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Using W.E.B. Du Bois double consciousness theory, this study explores how dominant American culture affects the experiences of Black American millennials in different class positions to answer the following research question: (1) How does the concept of double consciousness apply to both Black working class and middle class millennials currently and what are its implications? Interviews were conducted among a sample of 16 adults born between the years 1981 and 1996, who self-identified their racial identity as Black and national identity as American. Participants were asked questions about their interpretations of American values and ideals, race, and whether their interpretations aligned with how they were represented in mainstream American culture. Qualitative analysis indicates that among Black millennials in the sample, double consciousness is applicable to feelings of misalignment and tension with American culture and values. Misalignment and tension were prevalent regardless of class position but class position did impact the degree to which Black millennials engaged with behaviors associated with double consciousness. Following this analysis, it is recommended that further research include a larger sample size and that the demographic focus be narrowed to better explore intersections regarding class and race.

UNDERSTANDING BLACK IDENTITIES: A QUALITATIVE COMPARISON

OF INTRA-RACIAL CLASS DIFFERENCES IN BLACK

MILLENNIALS

by

Derek T Clark

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Approved by

<u>Dr. Zachary Levenson</u>
Committee Chair

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to those that I have lost this past year; my grandfather, Billie Joe Alston, and my uncle, Vick Lynn. You are no longer here in the physical world but forever with me in spirit. To my family. My grandmother Gladys Alston, my parents Norman and Lynn Clark, and my sister Brianna Clark. I thank you all for your prayers, your encouragement and grounding. To Jean and Paul Domanico. I thank you both for your encouragement and kindness. I send my love to all of you.

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APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis written by Derek T. Clark has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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Introduction

In 1897, W.E.B Du Bois wrote an essay for the Atlantic magazine entitled "Strivings of the Negro People". In 1903, that same essay reappeared as the first section in his book "The Souls of Black Folk", but under a new title, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings". In this essay Du Bois articulated a veil separating the white and black races in America, and in reaction a feeling of "twoness" as an upper middle class, African American man, in early 20th century America (Du Bois, 1903). This description is the basis of what would be known as his theory of "double consciousness". Double consciousness hypothesizes a tension within the Black American community stemming from the measurement of a Black identity and sense of self viewed in contrast against dominant American culture. "An American identity - attached to the history, values, and spaces associated with the United States vis a vis a Black identity - (a) victim of Americanism, systemic racism, and hegemonic patriotism" (Du Bois, 1903, as cited in Johnson 2017).

Tension from this double consciousness is felt in both the individual and the collective psyche of Black Americans. As a result of being subjected to external pressures and perceptions from the dominant society, as well as inward pressure to measure themselves against them.

As an 'other' and as 'a problem', 'black folk' developed a double consciousness where they have a sense 'of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others' (Meer, 2019, p. 52)

The sense that what it means to be Black in America, is not created solely by Black Americans is central to double consciousness. Ciccariello-Maher (2009) notes that "given the hegemony of Westernization over Afro-centrism in the USA, a proportion of what it means to be

Black is based on assumptions, attitudes, and expectancies of the dominant society"
(Ciccariello-Maher, 2009 as cited in Walker, 2018, p. 207).

The United States of America along with other developed nations are synonymous with
Westernization and Eurocentrism in many regards. In this context America represents the
dominant or hegemonic society and culture in relation to the "othered" values and culture
associated with Black people and other minorities as subjugated cultures within the country. The
tension felt in Black Americans that Du Bois articulates is a product of hegemonic or dominant
culture's influence on them in their position as a subjugated culture (Mocombe, 2009). Black
Americans' interaction with the dominant or hegemonic state and the cultures, institutions and
individuals that reinforce their subjugation would in theory affect their decision making and
sense of self.

Citizens of many ethnicities, racial categories and backgrounds have been and continue to
relocate to America to take part in the American way of life or the American Dream. The
American Dream ideology is a good example of the cultural values, and vision that are
synonymous with expectations associated with American life and citizenship. American Dream
ideology has many forms but in a general sense implies that if certain rules and values are
followed citizens can achieve middle class security (Ghosh, 2013). The rules entail adherence to
and demonstration of certain traits, behaviors, actions and values regarded in American culture
and encoded in political speeches, institutional documents, programs and policies in the United
States (Ghosh, 2013).

Values like equality, liberty, justice, individual success, self-reliance and educational
attainment permeate American culture (Ghosh, 2013). In turn, these values inform how
individual citizens see themselves in relation to the state and how the state sees the individual

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citizen (Lears, 1985). The "state" in this case is synonymous with the cultural and structural power of America, as well as the interests of those (groups, people, institutions, etc) who influence cultural and structural power. White, Anglo-Saxon, protestant, and male interests continue to dictate hegemonic culture (Mocombe et al., 2014). It is the perspective of these groups that defines the criteria for being a "real American" or "full citizen". The behaviors and attitudes perceived as vital to success within American culture are of great importance in this regard.

These sensibilities and ways of knowing are embedded in mainstream American culture and values and are dominant relative to the sensibilities and ways of knowing held by groups that are not creators or acknowledged as co-creators of the mainstream culture and values (Mocombe et al., 2014). The hegemonic American values and culture as described is what shapes the sense of self and collective identity of those considered American citizens by default and groups within the country whose claims to citizenship are constantly challenged. This applies to citizens and groups that benefit from this power structure as it is (white people, cis-males, e.t.c) and people who are "othered" relative to the hegemonic culture but still must adapt for their own survival.

Integrating hegemonic values and cultural norms pose unique challenges for "othered" groups and individuals, particularly those of color. American citizens regardless of racial or ethnic identity are measured through the symbolism and cultural leanings and values of the dominant ideology. Immigrants who could successfully pass as white were able to integrate easily with hegemonic American culture by adhering to the values and ideals prescribed within American Dream ideology (Miller, 2022). These citizens had historically been "othered" in relation to dominant or hegemonic American culture and values as well, but within two generations of being in America people of Irish, Italian, Jewish, Romanian, Polish, etc. were able

to pursue the "American Dream" as non-subjugated groups (Miller, 2022). White citizens from different ethnic groups were allowed to "fully assimilate into dominant American culture, assuming they were willing to forgo deep engagement with their ethnic identity and cultural practices of their native country" (Miller, 2022).

For Black American citizens in particular, challenges to reaping the benefits from integrating into hegemonic culture seem to persist despite their long history of American citizenship. The two identities created within Black people from aspiring for the benefits of homogenization within American culture while simultaneously identifying with their own culture still informs their experiences goals and as Du Bois puts it "strivings" (Du Bois, 1903). This difference in experience exemplified by the acceptance of "white" presenting immigrants into mainstream American culture, and the persistence of the tension and feeling of "twoness" and double consciousness among Black Americans, serves as rationale to explore expressions of "double consciousness" in contemporary American minority communities.

Acknowledging Du Bois's theoretical work is important both in terms of the history of Sociology as a discipline and in terms of its relevance for the analysis of the contemporary world and people.

> The theory of double consciousness offers much to sociology in terms of advancing theories of racialized subjectivity and racialized social systems. It provides a robust analytical framework that allows for the multi-level examination of individual-level processes—such as the formation of the self—within the broader contexts of a racialized world, offering the ability to conduct phenomenological analyses of particular groups while accounting for the macro-structural processes that condition them. (Itzigsohn & Brown, 2015)

While the importance of Du Bois' double consciousness theory and his many other contributions to Sociology are now widely acknowledged, scholars such as Allen (2002), Mocombe (2009), Itzigsohn & Brown (2015) have introduced nuance regarding its application and advocated "reconsidering" certain aspects of the theory.

These scholars point to Du Bois economic and social position as well as the time period in which Du Bois introduced the theory in "The Souls of Black Folks", early 20th century America (Allen, 2002; Itzigsohn & Brown, 2015; Mocombe, 2009). It is also suggested that double consciousness as it was presented in Du Bois' "Strivings" (1897) and "Souls" (1903) has been misread and erroneously interpreted as a cultural struggle from the modern day perspective of "culture" rather than the late 19th and early 20th century understanding of culture (Allen, 2002). Scholars also allude to the fact that Du Bois actually distances himself from his double consciousness theory in later works (Pittman, 2016). Honoring the 120 years since Du Bois introduced his theory, this study acknowledges and engages some of the challenges put forth against it by other scholars. This study intends to provide insight regarding the current relevancy and applications of Du Bois' double consciousness theory by exploring how and/or if double consciousness appears in the lives of Black American millennials today.

Research Study

This thesis examines the ways in which culturally dominant American values currently influence the attitudes and perceptions expressed by Black American millennials of different socioeconomic standing (i.e., intraracial class differences). The original intention of this research was to address two overarching research questions. The first question encompassed the use of hegemonic American values to determine racial or class solidarity by comparing perceptions of Black millennials of different class backgrounds. While there are various possibilities and

interpretations of values considered dominant or "hegemonic" in American culture this study

incorporated 7 values identified as significant. These values were represented in literature as

culturally relevant in American society and embodied popular ideas of how an American is

defined in mainstream consciousness. In this study these values are called "hegemonic American

cultural values" and conceptualized as: individualism, religiousness, higher educational

attainment, work ethic, independence/liberty, self-sufficiency, and equality. The intent was to use

these 7 values to answer the question:

     (1) Are perceptions of American values indicative of racial solidarity, class solidarity or

both?

     However, through the course of the study the first question and the objectives associated

with it took a background role. The focus of the study shifted to fulfilling the objectives and

providing answers to question 2:

     (2) How is double consciousness expressed among both Black working class and middle

class millennials currently and what are its implications?

     Instead, the 7 aforementioned values were used as themes to structure interview questions

and integrated into the analysis pertaining to what would become the main focal point of the

study: How double consciousness is expressed among Black working and middle class

millennials.

     Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with working and middle class

Black millennials living and working within the "Triangle" metro area of North Carolina. This

geographic area includes the cities of Durham, Raleigh, Chapel Hill as well as the smaller

suburbs in close proximity. From these interviews evidence of hegemonic culture and its impacts

on the identity of Black millennials of different class positions were analyzed through the lens of

Du Boisian double consciousness. This approach to "double consciousness" in regards to culture alludes to reconsiderations for contemporary applications and challenges made to the double consciousness theory from other scholars (Allen, 2002; Mocombe, 2009). Discussions implicating the effect of W.E.B. Du Bois' own social and economic position on the development of the double consciousness theory are taken into account in this study. This is deemed as relevant to ideas about how hegemonic culture influences Black Americans and in turn how double consciousness is expressed in Black Americans based on class. Black millennials alignment with American cultural values and whether class differences affect this were considered in analysis as well. My hypothesis is as follows:

H: Double consciousness is largely a middle-class phenomenon and will therefore not be as observable among working-class respondents.

The following sections of this thesis will include background information on hegemonic American cultural values, double consciousness and class within race, as well as the theoretical underpinning associated with these topics. The methodology used in this study will be discussed as well, followed by a discussion of the findings and concluding remarks.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Within this section, I will describe hegemonic American cultural values,"double consciousness" and hegemony and its effect on class and race. These major topics are the underpinnings of this research study. I will then describe the theoretical application within this thesis.

Hegemonic American Cultural Values

The basis of my thesis builds on the idea of hegemonic American cultural values and the translation of those values through Black millennials. Cultural hegemony is often attributed to the Italian communist Antonio Gramsci (Lears, 1985). While imprisoned he developed his ideas to explain the resilience of capitalism and, at the same time, to find the theoretical basis for the counter-strategy of the proletariat (Im, 1991). The main theoretical concept he elaborated in prison was the notion of "hegemony" (Im, 1991). According to Gramsci, the supremacy of a class or a social group manifests itself in two ways: domination - rule by force and hegemony - rule by consent (Gramsci, 1971: 57 as cited in Im, 1991). For Gramsci, the maintenance of power by the dominant bourgeoisie in capitalist societies normally takes the form of the organization of consent rather than the naked use of force. Hegemony, i.e., organizing the consent of subordinate masses, is based on the ability of a social group to represent the universal interests of a whole society (Im, 1991).

Gramsci did not explicitly define hegemony, but in regard to the constitution of dominant cultures or institutions Gramsci had in mind the values, norms, perceptions, beliefs, sentiments, and prejudices that support and define the existing distribution of goods, the institutions that decide how this distribution occurs, and the permissible range of disagreement about those processes (Lears, 1985). Applied to culture or cultural hegemony it can also be viewed as, "a set

of values, beliefs, ideas and cultural practices that are always willing to dominate, defeat and manage other cultures within the circle of its power." (Fluck, Brandt, and Thaler, 2007:1, quoted in Kasiyarno 2014). Taking these conceptualizations of hegemony into account when applied to American culture, American Dream ideology and the values and ideals associated with it can be interpreted as hegemonic.

> There is no idea more fully symbolic of American cultural idealism than the American dream, which has, time after time, expressed the paradigmatic structure for national and individual achievement in the United States…..the United States has used cultural globalization to spread the dream through popular culture. The culture has effectively influenced the way people on earth live. The American cultural dominance has been accepted in a smooth process, so that it has maintained the American power around the world. Hope of success and victory are the main icons of the American dream for the emergence of the hegemonic power (Kasiyarno, 2014).

