the Teuton nations are, then, first, their race identity and common blood; secondly, and more important, a common history, common laws and religion, similar habits of thought and a conscious striving together for certain ideals of life. The whole process which has brought about these race differentiations has been a growth, and the great characteristic of this growth has been the differentiation of spiritual and mental differences

between great races of mankind and the integration of physical differences. (Reader 21; “Conservation”)

Though Du Bois deemphasized biological features of races, he still included them as defining, even essential, features, while simultaneously admitting they transcend scientific definition. Appiah criticizes Du Bois’s definition, not just because of his inclusion of biological criteria, but because the method of inclusion implies necessity, primacy, and inescapability. “... It is simply to bury the biological conception below the surface, not to transcend it” (“Uncompleted” 34). Emphases on shared history and strivings are always preceded with a mention of the broad morphological differences; races are continually referred to as “great families” or “sharing common blood.” Though Du Bois attempted to minimize biological criteria for races, he made them the foundation of racial boundaries.

Lucius Outlaw criticizes Appiah for misreading Du Bois. He says that Du Bois argues for the existence of precisely the communities of meaning Appiah proposes, and he can not help it if they happen to overlap with morphological characteristic or geographical location. He is wrong in this argument, however, because for Du Bois the overlap is not merely coincidental but rather necessary.

Even if Du Bois had been able to transcend the biology, his proposed “real markers” of race are also problematic. Common history, memory, strivings are not essential, prerequisite or defining features of a race, but rather a posteriori properties of it. “Sharing a common group history cannot be a criterion for being members of the same group, for we would have to be able to identify the grouping order to identify its history” (Appiah, “Uncompleted” 27). In other words, we cannot recognize a common feature of



a group until we define the group. These markers are also problematic in that, even if the applied to the group as a whole, they certainly can not apply to each individual. A person can have a history or strivings different from those of the group. A defining feature of a group has to be true of all members; if it is not, then it can not be essential. It is useful now to complete Hull's argument regarding the essence of species:

If species can't be so delineated, then species names can't be defined in the classic manner. If species names can't be defined in the classic manner, then they can't be defined at all. If they can't be defined at all, then species can't be real. If species aren't real, then "species" has no reference and classification is completely arbitrary. (320)

This is essentially Appiah's argument as well. After systematically repudiating every criterion Du Bois proposed for race, Appiah concludes, "the truth is that there are no races: that is nothing in the world that can do all we ask "race" to do for us" ("Uncompleted" 35). Because there is no essential, necessary feature of race, it can not be defined. We should instead talk about "communities of meaning" that blend one into another. Just as Hull claims, Appiah seems to think that if we cannot define race in the classic manner, it cannot be defined at all. But Appiah's conclusion may not necessarily be true. There is a common feeling among most people that when we refer to race, we are referring to some group, no matter how porous and amorphous the group may be.

Appiah apparently acknowledges this upon further scrutiny. Though he does not mention this in his writing, in an interview he admits some reality of the concept of race. "As for Mr. [Paul C.] Taylor's charge [in the journal Social Theory and Practice], Mr. Appiah says that if a 'racial eliminativist' is 'someone who thinks that there are no biological races among current humans, I plead guilty. If, on the other hand, it is

someone who thinks that races have no social reality, I plead innocent' ” (Postel). If there exists a referent when talking about race, socially constructed though it may be, there should be a way to at least approximately describe it. Both Appiah and Outlaw propose alternatives to Du Bois’s biological cum social definitions of race.

Appiah explicitly rejects the notion of race, though he accepts its social reality. This seeming contradiction arises out of a strong desire to rid our world of the concept of race for the harm that it has caused. “The evil that is done is done by the concept and by easy - yet impossible - assumptions as to its application” (“Uncompleted” 35-6). Because the concept is harmful, he seeks to eliminate it completely. Instead, he replaces it with “communities of meaning.” By replacing the term, Appiah does not deny that race plays a role in today’s society. He simply thinks that our notion of race is so distorted that the mere use of the word pollutes our thinking about groups of people. Appiah hopes that by replacing the word, he can contribute to replacing false notions of what race is and what implications it has for an individual and society.

In an attempt to save Du Bois from Appiah’s criticisms, Outlaw claims that “Du Bois’s ‘race’ is best read as a cluster concept in which the elements are connected in an indefinitely long disjunctive definition such that ‘each property is severally sufficient and the possession of at least one of the properties is necessary’” (“Against the Grain” 463). In this statement, Outlaw draws inspiration from Hull’s taxonomy article. Instead of insisting upon particular necessary conditions for race, which have proved impossible, he proposes that race is composed of several properties, not one of which is definitive, but

each is sufficient. Though he does not list these conditions, they may reasonably include morphological characteristics, parentage, geographical origin and self-identification.

Outlaw seems more concerned with developing a working, accurate description of groups of people that tend to be labeled races. He assigns the recognition of race and other axes of difference very important roles:

First, that a full appreciation of what it means to be human requires that proper note be taken of definitive characteristics of human groupings such as historically mediated biological/physical and cultural factors which are constitutive, in varying degrees, of the person in the group. Second, the belief that the principles on which would be based the organization of socio-political life, and the organization and agendas for intellectual enterprise whose objects are living human beings, should also take explicit account of these constitutive differences. (“Against the Grain” 449)

In other words, in order to deal with injustice based on differences, they must be recognized and accounted for. Race, even if it just a perception, is just such a difference. Appiah does not deny this; he accepts race as a social reality. He simply emphasizes that race has no sound basis that can withstand critical scrutiny. Even if Outlaw’s criticism of Appiah is misguided, and their respective descriptive replacements for Du Bois’s race concept are compatible, their normative policy proposals certainly are not. Outlaw not only recognizes the reality of race and gives it a new definition, but he follows in the path of Du Bois in advocating a conservation of race. What Outlaw seems to overlook is that Appiah’s criticism of Du Bois is not simply descriptive, but also normative.

#### 3.1.4 What do we do with race?

In “Conservation,” Du Bois employs a common strategy of taking a mark of difference and, instead of denying its reality for the sake of equality, asserting and

revaluating it as something positive. Du Bois claims that each race has a particular message to develop for all humankind, and that it can only be developed by a race working together *as a race*.

... and the other race groups are striving, each in its own way, to develop for civilization its particular message, its particular ideal, which shall help to guide the world nearer and nearer that perfection of human life for which we all long, that "one far off Divine event..."

... Be that as it may, however, the fact still remains that the full, complete Negro message of the whole Negro race has not as yet been given to the world: that the messages and ideal of the yellow race have not been completed, and that the striving of the mighty Slavs has but begun. The question is, then: How shall this message be delivered; how shall these various ideals be realized? The answer is plain: By the development of these race groups, not as individuals, but as races. (23)

The implications of this proposal are many, not least of which is that the message a race is destined to give humanity is somehow inherited. Du Bois does not just want to conserve race as a useful demographical label, but as a tool that will help humans live up to their potential. This "practical" conservation must take the form of strict intra-racial marriage and reproduction. The implication, therefore, is that a race's message somehow belongs to a race by virtue of its "blood." Interestingly, since the message is a combination of intellectual and emotional notions, its supposed inheritance contradicts Du Bois's earlier assertion that biological and "social" characteristics are not co-inherited.

Even if this contradiction were forgiven and we took Du Bois's proposition at face value, it is opposed strongly by Appiah who not only denies "race" and wants to replace the term, but states in very plain terms that there is nothing race can do for us. It

has historically caused evil, and communities derive meaning for themselves beyond racial terms. Outlaw, on the other hand, supports Du Bois proposal. He believes that:

...the racial and/or ethnic life-world provides the resources and nurturing required for the development, even, of individual talent and accomplishment such that distinctive contributions can be made to human civilization... the continues existence of discernable race- and ethnically-based communities of meaning is highly desirable even if, in the very next instant, racism and perverted, invidious ethnocentrism in every form and manifestation would disappear forever... I remain convinced that both struggles against racism and invidious ethnocentrism, as well as struggles on the part of persons of various races and ethnicities to preserve, enhance, and share their "messages" with all humans, require the conservation of races. ("Against the Grain" 466)

In this very strong statement, Outlaw asserts that recognizing and characterizing race is not only necessary to combat the injustice based upon it, but necessary for the development of a people by virtue of the life-world it creates. Even if racism were to disappear, race would serve a valorous role. For Outlaw, it seems that race has taken on a life of its own beyond its original use in upholding, and then combating, social injustice. Appiah's insightful differentiation of which racial characteristics are a priori and which are a posteriori is useful to elucidate Outlaw's mistake.

To conserve a group, it must be that we propagate that which is essential, necessary, and a priori. If certain biological features were essential to a race, we would easily conserve it by maintaining the boundaries of reproduction. Such biological features do not exist. The other features proposed by Du Bois are a posteriori. They are contingent upon group definition. One can not conserve a group based on those characteristics which are its consequences. There remains, therefore, nothing to conserve except the general idea of "race."

It is useful at this point to summarize the descriptive and normative arguments of Du Bois, Appiah and Outlaw. Du Bois considers gross, morphological characteristics the general markers for large racial groups. However, he considers common history and strivings stronger indicators of race differences. Appiah criticizes Du Bois for not being able to transcend the biological argument but simply downplaying its importance. Outlaw criticizes Appiah for his views on Du Bois, claiming that Du Bois's emphasis on common history and strivings creates precisely the communities of meaning that Appiah advocates. But he is flawed in his criticism; Appiah is right about Du Bois's inability to transcend biology, most demonstrably in that he makes biology the basis for a race's potential message. Appiah makes no such necessary connection between biology and spiritual or intellectual capacities. Outlaw's positive proposal is that races can be defined using a cluster concept of conditions, where a long list of disjunctive conditions are severally sufficient, and possession of at least one is necessary.

The philosophers' normative claims are also diverse. Du Bois argues that race, biologically, should be conserved in order for the race to develop its message for humanity - *as a race*. He can not argue for anything other than biological conservation of race because, as Appiah points out, his others criteria or signifiers of race are a posteriori. Appiah, on the other hand, does not deny the reality of race as a social concept or tool, but makes the normative statement that race can do nothing beneficial for humanity. The very term was founded on such misguided ideas that there is no reason to insist on maintaining to the term. He does not just suggest that all that exist are communities of meaning, but that communities of meaning is all we *should* see the world as consisting of.

Outlaw, on the other hand, supports Du Bois in his proposal that race, even as a biological cluster concept, should be conserved, or order that the race-ethnic life-world can help develop individuals to their fullest potential.

It is clear that there is no singular condition or set of conditions necessary and essential to the definition of race. However, this does not mean, as Appiah suggests, that they can not be defined at all. That race is used, inexactly and flawed as the usage may be, indicates that there is something people use to identify races. Insofar as race is a social construct, its conditions are also socially constructed. Their inaccuracy does not make them any more influential in people's behaviors and attitudes. If race, because it is the source of injustice, needs to be accounted for when fighting injustice, so do the conditions people associate with it. Outlaw is right; race is defined by a cluster concept. There are several characteristics that people use to identify themselves or others as members of a race. Most often, skin color and facial features are primary. When this does not yield "accurate" results, one refers to parentage or country of "origin." In fact, outside of these four conditions, one would be hard-pressed to "prove" one's racial identity to others.<sup>4</sup> However, one does not need to satisfy all four conditions. A child could have completely white physical features and be able to "pass" for white; but if the parents are considered black so is the child. One could have black features, but if his family has been in India for hundreds of years he is simply a dark Indian or Asian.

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<sup>4</sup> One must prove her race to others because race is a social concept, it must have meaning only in a social environment. Race has no function unless one's claim to it is recognized by others, either positively or negatively.

Appiah, however, is correct in his normative claim. Though race, as it is understood today, may satisfy the cluster concept with the four aforementioned conditions, it does not follow that it must stay this way. Just because people have found “meaning” through their racial groupings (though even this is contestable) does not mean that people must continue to develop and progress only through, and according to, our current race conceptions. Appiah’s proposal that we eliminate the term “race” may be a little premature, in that racism still exists and must be dealt with by taking race into account. But it *is* a longer term goal that our misguided conceptions about what race is will eventually be eliminated, along with the horrible ramifications of the misuse of race, rendering the term meaningless and useless. Outlaw is wrong in proposing that individuals can only be fully developed through the paradigm of race. Another important flaw in Outlaw’s proposal is the assertion that only the racial or ethnic life-world can provide the necessary nourishment for individual development, implying that one’s primary identification is, and should be, her race. This must not be the case for every individual, and certainly is not, as will be discussed further in chapter eight.

For now, we turn to the question of why it is that Americans of color, besides being subjugated and marginalized, have been subject to the particular accusation of being less “American” and as a result of this accusation why it is that many Americans of color report having an “identity” conflict particularly between their being American and a person of color.



### 3.2 WHITENESS IN AMERICA

*He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. (Du Bois, Souls 39; ch. 1)*

Race in general, and whiteness in particular, has had a precarious history in America. Though it is now largely recognized that race is socially constructed, its construction in the United States has been more strongly shaped by political and economic agendas. Though it is also true that whiteness has been a gate through which many have accessed advantageous positions, that race should play a role in the definition of what is American – who a person *is* rather than simply what they can *have* or *do* - is particularly disturbing for Americans of color.

Having spent a few years in Egypt, my husband and I quickly learned what the common foreign perception of America and Americans is. Given our South Asian backgrounds and style of dress, our physical appearance allowed us to “blend in” in Egypt, an unintentional cover that was quickly betrayed once we opened our mouths to speak. Queries soon followed about where we were from, and we adamantly asserted our American-ness. Knowing full well that they wanted to know where we were “really” from, we refused to succumb to their perception that we must really be from somewhere other than America. We sometimes explicitly explained that Americans come in all colors, shapes, and religions, and that though all they saw of America was Hollywood and MTV, a larger, more diverse America exists.