The American dream is a narrative of a collective or individual experience that shapes and distinguishes the American nation according to Ştiuliuc (2011). However, other conceptualizations suggest that the ideology is more appropriate for the individual experience. Ghosh (2013) asserts that the American Dream is not a political ideology even though it influences policy and has political relevance. The American Dream is an abstract set of values about individual behavior (Ghosh, 2013). Cultural values associated with the American Dream as a dominant ideology of and belonging to the dominant culture would be useful in exploring the relationship between cultural hegemonic influence and "othered" groups. The American Dream and the values associated with it make up an ideology of success predicated on work, virtue, and happiness, and in theory it represents the society people want to live in (Ghosh, 2013). Relating

the Eurocentric nature of the American ideology as well as Ştiuliuc (2011) describes it as follows

> The American dream is the cultural expression of North American identity and, even if it was occasionally transformed into the American nightmare, it remains one of the most motivating forces of American civilization and a still viable token of American exceptionalism. The American dream cannot be interpreted as a myth in the traditional sense of the word, but as a metaphor of translation of the diasporic subject from an old cultural space to a new cultural space.

American identity is derived from adherence to particular beliefs and principles, such as constitutionalism, individualism, liberalism, democracy and egalitarianism, which make up an American creed, all having their roots in the Declaration of Independence (Ştiuliuc, 2011). Interpretations of the American Dream range from ideals of what material success in the United States looks like - home ownership, White Picket fence, two cars, two kids. This would be the post World War II, "good life" iteration of the dream (Ghosh, 2013). The second iteration has more to do with racial justice, equality, and inclusion. One could think of this iteration as striving for the American Dream that Martin Luther King Jr. invoked in his "I Have A Dream" address (Ghosh, 2013).

This study is concerned with the values and concepts underlying both iterations. Though they are arbitrary, values such as individualism, equality, work ethic, self-reliance are commonly put forth in relation to the American Dream ideology, suggestions as to where those values originate vary. Ghosh (2013) suggests that the American Dream did not originate with the Puritan ethic but is a modern offshoot. Ideas about the origins of capitalism and the organization of the modern social world being associated with Protestant religious ethics are attributed to Max

Weber (1905/2002, foreword by Kalberg). Weber posited that the methodical-rational work

motivated by work from within and vocation or calling was the grounds for a highly productive

organization of life and ushered in modern capitalism (Weber, 1905/2002, p. xlii). The values

underlying the Protestant ethic and the American Dream are arguably both representative of

hegemonic American culture as they are both linked to white, middle class values (Mocombe et

al., 2014). Mocombe (2009; 2014) links Weber's Protestant ethic and connection to capitalism as

a major constitutive element of American culture and middle class values (Weber, 1905/2002,

foreword by Kalberg)

Evidence to support specific values associated with America and mainstream

interpretations of these values are located in cultural narratives found in materials from

American institutions, educational sources, and literature. Archived content originally released

online from January 2017 to 2021 from the United States Department of State website includes

an online resource created by the Department of State's Foreign Service Institute that provides

descriptions of American values and culture. The resource guide entitled "So You're an

American? A Guide to Answering Difficult Questions Abroad", was "designed to build skills

and confidence in government workers responding to difficult questions about American culture

and nationality". It lists, defines and summarizes values and beliefs that are perceived as

important to American cultural identity. These values and beliefs are as follows: "independence,

equality, individualism, democracy, nationalism, meritocracy, directness, innovation,

consumerism, informality, and efficient use of time". (United States Department of State:

2017-2021 Archived Content).

Mocombe (2009) conceptualizes these values as what he interprets as the "Protestant

ethos" - work ethic, family organization, 'White standards of morality', godliness, obedience,

rationalism, etc. The terms and definitions below will be used throughout the study and were adapted from different conceptualizations of the Protestant ethic and American Dream. Individualism, religiousness, higher educational attainment, work ethic, private property, liberty, self-sufficiency, and equality. Definitions that follow represent mainstream interpretations of these concepts.

Individualism in a cultural sense can be seen as an "I" based culture that is full of frequently fluid environments, with an emphasis on individual achievement and self-reliance, and where success is measured by individual achievement. There is an emphasis on autonomy, independence, individual initiative, the right to privacy and the pursuit of happiness and financial security (Ben-Dor et al., 2008). Religiousness - general sense of religious freedom in American culture. Higher educational attainment - the advocacy for college education. Work ethic - the belief that people who work hard succeed (Bernardo et al., 2018).

Private property - physical manifestation of past labor. Property is an essential natural right; to take it is to take one's labor, to make one a slave. Seen in this way, property rights owe nothing to society; on the contrary, property owners form society and governments to protect their property (Smith, 1999 as cited in Friedman, 2001).

Liberty (Negative and Positive) - Negative liberty is the absence of obstacles, barriers or constraints (Carter, 2021). One has negative liberty to the extent that actions are available to one in this negative sense (Carter, 2021). Positive liberty is the possibility of acting — or the fact of acting — in such a way as to take control of one's life and realize one's fundamental purposes (Carter, 2021). While negative liberty is usually attributed to individual agents, positive liberty is sometimes attributed to collectivities, or to individuals considered primarily as members of given collectivities (Carter, 2021).

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Self-sufficiency - working and not relying on welfare programs or 'having enough money to meet basic needs', are common examples of self-sufficiency in public policy. These top-down policy definitions of SS have been conceived as 'desirable' outcomes that uphold and maintain the American ideological values of liberty, self-reliance, and individuality (Daugherty and Barber, 2001;Tickamyer et al., 2000; Sandlin, 2004; Shain, 1994 as cited in Hong et al., 2009). Equality - the idea that every one of us is equal in dignity and deserves to be treated equally (The White House Gender Policy Council, 2021).

Based on the culmination of literature in this area, I am using these values to represent American hegemonic cultural identity. Mocombe (2009) links values and praxis associated with a global capitalist social and economic structure, that trickle down from the American, protestant, White, male, capitalist, hegemonic institutions to the Black elite and middle classes who project them onto the working and lower class Black population while simultaneously speaking and appropriating frustrations and claims on their behalf towards mainstream America. For this reason, these values were used as a basis for developing the interview guide used in this study to examine how "double consciousness," is expressed within Black American millennials.

"Double Consciousness" and its Reconsiderations

"Double consciousness" in regard to race and the plight of Black Americans is attributed to the renowned sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois', and appears in his seminal work "The Souls of Black Folk" (Du Bois, 1903). The essence of theory appears in this passage from the first chapter, "Of Our Spiritual Striving", in it Dubois exclaims:

    "[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. 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 two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife – this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He does not wish to Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He wouldn't bleach his Negro blood in a flood of White Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face." (Du Bois, 1903)

Du Bois poses three elements to the theory of double consciousness: the veil, twoness, and second sight (Itzigsohn & Brown, 2015). The veil acts as a one way mirror for the dominant or hegemonic society upon which they project their own constructions of subjugated or "othered" groups (Itzigsohn & Brown, 2015). These "othered" groups have to in turn understand and incorporate the dominant translation of themselves into their own self-formation and understand the nature and desires of the dominant groups as well (Itzigsohn & Brown, 2015). The internal processing of the external gaze, gives rise to the second element of double consciousness: the sense of twoness (Itzigsohn & Brown, 2015). In this context "the White gaze" and the view of mainstream or hegemonic American culture would be interchangeable. "Twoness means that within the process of self formation the racialized group (i.e. Black people) takes the position of

two different worlds—the Black world, which they intersubjectively construct behind the veil, and the White world, which dehumanizes them through lack of recognition" (Itzigshohn and Brown, 2015). The third element of the theory of double consciousness is second sight. Second sight posits that, "oppression allows African Americans to understand the promise of freedom in a way that White Americans cannot" (Meer, 2019). This is realized in everyday scenarios where it is raised to a conscious level, serving as a means to probe deeper meanings and contradictions of a racialized experience and providing the resource for transformative change (Meer, 2019).

This is a constitutive structural element of racialized modernity and it also structures the way in which subjects situated on different sides of the veil see and experience their social world (Meer 2018). For the racializing (dominant) subject, the racialized (subjugated) subject is invisible. Therefore, the racializing subject cannot take the position of the racialized (Rawls 2000 as cited in Itzigsohn & Brown, 2015). Du Bois alludes to the anti-Black racism occurring at the time as he asserts a wish for the possibility that a man can be both a "Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed in his face" (Du Bois, 1903).

According to Walker (2018) and Nobles (1973) with African-Americans living in hegemonic society, there is concern when a cognitive organization exists as a function of this collision of worldviews. This collision may result in some individuals adjusting their self-concept in efforts to adapt to the dominant culture (Walker, 2018). This may include changing the self-concept or engaging and thinking in ways contrary to one's present self through the internalization of viewpoints of society (Walker, 2018). Tension stemming from double consciousness can be interpreted as the effects of hegemonic forces as they are communicated to African Americans and similar groups through hegemonic institutions, cultures

and ways of knowing and being. To be "American" or attempt to be an "American", minority groups must interact with these institutions and therefore "translate" hegemonic forces in order to navigate society effectively. Du Bois, both in "The Souls of Black Folk" (1903) and in his later work, "Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept" (1940), characterized possible reactions that Blacks would have had to "the veil" in his time period. These reactions for Du Bois were: "rebellion - a feeling of revolt and revenge; "assimilation"- an attempt to adjust all through and action to the will of the greater groups; or finally, "self-assertion" a determined effort at self realization and self-development despite environing opinion (Du Bois, 1903;1940, as cited in Itzigsohn & Brown, 2015).

In the time between "The Souls of Black Folk" (1903) and "Dusk" (1940), Du Bois had given up the moniker "double-consciousness"(Pittman, 2016). He wanted to distance himself from the idea – rejecting it in Dusk of Dawn (Du Bois, 1940 as cited in Pittman, 2016). There are varying arguments but one of them may be because he wanted to distance himself from the idea that collectivities are entities with their own consciousnesses, reified in what he came to regard as mistaken idealist overreach (Pittman, 2016).

Other scholars have interrogated issues regarding the double consciousness theory as well. Critics of double consciousness assert that it just expressed common ideas about twoness and alienation present in Du Bois's time pointing to differences in how "culture" was conceptualized in the late 19th and early 20th century (Allen, 2002). Mocombe (2009), Allen, (2002), Itzigsohn & Brown (2015), and Dickson (1992), all allude to Du Bois class position and his audience as well.

They make the case that Du Bois' double consciousness theory should be properly read from the perspective of his own strivings as a member, albeit a Black member of an educated

(Du Bois being a Harvard graduate), middle class bourgeoisie society in the late 19th and 20th century. Du Bois did not explicitly say that he was putting forth a case for an "African" or "African American" consciousness set to oppose hegemonic social order (Mocombe, 2009). However, some misreadings interpret double consciousness through a modern "cultural" lens rather than the paradigm of "nation" and "biological" idea of race present in the early 20th century (Allen, 2002). Rather than an opposing consciousness or striving, Du Bois' striving in 'Souls' was one of aiming for acceptance, inclusion and recognition as a middle class American, who happened to be Black as well. It is suggested that the frame for Black middle class strivings was to exonerate Blackness and Black achievements as worthy by Eurocentric standards. Du Bois "double consciousness" in its early points placed the African spirituality in connection with a more general body of Romantic ideas and imagery (Dickson, 1992). Du Bois reinforced this connection with a web of allusions and oppositions, allusions drawn from Romanticism as well as from Emersonian Transcendentalism (Dickson, 1992).

> Any suggestion that members of the tiny, educated elite among Afro-Americans were somehow torn between the values of, on the one hand, upper- or middle-class Whites and, on the other, those of Black sharecroppers, domestics, and other working people (that is, as one might say today, between a Eurocentric and an Afrocentric cultural orientation) is, quite simply, a proposition unsupported by the evidence (Allen, 2002).

In the context of this research intraracial class distinctions are being examined as a binary relationship in which there is a possibility of unique interpretation of American cultural hegemonic values differentiated by class (Working class Blacks vs. Middle class Blacks). This dichotomy still captures the tension that W.E.B Du Bois' alludes to in his original concept of double consciousness but in a context that takes into account class related issues that Mocombe

(2009) in particular points out. Mocombe (2009) criticizes the scope of double consciousness and suggests that double consciousness is chiefly an expression of a psychic conflict within middle and upper class Black Americans who regularly traverse between their self-awareness of Blackness and how it is perceived in the mainstream culture they must navigate for professional and economic stability. This double consciousness therefore is simply a representation of the interest and desire of the "Black bourgeois" to obtain equality and recognition for the betterment of their material conditions (Mocombe, 2009). This conforming process and move to adhere to a mindset that better incorporates American hegemonic values is what Moccombe alludes to in his summation of Du Bois double consciousness theory and Talented Tenth program as "seeking to institutionalize Blacks in the American social formation" (Mocombe, 2009).

This research hopes to address this critique suggesting that the tension interpreted through "double consciousness" is solely representative of interests and desires from the Black bourgeoisie (middle/upper classes Black Americans) opposed to working/lower class Black Americans. There are prior studies on double consciousness but this study sets out to clarify whether "double consciousness" is purely applicable and representative of middle and upper class minority group interests, or if there is evidence of this tension being relevant in the attitudes and values present in working class minority groups as well. This question is relatively unexamined through qualitative methods. There has not yet been a qualitative study comparing perspectives held among varying class distinctions within Black Americans (referred to in this study as intra-racial class perspectives) to address reconsiderations of "double consciousness".

Hegemony and Divisive Effects on Class and Race

The African-American experience remains "invisible" or nearly unfathomable to mainstream society and in social psychological analyses of personality (Sue, 2004, as quoted in Walker, 2018). In the United States Black Americans are often looked at as a monolithic group. "Structural racism has consistently limited the academic conversation in ways that explicitly and implicitly linked Blackness with poverty and deficiency and continued to presume a singularity of Black identity and experience" (Morning, 2011;Go, 2018; Williams, 2019 quoted in Charles 2022). What it means to be Black has moved well beyond an all- encompassing conceptualization of race as a master status in which all persons on the Black side of a color binary share a monolithic racial identity defined in opposition to Whiteness, reinforced by exclusion and buttressed by discrimination (Charles, 2022). "Native-born Blacks have been portrayed historically as 'unassimilable', while White ethnic immigrants – and more recently, immigrants of colour – are studied in terms of their attempts to assimilate over generations" (Myrdal; Gans; Lieberson; Alba; Waters; McKee; Portes and Zhou; Perlmann and Waldinger as cited in Lacy, 2004). This barring from assimilation into American culture is a key component of the systemic and subversive oppression that Black Americans historically faced and continue to face in America. The systemic barriers represent "the veil" that double consciousness arises in response to (Ciccariello-Maher, 2009).

"Presenting African-Americans as possessing a degraded cultural heritage or limited contribution to American life creates an internal echo of white America's racist judgements" (Meer, 2019). The idea of unity through a shared culture of a "Black nation" or diaspora is useful and relevant in certain contexts. In shared experience of oppression and marginalization, or Black identity as an opposing reaction to Whiteness (Miller, 2022). When contrasted with

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"hegemonic Whiteness", race from a monolithic perspective is useful in advocating for societal rights and advancements that were denied to groups like African Americans on the basis of racial inferiority (Miller, 2022). However, studies suggest that racial unity and solidarity is subject to change and may not lead to collective action or mobilization on its own. There are many examples of Black American movements characterized by racial unity for political representation and progress. By not looking at intra-racial differences within minority communities it is possible to miss important intersections in identity that could inform other forms of action and behavior not characterized by racial solidarity or shared marginalization.

In 2007 a study by the Pew Research Center found that nearly four-in ten (Blacks) said that because of the diversity within their community, Blacks can no longer be thought of as a single race (Pew Research Center, 2007). The following quote also speaks to challenges to the monolith paradigm from a political perspective.

> As recent elections have shown, no racial or ethnic group votes with one voice. Rather, it is the intersection of age, class, race, group membership, as well as other factors that influence voting behaviors. Black Americans, long considered monolithic in political attitudes and behaviors, are as diverse in politics today as they are in experience. (Trent, 2007)

Cokley et al (2007) suggests that "social class is an important construct that might influence the cultural values of different ethnic groups." Looking at behaviors present in minorities of different class positions could be helpful in thinking about the importance of values, how they influence behavior and where they come from. An ethnographic study from Crockett (2017) suggests that there are two distinct perspectives pertaining to respectability practice among middle class Black Americans: "(1) "discern and avoid," which seeks distance

from whatever is stigmatized, and (2) "destigmatize," using Black culture as a source of high status." Perceptions of how effective these strategies are depend on how lifestyle and viewpoints are connected through place and individual attainment. Lacy (2007) found that middle class Blacks practiced "exclusionary boundary work" to display that they were not members of the Black lower class, but there remained a specific motivation within the Black middle class to hold on to their racial identity as Black (Lacy, 2007). Pandey (2009) explores the social stratification of racial and ethnic groups comparing the experiences of middle class Black American and ex-untouchable Indian (Dalit) communities. Pandey (2009) and Lacy (2007) both allude to links between tensions based on identity and physical spatial proximity (or lack thereof). Pandey's (2009) suggestion that subaltern middle-class groups retain a tie or "allegiance" to the lower-class populations they emerged from, seems to cross with Lacy's proposal that "a third path of 'segmented assimilation' applies to middle class Black Americans" (Lacy, 2004).

Where immigrants seek community and "space" based upon shared nationality this "third path" of segmented assimilation serves native born Black Americans in a similar way as strategic assimilation (Lacy, 2004). It entails a desire for middle class Black Americans to seek out "Black spaces" either through formal organization attributed to upper class Blacks or spatial contexts for middle class Blacks that live in Black neighborhoods (Lacy, 2007). Intraracial distinctions in behavior like this might suggest that racial boundaries are permeable and class is increasing in importance in regard to behavior and decision making (Lacy, 2004; 2007). This perspective coincides with recent literature that seems to award significance to the growing diversity within the Black American population and illuminating the changing dynamics and behavioral changes afforded by greater opportunity and access granted to select numbers of this group (Charles et al., 2022).

The tie of allegiance to lower classes that Pandey (2009) cites is of interest in that it factors into framing "double consciousness" in the context of middle-class Blacks. Her findings are in dialogue with Lacy's (2007) work in the sense that it starts to address rationale for Black middle-class populations choosing to identify strongly with their racial identities despite of, or in light of achieving a certain level of status. It invokes Du Bois "twoness" in regard to identity (Du Bois, 1903).

Understanding the intersections which affect the perspectives of racialized groups has a range of applications. Class is one of many areas of intersectionality. Debates centered around class as it relates to Black Americans have ranged in scope. One debate posing whether a "Black middle/upper class" actually exists in America, follows a line of thinking that centers racial stratification (Lacy, 2007).

The first distinction focuses on comparing the Black American "middle class" experience with that of Whites and posits that middle class Black Americans experience is not significantly different from that of lower and working class Blacks. This perspective is taken as the dominant view in the literature (Lacy, 2007). Other groups of scholars suggest that middle class Blacks share more in common with middle class Whites than they do with Black lower classes (Lacy, 2007). The aforementioned 2007 study from the Pew Research Center also supported this view finding a gulf between the values of middle class and poor Blacks but also found convergence in the values held by Blacks and Whites (Pew Research Center, 2007). This perspective considers class to be more meaningful than race regarding commonality.

Another way to look at class and the division that stems from it comes from Mocombe (2014) and Miller (2022) who incorporate hegemony in their views on race and intra-racial dynamics. Mocombe posits that the values and ethics that shape the strivings of all people are

rooted in a capitalist social structure, reinforced by a liberal, bourgeoisie, Protestant, White value system dispersed through globalization or through social relations under American hegemony (Mocombe et al., 2014). Relating this to Du Bois' (1903) veil and the reactions he posits Black Americans have to the veil this could be useful in looking at double consciousness as applicable beyond strictly racial terms. In his later work "Dusk of Dawn", Du Bois (1940) mentioned possible reactions as "assimilation", "self-assertion", and "rebellion" (Itzigsohn & Brown, 2015). Assimilation as expressed in Du Bois' work assumes that black organizations are avoided in order to join the world of Whites (Du Bois, 1940, p. 187).

Rather than applying a strictly racial perspective of assimilation, in the current context assimilation of "othered" groups or minorities should take the benefits from capitalist and economic gain into account. Expanding the scope of double consciousness to look for alternative consciousness or challenges to hegemony both racially and economically could have broad applications to other groups that are subjugated within a westernized capitalist social structure. Mocombe (2009) suggests that double consciousness should be taken into account with Du Bois "purposive rationale" or reasoning in mind. According to Mocombe (2009) Du Bois as a middle class, bourgeoisie black, did not introduce an alternative consciousness, or non identity opposing the Protestant ethic and spirit of capitalism in the American social world. This "ambivalence" and sense of wanting equal footing within the status quo according to Moccombe instead indicates reproduction of the hegemonic American culture through class hierarchy (Mocombe, 2009). Mocombe et al. (2014) suggests that American capital seeks to hybridize other races, ethnicities and cultures along the lines of Black American class division to socialize them and incorporate them as workers and also to increase value within the global capitalist economy.

American Blacks as interpolated (workers) and embourgeoised agents of the American

post industrial capitalist social structure of inequality, represent the most modern

(socialized) people of color in terms of their practical consciousness in this process of

homogenizing social actors as agents of the Protestant Ethic or as disciplined workers and

consumers working for owners of production in order to obtain economic gain, status and

upward mobility in the larger American society (Frazier, 1957; Wilson, 1978; Glazer and

Moynihan, 1963; Mocombe, 2009; Mocombe et al., 2014)

The ideological and material influence of American capitalist lifestyle socializes or

hybridizes into what Mocombe et al. (2014) calls "two social class language games of Black

America"; the Black bourgeoisie and the Black underclass of hip hop culture. Mocombe et al.

(2014) claims this dynamic is taking place globally and dividing the African diaspora into class

groups indicative of global capitalist social structure and American capitalist ideology. What

Mocombe et al. (2014) calls African-Americanization similar to Globalization or

Americanization. This is a case of a subjugated group in one context acting as an agent for a

larger hegemonic structure or "consciousness".

Mocombe et al. (2014) posits that American Blacks are hegemonic from a global

standpoint as agents of capitalist hegemony as "the most modern (socialized) people of color.

Miller (2022) explores hegemony through Whiteness. Like Mocombe (2009; 2014), who

highlights the ways in which African Americans can both be subjugated and agents of

hegemonic capitalism and American ethics. Miller (2022) points out the ways in which

hegemonic Whiteness influences intra-racial division and subjugates working class Whites along

with "othered" minority groups. Mocombe points out that although Black racial identities are

portrayed as based on out-group differences and shared struggle, the hegemonic influences on

division within both groups are still very much similar despite assumed racial identity and marginalization of Blacks.

     The United States developed as an "empire nation" (Jung, 2015), embracing values associated with hegemonic Whiteness such as capitalism, free market exchange, individualism, and manifest destiny. Together, these values encourage White people to develop attitudes that justify the conquest and dominance of the ruling class, who are largely wealthy and White. Alternatively, U.S. citizens who are poor, or unable to live up to these capitalist values, are devalued and erased from dominant narratives. When marginalized citizens are included, their experiences are often contextualized using paternalistic ideologies that frame them as childlike and dependent on the kindness of the elite to survive (Okun, 2021; Winant, 1997; Miller, 2022).

People that "can" identify as White in America are allowed to fully assimilate into dominant American, White culture assuming that they give up their ethnic and cultural identity of origin (Miller, 2022). Embracing White American capitalist culture is a requirement for all and both Miller (2022) and Mocombe (2014) allude to this as well as Lacy (2007) who alludes to the ways in which middle class Blacks intentionally distinguish themselves from lower class Blacks. Miller (2022) suggests different types of Whiteness in which individuals are subject to stigma (i.e.; southern Whites, Whites in predominantly working class BIPOC communities), marginalization (i.e.; White Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer+ - LGBTQ+) (Gordon & Meyer, 2007; Miller, 2022) and protest (i.e.; angry working class White men)

Miller (2022) and Mocombe et al. (2014) as well as Frazier (1957) point to the role of education in the dissemination of White Puritan values. These values have a profound effect on middle class sensibilities required to adhere to for assimilation into the White, American

hegemonic cultural and social world. Dominant White epistemologies prioritize ways of knowing that are binary, linear, logical, "objective", and "rational" as opposed to ways of knowing that are more nuanced and subjective (Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008; Miller, 2022). Hegemonic Whiteness also emphasizes knowing through research and the written word, as opposed to storytelling and other verbally transmitted forms of knowledge (Okun, 2021; Miller, 2022). Miller (2022) points to education as a source and mechanism to produce class division.

Miller (2022) suggests that dominant narratives associated with hegemonic American educational institutions and media often intentionally exclude contemporary and historical efforts to develop class-consciousness across racial lines, such as the Highlander Folk School, Rainbow Coalition and Redneck Revolt (Glen, 1996; Rothschild, 2019; Sonnie & Tracy, 2011; Miller, 2022).

Recent efforts such as the New York Times' "1619 Project" (Hannah-Jones & Elliott, 2019) that seek to remedy these inaccurate historical narratives are under attack. For example, in the United States, legislation attempting to prohibit the inclusion of such narratives in educational curriculum has been introduced in at least 26 states (Education Week, 2021). Finally, White supremacy culture is guided by Christian hegemony that valuates White racial identities and institutions based on their ability to live up to moral standards and practices that are steeped in Protestant discourse and ideologies (Emerson & Smith, 2000; Kivel, 2013; Whitehead & Perry, 2020; Miller, 2022).

The implications here are that these are attempts to put forward a macro view of how class division proliferates. In looking at applying double consciousness as theory to values, behaviors and possible strivings related to power dynamics it is useful to have different framings to explore. The inaccurate assumption of a monolithic Black experience and/or identity has long

been used to marginalize specific subpopulations and their needs compared to what are seen as "real" Black issues. Race is a social construction and its expression is always intersectional, depending on the traits and characteristics of the person involved (Cohen, 1999; Collins and Bilge, 2016 as cited in Charles et al., 2022).

Theoretical Application

The relationship between translation and hegemony as it relates to "double consciousness" in Black millennials invokes the four conditions that Jaquemond (1992: 139-158) summarized to indicate hegemony in authorship. This framing also relates to recognition and misrecognition of systemic barriers conceptualized as the "second sight" that Black Americans possess and the "blindness" of those aligned with hegemonic culture and society.

a) [The] dominated culture will invariably translate far more of a hegemonic culture than the latter will of the former, (b) When a hegemonic culture does translate works produced by the dominated culture, those works will be perceived and presented as difficult, mysterious, inscrutable, esoteric, and as requiring a small cadre of intellectuals to interpret them, while a dominated culture will translate a hegemonic culture's works with a view to easy accessibility for the masses, (c) a hegemonic culture will only translate those works by authors in a dominated culture that fit into the former's preconceived notions of the latter, and (d) authors in a dominated culture thriving for a larger audience will tend to write for translation into a hegemonic language, and this will require some degree of compliance with stereotypes. (Jaquemond, 1992 as cited in Kasiyarno, 2014)

While this framework of translation is in the context of authorship of text it applies easily to the living world. There is overlap between this framework and three areas that Du Bois highlights in his introduction of the double consciousness theory in "The Souls of Black Folk":

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the veil, twoness, and second sight (Du Bois, 1903). The first area "the veil" overlaps with b and c - the very presence of difference between a hegemonic culture and dominated culture creates a separation.