It was very difficult for people to accept us as Americans because we were not white; how has it come to be that within America and abroad, American-ness has become synonymous with whiteness? The answer lies in much of the same story as was given for the development on the concept of race, but read from a different angle. While in that story, race was constructed to subjugate and oppress groups of people politically and economically, a simultaneous construction of what it meant to be American was also taking place. The current perception of American-as-white can be attributed to two historical legacies: explicit political exclusion of people of color from legal citizenship and political participation, and de facto exclusion from the means by which one could become economically successful.

In the 17th century, much of American political discourse used terms such as “savage” and “barbarous” to describe the Native Americans with whom they conflicted and hoped to convert to Christianity. Colonial charters of Virginia, Carolina, and Rhode Island made explicit aims of propagating Christianity among the “ignorant Indians” in order to bring them to “civility and humanity.” Between this time and the first American Naturalization Act in 1790, the term “white” was used to confer rights to certain people and to restrict the rights of others. It was used in the Articles of Confederation. Though the Declaration of Independence limited voting rights to property owners without specific mention of race (or gender), this was a de facto limitation of the enterprise to a small percentage of elite white males. When the Constitution was adopted in 1787, states were given the power to regulate their own voting laws that in most cases limited voting rights explicitly to free white males. In 1790, with the first American Naturalization Act, it is

made explicit for the first time that only whites can become citizens of the United States of America.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, That any Alien being a free white person, who shall have resided within the limits and under the jurisdiction of the United States for the term of two years, may be admitted to become a citizen thereof on application to any common law Court of record in any one of the States wherein he shall have resided for the term of one year at least, and making proof to the satisfaction of such Court that he is a person of good character, and taking the oath or affirmation prescribed by law to support the Constitution of the United States, which Oath or Affirmation such Court shall administer, and the Clerk of such Court shall record such Application, and the proceedings thereon; and thereupon such person shall be considered as a Citizen of the United States.

But this act did not introduce the connection between citizenship and “whiteness.”

It was simply reflecting the standard political rhetoric of the time. As Matthew Frye Jacobson explains, “in practice the idea of citizenship had become thoroughly entwined with the idea of ‘whiteness’ (and maleness) because what a citizen really as, at bottom, was someone who could help put down a slave rebellion or participate in Indian wars” (25). That whiteness should be used to mark this designation seems to be due to the banal reason that it was simply the easiest way to distinguish between the powerful group and the “others”; white skin color was easily identifiable, and not easily masked. It was an a posteriori designation, used to justify and maintain the hierarchical political and economic structures of the new republic. The designation was bolstered by the simultaneous construction of race that was occurring globally. This process, then, is apparently not dissimilar to the process of race construction. Just as whiteness-as-a-race

took on strong normative values to justify political and economic agendas, so too did whiteness-as-American.

That skin color was originally a tool of, or given excuse for, exclusion, rather than something prized in its own right, is born witness by certain phenomena in the history of citizenship in this country.

### 3.2.1 “Hispanics”

The Mexican-American war was caused by the annexation of Texas by the United States in 1845, a territory whose secession Mexico refused to recognize. The war lasted from 1846 to 1848, and was ended by the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. In addition to the land “sale” known as the Mexican Cession, the Treaty granted citizenship rights for Mexicans in article 8.

Those who shall prefer to remain in the said territories may either retain the title and rights of Mexican citizens, or acquire those of citizens of the United States. But they shall be under the obligation to make their election within one year from the date of the exchange of ratifications of this treaty; and those who shall remain in the said territories after the expiration of that year, without having declared their intention to retain the character of Mexicans, shall be considered to have elected to become citizens of the United States.

Since naturalized citizenship was established in 1790 as an exclusively white enterprise, Mexicans, and consequently other people deemed Hispanic, had to be classified as whites. Ronald Bayor explains:

Mexicans entered the political framework of this country in the legal sense in complex and not altogether unfavorable ways. On paper, the treaty promised rights that seemed surprising, given the ways Mexicans had been positioned racially during the war. Described in disparaging terms as a mixed-race population, they were nonetheless granted citizenship rights in

the treaty – rights to this point granted to people entering American civic society only if they were white. Acting on these rights, however, and especially on the right to vote, would prove difficult and often impossible. (77)

One of the more infamous modern manifestations of this paradox was the 1954 Supreme Court case *Hernandez v. Texas*. The allegation in the case was that discrimination against Mexican-Americans took place in grand jury selection in Texas. While the Court agreed that discrimination in jury selection was unconstitutional, it struggled over whether Mexicans constituted a distinct and protected group and were therefore “deserving” of constitutional protection. According to the Court, and consistent with the implications of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexicans did not constitute a distinct race. In order to prove the claim of the case, the petitioner had to prove that Mexicans constituted a distinct and separate class. Ian F. Haney Lopez discusses this case in “Racism on Trial.” The defendants’ principal expert, Joan Moore, “defined Mexican group identity along four axes: group distinctiveness as recognized by society as a whole; concentrated socioeconomic patterns; shared cultural traditions; and intergroup relations” (43). His research showed that though officially classified as White, Mexicans functioned and were treated as a distinct group not unlike racial groups. His conclusion was further corroborated by the fact that several state institutions collected statistics on “Mexicans.” The census bureau also attempted to track this group. In other words, Mexicans were perceived socially as distinct, were recognized as such, de facto, by state and federal institutions, and were marginalized. However, they were not immediately

privity to constitutional protection from systematic discrimination because they were, due to a politically motivated act in 1848, officially considered “white.”

### 3.2.2 Irish

The definition of white has had a tenuous history in America, as Lillian Rubin indicates:

The dark-skinned Italians and eastern European Jews who came in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries didn't look very white to the fair-skinned Americans who were here then. Indeed, the same people we now call white – Italians, Jews, Irish – were seen as another race at that time. Not black or Asian, it's true, but an alien other, a race apart, although one that didn't have a clearly defined name. (420)

The Great Famine of Ireland forced millions to flee to America; those who left were peasants, strongly Gaelic in culture, and Catholic. The great influx of Irish immigrants to America roused resentment and hatred in the native-born population. The traits ascribed to them were not dissimilar from those used for antebellum blacks. The very whiteness of the Irish was called into question. They were portrayed in cartoons as racially ambiguous or subhuman; they were considered lazy and vulgar. Their poverty, strong Gaelic culture and Catholicism (as opposed to American republican Protestantism) provided additional fodder for hostility. They were referred to by many, including ethnologists, as members of the Celtic “race” and were considered inferior to Anglo-Saxons. Though their skin color was virtually indistinguishable from other, native-born whites, their whiteness was widely questioned and challenged. As David Roediger explains in The Wages of Whiteness:

Political cartoonists played on the racial ambiguity of the Irish by making their stock 'Paddy' character resemble nothing so much as an ape. In short, it was by no means clear that the Irish were white. (133-4)

The Irish were commonly likened to African-Americans. They lived together in slums, they toiled in the same hard labor jobs; they were poor and vilified. Their common social plight and economic conditions at time made allies of the groups. They often socialized together, both casually and romantically. Given the similarity in treatment between the black and Irish populations, it is not surprising that there existed an Irish abolitionist movement. The Irish of Ireland saw reflections of their own struggle with the British in the plight of the black American slave, and urged their counterparts in America to unite with the blacks against "white supremacy." The movement's leader, Daniel O'Connell, explicitly likened the enslavement of American Blacks to the British colonization of Ireland.

Yet, the movement remained Irish and never gained significant support amongst Irish-Americans whose situation, like that of other non-whites, was a desperate one. They sought a means of being accepted into the folds of whiteness, and consequently social and economic upward mobility. Irish-Americans found it to be against their interests to identify with blacks; in order to thrive in America they had to become white. Several factors facilitated this transformation.

First and foremost, the Irish could reasonably make a case for being white based on their skin color. Based on their physical features, their claim to whiteness could be justified if there were a strong enough impetus to do so. Despite the social opposition they encountered and their de facto racial ambiguity, Irish immigrants had the official

legal status of “free white persons” and were therefore eligible for naturalization and access to the American political system.

Robert Lee asserts, “Their concentration in large numbers in urban centers and their eligibility to vote as naturalized citizens gave the Irish an almost immediate foothold in American politics at the local level” (70). The Democratic Party embraced the Irish-American population as white. The Irish provided political strength in the form of numbers for the Party, but they were kept from higher positions of power within the Party. The Democrats labeled the Irish white in an attempt to consolidate a significant white vote amongst the populace to endorse their racist and white supremacist agendas.

For their part, the Irish fully embraced their newfound whiteness as the only means of fully integrating into American society. This integration provided psychological comfort to a desperate people, as well as political and economic benefits. In fact, the Irish went further than simply embracing whiteness; they championed for it and redefined its boundaries. Indicative of this was their stance towards non-white workers. Lee continues:

Irish political leaders were thus well situated to mobilize working-class support for the Irish claim to a white racial identity that could contain significant cultural and religious differences. They did so by leading white working-class resistance to both the abolition of black slavery in the 1860s and the Chinese proletarian labor in the 1870s.” (70)

Though the main source of job competition for the Irish was from other whites, they fought against non-white workers, particularly recently freed blacks and Chinese. They did this not only because blacks and Chinese were less able to fight back, but because asserting their ethnicity (Irish) as opposed to their race (white) would have



provoked significant backlash from native-born workers. The Irish became the leaders of the white labor movement, which championed for the rights of white American families against non-white labor, immigrant and black. In assuming this role, Irish were able to fully amalgamate into the white working class and American society.

### 3.2.3 The One-Drop Rule

Examining the history of the one-drop rule in America is instructive not only in seeing how blacks were treated, but how whiteness was constructed, restricted, and deployed for political and economic purposes. The one-drop rule also serves as an indication that “race” - even in the absence of its purported corresponding skin color or physical features - was but a pretense for political and economic exclusion. Joel Williamson in New People and Floyd James Davis in Who is Black? provide valuable narratives about the one-drop rule and its development in various time periods and geographical locations in America.

The one-drop rule is essentially that a person with any known African black ancestry is considered black. The rule has not had a consistent history in America; it has been adopted and neglected depending on social and economic circumstances. It is also a uniquely American rule; it is a testament to the significance of the one-drop rule and its value in revealing the controversial nature of the relationship between race and American-ness that no other country has such a rule. In other societies, racial mixing, even when it occurred between blacks and whites, resulted in one or more new groups, sometimes allied with the dominant race to the degree that they are close to them in

“blood.” Williamson and Davis explore why America is anomalous in its consideration of “mixed-blood” or “mixed-race” groups.

The development of the one-drop rule is really a reflection of the development of attitudes regarding miscegenation, defined as the marriage or cohabitation between a man and woman of different races. Though the term was coined in the mid-nineteenth century, the phenomenon was an important social issue in America since the early colonial experience. Williamson explains what the situation was like in the Upper South:

The first significant mixing of blacks and whites came in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, by far the most of it in the Chesapeake world of Virginia and Maryland. Most of these first mulattoes were probably the offspring not of white planters and their black slave women, as were many of the later issues, but rather of white “servants” and blacks.  
(7)

He explains that these early white servants were of the underclass, and many were subject to ethnic prejudice (e.g., Irish, Scottish). They were not as influenced by the “color” code as the white elite, and thus were not averse to sexual contact with those who were most readily available, black or white.

Though the prevailing attitudes about miscegenation resulted in public whippings of both white and black, male and female, a “relatively complete body of law” concerning the phenomenon was not established until 1662. Starting that year, the children of slave mothers were considered slaves, a departure of English rule that children adopted the status of their fathers. As for children of white (free) mothers, they were initially considered free. Still not accepting of the act that led to their birth, the Virginia assembly punished the white mother with jail-time, financial penalties, temporary servitude, and eventually relegated the Mulatto child to servitude. As for the

free mulatto child, Davis explains that, “although there were legal uncertainties, by the early eighteenth century the one-drop rule had become the social definition of who is black in the upper South (33-34). The large increase in the population of free blacks and mulattoes caused by manumission during the American Revolution pressured lawmakers to draw a clear, legal line defining who was black and who was white. In Virginia, a Negro was defined as someone with a black parent or grandparent, allowing up someone to be legally white with anything less than one-fourth “black blood.” This amount was too much for many whites, and “pressure grew to make the legal definition correspond to what had legally become the customary social definition of a Negro as a person with any degree of black ancestry” (34).

In the lower south, mulattoes, who were mainly children of wealthier white men and black slave women, comprised a third class between blacks and whites, often used to control the unmixed black slaves. This utilization was common in Barbados, from where many of the area’s first slaves and settlers came. Miscegenation was widespread and accepted in the lower south, and the mulatto class came to be seen as a buffer class between whites and blacks.

Close to 1850, however, with the increased threat to the institution of slavery, attitudes in the entire south began changing and converging towards a unified stance – one that amounted to the one-drop rule. In an effort to defend slavery and suppress slave revolts and their free black support, mulattoes were increasingly considered black. A particular telling instance of this shift in attitudes was the treatment of the 1861 Negro regiment, comprised of mulattoes and formed to defend Louisiana in the civil war. They

were disarmed, however, by their white officers. When they defected to the North, they were treated badly by the whites in the Northern forces. This helped shift the feelings of mulattoes' own identification towards blacks rather than whites. The shift towards a black-white dichotomy was repeatedly reinforced by simultaneous attitudes of whites towards mulattoes and mulattoes' own increasing identification with blacks due to their mistreatment.

During the Reconstruction, the one-drop rule was used in addition to Jim Crow laws, to protect the economic interests of white workers. With a limited number of jobs and a large increase in the labor pool because of newly freed black men, whites needed to ensure that they had the greatest advantage when competing, particularly with skilled mulatto men and women, for jobs. This movement was bolstered by "the Ku Klux Klan and other vigilante groups to protect white womanhood" (Davis 49). Having no real choice, the mulattoes themselves began accepted the one-drop rule, more closely aligning themselves with blacks, and holding many leadership positions in the southern black community.

Moving into the early twentieth century, other social attitudes began to figure more prominently, such as white "guilt" about the large number of mulattoes, and paranoia about blacks passing for whites, to the extent that association with blacks was often used as proof for the blackness of a seemingly white person, more so than actual biological information.

By the mid 1920s, the one-drop rule was firmly in place:

Blacks and whites had been increasingly segregated since the 1850s and miscegenation within the black population had lightened its color and

moved it toward homogeneity. This emergence of what many then called a “brown” people was accompanied by the increasing alliance of mulattoes with other blacks. Hastened by the oppressiveness of the Jim Crow system, this alliance was led by such mulatto leaders as W. E. B. Du Bois, William Monroe Trotter, James Weldon Johnson, A. Philip Randolph, and Walter White, as they struggled against Jim Crow segregation and all discrimination against blacks. In the racially polarized nation of the early 1920s, old alignments were gone as mulattoes allied themselves totally with the black community, demanding their rights as blacks. Despite a lingering preference for lightness, mulattoes had come to insist that all persons with any black ancestry are black, even if they appear white. By 1915, white America... had accepted the one-drop rule completely, and at least by 1925 mulattoes and blacks in general were convinced that no alternative definition was possible. Finally, the nation had become firmly committed to the one-drop rule – North and South, whites and blacks, even mulatto elites... (Davis 58)

Through the twentieth century the one-drop rule was further advocated for by the whites and accepted by un-mixed blacks and mulattoes, bolstered especially by the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. The one-drop rule served changing political and economic functions during its tenure, but it is now a socially accepted fact that a person with any black ancestry is black, even when such judgments seem inconsistent with physical appearance or ancestral make-up. Such perceptions are based on a false belief that race is a natural, biological distinction, rather than the politically and economically motivated social construction as it always has been.

The history of whiteness in American illuminates how socially constructed and politically and economically motivated race truly is, though the fact that race has no biological, scientific, or “natural” basis was already established in chapter 4. In the case of the Hispanic community, their attributed whiteness did not even have any social

ramifications since they were treated as non-whites through discrimination and prejudice. Their assigned whiteness was a purely political scheme - one that, ironically, exacerbated the prejudice directed towards them, or at least inhibited their access to protection from discrimination.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, the Irish, who would theoretically satisfy purported biological or natural criteria of belonging to the white race as well as the supposed physiognomical features, were initially excluded from the folds of whiteness for the economic threat they posed as labor competition and the threat their inclusion would impose upon existing socio-economic hierarchies. With respect to blacks, the one-drop rule was adhered to in various degrees depending on the primarily economic conditions and political interests of powerful whites at the time.

This history specifically highlights how whiteness has been deployed to procure privilege so strongly that, even though whiteness is no longer a *legal* requirement for American-ness as of 1968 with the ratification of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution, it remains a *de facto* requirement for access to the opportunities American has to offer.

What this history also clearly demonstrates is that the “whiteness” of a group of people was not a judgment made first, with subsequent treatment based on that judgment. Rather, those in power first judged how a group was to be treated, and accorded or denied whiteness, or degrees thereof, accordingly. Due to a posteriori biological “explanation”

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<sup>5</sup> An illustration of the ambiguity and arbitrary nature of racial and ethnic definitions is given in the Richard Pryor movie, *The Bingo Long Traveling All-Stars & Motor Kings*. Set in the year 1930, blacks were still not allowed to play in Major League baseball. The characters, though black American, masquerade as Cubans because, regardless of physical features, “Hispanics” are considered white and can therefore play in the Major Leagues.

and normative justifications of racial superiority, whiteness lost its initial function and took on a life of its own. Whiteness was no longer coveted just because it was a path to citizenship or economic inclusion. Though modern legal injunctions barred the usage of such racist standards, whiteness came to be prized for its own sake. A large part of this valuation of whiteness was due to its historical connection to American-ness and, therefore, belonging – a connection that through time became less contingent and more necessary.

This legacy, combined with the fact that whiteness was often a prerequisite for social and economic opportunity, explains why the popular perception both inside and outside of America is that “real” Americans are white. The political and economic elite are the face of a society; in America, these elite are predominantly white. It also shapes policy and agendas in a manner that shapes public consciousness of what it means to be American. Public holidays are European in origin, even those which purport to be Christian. Educational curriculums focus on Eurocentric educational and historical legacies, without any qualification or disclaimer. In universities, classes about the history of philosophy are really about the history of European philosophy without any qualifiers – as if the standard or default philosophy is European. Even when other philosophical traditions are studied, they are forced into a European ideological framework.

Whites are over-represented, compared to their percentage in the general population, in high profile professions and public cultural spheres. This over-representation is a direct result of the social and economic advantages historically and deliberately accorded to whites. To Americans and foreigners alike, the face of America

is a white one, and it is with this face that Americans of color must contend when asserting their American-ness.

It should be noted that the popular perception of who an American is does not only imply racial whiteness. In many ways, American-ness tends to be defined, and demanded, “thickly” as well. Protestantism is the preferred religion, which is why John F. Kennedy’s Catholicism or Mitt Romney’s Mormonism was in issue during their presidential campaigns, and partly why Jewish and Irish Catholic inclusion in American whiteness was strongly resisted.

Typically, thickness implies the adoption of certain cultural practices. There are several practices that are uniquely American and easily identifiable – barbeques, celebrating Thanksgiving and particular other holidays, driving pickup trucks and SUVs. Other practices are identifiable only when threatened by their opposites; thick American-ness often demands a rejection of particular practices that are not considered mainstream. For example, thick American-ness would demand a rejection of the *hijab*;<sup>6</sup> this is equally a positive exhortation to display and beautify one’s hair along with the rest of one’s body as a sign of American women’s “liberation.” Some professional women describe being reprimanded in the workplace for wearing jewelry that looks “too ethnic;” this is an exhortation to wear a particular type of jewelry or dress in a certain way that is common amongst white people. Though many other practices may be labeled as being non-mainstream (certain body piercings, for example), only those customs which are commonly practiced by racial or ethnic minorities are also accused of being un-

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<sup>6</sup> The hijab refers to the headscarf often worn by adherent Muslim women.



American. The insistence upon whiteness, then, has implications for one's behavior, demanding that racial or ethnic minorities adopt practices that are broadly prevalent amongst white Americans.

Americans of color, however, must also face other challenges when making their case as Americans. One particular challenge comes both from within racial and ethnic minority communities and imposed from the outside. This challenge comes from a different direction, not making positive claims about what it means to be American (i.e. white), but rather about what it means to be a member of a racial or ethnic minority group. These claims are largely the product of the powerful and popular political multicultural rhetoric.

### 3.3 PROGRESSIVE RACISM

*... and the other race groups are striving, each in its own way, to develop for civilization its particular message, its particular ideal, which shall help to guide the world nearer and nearer that perfection of human life for which we all long, that "one far off Divine event.*  
(Du Bois, Reader 23; "Conservation")

In tracing the history of modern identity politics, or the politics of difference, it was shown how the fall of hierarchical societies and the rise of the idea of authenticity gave birth to the claim that a group of people have the right to assert their authentic life message. For minority groups, this often entails changing externally ascribed negative life scripts to positive ones. However, the premise upon which negative life scripts were based remained unchanged, namely what Seyla Benhabib calls the "reductionist sociology of culture."

Gloria Yamato introduces the phenomenon anecdotally in her article "Something About the Subject Makes it Hard to Name":

Now, the newest form of racism that I'm hip to is unaware/self-righteous racism. The "good white" racist attempts to shame Blacks into being blacker, scorns Japanese-Americans who don't speak Japanese, and knows more about the Chicano/a community than the folks who make up the community. They assigned themselves as the "good whites," as opposed to the "bad whites," and are often so busy telling people of color what issues in the Black, Asian, Indian, Latino/a communities should be that they don't have time to deal with their errant sisters and brothers in the white community. Which means that people of color are still left to deal with what the "good whites" don't want to... racism. (92)

It is important to point out that such attitudes exist within minority groups as well; intragroup accusations and labels of not being a real x (where x is any racial or ethnic minority identity) abound. A coconut or Oreo is someone who is black or brown (South

Asian or Hispanic) on the outside, but white on the inside; a Twinkie is yellow (East Asian) on the outside, white on the inside. Often, many successful minority group members are accused of not adequately identifying with their racial or ethnic group - of selling out to whites to get ahead. Most recently during the 2008 presidential campaign, President Obama was accused of not being a “real” black man, or not being black “enough.”

Benhabib describes this as:

... faulty epistemology, which has grave normative political consequences for how we think injustices among groups should be redressed and how we think human diversity and pluralism should be furthered... Whether conservative or progressive, such attempts [to preserve and propagate cultures and cultural differences] share faulty epistemic premises: (1) that cultures are clearly delineable wholes; (2) that cultures are congruent with population groups and that a noncontroversial description of the culture of a human group is possible; and (3) that even if cultures and groups do not stand in one-to-one correspondence, even if there is more than one culture within a human group and more than one group that may possess the same cultural traits, this poses no important problems for politics or policy. (4)

While this faulty epistemology was, and is, used by conservatives to keep groups separate, progressives use it in their attempts to combat domination and misrecognition. This phenomenon has give rise to another usage for the term authenticity: that to be considered a truly authentic member of a racial or ethnic minority group, one must embody particular, pre-determined cultural traits. The same standard can be applied to entire groups of people. While the earlier mentioned notion of authenticity (authenticity<sub>1</sub>), originating in the eighteenth century and asserting the right and duty of a person to live according to his internal, unique message, itself gave rise to doubts about

whether such authenticity<sub>1</sub> is possible given the dialogical nature of identity development, this second sense of authenticity (authenticity<sub>2</sub>) has its own host of larger problems.

### 3.3.1 Authenticity<sub>2</sub>

Today, the idea of authenticity<sub>2</sub> is so deeply engrained in a person that it produces strong reactions to examples of in-authenticity<sub>2</sub>. An acquaintance of mine, while on a trip to Egypt, took a traditional felucca ride on the Nile. After a few minutes in the boat, the felucca driver received a phone call on his mobile phone. The acquaintance was so amused by the scene of an Egyptian man in very “traditional” Egyptian dress seemingly poor and from a rural area speaking on a mobile phone while driving a felucca in the middle of the Nile River that she immediately took out her camera and began taking pictures of the man.

This incident is a clear example of problematic nature of the idea of authenticity<sub>2</sub>, and its underlying prejudicial assumptions even seemingly liberal minds are prone to embrace. The juxtaposition of the mobile phone and the “traditional” Egyptian rural man seemed so strange to my acquaintance that she was compelled to photograph the scene. She would later show the pictures to others, describing the polluting affects Western culture is having on the common Egyptian person. A similar phenomenon occurred when a picture of a Native American straddling a snowmobile appeared in the *New York Times*. The picture echoes the article’s lamentation about the demise of Native American culture.

Linda Alcoff explains the phenomena as commoditization of indigenous peoples by Anglo people. Indigenous cultures are view viewed as having preserved their ancient

wisdom by avoiding the modernization forces that bring with them materialism, consumerism, and a spiritual void. This view is condescending in that those claiming to “protect” these people’s cultural “integrity” do so with a sense of superiority; the Anglo culture grows and improves and can learn from stagnant “native” cultures whereas native cultures are “protected” from social evolution. Any foreign or “modern” threat to a native way of life is a threat to native wisdom upon which everyone else is so dependent. This commoditization was also manifested when my acquaintance did not at any time feel that perhaps she should ask permission from the Egyptian man, sitting not more than ten feet away, to photograph him.

Not only is this protectionist view insulting but, as Benhabib claims, it is pragmatically problematic. If outsiders strive to preserve ancient culture, which version are they seeking to preserve? Certainly the unsullied version of a native culture that is being “protected” now is vastly different than the same people’s culture 500 years ago. If they are trying to protect cultural integrity and purity, it would follow that the culture from 500 years ago was more pure, being even less sullied. It is not difficult to see how this logic leads to practically infinite regress. The idea that a native culture must be preserved as it is presumes that the culture is fixed, and is now under threat to change due to foreign and modern forces. But cultures have always changed, due to both external and internal forces, and there is nothing wrong with that. For one, people to dictate the terms of another community’s social evolution is highly condescending and misguided. It also reinforces the dominant versus dominated relationships amongst different social groups.

Perhaps the most condescending aspect of the notion of authenticity and native culture preservation is the notion that “native” people need someone from the outside to protect them from the onslaught of foreign and modern ideas, technology, and commodities. It assumes that the people are completely undiscerning in their choice of social practices. The paradigm also assumes that there is no internal, social means of “protection” or discernment of foreign influences.

Authenticity<sub>2</sub> is often contrasted with contamination, the case for which Appiah makes in a 2006 New York Times article, “The Case for Contamination.” He cites a study by media scholar Larry Strelitz in which Western media programs were viewed by African audiences through the lens of their own cultural values. Their praise and criticism of the show as based on those ideals that they already embraced. Far from being blank slates upon which the West could write its narrative, these audiences were critically assessing foreign products.

Appiah further adds that not only are these people able to deal with the onslaught of Western ideas in a critical manner, but they sometimes turn these ideas against their proponents. He calls attention to the fact that the freedom movements in Ghana, India and Pakistan were all spearheaded by Western-educated individuals, who used “Western” ideals of democracy, freedom, and equality against their oppressors. Of course these ideals are not merely Western, but they are the ideals that the West loudly proclaims as its own.

He adds that the world is changing, and the health and even survival of particular peoples may depend on cultural contamination. Those that bemoan the threat of

homogeneity that accompanies globalization should also recognize that globalization has also empowered many communities with clean water, schools, and effective medicines.