The second element "twoness" overlaps with b, c, d - a conflict exist between the African American and what it means to be both American and Black,

The third element "second sight" - speaks to the necessity for Black Americans to perform their interpretations of hegemonic culture, and gauge this performance against the expectations of the hegemonic culture. This creates a sense of knowing the world from multiple points of reference.

As a lens to examine intraracial class perspectives, double consciousness is useful in that it operates from a binary perspective in its original use (Black identity vs. American identity). This could be applied to the question of how Black millennials in the present moment are influenced by and perceive hegemonic American culture and the values associated with it. However, the debate surrounding Du Bois presentation of "double consciousness" poses questions for its application in the present context. Taking into account the misreadings of culture in the theory suggested by Allen, 2002), Mocombe (2009) theorizes that double consciousness as presented by Du Bois was and is simply a representation of material and self interests of the Black bourgeoisie and that the relative position of Dubois as a member of the "Black bourgeoisie" and that can't be discounted. Suggesting that the theory represents or is relevant to all of Black society would be a mistake. He argues that the tension is a side-effect of "cultural homogenization" stemming from the pressure to:

Reproduce the 'pure identity' of power in terms of the practical consciousness (structural

variables - class and status) of the dominating American capitalist bourgeois social

order." (Mocombe, 2009)

The striving for integration and equality under capitalist, globalizing forces is of interest

and encouraged culturally by a liberal Black bourgeoisie living under and influenced

by.…the ethos of Protestantism and the spirit of capitalism reified in the discourse and

discursive practices of the nation-state and its ideological apparatuses, i.e., education,

church, family, etc., and organization of work or social relations of production under the

leadership and social class language games of rich, White, Protestant, heterosexual men."

(Mocombe et al., 2014)

This ethos is part of a hegemonic global structure and in this study is the basis of

"hegemonic American cultural values":

Americentric form of modernity, neoliberalism with its emphasis on family life,

individuality, education, class division, free markets, free trade, political and economic

liberalism, outsourcing of jobs, privatization, etc, which contemporarily dominates the

world in and through the discourse of globalization represents the continual attempt to

homogenize and universalize social identities and social practices the world over to fit

within the metaphysical discourse and discursive practices of agents of the Protestant

ethic who purposively rationalized the discourse of their metaphysic into the laws and

practices of their society and global institutions against the metaphysics of adherents of

the Enlightenment, the poor, and other metaphysics (Mocombe et al., 2014).

In exploring the experiences of working and middle class Black millennials through the

lens of double consciousness the reconsiderations that Mocombe (2009), Itzigsohn & Brown

(2015), Allen (2002) and others put forth are considered. All three scholars call attention to Du Bois class position and ambivalence towards "national identities" and misreadings of this as him attempting to characterize a struggle between cultures from the modern day perspective. Whereas struggle at the time actually centered around proving the Black American worthy using Eurocentric perspectives to measure (Allen, 2002). Mocombe's (2009) argument that the Black American middle class (re)-presents and represents the ideals, values and strivings of hegemonic, American, capitalist, "bourgeoisie" instead of a "African consciousness" or "Black consciousness" is of interest and taken into account .

In this study I will apply Du Bois' double consciousness theory as he introduces it consisting of the three elements: the veil, twoness, and second sight (Itzigsohn & Brown, 2015). As well as three main forms of reaction that Du Bois conceptualized, "rebellion","assimilation" and "self-assertion". To adjust and situate Du Bois double consciousness in the current context, findings will be discussed and analyzed taking the reconsiderations and ideas associated with those concerns regarding the double consciousness theory into account.

In short this study intends to look at racialized individuals (Black millennials) from different social and class positions, through a theory read as racial (double consciousness), to explore how how they (Black millennials of different class positions) translate and process hegemonic culture possibly in ways that the dominant culture can't (through their lens the veil). Taking into account a perspective that extends past race into environing conditions and structure as Du Bois and other scholars suggest.

CHAPTER III: METHODS

Overview

This study uses W.E.B. Du Bois double consciousness theory to explore the relationship between hegemonic cultural values and Black millennials representing different socioeconomic class positions. The goal was to explore how hegemonic cultural values were processed and expressed through the thoughts, behaviors and actions of Black millennials. The purpose was to understand if the meanings these groups associate with these concepts have implications for racial and class solidarity for the African American community. This chapter will describe and discuss the research methods and methodology used to address these topics.

Research Strategy and Approach

The main question that this study addresses is as follows:

1) How does the concept of double consciousness apply to both Black working class and middle class millennials currently and what are its implications?

The main objectives of this study were to:

1) collect and analyze responses from both "working class" Black millennials and "middle class" Black millennials for insight on how hegemonic culture, represented by 7 dominant values in American culture and interactions with White Americans and hegemonic institutions, impacts "double consciousness".

2) Compare these responses by class group (ie, working class Blacks vs. middle class Blacks).

3) Analyze responses that detail interactions between Black millennials and hegemonic cultural mediums and institutions (White people, institutions, 7 hegemonic values). Compare perspectives from working and middle class Black millennials.

To address these objectives I conducted 16 semi-structured qualitative interviews with Black "millennials" (ages 26-42 years old) representing two different socioeconomic class positions; working class and middle class. Another class position, "hybrid" was introduced during the course of the research.

Research Methods

A qualitative approach was deemed as the most appropriate method to address the subject matter of this study. " Qualitative research techniques provide a lens for learning about non quantifiable phenomena such as people's experiences, languages, histories, and cultures" (Bhangu, Provost, and Caduff, 2023). There are two types of research methods available to choose from: quantitative and qualitative. The two modes of research are often defined in contrast to one another as expressed in the description given by Gerring (2017) highlighting the core differences in function between them.

Qualitative work is expressed in natural language, whereas quantitative work is expressed in numbers and in statistical models. Qualitative work employs small samples, whereas quantitative work is based on large-N analysis. Qualitative work draws on cases chosen in an opportunistic or purposive fashion, whereas quantitative work employs systematic (random) sampling. Qualitative work is often focused on particular individuals, events, and contexts, lending itself to an idiographic style of analysis. Quantitative work is more likely to be focused on features that (in the researcher's view) can be generalized across a larger population, lending itself to a nomothetic style of analysis (Gerring, 2017)

More support for qualitative methods in the case of this study comes from a study from Walker (2018). In his quantitative study on double consciousness in Black male college students he suggests that qualitative studies on double consciousness would be helpful to draw out the

complexities within current applications of the theory (Walker, 2018). Although the premise of this study is different from Walker's (2018) study, this observation lends support for qualitative research in regard to the topic at hand.

Setting

Participants were from various locations within the Raleigh - Durham - Chapel Hill, North Carolina metro area known as the "Triangle". The Triangle metro area was chosen for its designation as an urban area and the large number of potential participants that would easily fit the study criteria. The location was particularly relevant for recruiting Black millennials for the research study as there is a relatively high population of Black people in the two largest cities in the region Durham (37.5%) and Raleigh (28.6%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). The historical significance of Durham, NC as an economic and cultural hub for Black Americans in the region adds to the rationale to study intra-racial class differences and the dynamics that arise from it in the Triangle region. Neighborhoods and districts like "Hayti" were key to Durham's reputation as a place where Black people could prosper but urban renewal and systemic racism derailed the progress.

> Hayti had been the epicenter of a thriving black community, inspiring Durham's moniker as the "Capital of the Black Middle Class." By the 1950s, however, city officials, as well as the Durham Committee on Negro Affairs, viewed Hayti's tightly-interwoven streets, "overcrowded land" and "deteriorated structures" as impediments to economic growth. They developed a plan to clear the area and construct a major freeway through the city center. Work for most projects began in the 1960s and was completed in the 1970s. (De Marco & Hunt, 2018)

The Triangle has a relatively high number of college educated residents and is a very fast growing southern metro area. Frey (2022) contends that a new "Great Migration" among college educated Blacks Americans from the north is contributing to prosperous and highly populated areas of the "New South", especially in Texas, Georgia and North Carolina. Black neighborhood segregation is still substantial, but has declined in rapidly growing southern metro areas, while Black suburbanization has risen [in the south] compared to most other parts of the country (Frey, 2022). An urban setting in the southern United States like the Triangle metro area with its vast array of universities and an economy driven by a highly educated population offer a great opportunity to explore the perspectives of Black millennials that enjoy the benefits of the area and those that may not have access to it.

Participants

Criteria for eligibility for the study was determined by age, race, work location or residence, and socioeconomic status. As mentioned previously participants living and working within the Triangle metro area were eligible for the study.. Individuals recruited for the study were given a pre-screening survey to collect this information prior to interviewing to determine their eligibility for the study (see Appendix B).

Overall 31 people were contacted or recruited to take part in the study. Out of the 16 participants that successfully completed pre-screen surveys, all were eligible to participate in the study. The other 15 recruits initially indicated interest but did not respond to requests for survey completion or were not chosen to participate because the recruitment process ended. Participants selected for this study indicated in the pre-screening that they were Black according to the criteria presented, that they were born between 1981 and 1996 indicating that they were millennials and that they lived and/or worked in the Triangle metro area. Participants were also

asked which socioeconomic class they identified with most based on three answer choices: "working", "middle" or "upper" class. 16 individuals in all participated in the study (n=16). There were 8 male participants and 8 female participants. 7 identified as middle class, 5 participants were categorized as working class and 4 were categorized as "hybrid" , a category that arose from data collection. Individuals were allowed to self-identify both class position and race (See Table 1).

For both class and race categories the researcher confirmed actual alignment of participants self-classification with the definitions of these categories presented as follows. For class categorization most respondents self-identified class position matched the definition used for the study based on the individual and household income they reported in the pre-screen survey. Participants that matched in this way both "working" class and "middle" class were assigned socioeconomic status according to their reported income. Those that identified with more than one class category and indicated characteristics of both"working" and "middle" class categories were labeled as "hybrid" and matched with a class category based on the income they reported in the pre-screen survey (example: hybrid/middle class or hybrid/working class). Characteristics of the class categories are described in this section.

Table 1. Participants: Sex and Class Position Distribution

Sex	Middle Class	Working Class	Hybrid	Total
Male	2	4	2	8
Female	5	1	2	8
Total	7	5	4	16

It is necessary to elaborate on the definitions of terms used in the criteria for eligibility. "Black", for the purpose of this study, refers to "individuals of African descent/ancestry that self-identify as Black or African American". The United States Census criteria for "Black" includes all people having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa in the category of African American or Black (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). My approach was similar, however, no participant in this sample claimed another nationality other than American.

Class categories were determined through "self identification" and data from local median income. Median household income estimates for the age range 25-44 years old were taken into account. For the Durham-Chapel Hill area median income for this age range was $80,132 ± $5,384 (US Census Bureau: ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables, 2021). For the Raleigh-Cary area estimated median income was $93,495 ± $3,739 (US Census Bureau: ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables, 2021). A study from the Pew Research Center (2015) allowed participants to "self-identify" their social class position. They found that among those with incomes of $75,000-$99,999 and $50,000-$74,999, majorities describe themselves as middle class (Pew Research Center, 2015). Those with smaller incomes are more likely to say they are lower-middle class or lower class (Pew Research Center, 2015). For this study respondents reported their income and self-identified their class status in the pre-screen survey. Their actual class status as it pertains to the study was determined by income ranges informed by the estimated median incomes of the Durham-Chapel Hill and Raleigh-Cary areas as well as the income ranges reported in the Pew Research Center's (2015) where study respondents self reported (US Census Bureau: ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables, 2021).

"Middle class" in this study refers to "individuals with a 4 year degree or higher, an annual household income within the $50,000 - $75,000 or higher for one person, and $100,000

or higher for households with more than two people, and an occupation requiring a degree as a prerequisite."Working class" refers to "individuals without a 4 year college degree, with household incomes within or below the $50,000 - $75,000 range. These individuals would have occupations that do not require a college degree. Similar to the study from the Pew Center (2015) participants were able to self identify class status in the pre-screen survey given that reflected these class categories. Most participants' perceptions of their socioeconomic status matched the criteria used in this study. Meaning their own perception of their class position aligned with the definition of class categories based on income (middle class = $50,000-$75,000 or above for an individual and $100,000 or above for a household, etc). This also seemed to align with the median incomes in Raleigh and Durham (US Census Bureau: ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables, 2021).

Others did not fit squarely within domains for the class distinctions above based on income level and education. Those participants were also aware of the ambiguity of their class status and chose both work and middle class options in their pre-screen surveys. From this a third categorization arose from the data. The term "Hybrid" was used by a respondent to describe being both "middle" and "working" class. This respondent had a high income but did not have other social indicators of middle class status (Income: 100,000+, no degree, no career that requires a degree). That respondent and others that did not not meet all the criteria to fit either the "working" class or "middle" class categories as defined above, were categorized as "Hybrid". There were four respondents in the sample that were labeled as such. Out of the four "hybrid" respondents, three of them indicated both "working" and "middle" class status on their pre-screen surveys. The one respondent that was placed in this category by the researcher was a graduate student with a low income but in possession of a bachelor's degree. This participant was

deemed as a "hybrid/working" class participant, as she self-identified as working class in the pre-screen survey.

Income and Education were deemed as important class characteristics or indicators to be considered. Income indicates access to resources and associated experience with having financial stability. Education is important in that it is indicated in the literature as historically and socially significant within American values and to the Black American middle class. According to Charles (2022), "the main factor in differentiating between working class and bourgeois Black Americans will be the presence or absence of a 4 year degree". For most of the individuals in the sample, obtaining a 4 year degree or higher level of education impacted their occupation and income. This in turn shaped their network and access to resources and capital, which would presumably impact their life experiences, thoughts, beliefs, and actions relevant to the study of double consciousness and how they might express it.