If authenticity<sub>2</sub> is problematic on a global scale, it also is in America insofar as America has a multi-racial and multi-ethnic population. Racial and ethnic groups within America, despite their history in America with respect to the nature of immigration or length of time here, are subjugated to ideas of authenticity. It is this subjugation that Yamato and Benhabib allude to when describing conservative and progressive racism.

Conservative racists see groups or individuals that embody perceived authentic<sub>2</sub> cultural traits as different, un-American, unwilling to assimilate, and, therefore, deserving of contempt. Those who take on “American” attitudes and habits are praiseworthy, precisely because of their perceived rejection of “native” culture. Liberal racism is based on the same premise of authenticity<sub>2</sub> but with the opposite attitude. Liberal racism demands that cultural groups and their members remain authentic<sub>2</sub>, and bemoan those who adopt inauthentic<sub>2</sub> ones. This denies people of color a choice in their actions or behavior, and denies a cultural group the possibility of cultural evolution.

### 3.3.2 Thin and Thick Identity

Authenticity is primarily a notion of the external perspective of a culture; similar tendencies exist within social and cultural groups. Closely related to the idea of authenticity is Tommy Shelby’s idea of thin and thick blackness. When discussing anti-black racism and the black solidarity required to work against it, he discusses what criteria for blackness, or black cultural identification, should be used for the purpose of

black solidarity. He proposes that black solidarity should be based upon shared experience of anti-black racism and a commitment to end it. He differentiates between two modes of blackness. Thin blackness “is a vague and socially imposed category of ‘racial’ difference that serves to distinguish groups on the basis of their members having certain visible, inherited physical characteristics and a particular biological ancestry” (207). Compared to other standards of blackness, this is a bare minimum requirement to be identified as black. Thick blackness requires commitment to ethnic, cultural or other racial characteristics. Shelby explains that these modes of thickness can be ambiguous and divisive, they can subject “thin” blacks to criticism of inauthenticity<sub>2</sub> (even though there are several good reasons to be only thinly black), and are essentially irrelevant to questions of political and social rights. True to his pragmatic stance, thick blackness is problematic and unnecessary. Thin blackness is all that is needed to achieve the goals of defense against racism, and so that is all black solidarity should require.

Therefore, inauthenticity<sub>2</sub> is a claim that can be lodged towards members within the same group, if they define their group’s common characteristics in a “thick” manner. Just as an outsider may insist that a pure native culture consist of certain characteristics, an insider may also insist that all members of her group embrace certain cultural practices and values.

The practice of thick cultural identification started as a reaction to forceful and oppressive powers demanding a rejection of all culturally-specific practices and “assimilation” into mainstream culture. Slaves were forced to replace their names with Anglo ones, their religion with Christianity, and their habits with European-like ones. A



strict adherence to cultural traits was therefore a form of resistance to cultural oppression on an individual and group level.

In today's era of popular multiculturalism and globalization, the same demands for thick cultural identification deny a person his individual choice about which principles and practices to adopt from the many available to him through exposure many different systems of belief and practice. Though some oppressive forces still attempt to assimilate minority cultures into a mainstream culture, these forces can now be opposed in many other ways besides demanding that an entire group adopts, often disingenuously, perceived authentic<sub>2</sub> cultural practices. One such way is challenging the notions of authenticity<sub>2</sub> and identity conflict that are taken for granted in America.

### 3.4 A SUMMARY OF THE PROBLEM

It is useful at this point, before giving my positive case for a solution to the problem of “double-consciousness” or the assertion that an American of color is not fully American, to give a summary of the context which frames the problem as described thus far.

America, from its inception, has had a race problem. Proposed solutions vary according to perceived causes of the problem, though it is widely accepted that much social injustice is a repercussion of, and directly caused by, social misrecognition. One’s identity development is dialogical in nature, and so affected by the social realities of her environment. Personal identity is also partly composed of features that are shared with a group of others, which compose the basis for social identities. Insofar as social groups, such as racial and ethnic minorities, are misrecognized and insofar as one’s personal identity partakes in the social one, one’s personal identity is similarly affected by group misrecognition. Group misrecognition in popular discourse also affects one’s personal interactions with others who are informed by the faulty discourse. In other words, the issue is not just that the television is implying a black person is more violent than his white counterpart, but that his neighbor internalizes and implies this through words or actions.

Faithful group recognition is therefore crucial in solving the particular problem of “double-consciousness,” since this is a particular problem contained within the broader auspices of America’s race problem. Double-consciousness is a result of the popular idea

that to be a person of color makes one less, or even un-, American. This assertion is manifested through bigoted direct accusations (“Go back to your own country”), direct accusations that are not intended to harm (“Wow, your English is so good”), as well as through subtle social phenomena (the encumbered self).

To understand the exact nature of the problem of double-consciousness, with the intent to solve it, it is important to understand the basic ideologies and historical phenomena that gave rise to it. Most fundamental is the idea of race. A majority thinkers now dismiss the idea that race is biological; race was socially constructed to differentiate between peoples encountered by Europeans during the Age of Exploration. Motivated by political and economic agendas of domination and subjugation, some Europeans then used race and consequent racial hierarchies to justify their oppression of others. This usage was bolstered by contemporary scientific developments that inspired many to liken race to “species.”

Though forthright statements of this nature were eventually rejected, remnants of the idea that race is biological in nature remain widespread even today, though more are recognizing that race is and always has been a social construction. Even more prominent is the presence of race in our personal and national consciousness and its employment for various goals. Some thinkers, such as Du Bois and Outlaw, promote using race as a tool to not only help racially oppressed groups but to also develop the talents of the groups and their individuals even in the theoretical absence of racism. Others, such as Appiah, think that only harm can come out of a concept based on falsehood and so steeped in

historical injustice. Nobody, however, can deny how large of a role race actually plays in America's social structure and consciousness.

That a person of color is seen as less or un-American is a result of two things: the history of whiteness in America, the remnants of which are still strong today, and "progressive" racism, which demands people of color to think and behave in particular ways.

Whiteness in America, like race globally, was used to demarcate and maintain a political and economic elite. That whiteness in America had particularly political motivations is born witness by the anomalous description of Hispanics as "white," the difficult inclusion of Irish in the folds of whiteness, and the gradual entrenchment of the one-drop rule. That whiteness was for so long an official and legal gateway to economic and political opportunity has left a legacy of the present "virtual" gateway in two ways. Firstly, it has been engrained in the consciousness of America that to fully take advantage of America - or to be *truly* American - one must be white. Secondly, social, political and economic institutions have developed in such a way to perpetuate institutional racial bias in favor of white success and minority failure. The demand for whiteness is accompanied by a demand for those behaviors prevalent amongst, or commonly associated with, whites.

Progressive racism can originate both outside a group and from within it. The notion of authenticity<sub>2</sub> requires that a person of color conform to the particular traditions or cultural habits that comprise (a skewed view of) their minority culture. A group is likewise authentic<sub>2</sub> if it maintains and perpetuates that culture. Within a racial or ethnic

group, members may accuse other members of not acting or identifying enough with the group. These varying internal and external demands make it hard for one to choose a manner of being that is consistent with his personal inclinations and beliefs.

Mindful of avoiding the fundamental theoretical problems already expounded upon, the following is a proposal for how we should think about personal and group identity in order to mitigate the causes and experience of double-consciousness.

## THE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM

### 4.1 NEW MODEL OF IDENTITY

The topic of identity is an elusive one, partly because of its widespread and varied usage. It is an object of study in fields as diverse as philosophy, history, cultural studies, psychology, biology, and sociology. As Verkuyten astutely writes:

Descriptively, an incredibly varied and dissimilar range of phenomena is widely held to be a matter of identity: nationality, gender, individual character, personality, psychological needs, social memberships, group characteristics, intergroup conflicts, and personal uniqueness. All these and more are relevant to ‘who you are’ and therefore are defined as identity issues. In using the same term, there is a tendency to assume that all these things are somehow of the same kind. However, although each of these descriptions of ‘identity’ may tell us something, they do not tell us the same thing. (40)

Various fields reveal different things about what we perceive as identity, but none is comprehensive or exhaustive. It is useful, therefore, to draw upon the ideas of several fields to piece together an effective solution to the problems posed by double-consciousness, a phenomenon that is itself a result of history, sociology, philosophy and psychology.

Erik Erikson was a founding theorist of identity development and its significance in social reality. Joshua Avera explains:

Drawing upon psychoanalytical thought, Erikson posited that identity is linked to the ego’s ability to synthesize societal expectations and relational identifications with individuality and personal agency. Erikson stated: Ego identity then, in its subjective aspect, is the awareness of the fact that there

is a self-sameness and continuity to the ego's synthesizing methods, the style of one's individuality, and that this style coincides with the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for significant others in the immediate community. (50)

Erikson asserts that a person has reached a stage of *identity achievement* when they successfully negotiate conflicting demands of various domains of identity and those of one's identity in the personal (as opposed to collective) realm. Supposedly, then, one does not experience double-consciousness in this stage; it is for the sake of expediting this process that a new conceptual model of identity must be formulated.

Before detailing this model, it is necessary to explain some of the terminology I will be using in the following discussion. Firstly, I will differentiate between "identity" and "identification." I will be using these terms in very specific ways because (1) they will refer to different concepts and (2) the way in which the term "identity" is used is itself a major part of the current problematic conceptual model of identity. "Identity" will be used to refer to one's overall sense of self; it encompasses all of one's ideals, beliefs, commitments, and behavior – conflicted or not. "Identification," on the other hand, will refer to one's affiliations with a particular "domain" of identity – race, gender, religion, profession, etc. So, one's Mexican identification, or identification with Mexican-ness, is part of his identity.

Using the term "identity" when referring only to one's racial affiliation, for example, wrongly implies that one's whole being centers on race. When "identity" is then used to describe one's gender, political and religious affiliation as well, the problem is exacerbated in that there are competing claims on one's essential being. By using

“identification” instead, one is free to identify, to a lesser or greater degree, with multiple domains of identity without surrendering one’s entire identity to any one of them.<sup>7</sup>

Another term that I will use is commonly used in psychology: domains of identity. In psychology, domains of identity typically describe the broad categories of the various types of identifications one may have (e.g., gender, ethnicity, profession, religion). I will use the term in this manner when speaking generally about the categories of social identity; when referring to a specific person, domains of identity will refer to that person’s specific realms of identification (Woman-ness, Indian-ness, doctor-ness, Muslim-ness).

Lastly, the –ness in any given domain (x-ness) is not used to imply that there is some abstract or universal Platonic Form informing each of these domains. This is a very important clarification to make, because asserting a universal Form in which its particular worldly manifestations participate implies that there is something essential or necessary about each domain, the absence of which renders a particular manifestation inauthentic<sub>2</sub>. The particulars may have nothing in common except that they are called x. X-ness is then simply the term that is used to refer collectively to all of the particulars that bear the x label.

Having explained some foundational terminology, we can now begin the construction of a new conceptual framework for identity that will help eliminate the phenomenon of double-consciousness and expedite the process of “identity

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<sup>7</sup> It is worth noting that this usage is different than what is common in social psychology, in which social identity is largely externally imposed, whereas identification is a psychological process by which one feels a connection with a person or group of people to whom they may or may not belong. For example, one can identify with a celebrity and have no actual connection to them.



achievement.” An elimination of double-consciousness requires changes to how we think about race, racial identification, American identification, but most fundamentally how these elements inform personal identity and its relationship with multiple socially-defined-group identity domains. Many philosophers and thinkers, including ones cited in this paper, have criticized one or more of these concepts. The new identity conceptual model I propose critiques all of these elements simultaneously. I will first discuss the problems I see with the rhetoric used to discuss issues of race and identity and propose solutions. I will then give a positive argument for how identity should be conceptualized that not only solves the described problems and double-consciousness but also provides a model that can account for, and provide solutions for, other problems related to race, identity, and social justice.

#### 4.1.1 Race

Most philosophers and thinkers agree that race is primarily a social construction, or at least that what is significant and operative about race is its social characteristics. However, the potent history of race has had lasting effects on both America’s national consciousness and Americans’ personal views about race. Even if race was constructed to satisfy political and economic agendas, the construction worked. We started, and continue, to think about people in terms of races that can be demarcated by physical features or, if physical features are not determinant enough, other “natural” factors such as parentage or country of origin. We also applied normative features to each race.

While the efforts of the twentieth century have done away with official policies based on these normative features, two things remain: America's socio-economic hierarchies that largely follow racial lines and the racial prejudices, deliberate or not, that lie below the surface of American consciousness. Therefore, we can not ignore race and its "defining" factors. Because most people associate blacks with black skin color, it is one of the many de facto sufficient conditions of "the black race."

However, what has changed somewhat, and what needs to continue to change, is our attitude towards race. At a time when race was publicly and explicitly used to discriminate against and subjugate groups of people, race was mostly embraced by the oppressed group and turned into something positive. Outlaw suggests that we should continue to use race as a positive tool for human development. He is wrong; just because race has a social reality now does not mean that we have to surrender resign ourselves to it. Rather, we must work simultaneously on "recognition" and "redistribution" - working on how we think about race and how our political, social, and economic institutions systematically disenfranchise Americans of color. As racial minority groups win more justice, we can collectively let go of our stronghold on the concept of race, at least in the way we think of it now. This directly opposes Outlaw's contention that even if racism were to disappear, we should continue to conserve races in order for racial groups to deliver their full message. What Outlaw overlooks is that race has only maintained its potency for so long precisely because it has been used for racist agendas. Without these agendas, race no longer has any strong footing upon which to remain, or a reason to continue existing in the forceful capacity it does now in America.

We can move towards what Appiah proposes when he talks about communities of meaning - communities that share ideals and principles not by virtue of some socially constructed and externally imposed concept that supposedly binds them, but on their own terms. These communities of meaning may sometimes correspond to currently delineated racial or ethnic groups, but may just as easily transcend them.