The presence of a 4 year degree also factors into self-identification of class. According to the same aforementioned study from the Pew Research Center those with a post-graduate (28%) or college (22%) degree are more likely than those with some college experience (7%) or no college experience (8%) to say they are either upper-middle or upper class. Nonetheless, just 3% of post-graduates describe themselves as "upper class." (Pew Research Center, 2015).

While all participants in the sample had jobs and "worked" for a living, the distinction between "working" and "middle class" in this study was based primarily on social and cultural markers of middle class life. These markers being educational attainment, home ownership, and household income at $100,000 or above, $50,000 to $75,000 or above for an individual. Respondents categorized as middle class met at least two of these markers if not all three.

Table 2. Participants Class Descriptors

Participant	4 Year Degree+	Income - Household	Age	Class	Occupation Requires Degree
#1 Dondria	**Yes**	**$0-$25,000**	27	**Hybrid/Working**	Yes
#2 Trey	Yes	$75,000-$100,000	30	Middle	Yes
#3 Tressa	Yes	$100,000	37	Middle	Yes
#4 Darius	**Yes**	**$50,000 - $75,000**	34	**Hybrid/Middle**	**No**
#5 Tami	Yes	$100,000	39	Middle	Yes
#6 David	**No**	**$100,000**	31	**Hybrid/Middle**	**No**
#7 Deloris	**No**	**$50,000 - $75,000**	34	**Hybrid/Working**	**Yes**
#8 Ryan	No	$25,000 - $50,000	32	Working	No
#9 Tara	Yes	$100,000	39	Middle	Yes
#10 Tia	Yes	$100,000	35	Middle	Yes
#11 Marco	No	$25,000 - $50,000	33	Working	No
#12 Ben	Yes	$100,000	37	Middle	Yes
#13 Jill	No	$25,000 - $50,000	38	Working	No
#14 Shay	Yes	$100,000	34	Middle	Yes
#15 Carlos	No	$0 - $25,000	30	Working	No
#16 Huey	No	$50,000 - $75,000	33	Working	No

This study focuses on Black Americans belonging to the "millennial" generation. The term "millennial" refers to individuals born between the years 1981 and 1996 (26 to 42 years old). This birth year range of 1981 to 1996 was determined by a 2018 report from the Pew Center that established a cut-off point between millennials and "post-millennials" now known as "Generation Z" (Dimock, 2018). "Studying generational groups allows the opportunity to look at Americans both by their place in the life cycle…..and by their membership in a cohort of individuals who were born at a similar time" (Dimock, 2018). The digital age and remote work along with inflation, and precarious working arrangements, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic have made "economic vulnerability the new normal (Branch & Hanley, 2022). This makes for a unique landscape in which Black millennials are living and working. At the same time Black Americans have more social and economic opportunity than previous generations and ideas around what constitutes"Blackness"in America are more diverse and ambiguous (Charles, 2022).

Recruitment

Data collection and recruitment for this study was conducted over a period of 4 months and began in December 2022. During this time I posted the study information on Facebook and Instagram in an effort to find participants. I also reached out to people that I knew via these two social media sites, text and email for the purpose of snowball sampling. I asked these contacts if they knew others that fit the eligibility criteria for my study and asked them to connect me to them. I engaged in this same process with individuals that agreed to participate in the study as well. After they had completed the full interview I asked participants to reach out to others that might be willing to participate and pass along my contact information. Some participants volunteered to share the study information with others before I asked. Recruitment occurred

mainly through social media, snowball sampling via direct (personal contacts asking others) and secondary contacts (study participants asking others that they knew), personal interaction at various locations around Durham, NC. While physical recruitment (canvassing) occurred mostly in Durham, NC respondents recruited through social media represented a range of locations within the Triangle metro area. Social media was the primary medium for online recruitment, specifically Facebook groups geared toward Black millennials and secondary contacts made through direct messaging on Instagram. The Facebook groups that I posted research study information to are as follows:

- "Triangle (RDU) Black Owned Businesses (TRIBOB)"

- "Black Parents of Durham"

- "Housing for Lovely People/Durham, NC"

- "Black Parents Connect *Durham*"

- "Black Joy by Reckon"

- "Black Parents Connect - Chapel Hill/Carrboro"

- "Black Parent Connect Raleigh (Wake County)"

- "All Things BLACK Raleigh (ATBRaleigh)"

- "North Carolina Central University Young Alumni Group"

- "Durham Downtown Community"

- "Raleigh Durham Chapel Hill Cary Apex Events (Triangle, RTP North Carolina)

- Durham NC Community Page

- Raleigh-Durham Black Professionals (RDUBP)

- NC Black Businesses

These groups were contacted because they were targeted to Black people for membership, and/or membership indicated members age groups might fall within the millennial age demographic (i.e. "North Carolina Central University Young Alumni Group", "Housing for Lovely People/Durham, NC"). The event and community based pages that were contacted offered an opportunity for place based advertising and recruitment within the Triangle metro area.

Posts added to these pages included my contact information, a basic summary of the research study, the criteria for eligibility, and what participants would be asked to do (2-5 minute survey and hour to hour and a half long interview). This was the most successful form of recruitment I engaged in. Facebook posts were an effective form of recruiting participants outside of my network. Direct messaging existing contacts on Instagram yielded two secondary contacts that participated in this research. I also spent time canvassing in-person at public locations, mainly in Durham and Raleigh. Locations included barbershops, salons, public libraries, a grocery store near North Carolina Central University, shopping plazas. These locations were chosen for their proximity to predominantly Black neighborhoods, accessibility and type of activity that took place in the establishments. Barbershops and hair salons for example were establishments that are culturally important to Black Americans.

For planned canvassing efforts I got permission from business owners, I followed a drafted script, and presented people that engaged with me with a one page hand out with my contact information, information regarding the study, and what constituted participation. This method was not effective. Planned and directed canvassing efforts yielded contact and dialogue with people but no serious study participants. Participants that were retained from in-person recruitment mostly came from impromptu, casual conversations and instances that were not "planned" recruitment efforts. In other words, I had better results from going to places I would

normally have gone (running errands, studying at the library, eating out) and engaging in opportunistic conversations. What was intentional is that I did start conversations with individuals I presumed to be Black millennials but I did not plan to do this beforehand like other efforts. In conversation I would mention the research study and if they were interested, I exchanged contact information and followed up with them via text or phone call. I sent more information about the study, as well as pre-screen surveys and consent documents through email if they indicated they wanted to participate.

Data Collection

Data for this research study was collected through pre-screening surveys completed by each respondent and semi-structured interviews conducted from January 2023 to March 2023. Overall 16 participants from the Triangle metro area (Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill) were interviewed for the study. The pre-screening questions were designed to gather data pertaining to class, age, race, location, income, and educational attainment (see Appendix B). Individuals were asked whether the identified as Black, if they lived in the Durham, Raleigh or Chapel Hill area, whether they identified with a religion or considered themselves to be spiritual, gender identity, yearly personal and household income level, highest level of education reached, profession, what socioeconomic class they considered themselves and why.

Individuals were asked if they self-identified as a Black, African American descendant of slaves, or African American and what they thought their class positions were. For whether they identified as Black respondents chose either "yes" or "no". For identification of socioeconomic status respondents could choose between "working class", 'middle class", or "upper class". Most respondents chose "working" or "middle" class while some respondents chose both "working" and "middle" class options, noting that they identified with both. Those that indicated both were

categorized as "hybrid", a term that came from one of the respondents in an interview. For the interviews a semi-structured interview guide was created (see Appendix A). The researcher intentionally attempted to make interviews more conversational so questions from the guide were consistent across interviews but asked in accordance to responses. The questions asked in the interviews were generated based on themes centered around concepts of hegemonic American values described above as: individualism, religiousness, higher educational attainment, work ethic, independence/liberty, self-sufficiency, and equality.Two test interviews were done prior to the 16 interviews conducted for this research to gauge the adequacy and effectiveness of the survey instruments and interview process. Interviews were done both in-person and virtual but all interviews were recorded using Zoom. Locations were determined via correspondence between the researcher and participant and determined by the comfort level and preference of the participant. Interview locations are as follows: participants residences, coffee shops (Namu -Durham, NC, Barnes and Noble - Cary, NC), The American Tobacco Campus - Durham, NC and remote via Zoom. Interviews were semi-structured. In this case questions were presented to respondents in a more conversational format. Probing questions were used as needed to allow natural flow of conversation. Interview length ranged between 55 minutes and an hour and fifty-three minutes. Audio files from Zoom were downloaded and stored in "Box" cloud site. From there audio files were transcribed using the software "Otter.ai".

Researcher

"'Race', like gender, is a contextual feature of all social research, irrespective of the 'race' or gender of its subjects" (Rhodes, 1994). My status as a middle class, millennial, Black male certainly influenced the interview process. This was especially true regarding questions with a racial overtone or questions pertaining to White people. There were examples of interactions in

which respondents would say things such as "our people" or "as you know" or simply use words like "we", "we're" or 'us' in response to questions about Black people. These responses clearly indicated that they were aware that I shared the same race and assumed similar knowledge and experience or at least familiarity with them. In most cases my approach was not to refrain from using inclusive language in the same way. I viewed data collection and the interview process from the perspective that I was collaborating with people and that they were helping me. I tried to make the interviews feel more like a space for introspection and exploration and not just information extraction. I cite this as both a limitation and a strength in the process. A limitation because there were some responses that I did not probe further because I interpreted the meaning from a place of understanding. Sometimes this "understanding" came from a position of having similar thoughts and experiences. Without this bias more detail could have been obtained on certain topics. On the other hand, this "understanding" served as a strength particularly when asking questions about"Whiteness". There were experiences and views shared that were honest and intimate regarding feelings about race, class and gender. I did not interject my own opinion, but I noticed and acknowledged "myself" as a factor in the interview process. In all my interactions my racial identity (Black") presented as a point of relation and understanding. Other interactions featured different intersections where differences in gender, class and age played important roles. Whether these positions influenced bias or "understanding" from my vantage point depended on who I was talking to.

Procedures

Participation in the study was voluntary and no participants were offered incentives to take part in the research. All participants verbally consented through email and were presented a consent form via email before taking part in the study and informed of their right to withdraw

from participation at any time they wished. Participants were sent a consent form, pre-screen survey to ensure they fit criteria for the study and a study information sheet. Upon completion of the consent form and pre-screen survey participant's data was cataloged by number in place of their name or other identifiable information so as to not mitigate privacy or identifiable information. Physical copies were scanned and transferred to "Box" cloud and digital copies of the consent forms and surveys were transferred to "Box" cloud storage. They were then deleted from the researchers' files. Interview dates and times were established through email or text message correspondence between the participants and myself. Interview dates, times and locations were determined by best fit for the interviewee. The consent form included a disclosure statement and asked for permission from the participants to record the interview process. To ensure that privacy was protected, audio recordings of the interviews were also stored on "Box" cloud site and deleted from the researchers personal computer. A laptop was used to record interviews both in-person and remotely. Audio recordings and transcripts were immediately transferred from Zoom to "Box" cloud storage site. Audio recordings remaining on the Zoom cloud site were subject to automatic deletion after 30 days. For coding audio files saved on the "Box" cloud site were transcribed using a software called "Otter.ai".

Coding

  Interview transcripts were coded with the assistance of software called "Otter.ai". The researcher used the software to search for keywords within transcripts, create memos, write notes and categorize pre-existing themes that were developed by the researcher and informed by literature.

  Coding was done in two parts with the intention of doing analysis from both perspectives. The first perspective (1) definition/descriptions of hegemonic cultural values and the

interpretations that working and middle class Black millennials associated with them represented the first round of coding. The questions asked in the interviews were designed based on themes centered around concepts of hegemonic American values described before as: individualism, religiousness, higher educational attainment, work ethic, independence/liberty, self-sufficiency, and equality as well as race. Through the first perspective responses were color coded within the transcripts for meaning using the values as themes. Example - responses regarding educational attainment were highlighted orange for most interviews, responses dealing with religiousness were highlighted in green, etc.

The second perspective, (2) how double consciousness was expressed in Black millennials via class position focused on responses to questions about race. During this process it was decided that the focus of data analysis should be narrowed down to perspective (2) the expression of double consciousness in Black millennials via class position. Some of the data coded from perspective (1) interpretations of 7 hegemonic cultural values, was relevant to expression of double consciousness and utilized. Responses to questions regarding America in general, individualism vs. collectivism, success, religion and self-sufficiency yielded useful data. The latter part of the coding process continued and concluded from the 2nd perspective looking for expression of double consciousness in answers to questions pertaining to race. As a result, analysis and findings reflect perspective (2) and better address the second research question - How does the concept of double consciousness apply to both Black working class and middle class millennials currently and what are its implications?

Data Analysis

I used deductive qualitative analysis utilizing themes informed by literature dealing with "double consciousness" and "hegemonic American cultural values".

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Deductive, or a priori, analysis generally means applying theory to the data to test the theory. It's a kind of "top-down" approach to data analysis. In qualitative analysis, this often means applying predetermined codes to the data. The codes can be developed as strictly organizational tools, or they can be created from concepts drawn from the literature, from theory, or from propositions that the researcher has developed. (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2022).

The perceptions that working and middle class Black millennials have of American hegemonic cultural values, and how these perceptions are expressed from the lens of double consciousness theory are the basis for examination and analysis in this study. Independent variables would be the values chosen and the definitions of those values, used in this study, the socioeconomic status of the participants, the age, educational background, geographic location/region, and racial status of participants.