#### 4.1.2 Identity

There are two fundamental problems in current thinking about identity, social identifications, and racial identifications in particular: (1) what applies to the group applies in equal measure to the individual and (2) racial “identity” is some discreet, delineated entity.

In his book, Yellow, Frank Wu describes what is wrong with rational discrimination (more commonly referred to as “profiling”). Those who profile are often being rational and efficient; they are using existing statistics to make judgments about a particular person within a demographic group. He reminds us that making generalizations in and of itself is not wrong; “we are required by daily life to make judgments about people with a modicum of data, very quickly, and under stress” and “our ability to generalize is a hallmark of higher intelligence” (196). But what profiling does is “conflate the truth about a group with the truth about an individual” (196). This is wrong because it values efficiency and rationality more than basic rights, such as equality and liberty.

Wu is pointing out the problem with making judgments about the particular based on the general; this is one of the problems underlying identity politics. A group may assert its *aggregate* groups characteristics, but it should not demand that every member have those particular characteristics. The intra-group demand for its members “thickness” makes exactly this mistake. Though the components of a thick racial identity may be present in a group, it is wrong to assume, and even more-so to demand, that all of these characteristics be present even to a large extent in each group member. Arguably, the thick-identity components are necessary for group vitality or survival, but this responsibility does not fall on the shoulders of each individual.

It is also troubling that the centrality, or determinant nature, of social identities with respect to personal identity is not popularly questioned. Though it can not be denied that, in general, externally perceived and imposed social identities play a huge part in one’s idea of who she is and affects her interactions with others, it is not necessary that for every person socially imposed identities are the overriding force in her life. Further, even if it were true that social identities were always the dominant force in a person’s own identity, we should not be afraid to protest the phenomenon and propose changes to mitigate or eliminate it. In other words, even if a particular situation exists does not mean it should continue to exist while we alter our behavior to accommodate it. One way to mitigate the effects of social identity “determinism” and the associated problem of double-consciousness is to develop and adopt an alternative conceptual framework for identity.

Similarly, though race is, by definition, the most important factor for a racial group it does not follow that it will be the most important factor for every individual in that group. Discussion regarding race tend to treat race as the definitive factor in one's personal identity. Taken to an extreme, Outlaw, for example, thinks that race or ethnicity is *the* paradigm through which individuals can contribute their talents to the world. One may argue that because race is the most prominent and problematic group identity in America, any given American will be primarily interpreted through this lens. Consequently, race will inevitably become his most important identity. However, it is logically feasible and empirically demonstrable that a person can, though the force of one's will and convictions, assert a different identity (or multiple identities) as primary or more pertinent to their overall identity. He can affect his own self-image and how others see him.

There must be recognition that though race is arguably the most important issue in identity politics, it is not necessarily the most important issue for every individual; we must take people's multiple identifications into account. Dr. Maxine Baca Zinn and Dr. Bonnie Thornton Dill shed light on this issue in the early 1990s with their development of multiracial (women of color) feminist theory. Though these women formalized the theory, their contention was the same as many other women of color, including Michele Wallace, bell hooks, Alice Walker, Audre Lorde, and Toni Morrison: that second wave feminism (of the 1960s through the 1980s) was essentially dictated by the experiences and needs of upper-class white women. In a field that focuses on gender, these feminists asserted that injustice can not be viewed through one lens only, and that the members'

identities and agendas, even within a self-asserted group like “feminists,” are not the identical. The heterogeneity in an ascribed identity group, such as race, is bound to be even greater.

It is worth digressing to make another significant point. As alluded to above and previously in this paper, particular group identities are ascribed while others are asserted. Just as a particular ascribed identity, such as race, must not necessarily trump all other identities of a person, asserted identities do not have to either. In fact, a social identity may not in fact be dominant at all; a person may instead feel that certain characteristics unique to her are most important, and insist on being treated with respect to those qualities. Granted, such insistence may not have much potency in chance, one-time encounters, but they certainly can affect the dynamics of long-term, close relationships. Though social identities play a large role in short-term, public interactions, many of us can relate to the feeling of treating the people closest to us as “just people,” not conscious of the social labels they are subject to. Equally, if not more, importantly, one’s *self-perception* must not necessarily center on a shared collective identity.

The suggestion that social identities are determinant in one’s life, essentially an argument for social determinacy, also fails to explain how two people with the same ascribed (and even asserted) social identities can lead very different lives, make different decisions, or embrace different perspectives. It also seems unable to explain how a person could make a drastic change in identity like religious conversion. What *is* accurate is that social identities, both asserted and ascribed, by virtue of the inevitable

feedback cycle, provide the social framework for a person's life. How one *actually* lives, thinks and behaves, however, is a matter of personal volition.

Another fundamental problem with conceptualizations of racial and ethnic minority identities is the way in which they are viewed as discrete, delineated entities. Such a conceptualization is illustrated by Du Bois's words, "One ever feels his twoness, - an American, a Negro; two warring souls, two thoughts, to unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (Souls 38; ch. 1). The implication here is that Negroness comprises a complete soul and determines a full set of thoughts, strivings, and an ideal, as does American-ness. Du Bois describes being an American and a Negro as two, seemingly mutually exclusive, entities. To think of social identity in general, and race and ethnicity in particular, in this "concrete" manner is common.

In multicultural societies, debates are often framed around the pitfalls of both isolation and assimilation, succumbing fully to one of two identities – racial and ethnic minority identity, and "national" or majority identity. The assumption is that there is something concrete, circumscribed, and established to which we can refer as "black identity" or "female identity" or "Muslim identity." These identities supposedly take the form of delimited spheres containing all the cultural habits and ideals that comprise it. It is within this sphere that a person who shares in that identity must fit. When a person partakes of one or more of these identities, he must find a way for all his various spheres to overlap. The more spheres, the more elusive the overlap (see fig. 3).

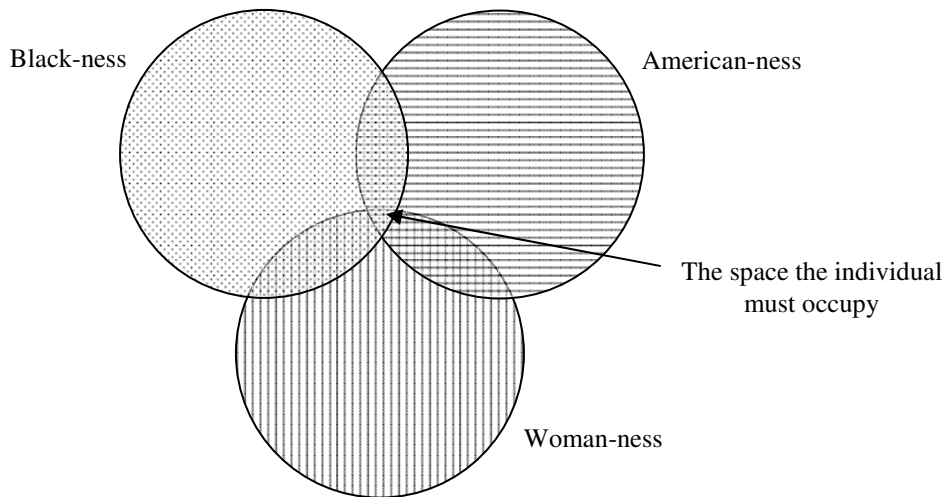


Figure 3. Reconciling multiple “identities”: traditional view.

Linda Alcoff’s article, “Mestizo Identity,” critiques the social demands of racial or ethnic purity from both the political left, who see race mixing as a form of pollution that requires cleansing or prevention through segregation, and the political left, who see it as a threat to cultural integrity. She proposes that instead of choosing one racial identity over another, a “mixed-race” person assert the right to combine aspects of both identities.

The problem with these critiques is that they do not challenge the conceptual frameworks of social identities, and simply change the place of the person within that framework. The multicultural feminist critique of second wave feminism suggests, for example, that a person can move between various social identities (e.g., gender and race), but does not challenge the integrity of these “identity spheres.” Though Linda Alcoff challenges the normative claim that races should remain “pure,” in using the terms Mestizo or mixed-race effectively affirms the notion that a race and the associated social identity can be pure (see fig. 4).



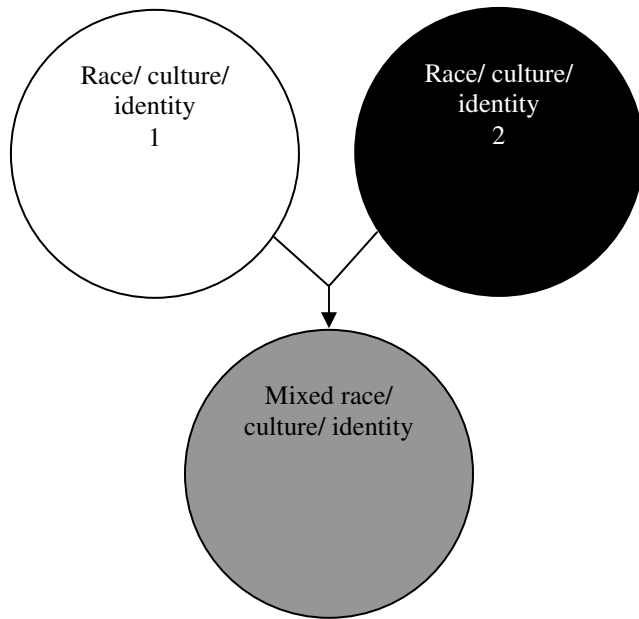


Figure 4. Reconciling multiple “identities”: Alcott's view.

This view of identity is a natural consequence of what Benhabib describes as the “reductionist sociology of culture.” If cultures are seen as “clearly delineable wholes,” then so too are the social identities accompanying each of those cultures. The problems with these discrete “identity spheres” are many: it does not conceptually allow for changes in the content of the sphere, the boundaries are clearly marked implying there is a necessary condition one must fulfill to be “in,” there is no way of accounting for heterogeneity within the sphere, and for one to belong in one or more sphere requires the possibility of overlap amongst all her spheres. The model also does not account for varying degrees of affiliation with various identities; one is either in or out. This problem is exacerbated of course by they fact that “thickness” is imposed on each individual “in” the sphere.

Thick and thin ideas of culture can be likened to necessary and sufficient conditions. To subscribe to a thick concept of culture insists upon several necessary conditions for membership in a cultural community. When there is a claim that an identity has associated necessary conditions, the logical implication is that simply by knowing about one's identity, these conditions can be deduced. If P is a necessary condition for Q, the logical representation is "If Q, then P." Furthermore, "If not P, then not Q." This makes it clearer why necessary conditions for cultural "membership" are troublesome. They are prejudicial because knowing Q necessarily indicates P; by knowing one's racial or ethnic identity one necessarily knows a cultural trait(s) he possesses. Necessary conditions are also impossibly demanding. If a person does not have the necessary condition or quality, one would logically conclude that he is not what he claims to be.

For an American of color, the conflict inevitably arises due to two major factors. Firstly, one does not conform to all the thick cultural descriptors (necessary conditions) attached to every facet of her identity. This makes her the subject of accusations of inauthenticity or "selling-out," a form of cultural treason. Secondly, it is impossible to consistently combine all thick ideas (necessary conditions) of his identity spheres. Given the theoretical framework, reconciliation means that he must give up one for another, or at least prefer one over another. She may change allegiances depending upon the situation, acting "American" at school and "Chinese" at home. This switching may further make one further feel disingenuous, deceitful, or hypocritical.

These conflicts may be avoided by changing the way to think about culture and identity. Culture is not a stagnant entity. It not only changes with time, but it also fluid within a particular situation. Therefore, to posit thick cultural descriptors as necessary conditions for membership in a racial or ethnic group is not only troublesome for an individual member, but also historically and logically inaccurate.

To think of cultural group membership in terms of sufficient conditions is more helpful for thinking about identity, and especially for negotiating “multiple identities.” If A, B, and C are all sufficient conditions for Q, then:

If A, then Q.

If B, then Q.

If C, then Q.

Just by knowing Q, we can not make any prejudicial, conclusive statement about A, B, or C. Therefore, we can not prejudge the characteristics (A, B, or C) of a person simply by their identification with a particular cultural group (Q). We must look at a person as an individual, with his individual characteristics, before making claims about identity and cultural affiliation. There are multiple and diverse pathways to Q. Additionally, we can add new sufficient conditions for Q without undermining the others.

If we think about cultural (and other) identities in this manner, then we must change the way we think about ourselves in relation to these domains of identity. Instead of thinking about identities as entities with which we must conform, we can now think of ourselves as having multiple identifications with fluid and amorphous cultural groups.

The ramifications of this new conceptual model are many and significant, though a more thorough description of the model is required.

#### 4.1.3 Description of New Model

In the new model (see fig. 5), the individual is placed in the center outside of any given domain or nebula of identity. He has emanating from himself connections to all the various features of his identity: behaviors, beliefs, ideals, personality traits. These features may stand alone, as they do in the case of those features which are within the strictly personal realm of one's identity, or they may reside within a domain of social or collective identity.

The connections to social domains are created willfully by the individual or as a result of social perception. Meaning, one can choose to adopt a feature and derive meaning for that feature from a particular group. Alternatively, one can acquire a connection to a group because she is identified as part of the group. In this most basic case, perhaps the only feature that makes her part of x-ness is that she is "perceived as an x."

The domains of social identity are nebulous. Like cultures, they have no clear borders and their contents are continuously in flux. The nebulas consist of all the features people use to identify themselves with the nebula. As the definition of x-ness changes, so do the features associated with x-ness, and vice-versa. Connections from individuals to the nebula are greatly varied. A "thick" member may have several connections between himself and the nebula; other "thin" members may have only one.

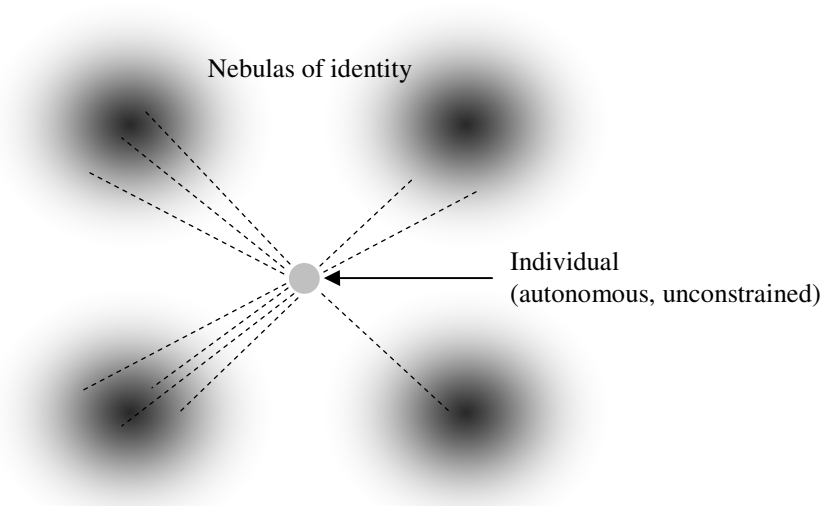


Figure 5. New model of identity: individual-centered, multiple identifications.

By changing perspective and placing the nebula in the center of the picture, one can see all the individuals connected to that nebula and to what extent they are connected – the group’s membership (see fig. 6). One can also look at individual features within the nebula and see who is connected to the nebula through that particular feature. All those connected to that feature share something even more specific than membership in the nebula, namely the embrace of the particular feature.

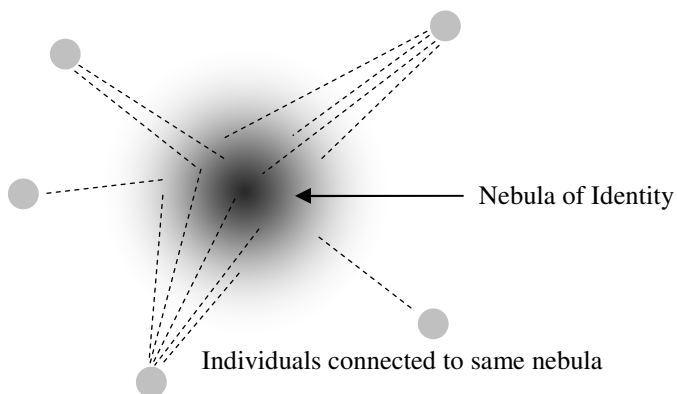


Figure 6. Identity-nebula membership.

By changing perspective again, and taking a more macro-level view, one would be able to see all the various domains of identity and every individual's identifications. This allows one to see the way in which various people are connected via the social identities with which they identify. They no longer occupy the same identity sphere; instead, they extend connections into the same nebula.

#### 4.1.4 Ramifications

The ramifications of this model are significant, all of which reflect my normative assertions about race and identity:

A more accurate representation of domains of social identities as nebulous, dynamic entities is given, reflecting the nature of social identities in general and race and ethnicity in particular.

A person is seen as a unique collection of beliefs, behaviors, tendencies and physical traits that draw from the various domains with which she identifies. From this perspective, nobody is a minority or a majority. Each person is first and foremost an individual.

Heterogeneity within a group is clearly represented, and rendered unproblematic. Other models confine all members to one, undifferentiated, demarcated sphere. This model illustrates the varying degrees to which one may be connected to a particular domain through the number of connections between it and the person.

Though a group as a whole may have general features, it does not follow that each group member will engender them. Though most "black" people have darker skin that

most “white” people, it is wholly possible, and not infrequent in reality, that a “black” person will have very “white” skin, lighter than some “whites.” Incidentally, this is a fatal flaw of racial (or any other kind of) profiling.

It has already been established that there are no necessary conditions of race membership. If there were a necessary condition, P, for race membership, Q, it would logically mean: If Q, then P. If there were no necessary conditions, we could make no definitive conclusions about P or any other condition (R, S, T) based on the truth of Q. Racial membership does not necessarily indicate anything about an individual’s features. There are only sufficient conditions, A, B, C, etc. If A or B or C, then P. There are multiple pathways (connections) to P, none of which can be assumed or required.

The model changes how one envisions his membership in multiple identity domains. Instead of one being contained by several identity spheres, requiring an impossible overlap amongst them all, the person now stands alone, and “identifies” with multiple identity nebulas. He is connected to each nebula by means of the personal characteristic he sees as having been derived from, or given meaning by, that group. He can be connected to multiple nebulas, each in varying degrees depending on how much of his total character is derived from or influenced by that nebula.

One can also easily see which domain of identity, if any, is dominant in one’s overall identity: the one receiving the most connections. It is also possible that more than one domain are equally dominant, or that none at all are.

Changes are allowed and easily made. An individual can make and break connections over time and according to changing life circumstances. The model also

explains why some people may seem to alter their behavior based on their company. That an American born to Japanese immigrants will behave differently amongst other ethnically Japanese people is simply a result of the group's implicit recognition that they share in having connections to Japanese-ness. This may make one's interaction with others easier and more efficient if she emphasized those features that connect her with the identity domain. So, for example, in recognition of this shared affiliation, she may choose to abide by cultural norms recognized by others in that group.

At the same time, this model suggests that the group members should not demand particular behaviors of other members as a condition of group membership because those behaviors may or may not be among the features connecting them to the group.

It is now easier to make sense of the relationship between an individual who is "mistakenly" identified as part of a particular group. For example, many Muslims, particularly women wearing the headscarf, are mistakenly identified as Arabs. Though there is no reason for an American Muslim of Chinese ancestry to be identified as an Arab, she now has a connection to Arab-ness. As such, she may share in some experiences of Arabs by virtue of that identification. She may also adopt other features of the group, the connection already having been established.

This is a type of self-fulfilling prophecy that occurs with profiling, as described by Wu. In describing perceived Asian-American disloyalty to America Wu explains that, "by following the market forces directing them toward disloyalty and converting to disloyalty, they realize the benefits they are not enjoying while paying no more than the costs they already pay" (205). Though not every situation must be this politically



charged, one can see that someone who is perceived and treated as a member of a particular group may start adopting additional features of that group, “acting” like other thicker members of that group.

As for the specific version of double-consciousness that concerns this paper, we can now see how one can be easily connected to both American-ness and their particular racial or ethnic domain of identity, without having to conform to “thick” ideas of either or negotiate an overlap between two, “thickly” defined spheres. In thinking of identity in this way, nobody would feel as if they are rejecting one domain of identity in favor of another; it is an individual’s prerogative to choose and develop features of the self derived from various domains of identity or that are completely personal. Each person’s set of features is a unique combination, constantly in flux, and working towards the “achievement” stage of identity.

## 4.2 MAKING SENSE OF GROUP ACTION

This new conceptual mode of identity solves many of the problems in the realm of personal and group identity. There is, however, another issue that must be addressed: group action. Arguably, group identities have formed around a need for group action. Particularly in the case of race, group identities, including that of whites, were formed around particular social, political, or economic agendas. How, then, does this new model of identity account for group solidarity and group action in America? I content that group solidarity and action must be determined by a specific purpose or goal.

Group identity, group solidarity and group action are different, albeit related, concepts. Group identity can refer to the amalgamation of all the features group members ascribe to the group. Under the new model, it will also refer to a sort of “group consciousness” – a mutual understanding amongst group members of what features group membership entails and what it does not, what action it requires and what it does not. Group solidarity is more closely related to group action, and is the commitment group members make to each other that they will work together, support and defend each other in the attainment of their group’s goals. Group action is any work on behalf of the entire group in accordance to an agreed-upon agenda.

As for the groups, particularly racial ones, my insistence upon a “thin” definition of racial identity means that an entire racial group will not agree on particular agendas or courses of group action. This is because, thus far, there has not been a thorough discussion of the relationship between group composition and group action.

When discussing ascribed and asserted group identities and the feedback cycle they engage in, I alluded to the notion that groups must assess their relevance based on their goals and needs. To say this in another way, when a group is formed around a particular agenda, group membership should include all those committed to the agenda.

Shelby contends that in the context of group solidarity for ending anti-black racism, “the basis of blacks’ group identification is not their attachment to their thin black identity but rather their shared experience with antiblack racism and their mutual commitment to ending it” (237). Presumably, one need not even *be* black to *identify with* blacks, and work together with others to end anti-black racism. In the new conceptual model, this shared experience may be one of the features that attach one to “black-ness,” even if nothing else does. In cases such as these, it indeed serves the interests of the group to be as inclusive as possible. Not only does the group benefit by the strength of numbers, but it also benefits from the diversity of talents, opinions, experiences and connections, making it easier to attain their goals.

Take another example, however, in which the goal of a group is not something as universal as ending prejudice, but rather something very specific such as the preservation of a particular cultural heritage. There are good reasons to preserve cultural heritage, including historical record, availability of that heritage for future people to choose, and inherent benefits of the practice (in the case of traditional medicine techniques, for example). In this case, this will be a sub-group within the most general racial group. This sub-group may be right to insist that its members embrace some “thick” qualities – namely those qualities they wish to preserve – simply to make the attainment of their

goals feasible and efficient. However, even in this case, inclusion would be based on specified criteria, and exclusion could not transgress those criteria. For example, if a white American woman who is a practitioner of a classical Indian dance form who claimed membership in a group promoting the art form, some may bemoan her wanting to join the group because she is not Indian though she is knowledgeable in the particular issues at hand and is committed to the cause. To exclude her would smack of racism, albeit “reverse” racism; these must be our stances if we are to move towards a society that does not discriminate based on race, ethnicity, gender and other such qualities.

Therefore, the purpose and goal guide the inclusiveness of the group. The goal may range from the preservation of cultural heritage to the attainment of political rights and economic development. Each goal requires a different collection of people, and a person may be part of various groups, or prefer a particular group, based on his own personal goals, ambitions and aspirations.

For example, an American woman of Chinese heritage may feel a strong desire to work for women’s equality in America. Her primary group identification would be with women, and she would join a group that works for feminist causes. However, she also finds it important to preserve particular cultural aspects of Chinese heritage, and so also spends time with other people of Chinese origin or a group that works for Chinese cultural preservation. She would not be an exclusive member of one group or the other, nor necessarily thick in either. Her life would embody ideals held by both groups to varying degrees, but in a manner that is congruent with her individuality.

For a very long time, oppressed racial groups sought to do everything by way of their race. Initially, this was necessary and realistically goal oriented. For the black community in the early twentieth century, for example, “racial” solidarity was necessary to fight oppression and succeed economically. Alliances with other groups, particularly white groups, were problematic in that it was difficult to escape the hegemony of white domination, especially since equal civil rights for blacks were not yet on the books. Black economic institutions were necessary for blacks to develop economic independence, job training, and confidence. Black churches were necessary to escape white cultural hegemony, preserve native traditions, and develop leadership. Other racial groups followed suit in similar ways, developing various institutions that were specific to their “race.”

Though such development is necessary at some point, particularly in the beginning of a minority group’s freedom and development, it need not be dogmatically adhered to in spite of changed circumstances. Perhaps the most profound example of this need for a changed paradigm is the second generation of African-American politicians, the most notable of which is President Barack Obama. The first generation of African-American politicians, including Jessie Jackson, for example, promoted “black” agendas and ran on “black” platforms. Steeped in the experiences of the Civil Rights era, this is understandable and was necessary to win the many fights for civil rights the second generation can now take advantage of. However, since most of the political goals have now been satisfied “on the books,” a new political strategy, one that is farther reaching and more inclusive, is necessary. This is why second generation minority politicians are

more successful now. They are not “selling out”; they are simply more suited for our times.

Given these new times and circumstances, we can recognize that a racial group may have several subgroups each working toward different goals. Conversely, group members may decide to move beyond racial groups and join “coalitions” that aim to address issues that concern several different groups.

In his last few months of life, Malcolm X (El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz) took a number of actions that can be seen to represent this goal-oriented model of group action. In March of 1964, he officially broke away from the Elijah Muhammad’s Nation of Islam, reclaiming personal autonomy and freedom to pursue the goals of black Americans in the best way he saw fit.

The break with Elijah Muhammad’s Muslim movement was the necessary precondition for this intellectual and ideological transformation because it released Malcolm from the constrictive doctrines of a religio-racial nationalistic mystique that had been a straitjacket to both his ideological growth and his nationalistic activities. (Udom 236-37)

After embracing orthodox Islam he decided to go on the *hajj* pilgrimage; he also toured Africa and met with the leadership of several African countries. The most significant turning point of the trip was the hajj, during which Malcolm closely interacted with Muslims of all races, including whites, who treated each other equally and with love, respect and dignity. This marked a breaking point between Malcolm and the racist ideologies of the Nation of Islam. Though Malcolm remained completely devoted to the cause of black Americans, he no longer viewed whites categorically as the enemy by

virtue of their race, but only opposed those who played a part in the subjugation of people of color.

Because of his experience in Mecca and the discussions with learned men in the Islamic world, he came to realize that the problem did not reside in whiteness itself but in the attitudes which the Western world and particularly America had vested in whiteness. As a consequence, Malcolm repudiated racist thinking, but this does not mean that he had in anyway altered his awareness of the predominance of white power either on the international or the American scene. White power is a reality, but it has to be understood in terms of the imperialistic economic system of Western Europe and America. (Udom 246)

While touring Africa, his observation of the condition of Africans and oppressed people impressed upon him several ideas. Most importantly, he asserted a strong relationship between the plight of African-Americans and that of other Africans, thereby strengthening this Pan-African loyalties, he also likened black Americans to all other victims of colonization and imperialism, echoing Du Bois's proposition that slavery and subsequent black oppression at the hands of whites in America and European imperialism in the third world were simply analogues of each other.