The findings and discussion thereof incorporate data from 5 participants identified as "working class" Black Americans, 7 participants identified as "middle class" Black Americans and 4 "hybrid". All live and/or work within the Triangle metro area of North Carolina.

Part One

The goal in part one of the analysis was to use themes from the first round of coding focusing on patterns related to the 7 "hegemonic cultural values" to produce two interpretations of each value (individualism, religiousness, higher educational attainment, work ethic, independence/liberty, self-sufficiency, and equality). One from the perspective of (1) working class Black millennials and another from (2) "middle class" Black millennials. The researcher attempted to then interpret responses for patterns within 1) working class Black millennials and 2) middle class Black millennials. Patterns in interpretations and meaning were compared two

ways. 1) similarities and differences between working and middle class Black millennials interpretations of hegemonic American cultural values, 2) similarities and differences between both working and middle class Black millennials and mainstream interpretations of hegemonic American cultural values. This process was done with most of the interview transcripts. The researcher decided it best to focus on insights from the second round of coding for analysis.

Part Two

Part two of the analysis came after the initial sorting and coding for meaning and interpretation of "hegemonic American values". A second round of coding was used to determine whether or how "double consciousness" was being expressed in Black millennials experiences. Data was grouped into three categories.

A (Hegemonic American Values) – responses that aligned with, or included ideas based on interpretations of American hegemonic cultural values. Example: a statement expressing a respondents thoughts about what America is or what America does through their perspective and experience.

B (Racialized Identity) – responses interpreting hegemonic American cultural values through a racial perspective or alternative viewpoint based on race or something distinct from American mainstream perspectives. Negative connotation or desire for alternatives that are expressed and articulated in the form of anxiety, tension or feelings of "otherness". Example: quotes within responses representing thoughts towards situations or scenarios where a respondent is processing feelings related to racial identity.

C (Other/Alternative/Class Consciousness) - other responses would be alternatives that neither reflect hegemonic American cultural values or racial identity. Example: respondent's perspective reflects a spiritual or political position not associated with race or identity.

From this perspective coding focused on the ideas and thoughts expressing "double consciousness" in professed behavior and reactions to interview questions that focused on hegemonic values. In analysis differences in class position and related factors that contributed to lived experience informing participants answers were taken into account.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Overview

This research study addressed the question: How does the concept of double consciousness apply to both Black working class and middle class millennials currently? I was not able to produce emic definitions of the 7 American values (individualism, self-sufficiency, higher education, equality, religiousness, work ethic, liberty) from different class groups as originally intended. However, I was able to use these same concepts as themes to help address the research question regarding double consciousness. Through asking interview questions about concepts associated with American values I was able to gain insight into how Black millennials think about themselves.

Findings

The findings are organized and presented according to the three elements in double consciousness: the veil, second sight, and twoness as well as reactions to the veil "rebellion", assimilation, and "self-assertion". These themes are used to address the question of how double consciousness is expressed among Black millennials of different class positions. Interview questions were structured around the 7 American values mentioned earlier and race as themes. Responses indicating specific values were color coded according to one of the 7 values identified as American and hegemonic. They were then coded A, B, or C. A - representing and marking thought or data indicating American hegemony or dominant values. B - representing responses that were racialized and/or in opposition, tension, misalignment or contradiction based on the respondents race. C - represented thoughts and forms of expression not racialized and more alternative. Some responses included thoughts and answers that had elements of both A and B or combinations of A and C. This was analyzed as being indicative of double consciousness and an

expression of it as racial (A and B) or non-racial (A and C). Examples will be given in the sections below.

The Black Side of the Veil: American Values, Systems and Division

Du Bois' veil could be described as a "one-way mirror, with the minority seeing the majority through the glass, whilst the latter sees only their own reflection (of mastery or dominance) as the former remain behind the mirror" (Meer, 2019). Du Bois also conceptualized possible reactions to the veil; self-assertion, rebellion, and assimilation (Du Bois, 1940). In this study the veil is represented by hegemonic American values, culture and societal structure (systemic barriers - economic and racial), as well as Black millennials' relation and interpretation of them through interactions and experience with White people, and institutions as proxy or agents of hegemonic American culture, values, and social structure. This section will show how Black millennials in this sample think and react to ideology associated with "the veil" and experience double consciousness. Responses in this section answer interview questions that were centered around American culture, race and values. Responses are representative of the perspectives that Black millennials hold regarding hegemonic American culture from their position relative to Du Bois' "veil" and conceptualized in cultural, systemic and racialized terms.

American Values

Respondents were asked about their views on American values, how success was defined, and whether those values aligned with their own. Many respondents regardless of class position pointed to capitalism, money or emphasis on "financial situations" when asked about American values and culture. Respondents alluded to other values associated with American culture as well. Some respondents associated American values with Whiteness or White supremacy like Shay.

Shay/Middle Class/Female: America's very, its, it's very White (A). So, you know, when

you talk about values, they may not necessarily be my values, you know (B).

When asked about what he thought American values were, Ben made a similar

association but more blatant.

Ben/Middle Class/Male:White supremacy. You know what I mean like, when I hear

American values American this Make America Great Again, whites (A). Yeah, that's all it

is….Anytime you say the word American, the first thing, you know, you think or anyone,

most people, I would venture to say things as a white person (A). The minute you say,

you know, all these phrases like, as 'American as apple pie'(A). Brothers don't eat apple

pie. We eat banana pudding baby (laughs) (B). Like even, you know, my fellow

Americans, any of the patriotic songs they ain't really talking about no black people man

(B).

Some respondents indicated that they did feel connected to American culture or values

associated with it but these connections were rooted in participation in capitalism or

experiencing otherness from race. Even if there were feelings of patriotism or connection,

respondents experienced this in connection with a feeling of being "othered" by or disassociated

with American society. In response to whether she felt aligned with American culture Tara had

this to say:

Tara/Middle Class/Female: Yeah, before those kinds of conversations, I might not think

that but there are lots of subtle differences. Like, for example, the way we experienced

racism, it's really difficult to describe that to someone who isn't from here, even if it's

someone who is not White, because they haven't experienced the American or the US

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brand of racism, or sexism or whatever, or like White privilege is really difficult for them

to understand those concepts.

Carlos expressed a sense of connection when asked if he considered himself patriotic but also

related this feeling of connection to America and national identity to his race and a sense that he

was "othered" because of it. He points out that the fact that he considers himself patriotic is

"funny" and acknowledges the conflict associated with being Black and American.

> Carlos/Working Class/Male: I mean, it's funny I do. But the reason why I say that is
>
> because most of the time a black man in America, he not associated with America as a
>
> whole, but he is associated with America (A)(B)……Like I was saying it's stereotypes
>
> and stigmatisms that come with other people looking at us from the outside, even in
>
> America (B). In America it's like it's a separation in the races outside of you know, the
>
> economic structure, outside of, you know, the judicial system, stuff like that, and it do
>
> come with its own problems in the statement of being an actual, like black man from
>
> America or black man in America (B). But you know, we supposed to take the the mental
>
> choice to stay away from that or steer ourselves to something that doesn't involve, like
>
> the bad stuff that comes with that (B).

What is interesting is that he expresses the sense that it is possible to separate or insulate

from the "bad stuff" associated with the stigmas and stereotypes. Out of the 16 respondents in

this sample 14 expressed or acknowledged misalignment with American values or a feeling that

what America represented currently was not totally in line with their personal interest or identity.

This feeling of misalignment was expressed in racial terms, as in not being recognized or totally

accepted culturally, but it was also expressed as stress brought about by the emphasis on

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financial gain and enterprise in American culture. Tami expresses the difference in her perspective of success in relation to what she sees as an American viewpoint.

> Tami/Middle Class/Female: I don't think that aligns with America's view (B/C) because it's like America's view is always more and more and more and compete, compete compete…(A)

Tami also draws a connection between the values and messaging to the ways that people receive them. She points out media and "marketing" as mechanisms that "push" these values on to people. She suggests that her upbringing serves as a buffer against the dominant messaging and lifestyle she associates with American culture.

> Tami/Middle Class/Female: But just the marketing, you know, the marketing agencies and America as a whole like they push all this extravagance as if that's the target for success and which is why people end up striving for more and more and more and they're never really truly happy or content (A). Because it's perceived that that's what success is, but it's like I want to be able to do stuff and I want to, I want to like have nice things, but I think it's probably because of the way I raised was and my values, I'm content with some level of simplicity (B/C).

Dondria associates the American view of success with capitalism outright.

> Dondria/Middle Class/Female: Americans define success by capitalism, by money, you're successful when you have money (A). That's why Black capitalism aint gonna free us (B).

Dondria also acknowledges that there is buy-in from some Black Americans to the idea that money and capitalistic behavior will lead to collective success as a racial group. The idea of "Black capitalism" alludes to a desire for material gain and class consciousness among Blacks

with entrepreneurial and middle class aspirations. When she says that Black capitalism isn't going to free "us" Dondria is referring to Black people as a racial group. This implies a belief that racial solidarity and class solidarity are not the same in practice and that material gains for middle class Black Americans may not translate into gains for working class Black Americans or racial solidarity. Tia cites "American exceptionalism" when asked about her views on American values.

> Tia/Middle Class/Female: For American values, there tends to be an emphasis on being bigger and better, like we are the supreme country and like, We are the winners and everyone else, they're the losers (A).

Tia's views diverge from her interpretation of mainstream American values in that she considers herself more inclusive to other viewpoints and ways of being.

> Tia/Middle Class/Female: I'm more. I'm a person who values other people's perspectives or experiences. It might not align with my own thinking, but there is value in other people's experiences (C). I can't negate that. I can't say that my views are better than someone else's. They're just different, and so, currently, when I think about American values, it's like, 'oh, no, we are superior.' We are more advanced….we're just better and I don't, I don't agree with that (C).

David and Tressa both mention money and capitalism as synonymous with American values. Both of them allude to aspects that in their view are negative features.

> David/Hybrid Class/Male: After Trump was president. I think it was just like, clear sight, oh, this is just capitalism (A). Like it's just money (A). Like, that's what I think the core values is. I mean the American dream and "we help the people and stuff like that" (A). I

think it's really changed……, yeah, more of a self thing. Capitalism (A): I'm gonna look out for myself. I don't think people are as caring as they used to be anymore (A).

David hints that he views the American Dream ideology as positive when he associates it with "the people" getting help but acknowledges that he thinks those values have changed to a more individualistic or self centered way of being. Tressa talks about

Tressa/Middle Class Female: You know, we have to work five days a week for at least eight hours (A). And, you know, or, you know, if you're not making it that way, that you have to sit up there and work another job too, because basically everybody thats from my college, I feel like most folks, you know, they have a part time job with their full time job, you know, because they're steadily trying to keep up (A). Because of, you know, how, again, Americans, we just value a dollar (A) We, that, you know, it's we're, we value a dollar, but then we value our independence, but yet we value independence, but yet, we sit up there, and when you are yourself, you can't be yourself, like you can't be yourself (A) (B/C). But then if you say something to somebody, somebody gets mad at you.

Respondents were asked if there were differences between American values and values associated with Black people and what those values were? Respondents indicated spirituality, working hard, cohesiveness and collectivism as values that stood out. One of the participants attributed these values to marginalized status and in turn the environmental and structural pressures that encourage cohesiveness and collectivity within culture. There was a sense that marginalization both historical and current contributes to an awareness among Black people across social classes of the hardships and oppression faced by others of the same race. For Black millennials that may not be experiencing certain forms of marginalization themselves, proximity to social issues through the experience of family or friends may factor into their worldview.

These types of connections can possibly influence the desires, actions, and goals Black

millennials have in relation to typical American sensibilities and ideas of success but this is not

guaranteed.

> Ben/Middle Class/Male: So our value systems, basically, to me, the difference [is] being
>
> a marginalized group of people. We had to rely on each other (B). And there's a lot more
>
> collectivism within marginalized groups (B), than there is going to be with, you know, the
>
> majority who is, you know, White people in this country (A).

Systems

Black millennials across class positions expressed similar thoughts on "systems" or what

was referred to as "the system" in their responses. The system was conceptualized as multiple

institutions, political, financial businesses, schools, media, marketing etc, that have an influence

on all people within a society. Tara mentions hierarchy as a structural component of systems.

> Tara/Middle Class/Female: I think our systems, and systems could be anything from
>
> schools, to, like financial institutions, businesses, whatever, I think it's designed to have a
>
> very specific, hierarchical structure (A). And it's really difficult to get people who are
>
> closer to the top…. Once they get there, I think it's really difficult to convince those
>
> people to take action to make things more fair, because when you get to that position, a
>
> lot of people think that there's something about them that's really special compared to
>
> other people who don't have that position that got them where they are. And so I think
>
> that makes some people less willing to help others or less willing to think that they should
>
> help others.

Systems were brought up in response to questions about American culture and values, as

well as questions about work ethic, success, political involvement and whether they thought

people had an equal or fair chance at success in America. Most respondents indicated a sense of unfairness or unequal opportunity which they noted was not aligned with how the American "system" is represented in mainstream rhetoric. Most respondents did not think that the majority of people had a fair chance to succeed within the American "system". Respondents mentioned hierarchy and acknowledged that a particular element of society benefited from inequality in opportunity and access highlighting systemic inequality stemming from historical wrongs like slavery, and the general historical marginalization economically and culturally of Black people in American society.

Reactions

Respondents experienced "systems" or "the system" by means of education, personal interactions and experiences through which institutional racism, political power and influence, social hierarchy were made apparent to them. There were no hard distinctions among respondents based on class position. Respondents' reactions varied depending on the subject and did not entail the full range of their ideological positions. Respondents that were identified as "rebellious" had more common factors between them, whereas the range of respondents that expressed "assimilation" and "self-assertion" was more fluid among the sample in regards to class position.