In the short months before his assassination, Malcolm attempted to link the African-American community with the worldwide struggle of colonized and newly independent peoples as noted in his speech, "The Ballot of the Bullet":

In this speech Malcolm discussed the necessity for black American to reinterpret the nature of the civil rights struggle and to seek new allies. He believed that the civil rights struggle should be see in the context of the worldwide human rights struggle. Accordingly he proposed that the race problem in America should be brought before the United Nations where [their African, Asian and Latin brothers could "throw their weight" on their side]. (Udom 241)

Breaking from the Nation of Islam, embracing Orthodox Islam and making the hajj allowed Malcolm to freely explore the methods by which the goals of the African-American community could be most effectively addressed. In doing so, he urged the community to re-examine the nature of their struggle and, consequently, the possibility of alliances. He was clearly goal oriented in group formation; he first took account of the goals of African-Americans and invited supporters to the cause based on those goals, regardless of color, creed or nationality. Malcolm X died in 1965 as international man, setting the stage for political consciousness that arguable paved the road for second generation black politicians, including President Barack Hussein Obama.



#### 4.3 WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AN AMERICAN

*We are Americans, not only by birth and by citizenship, but by our political ideals, our language, our religion. Farther than that, our Americanism does not go.*  
(Du Bois, Reader 24; “Conservation”)

A final question remains, one for which the answer is as evasive as it is important: what does it mean to be an American? I have asserted that racial and ethnic identities should be defined thinly in order to be logically coherent and to help eliminate the feeling of double-consciousness. Similarly, no “thick” definition of American-ness requiring a particular race or set of behaviors can withstand critical scrutiny, and such a definition exacerbates the problem of double-consciousness.

In negotiating the reconciliation between blackness and American-ness, Du Bois gives a broad sketch of what implications American-ness has:

We are Americans, not only by birth and by citizenship, but by our political ideals, our language, our religion. Farther than that, our Americanism does not go. At that point, we are Negroes, members of a vast historic race that from the very dawn of creation has slept, but half awakening in the dark forests of its African fatherland. (Du Bois, Reader 24; “Conservation”)

Du Bois found he could reconcile blackness and American-ness by limiting the latter to: birth, citizenship, political ideals, language, and religion. Though he may have found this definition satisfactory for his purposes, it is unsatisfactory now; it is still too thick. There is certainly no American religion, the absence of which would make one un-American. One of the founding principles of America is freedom of conscience and religion, as enshrined in the First Amendment of the Constitution. Thomas Jefferson wrote that the First Amendment erected a “wall of separation” between the “church” and

state. English as a common language is certainly useful in easing communication amongst Americans, but the recent debates about Ebonics (or African American Vernacular English), English First and bilingual education make it clear that it is far from obvious that English fluency is a necessary condition for American-ness.<sup>8</sup> With respect to politics, even though America is built upon ideals of democracy, constitutional republicanism, and federalism, its liberal political ideals also ensure the freedom of speech, let alone the freedom of opinion, to disagree and dissent with the reigning political system, so long as those opinions do not entail or directly cause criminal acts. In his overridden veto of the McCarran Internal Security Act of 1950, President Truman wrote, "In a free country, we punish men for the crimes they commit, but never for the opinions they have."

We seem to be left with birth and citizenship, then, or simply citizenship. The United States Citizenship and Immigrations Services says the following regarding the oath of citizenship, which is only required of naturalized citizens:

The oath of allegiance is:

"I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law; and that I take this obligation freely without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; so help me God."

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<sup>8</sup> For a more detailed discussion, see Pullum.

In some cases, USCIS allows the oath to be taken without the clauses:

". . .that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by law; that I will perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States when required by law. . ."

If USCIS finds that you are unable to swear the oath using the words "on oath," you may replace these words with "and solemnly affirm." If USCIS finds that you are unable to use the words "so help me God" because of your religious training or beliefs, you are not required to say these words.

Removing the two clauses for which exceptions can be made, the oath as it remains reads:

"I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law; and that I take this obligation freely without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion."

The oath, therefore, is a citizen's commitment to dedicate allegiance to the United States, defend its laws, and perform work of national importance if required to do so.

The question is whether these commitments are "enough" or, alternatively, are still too much.

In light of what was discussed regarding group solidarity, we must know the purpose of the group (i.e., Americans) in order to set the terms of inclusion into that group. The particular goals of America change constantly, and most significantly when presidential administrations change, but the goal of any nation-state is arguably to ensure the safety of its citizens and gather the efforts of its people to accomplish for the public good what the individuals could not do on their own (i.e., public works). Goals beyond that depend upon the particular political principles one ascribed to. Therefore, it seems

that a citizen's commitment to support the legal system (to ensure citizen safety) and participate in whatever public work would be necessary to ensure the integrity of society is precisely enough to be considered an American.<sup>9</sup> In fact, if one were to embrace this commitment without being an official citizen, she would still satisfy the requirements of American-ness.

Though most Americans abide by these commitments by obeying laws, paying taxes, and participating positively in society, there is no general awareness of the intrinsic relationship between this commitment, one's American-ness, and the fundamental purpose of the country. If Americans were made more aware of this relationship, they would not only more readily support these commitments, but they would also release their grip on those false notions of what American-ness requires.

This commitment may be enough to ensure the integrity of America, but there is something to be said for the "feeling" of social cohesion; the sense that not only are we all gathered under the umbrella of American-ness, but that we also feel a camaraderie with each other that commits us to help and support one another. Sherman Jackson addressed the problems of Muslim-Americans who, though abide by their commitment to America and even go beyond it by making many positive contributions to society, are still looked upon with suspicion and find few allies in their struggle against prejudice and oppression. He alleges that while Muslim-Americans are part of American society, they are not yet part of the American story:

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<sup>9</sup> Even the commitment to obey and support the law is a flexible one, in that peaceful civil disobedience is accepted as a means of protest against a law that is viewed as unjust. Such acts have often resulted in changed laws, suggesting that the disobedience of the former law was really an act of "defending" America - against injustice.

Muslim-Americans are vulnerable to the attacks of their detractors because they are not sufficiently bound to their fellow Americans by enough “cohesive sentiment” to place a proper burden of proof on their accusers. The way to that sentiment, however, is neither through simple protest nor acts of ostensible public altruism. The way to that sentiment is through becoming a part of the American story, a story of powerful truths, lies and contradictions that have destined America to struggle, to her dying breath, to find that balance between enough remembering and enough forgetting to point her towards redemption. It is a story of America’s quest to rid herself of the vile habit of violating her own principles and creating “problem peoples” who fall outside the reach of her lofty ideals. From the founding of the republic and Thomas Jefferson’s “We hold these truths to be self-evident . . .,” this quest — more than anything else — has defined us as Americans. Indeed, this is the struggle that generates the “cohesive sentiment” that binds Americans as a people.

This is why Americans are so excited about the candidacy of Barack Obama: Obama holds out a chance for redemption. Amidst this excitement, however, Americans must remain mindful of the evil of which we have proved ourselves so capable of perpetrating. Muslim-Americans, meanwhile, must come to see that American history, whether we like it or not, is now our history, and that we cannot accept the bounties of her present without sharing responsibility for her past. And we must understand the difference between being a part of American society and being a part of the American story. To be part of the American story is to strive as mightily as other Americans in pursuit of American redemption. Thus far, however, Muslims remain outside the American story, which is why, despite their positive contributions to society, they seldom enlist empathy when they are jailed, deported or discriminated against. Hopefully, however, it will not be long before Muslims come to understand this. Once they do, while guilt by association may continue, Muslims will be able to fight back. For in this they will be joined by others.

Though we can only insist that Americans abide by their commitment to the well-being of America by defending its laws and participating in necessary public works, we can encourage each other to become part of the American story so that we may be motivated to help and support each other in making this country a safe and just place for all.

#### 4.4 A CASE STUDY: MUSLIM AMERICANS

The experience of Muslims in America is of particular interest for its complexity and current political significance. A topic that has become of academic interest recently is the racialization of religion, in which race and religion are conflated or are mutually marked categories. Khyati Joshi described the phenomenon in an article regarding the racialization of Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism, the three predominant religions of second generation South Asian Indian Americans.

I have theorized the racialization of religion: that particular religions in particular historical moments, come to be associated with certain real or imagined phenotypical characteristics and that race thereby becomes a proxy for a presumed belief system. The process is both enabled and aggravated by the presence of a white and Christian norm in American society. (223)

There are two different ways in which the conflation or coincidence of race and religion is manifested. In one case, a person is perceived as a member of a race and assumptions about her religious affiliation follows. In the other case, one is identified religiously, and assumptions about his race follow. The latter is the case particularly amongst Muslims in America. Because Muslims are such a racially diverse group, racially associated phenotypes can not mark adherents. However, there are broad similarities in names and practice that make religious identification easier.

A majority of Muslims in America are people of color. About half of American Muslims are black; most of the other half consists of immigrants from African and Asian countries and their American-born children. American Muslim converts are a racially diverse group, consisting of whites, blacks, Latinos, Asians and others.

Muslims are often identified by name, dress (particularly adherent women who don the headscarf) or self-identification. Once identified as a Muslim, the presumption is that the person is “foreign,” and most often Arab or “Middle-Eastern.” Among those who convert to Islam in America, women are the majority. A common occurrence is that a white woman, who grew up Christian and retains her original name, converts to Islam, wears a headscarf, and then is presumed to be Arab. People are shocked to hear her speak English fluently, and are reluctant, at least initially, to accept her as an American (i.e., as white). This reluctance is partly a result of “rational discrimination” (i.e., profiling) since most American Muslims do have non-white racial roots. It is also the result of the conflation between race and religion; Islam is perceived as something foreign, Arab, brown, and certainly anti-American, as emphasized by popular media and right-wing political rhetoric.

Therefore, it is not only with the issues common amongst people of color that the American Muslim must contend, but often also with these additional presumptions about what being a Muslim means. Though an American Muslim can successfully negotiate these multiple identifications through the model described earlier, the situation can be a bit more nuanced due to a crucial difference: being a Muslim has a very particular necessary condition. A Muslim must believe in and assert the *shahadah*, or testimony, which amounts to testifying that there is nothing worthy of worship except for God, and that Muhammad is His final messenger. Though this necessary condition for being a Muslim exists, it is the only necessary condition, and one that is done out of choice. In

other words, once can choose to be Muslim, and the inclusion into the Muslim community requires an act that is significant but minimal.

This difference is important in that, though being Muslim often functions as racial or ethnic minority identification, one's identification with Islam is voluntary, as opposed to one's being a member of a racial or ethnic minority. The necessary *shahadah* also makes it very clear and precise who exactly is a Muslim and who is not. In fact, though allegations may still exist in the community regarding insufficient "thick-ness," it is theologically forbidden to accuse a Muslim of not being Muslim, as opposed to other identifications in which accusations of this type are commonly lobbed and must be defended against using philosophical arguments (most often) external to the ideological framework of the community.

This nuance should make identifying as a Muslim easier. One has only to commit to the *shahadah* to be Muslim. She is then free to make any number of other identifications so long as they do not conflict with this single necessary condition. What makes the situation of the Muslim American complicated and difficult is the nature of current political rhetoric that posits Islam as being antithetical to "the West." Though all racial and ethnic minorities have to navigate subtle assertions of un-American-ness, the Muslim America must contend with these allegations directly, explicitly, and publicly. The perceived dichotomy between "American" and "Muslim" is not just of personal interest to the individual, but also of political significance to the entire community.

Though the *shahadah* alone is necessary and sufficient to be considered Muslim, the popular conception of what Islam means entails much more. In one sense, this is



rightly so. For most Muslims, their identification does not stop at the *shahadah*. Islam exhorts many different behaviors in the realms of worship, spirituality, morals and social behaviors. In another sense, however, popular conception is sorely misguided.

Popular media emphasize a connection between Islam and terrorism, and spotlight those so-called Muslims who engender an anti-West ideology and worldview. Though a vast majority of Muslims, including American Muslims, reject such rhetoric quite vehemently, they are called upon to “renounce” these hateful acts and words. The fact that one is asked to renounce something implies that they have a share of the responsibility, similar to the perception that every individual of a racial or ethnic group can somehow represent the entire group. It is this implication, combined with legal and political measures, that further places American Muslims under constant suspicion of being anti-American. This creates conflict for the typical American Muslim who, though feels American and loves his country, is made to feel like an outsider. Perceiving this, some proactively work to change popular perception. Others, however, may start resenting this situation in America, reinforcing the original beliefs about Muslim anti-American sentiment. Such are the dangers of racial-profiling, highlighting the role (mis)recognition plays in negotiating one’s own identity.

The situation is even more profound in the cases of white Americans who convert to Islam. Before conversion, they were not subject to these forms of suspicion and accusation. By changing one’s religion and, possibly, appearance (especially in the case of Muslim women wearing a *hijab*), the convert is suddenly seen as foreign, strange, and

un-American. This highlights how central the role of perception is in race-identity formation.

One suspicion that Muslim Americans are subject to is that their worldview and sentiment is anti-American and certain religious edicts they may hold dear are incompatible with “American” lifestyle, culture and society. Some of these perceived contradictions, such as the prohibition of alcohol in a country where moderate alcohol consumption is customary, are rather benign and can be eliminated by appealing to the fact that the consumption of alcohol is in no way part of any condition for American-ness. Other perceived contradictions can be quite fundamental, such as the role *shariah* plays in a Muslim’s life.

*Shariah* literally means “path,” and was used by Arabs to mean the path towards a water-source, and therefore a life-source. With the advent of Islam, the word became used as a religious term representing the social, political and legal lifestyle prescribed by the *Qur’an*<sup>10</sup> and *sunnah*.<sup>11</sup> Because Islam came as a complete way of life and a social system, the *shariah* encompasses areas such as morals and manners, family law, economic and political principles, as well as criminal law and penal codes.