Assimilation

Assimilation as a reaction to the system or the veil as Du Bois suggests assumes that "Black organizations are avoided in order to join the world of Whites" (Du Bois, 1940). It is necessary to situate "assimilation" in the present context. Most respondents in the sample identified closely with their racial identity as Black Americans and exhibited positive attitudes towards Black "culture". Some more so than others, one participant Darius not at all, distancing

himself from labels and categories.While the "White world" is still dominant and hegemonic, and the reaction that Du Bois characterized can still be found in that form, it was not brought up in this manner within the sample.

There was no one in the sample that desired to assimilate on the grounds of racial identity or culture.Whiteness and White supremacy along with capitalism, economic pressures, and the institutions that perpetuate them were also associated with American values, and the identity and ideology of the respondents. Assimilation as it relates to this sample incorporates the necessity to adapt and adopt hegemonic values for those striving for economic gain. Respondents expressed these values as they relate to employment or a career in which they have to interact and conform to the hegemonic American social world and cultural values. Respondents also expressed this when asked about individualism and their views on private property. Assimilation in this sample is defined by economic pursuits and subscription to the values and ideals that enable success in this area. The majority of respondents that expressed this reaction exhibited awareness of the pressures that the system puts on them but also expressed more of a willingness to accept it and participate in it "as is". A sense that "this is the way things work".Tressa a middle class female respondent expresses this:

> Tressa/Middle Class/Female: I definitely think that unfortunately for me (C), I am a part of that system (A). So I have adopted some of those ways (A). You know, I have this work ethic that is just like ridiculous (A). I'm one of those people that work almost every day, and I hate it (C). But you know, again in order to stay ahead that's what I have to do (A).

While respondents expressed misalignment with the competitiveness, materialism, and individualism associated with America, many still looked favorably upon values like work ethic,

higher educational attainment and self-sufficiency and ideas associated with capitalism. When asked about problems in the Black community Carlos suggested poverty was a major issue and he pointed to gentrification in Durham as a major component.

Carlos/Working Class/Male: Shit...poverty (B/C). For sho, for sho definitely gentrification boy thats fucking up the game, that gentrification aint it. (B)(C)

When asked who, or what was responsible for the gentrification, Carlos mentioned private ownership.

Carlos/Working Class/Male: Pretty sure they private people, people just trying to make money. I guess entrepreneurs is what you should call them but from that standpoint, of gentrification definitely like private investors (A).

I finally asked Carlos about whether he felt a duty or an obligation to get involved in any of the issues that he mentioned.

Carlos/Working Class/Male: Somewhat you know gotta make some of that money can't let them make all the money so hey....Aside from that (shrugs). (A)

Assimilation in this sense can be regarded as a merging or adaptation to hegemonic American values. The example above shows the acceptance of capitalism as a default mode of operation. In Carlos' case as in the rest of the respondents to a certain extent, participation is expected, and participation entails making money. Other respondents like David and Tara mentioned plans to buy rental properties or increase assets and give nuanced perspectives based on experience in "the culture" or Black culture coinciding with acquired knowledge within the hegemonic culture.

David/Hybrid/Male: I feel like that could be a good thing (A). I mean, I used to think like again back in the culture and stuff like that. I thought that was bullying at first or like taking

advantage of somebody (B). But since we got the credit system in place, then it's kind of like, kind of is what it is (A). If you can't [buy a home], it actually provides a home for somebody that doesn't have good credit or really can't buy a home or something like that (A). So I look at it as a good thing, too (A). But I don't look at it as a bad thing because we got the credit system (A). If the credit system didn't exist then, yeah, I would think it's bullying (B).

Tara expresses plans to buy a second property as well but specified that she wanted to make her prospective rental property affordable.

> Tara/Middle Class/Female: Yeah, so I mean, technically, I'm a homeowner. So my long term goals for my home are to live in it. And I have plans to be a property owner in the sense that I would like to own rental property to provide affordable housing (A)(C). So my long term goal with that would just to be able to provide affordable housing to people who need it, and at the same time, you know, reap the benefits of being a property owner (A)(C).

Respondents were asked about able-bodied citizens having access to certain benefits (housing, food, etc) without having to work in exchange for it.. There was variation across class positions among those that responded in favor of strong work ethic or expressed that benefits should be given in exchange for work or labor. There was a bit more cohesion and shared characteristics among those that advocated for benefits unattached to labor or work ethic. These respondents were currently middle class or hybrid and acknowledged coming from middle class backgrounds, and explicitly expressed views opposing capitalism or feelings of misalignment with capitalism. Most of the respondents that expressed this view also had an awareness of the idea of universal basic income as they cited it as part of their rationale.

Most of the respondents that subscribed to more mainstream ideas towards work ethic, self-sufficiency and success had experienced some upward socioeconomic mobility, were from working class backgrounds, had grown up in areas with limited opportunity or had faced economic challenges. These respondents also alluded to experiences with government assistance both directly and indirectly but similar perspectives varied across current class positions. Tami talks about her experience

> Tami/Middle Class/Female: So during that time period, because I had both of my kids only a year apart, we had a household of four on one income, kind of one small income. So there was a need for us to have assistance. But nothing was free. Like we definitely didn't qualify for free housing free, like free anything was just like, supplemental…..So in situations like that, I say, Yes, assistance is needed (C). It was very…. but it was short term at that, too, so it wasn't like…. So once my youngest one turned two, I went back to work, and, you know, whatever. Because I'm able bodied, there's no reason for me to not be working (A). Um but I have seen so many examples, including people in my family circle, who, they got three, four kids altogether. They just don't work for whatever reason, and they just…(B). This is a probably a very biased question for me, because it's like, I see them getting like, all this assistance and free housing and this and other, and what I see them do with it, like, you go on, you're buying Jordans and like, you're doing all this stuff with this money, but you're not doing anything to better your situation, so that you can keep getting this money (A). So I basically feel like I'm taking care of you, because those are my tax dollars that I'm paying (A).

Most of them expressed anecdotes of the others abusing government benefits or becoming "stagnant" likening government assistance to that of a "trap" or holding views that people should not be rewarded for not working. Jill explains her point of view.

> Jill/Working Class/Female: In my honest opinion, I don't feel like they should. Because I feel like if you're able to work to provide for yourself or to even you know to make ends meet then why not do it (A)? Like I feel like it should be geared towards those who with different disabilities, or even parents, single mothers who have children that have disabilities because taking care of a disabled child isn't a lot of responsibility and a lot of time and the parents not able to work like they you know, they were like, I feel like that should be geared to happen those individuals rather than those that are able bodied and you know, able to work and just choose not to do so (A)(C).

From David:

> David/Hybrid/Male: I think that's part of what's enabling us, I wouldn't completely want that, to be honest with you (A)(B). Well, for people that really need it, but it's allowed most of us as far as our culture….they just kind of dependent on it so I really don't think that's going to be the solution (A)(B). With the system they got set up they're able to measure what type of pathway these people go……It's just basically feeding a circle of people who are dependent instead of like, driven and want more out of life (A).

Shay alluded to her experience working in social services and Christian ethics.

> Shay/Middle Class/Female: Yeah. So my bachelor's and master's is in social work. So yeah, I've worked in those fields in the settings and these institutions. I do not think that people who are able to work and choose not to should be receiving free anything (A). No,

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no, no, not at all. I got to work you got to work. The Bible says if a man don't work, you don't eat. So no, sir. Nope…..No, you don't have a right to it if you don't work. No (A).

Trey invokes a feeling of unfairness or unequal effort and resources being allocated to people that are not productive.

> Trey/Middle Class/Male: Just like, based off of like the system is it's like we all pay taxes and I know like a chunk of my money, it goes towards the government and if there's like another guy my age, and he's just doesn't want to work and he's just sitting around playing video games but feels entitled to basically the system we're all contributing into, I don't think that's fair (A). Because I'm like, 'well, why can't I do the same thing as him and expect that?' Just like, why am I working? Yes, I don't think that's like a fair way to live. You shouldn't be rewarded for that (A)……Yeah, I believe everybody should be given fair access to that [housing, food, resources], but kind of back to the last question, but it's like if you're able bodied, and you're able to work like a basic job for a couple hours a day? Yeah, it's like, you shouldn't just sit there saying, 'Hey, you owe me food', to somebody who is working (A).

Darius likens not working to choosing to be lazy.

> Darius/Hybrid/Male: You see what I'm sayin, if they're not choosing to be lazy, but then you reward the ones that are choosing to be lazy, you're pretty much living or benefiting from you know the ones that aren't choosing not to be lazy.

Self-Assertion

Respondents from areas of low economic opportunity or that experienced social mobility within their lifetime expressed strivings that aligned with Du Bois' "self-assertion" category in their reaction to the American system. The two hybrid men in the sample best exemplified the

desire for economic gain and were most sympathetic to "Black capitalism" and self-improvement. Self-assertors were more likely to advocate for work ethic and earning benefits like housing, food, and health care whereas those reacting through "rebellion" were more likely to be proponents of those things as rights. These views were not streamlined and these reaction categories resemble more of a spectrum. Self-assertors recognized structural and historical barriers but also expressed more of a belief that people could insulate or separate themselves from the negative aspects. Self-assertors used different strategies to achieve and justify these aims as well as navigate tension that arose from separating oneself. When asked about how minorities or Black people are able to navigate certain systems Darius mentioned feeling that he had to go a different path for the sake of his children.

> Darius/Hybrid/Male: I started separating myself from the people that was around me that weren't......that didn't have the same drive and mindset that I had, you know what im saying and that wasn't really trying to, you know, better their lives as much as I was trying to better mine. So that kind of, you know, allowed me to distinguish who I needed to keep around me and who I needed to let go.

The two hybrid men in the sample David and Darius, in particular expressed a willingness to separate from certain aspects of the cultures they were familiar with for their betterment.These differences and a desire for separation are not necessarily racial although they could appear to be given that the context pertains to Black millennials. Experience within environments lacking in resources and opportunity would likely have an effect on desire to move upward in social and economic status. It is not necessarily a conscious desire for separation from "Blackness" or Black culture brought upon by racial trauma but more an embrace of doing what is practical to advance economically and socially. Most respondents in this category expressed

feeling tension both through a dual identity when interfacing with the White, American social world and through intra-racial conflict with Black people. Intra-racial tension was felt through feeling frustrated with the mindset of other Black people and ridicule. Respondents expressed that other Blacks would imply that they had abandoned Black culture or they thought they were better than them. A desire to ease this tension internally was evident in David, and Darius relating more to, and desiring companionship with middle class African Americans or people who they deem more similar to themselves.

>David/Hybrid/Male: I guess now that I'm in a different circle, I do start to see that the people that I used to hang out with it's kind of like starting to decline the mindset is starting to fall off and I am starting to become and starting to be in a circle with people starting to think similar like I ran into common interests a lot when I was in Georgia, a lot of affluent African Americans especially in the Atlanta area that you can kind of connect with that don't feel like you're a sellout. You do feel like "okay, there are people that are educated there are people that you know, know about finances, know about technology know about all this stuff."

Some middle class respondents alluded to what Du Bois posited as the "Talented Tenth" ideology. The value of American individualism with a bit of nuance from the perspective of the minority. Still embedded in ideals of striving for recognition or penetrating the veil. When asked whether individual or group success was more important Tia mentioned that individual success was more important alluding to representation in society or lack thereof. This incorporates individualism but with the nuance of the group perspective from a racial lens.

>Tia/Middle Class/Female: I'm going to say, the success of a person only because there may be a group of people who are looking for some sort of role model or someone to be

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an example (A)(B). And a lot of times that comes from an individual. And so that individual could then lead to a group being successful.

Tia elaborated more on this answer.

Tia/Middle Class/Female: Just not seeing oneself in society (B). So for example, another chapter in my professional career as a teacher, I know other black teachers who say, I want to be a teacher, because I never had a teacher who looked like me and I was fortunate to have my preschool teachers, almost all my elementary school teachers, half of my middle school, and about 75% of my high school teachers be black. So it's like, I didn't need to see a black teacher to want to be a black teacher (B). However, in college, I had very few black professors and so it was no one in particular, it's like, I see myself in you, not even just on how we look, but just your upbringing and how we have a very similar background. I needed to see that in order to believe that I could reach that point in my future (B). I think it would be different. thinking more broadly, just because of this idea that America is just the land of opportunity, and you can do whatever you want, and like, just just say you want to do it, then you can do it (A). I don't think that there is a big enough emphasis on realizing that there are certain identities, perspectives and experiences that are exposed more and presented more to the broader population and that there are, you know, minorities within the country who don't align with that (B). Like that's, that's just a different kind of approach (B). So......I don't think that the majority within a country would agree with that, that you need to see someone that looks like you in order to be successful or to help influence your success in a certain role (B).

Rebellion

Rather than striving for economic success and acceptance within it, five respondents in particular, took anti-capitalist positions in their responses. These five respondents' reactions would fit loosely in the category of "rebellion" according to the framing Du Bois introduced. These respondents expressed views that could be interpreted as further left leaning on the political spectrum than other Black millennials in the sample. When asked about political participation Ryan expressed a sense that the effort to vote was futile.

> Ryan/Working Class/Male: Not at all. Not at all. I don't vote, I don't do none of it...like I have zero support for any form of government (C). I don't trust any politicians. I don't vote for em. I don't believe none of them (C). Could be Barack, it could be Michelle, it could be any of them. I just don't. I can't because you're playing into the game (C).