For most edicts, there is no contradiction between *shariah* and American life. Islamic moral principles are aligned with most other universal moral principles enjoining kindness, honesty, and peace. Sharing a common history and prophetic lineage, Islam is even closer to Judeo-Christian tradition than others. Areas in which Islam enjoins

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<sup>10</sup> The Holy Book of Muslims, who believe it was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad by God through the Archangel Gabriel.

<sup>11</sup> The authentic and divinely inspired sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad upon which Islamic rulings can be based.

behavior uncommon in America, such as wearing a headscarf, refraining from alcohol, and praying five times a day, are still completely compatible within a diverse America, especially one in which we insist on no necessary conditions and in which freedom of religion is constitutionally guaranteed.

However, the *shariah* has a very sophisticated legal system as well, and a Muslim adherent may be asked where her “loyalties” lie - to the American legal system or the Islamic one. Though the dichotomy between Islam and America is a false one in many situations, it may become a real one in particular legal matters. In France, the *hijab*, which is mandatory for all Muslim women, was banned in public schools and offices. In order to successfully negotiate this type of situation, one must refer to broad Islamic and American principles.

One of the legal principles in Islamic law is that one must obey the laws of the land in which he is living. Though polygyny is allowed in Islam, it is illegal in America. Therefore, a Muslim in America should not marry more than one wife. Islamic family law, or rules about marriage, divorce, inheritance, child custody, etc., differs from American states’ family law. However, there exists enough flexibility in American law to allow for a Muslim to conduct his affairs as his religion requires.

Occasionally, there exists a real dilemma, such as the situation for *hijab*-wearing women in France. In this situation, a Muslim would firstly protest a law if she saw it to be unjust, as is arguably the case in France. Then she would make a choice between public education and a particular level of modesty. Many Islamic scholars argue that according to broad Islamic principles, though both receiving an education and wearing

the headscarf are mandatory, to receive an education is more important. Those who agree sacrifice one Islamic injunction (the headscarf) for another (education). Others who prefer not to make that sacrifice decide instead to go to private schools or home-school.

Sometimes, the religious sacrifice a Muslim would be asked to make is simply too great. In these cases many Muslims would give precedence to an Islamic principle over an American legal injunction, but this does not imply un-American-ness. Indeed, this situation would simply be form of civil disobedience, a situation in which one's moral principles prevent one from obeying a perceived unjust law; it is not a phenomenon and not particular to a Muslim or Islam in America. Some of our proudest and most American struggles have embraced civil disobedience.

Though the situation is sometimes complex, it does not at any point threaten the American-ness of a Muslim. Even if one were to argue that American-ness necessitates obedience to the law, Islamic *shariah* does not preclude that. And in cases in which they do conflict, the prescribed actions of protest, sacrifice, or civil disobedience are all accepted forms of protest, and sometimes revered American traditions, that have often resulted in a reformed and more perfect country. The model of American-ness built upon multiple-sufficient conditions is completely compatible with the thin standard of Muslim-ness built upon the single necessary condition of the *shahadah*. Furthermore, this model of American-ness is compatible with thick manifestations of Muslim-ness.

#### 4.5 PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

I have suggested that one addresses the apparent problem of double- (or multiple)-consciousness, especially with respect to Americans of color, by insisting on no necessary conditions for American-ness or racial and ethnic group membership but rather sufficient ones, and by insisting only upon thin-ness when it comes to cultural identities. The result would be a collection of individuals who have multiple identifications in various domains of identity, who come together as groups in different combinations depending upon the intended goal.

There may be some objections to this model. An obvious objection is that which is common to any strategy within identity politics: embracing ideas such as race, even in an attempt to change a negative life-script into a positive one, plays into the hands of the oppressor, and does more to reinforce the hegemonic agenda than undermine it. This argument is bolstered by the “universalism” side of the debate - that the focus should be on what is common to us all rather than being preoccupied with difference. Though a lengthy response was already given in chapter eight, it suffices to say that as long as difference subjects one to prejudice, oppression and injustice - perhaps not by law but in practice - then difference must be recognized and reckoned with in developing the solution.

Secondly, it may be said that this model is too dependant upon perception, especially of others', in addressing social injustice based on demographic factors. This emphasis is subject to the same weaknesses as other models which focus on recognition.

Much of the power is given up to others and, as such, the results are outside one's control. This argument is a corollary to the first one, which argues that the dependence upon the perception of others validates the power that the other has over the subject, instead of asserting the power of the subject. Both arguments are valid, but ultimately unproblematic. The goal is precisely to change perception, and assert the power of perception in affecting society. It is the role of intellectual debate and public discourse to effect public consciousness and rhetoric surrounding pertinent social issues. Though one does not have total control over others and the ideas they accept, she can contribute her ideas to the marketplace of ideas in hopes that someone will find them valuable and incorporate them into their own thinking.

Regarding the details of the new model I propose, one may object that many will refuse to accept a thin standard for cultural identification, and continue to insist that group members embrace a thick identity. My model does not insist that nobody embrace a thick cultural identification, only that those who embrace a thick standard does not impose their version of culture on others, and that they do not posit the thick standard as a necessary condition for group membership. If they continue to do so, they are simply wrong. They are doing the group a disservice by excluding people who may genuinely contribute to the goals of the group, and are dogmatic and naïve in their view of what race and ethnicity is, particularly in America. To insist with such vehemence that Americans of a particular racial or ethnic identification behave, look, or think a certain way is to forget the history of the social construction of these identities, and to hearken back to a time when it was widely accepted that race has a meaning outside of what

humans think of it. In some people's erroneous view, race is something to be held on to no matter what, despite our knowledge of the oppressive reasons it was created, and beyond just what is needed to combat prejudice in its name.

One would be right to claim that this model does not eliminate the possibility of conflict arising from identifications with different domains of identity. An individual may feel divided between two irreconcilable principles or values that were inspired by different group identities. This conflict is no different from any other conflict a person may feel in making value judgments or moral decisions. Though it may cause a real dilemma for the person, requiring introspection and critical reflection in order to decide between the options, the conflict would not be called an "identity" conflict, particularly between American-ness and racial or ethnic identity, under the structure of the new identity model. Whichever value one chooses, in giving up the other she does not reject that whole domain because it has been defined thinly. One can choose not to accept a feature of the domain, and still claim membership in it.

What are we to make of a situation in which one of the values involved in the conflict is a necessary condition of group identity, particularly in domains outside of American-ness, or race and ethnicity, where certain necessary conditions may indeed exist? In this case, one may have grounds for questioning their membership in a particular group. If one claims membership in the broad group of Christians, yet for some reason doubts the existence of Jesus, then their identification as a Christian indeed is questionable.

Lastly, some may say that these ideas, since not related to actual policy and legislation, can not be enforced and so have little effect. As our history has shown, ideas often precede policy, and not all moral questions fall within the realm of the law. If those who read this paper become just a bit more convinced of its contents, and consequently change the way they view themselves and others, a step has been taken in the right direction.

There are also some interesting questions that were not addressed in this paper that would be worth exploring. The focus of this paper was issues surrounding identity in the particular context of America. The dynamics of a national identity in a country where the “national identity” is also considered an “ethnicity” may play out differently. Because America is a land of immigrants (except for Native Americans), there is no native culture with which “new cultures” must contend. However in Spain, for example, some may argue that particular aspects of Spanish culture are essential to Spanish-ness. Though this argument may be more feasible than a similar one in America, it would still be susceptible to Benhabib’s charge of the reductionist sociology of culture.

One distinction I did not make in this paper is that between race and ethnicity. It is widely claimed that ethnicity is a subset of race, or that race is constructed while ethnicity is more “real.” However, this distinction is actually one that many contest, saying that both ideas are equally constructed and equally problematic, and that the claim that race is socially constructed but ethnicity is reflective of reality has no empirical evidence to support it. The question, however, is worth exploring further, to see how the



different history and circumstances of the construction of ethnicity has affected our thinking about of the interplay between race, ethnicity, and American-ness.

#### 4.6 THE ELECTION OF OBAMA

The election of Barack Hussein Obama as this nation's 44<sup>th</sup> president has profound significance in two regards. That it was possible for him to be elected reveals a great deal about the state of the nation and how Americans now think of race and race relations. It also has the potential to be greatly transformative of how Americans, particularly youth, think about race.

His election indicates that we have made huge progress since the civil rights movement of the 1960s. It has been argued that because of the nature of our political system and electoral process, a person's election to office does not necessarily reflect widespread support. However, before 2008, a black person had never even been a serious contender for the presidency. That this country could even consider a black person for such a powerful and rhetorically significant position, and then proceed to elect him, is a far cry from the days of segregation and Jim Crow. This change in general perception is real and dramatic.

But given what we have talked about regarding the nuances of the unencumbered self and thick notions of American-ness, it seems that it should have been impossible for a black man to be actually elected to the highest political office in this country. This may suggest that those ideas are no longer applicable, and are misguided in contemporary America; post-racial America has finally arrived.

Of course the biggest danger in proclaiming the arrival of post-racial America, an America in which race is no longer an issue, is that it can not logically accommodate or

explain the presence of racism, the existence of which is undeniable and can be attested to by millions of Americans of color. Prejudice, racial in nature, individual and systematic, has not been erased.

Obama's election may be an indication that America is less overtly racist than it has ever been. But if anything, Obama's election is instructive of how one can navigate the waters of prejudice and overcome them to fulfill seemingly impossible goals. Posited by some as our country's post-racial president, Obama has truly challenged ideas of authenticity and mainstream identity politics. Obama never denied his black-ness; he is married to a black woman with whom he has two black daughters and was a member of a black church. Most importantly, he unhesitatingly self-identifies as black. What he does not do is allow this identification to completely determine his social and political interests. It is well known that though he was a member of the Black Caucus as a senator from 2004 to 2008, he never had a particularly strong relationship with the group. It is said that the reason he never became active in the Black Caucus was because he did not think race should dictate his politics.

During the Presidential campaign, he was accused of not being really black and of being inauthentic by both blacks and whites because he does not conform to the thick-cultural identity that several black leaders advocate and demand or that others come to expect. That he is a child of an immigrant African and not a descendent of slaves somehow meant that he did not deserve to represent other black Americans. These accusations only demonstrate that influential social and political leaders are still very

attached to ideas of authenticity<sup>2</sup> and identity-focused, rather than goal-focused, political action.

What Obama's political strategy and eventual election has demonstrated is that goal-focused political action is much more successful and appropriate in America's current climate. Where overt racism is not longer publicly acceptable, but subtle institutional racism still exists, racial and ethnic minorities can and must work together and with the white majority to attain particular goals that will create a situation in which institutional racism can be challenged and eliminated. "Thick blackness" may be required for certain goals, particularly those related to cultural preservation and historical record-keeping, but no longer for politics.

Perhaps even those who mistakenly think that they live in a post-racial America have an important role to play in the political spectrum of identity politics and social justice. It could be argued that those who refuse to see race as an issue engender a different perspective, and reach people and groups that prove beneficial for the cause of social justice that would not have otherwise been reached. The advancement of social justice requires concerted effort on the part of all segments of society – even those with whom we may disagree.

Another argument that has been made regarding Obama's election is that it is really not as meaningful as most people think. He was a product of the political machine, and got elected using smart marketing and grassroots awareness. In fact, some even claim that Obama's election does a disservice to the cause of minority representation in politics, because America can finally claim to have elected a minority candidate by

choosing the “least-black” candidate possible. Even if it were true that Obama’s election was not a reflection of changed racial attitudes in America, his election does have serious practical ramifications for the future of race in America. Youth of color can now look to the most powerful person in American, and perhaps the world, and see a bit of themselves in him. Insofar as the President represents an American ideal, a figurehead for all Americans, people of color have become a bit less “encumbered.” There is much less credence to the claim that America is white when its commander-in-chief is not. Insofar as positive attitude and self-confidence play a role in a young person’s success, having a precedent and example to follow in Obama has increased the probability of success for every child in America. One of the very common reactions to Obama’s election came from black parents, who said that though they always told their children that they could be anything in the world that they wanted, now it was finally really true. Of course, the victory of Obama is as much a victory for white Americans as others, in that a vast majority of Americans are supportive of, or engaged in, a continual struggle for justice.

## CONCLUSION

Far from undermining my model of minority identity, the fact of Obama's election does much to reinforce it. Obama, who embraces his racial identification, though in a thinner sense than most other black political leaders, crafted his political strategy around particular goals, allying with people of diverse backgrounds who nonetheless shared in his vision. His racial and religious identifications helped craft his personality, character and experience, but in no way determined or limited his political action. This strategy helped win him the highest office in this country that is still burdened with pockets of overt racism and widespread institutional racism.

If this attitude can be so successful for one person and influence such great change in this country, one can only imagine what would be possible if we embraced these ideas en masse. Those who are part of the struggle for social justice would not only be more efficient in the attainment of their goals, but would highlight the universality of the principles they advocate.

Ideally, an individual would feel free to identify with multiple "cultural" groups without feeling a conflict of agendas or multiple-consciousness. Certainly, he should not feel, or be made to feel, that any racial or ethnic identification threatens his American-ness. This is possible if he no longer thinks of himself as a member inside multiple, rigid identity spheres, but rather as an individual who has multiple identifications to these nebulous domains of identity. These domains have boundaries which are not rigid, but

fluid and flexible. Identification to a domain is determined through satisfaction of one of several sufficient conditions, eliminating the possibility of prejudgment based on cultural identification and threats of inauthenticity<sup>2</sup>. Collectively, we must also embrace an idea of American-ness that is thin and has minimal, if any, necessary conditions. The only necessary condition may be a simple claim to American-ness. Combined with several sufficient conditions, this claim makes it so that nobody must feel rhetorically threatened or estranged in his own country. This situation certainly is ideal, but every person who embraces its ideological framework constitutes a part of its realization.

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