What makes these respondents fit within this category in their responses is anti-capitalist, anti-White supremacy rhetoric, and anti-government stances and a sense that the system and hegemonic institutions associated with it are hypocritical. Ryan dissociates himself from the system choosing not to vote or take part in political engagement regardless of what race a political candidate may be, while Ben who would still be considered "rebellious" votes, and involves himself with a labor union. When asked whether he felt obligated to participate in social justice or address issues that pertained to Black people he had this to say:

> Ben/Middle Class/Male: I mean, the short answer is yes. You know, all of that, okay, as an American citizen (A), as a black American citizen (A)(B), in which my ancestors fought for this opportunity, but also, like, just understanding politics, like, you know (A)(B). Like I said, I'm a board member of a labor union (C)..... I got lots of friends that, you know, have Marxist thought, that have all, you know, all different views all over the

political spectrum (C). Some of them don't want to vote. I'm like, yeah, I hear you, that

you feel like it doesn't matter. I disagree. For a lot of reasons. Like, it is, what is what is,

you know what's the saying? 'You miss 100% of the shots you don't take.' So even if

voting means that it's going to put enough pressure on an oppressed person, it's going to

put enough pressure on a higher class of people to at least even pay you attention (A). It

may not work totally, but you need that resistance (A)(C). You know, particularly if this is

supposed to be a democracy, you need that resistance in order to build something better

for the future (A)(C).

Huey and Deloris had perspectives that were more centered upon their racial identities in relation

to the White power structure and systemic oppression linked to it. They both expressed views

that social and economic integration might have been the "wrong path" for Black Americans.

Huey/Working Class/Male: Martin Luther King wanted us all to be together, before that

they had Black only buses, Black only water fountains you see what I'm saying. It wasn't

a problem that we had our own (B). That was the course that was the correct course (C).

They didn't know it. They didn't know it at the time, but that was the correct course (C).

Deloris alludes to separation.

Deloris/Hybrid/Female: Sometimes I feel like integration was a mistake (B)(C). I do feel

like there's some aspects of ourselves in our culture that got lost (B). Or like I said, kind

of taken more so behind closed doors when we were integrated. I don't know. I've been

thinking about it a lot over the past few years. Like, did we make the right call, there? I

don't know. We wanted to be in this….within this white society so badly and then we get

there and we're treated like shit (B). We're like, why? Because they still don't like us.

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Because we're never gonna be the same. I don't think equality really exists within white

supremacist culture (B).

Deloris also comments on Black capitalism and materialism as did Dondria who

mentioned that "Black capitalism is not going to save us". She asks the question of whether

material success for some Black people really actually benefits Black people as a whole.

Deloris/Hybrid/Female: "Black capitalism and materialism, it's just like, the bane of my

existence. Just like, "Are we done yet with the like, the cars and the chains" (C)(B)?

And it's like, what? What is that doing for us? What does it?…You're still putting money

in these White people's hands (B)(C) to fuck you over with, you know, you're still voting

all those people into office who are fucking over your children. You know, it's like, I

think bigger...... where…. are we putting our money, and how we're acquiring that money

is like a main cultural issue for me. Like the Black Wall Street, thing I'm just like fucking

why do we need to have a Wall Street at all? (B)(C)

Dondria expresses that people that acquire a certain amount of wealth should have to

redistribute it back to communities.

Dondria/Hybrid/Female: There is no ethical way to be like a billionaire (C). You're only a

billionaire because someone somewhere is working for pennies to make you a billionaire

(C). Like so….You should…..Yeah, you should definitely be required to trickle that down

(C). Like there's no, there's no ethical way to be a billionaire. There's barely an ethical

way to be a millionaire. Yeah, no, pour that back into the people who helped you get there

and that you probably don't even know like, who's helping……. When Rihanna became a

millionaire. I love Rihanna. But the second I hear billionaire, I'm like, what are you

doing? Because like I said, there's no ethical way (C).

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When talking about the "system", Ryan captures the essence of the attitude associated with the "rebellious" reaction and viewpoint as it relates to Du Bois veil. Although not exclusive to these five respondents in the sample the leftist orientation allows for evaluation of the American system or the veil beyond the scope of race.

> Ryan/Working Class/Male: Shit um, so of course I want to, as a black man in America, I want to say its against us minorities (B), but to be honest, when you watch the greed and corruption of you know, the rich and the wealthy, and the people who really controlling like world wealth, not just talking American wealth, [but] world wealth, people buying all that stuff, like, you know, they don't care about humans (laughs) (C). You know what I mean, whether you black or white, they don't give a damn about people (C). So, you know, to me, America, once I got older and really seen it, America is more than just against you know, it's about capitalism (A).... that's what it's really about more than anything, they don't care about people. You're a dollar to them, you're a you know, you're an asset to them (C). You're ....is that the word I want to use?? Not really an asset but you know, you're like a product or something (C).

Huey also makes a similar point and demonstrates a similar vision of the veil from his vantage point. Huey mentioned a few times that "America is in love with poverty" and referred to the "rags to riches" narrative that is often associated with the American Dream. The idea that American citizens have access and opportunity to rise above or create their own success through sticking to American values and work ethic. Huey's stance towards this view is that it is false and he expresses a different perspective in his double consciousness.

> Huey/Working Class/Male: Poverty….. everybody in poverty, everybody that's poor is a nigga and I aint talking about face value, more systematically (C). You know what I'm

saying? The rich stay rich the poor stay poor. That's how they look at everybody so it's not that we are nigga by color its systematic (A)(C).

Division

Respondents of varying class positions expressed a sense that the American system and the values associated with it were connected to white supremacy, as well as capitalism or "financial" interests. Most respondents regardless of class position, but especially those that expressed that their racial identity was meaningful to them, expressed feeling misaligned with what they interpreted American values and structure to be. There was a sense among some respondents that race and class systems couldn't be separated from each other.

Dondria/Hybrid/Female: I don't think you can separate the two. Because I think, you know, the race caused the class problem (A)(B). So like, without the oppression of white people without slavery, you don't get class systems… (A)(B)

When asked about black culture many respondents thought that issues affecting black people were caused by externally or historically entrenched systems of racism as opposed to being a product of culture or intrinsic to culture. Issues identified as affecting black Americans were framed as division in hierarchy and economic disparity stemming from hegemonic American culture. Respondents pointed to ways in which prejudice and oppression found in hegemonic American culture are recreated through division. Respondents cited colorism stemming from racism, classism stemming from economic inequality. Tara talks about how classism affects dynamics among Black people and emphasizes the value placed on certain class markers in the Triangle area, education in particular.

Tara/Middle Class/Female: So I think that that's something that I don't know if people talk about a lot, but I think, like classism, and colorism definitely is a huge issue (A)(B).

And that creates a lot of divisiveness amongst black people (B)…. I'm a fairly highly educated person and so I interact with a lot of other highly educated black people and, and I have friends like across the board. And one thing that I noticed and people who are more highly educated regardless of where they're from, is there is an air of being better than, and when I talk to people who maybe aren't as highly educated, especially in the Triangle, because that's sort of a value within the Triangle is like education and success and all that (A). And they say that they feel very isolated because in spaces where they are, they might be one of the only people who's not as like highly educated or, you know, their career might not be where it needs to be (C).

Tami mentions division stemming from interpretation of culture and what it means to be "Black". This was expressed more by middle class Black millennials in relation to other Black people. When talking about colorism and hair texture Tami gets into aspects of the physical components that racial division entails. Racism is experienced interracially between White and Black people in this context. Colorism is in a sense racism experienced intra-racially or prejudice within and among members of the same group or different minority groups as well but stemming from white supremacy or notions that white skin is normative at its root.

Tami/Middle Class/Female: There's a lot of dissension within our own community as well, like me and my cousin, were just talking about this the other day, and it's like, I get so tired of people saying, I'm not black enough (B)….What is black enough then? I think it's just because of so many years of oppression and racism and favoritism that some of these things have come about (B)(A)t. There's so much colorism (B). There's so much….. my daughter said the other day, she was like, I don't know if this is a real word. But it's also like, in addition to colorism, like texture ism, like with your hair like, yeah, 'Oh,

you've got good hair.'....(scoffs) its hair. Like, if it's growing out your hair, and it's

healthy it is good (B).

Respondents also alluded to poverty, jealousy and envy as issues affecting Black Americans.

Huey/Working Class/Male: Black man we mentally ill, we F'd up in the head, stemming

back from racism (B)(A)........they made us what they wanted (A). They the reason why

we hate each other (A). They [White people] put that in us (A). We the reason why they

so rich and all these brands Nike, Gucci, you know what I'm saying (A)?

Patriarchy was cited as problematic but also linked to white supremacy and racist

structure in America. One of them noted that black men in particular marginalize black women

and the black LGBTQ+ community through the same rhetoric white people use to marginalize

black people. Some respondents alluded to mindset and certain traits they ascribed to people and

scenarios they experienced.

Dondria/Hybrid/Female: People say that, like black men are the white people of black

people (B)(A). Because the oppression that comes from black men is not necessarily the

fault of black men (B). But it comes from the close knit oppression that comes from

white people (A). Like if you listen to straight black men talk about people in the

LGBTQ communities, about the things that they shouldn't have, or about their lifestyles

and all kinds of stuff like that. It's identical to the rhetoric that goes on [that] white people

have about black people, it's literally identical (A)(B). Even the rhetoric about black

women, it's identical to the rhetoric that white people have about black people…

Tara points out division within gender as well.

Tara/Middle Class/Female: So I think there's a lot of division within the black population,

I think one of the major things that I've seen is like, division between heterosexual men

and heterosexual women within the black community. And just a general dissatisfaction

that each side, like I have a lot of female friends who have a lot of negative views on like

black men as a whole. And I have interacted with a lot of black men who have very

similar views about black women (B).

There was not a difference between classes in acknowledging or recognizing systemic issues.

Some respondents spoke on these issues a bit more than others and this was attributed to personal

investment. Most agreed that "unity" within the black community was and is undermined by

hegemonic influences whether it be cultural, structural, economic, or social.

Ben/Middle Class/Male: White supremacy creates division (A). Because if you can

divide a people, you can conquer them……When we sit in, in a church house, and they

gotta pass a budget, there may be some disagreements, but the budget gets passed (B).

The only question is, is why that doesn't happen with some of these larger issues. And I

would say, that part of the division is rooted in white supremacy……(A)(B)

Trey talks about the division that he saw among Black people in California and he points

to economic disparity and inequality.

Trey/Middle Class/Male: It's like when people describe that crabs in a barrel mentality,

It's definitely, it's definitely there. When you, you kind of like, if you're going into like,

the more like, like the hood, or like the ghettos and where there isn't really like a middle

class a lot of people are just kind of at each other's throats. You don't really see a lot of

black businesses, things like that. And it's just really divided. And it's like you look at

other nationalities that are there, it's like you got like the Latinos, they're all working

together coming up with their businesses, white folks, that Asians, and you don't really

see that too much, despite there being a nice black population in places like LA, which

was like 20 minutes from me, and I spent a lot of time out there. Or then when I went up to northern California. Oakland, which has a massive black population, but it was just kind of more poverty stricken, it was kind of like a warzone. But then I come out to North Carolina, and everything's stable. There's black businesses, there's like a whole website that pointed out all the black businesses you could go to. I felt very welcomed, and I felt people out here want to see you succeed. Black people, like the few at the company I work with, they all lent out a hand, helped me out, gave me advice and I just wish we could all kind of be on that train across the board.

In response to whether he thought that class factored into unity Trey alluded responded as follows:

Trey/Middle Class/Male: Yeah, I definitely think wealth is a big factor, because you wouldn't feel like you would have to pull somebody down if you are comfortable with your life. So if you have a bunch of people who are stable and living comfortably, it's like you wouldn't have to see somebody else doing good as like a threat because you're pretty satisfied with how things are going and you're able to just kind of stay in your own lane and just be content.

Code Switching: Outer Voice and Space

Double consciousness was expressed as practice and behavior in the sample. Black millennials altered the way they communicated depending on the spaces and people they were engaging with. In the workplace Black millennials mentioned altering the way they spoke and having to learn different styles of communication. David explains the adjustment that he had to make in order to advance in his professional career.

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David/Hybrid/Male: "That's one thing that I had a real big challenge with is when I went

to corporate America code switching. I tried to....... go from using slang to using

professional words and stuff like that……lingo."

Many middle class respondents engaged in the practice of "code switching". The prior

example demonstrates switching communication styles. Others in the sample referred to their use

of code switching as "omission", or purposely leaving things out of conversation that one might

say otherwise. Omission was embedded in examples of code switching from both middle and

working class respondents that engaged in the practice. Shay acknowledges that code switching

is a conscious effort.

Shay/Middle Class/Female: "it's definitely something that I do intentionally…it's almost

like an omission of".

Respondents gave examples of code switching in the workplace as well as in more casual

social settings. Tia also alludes to using code switching as omission but elaborates on its use in

this form as a protective mechanism, as well as a way to make social interactions with people of

other cultures easier.

Tia/Middle Class/Female -"There are at least topics that I don't bring up, because I'm not

sure of how they'll be perceived, or I just don't want to spend the energy trying to explain

something that I wouldn't have to explain to my friends."

The only respondents in the sample to report that they did not engage in code switching

or "changing the way they acted around White people" were Carlos, Darius, Deloris and

Dondria. During the interview process Carlos actually disproves his claim to this. Darius

exhibited more of an alternative view in response to this question. Darius actually expresses that

he is more likely to change how he acts around people that look like him. This is something he attributes more to mindset and behavior rather than race.

Darius/Middle Class/Male: Personally, no, I mean, I don't. I act like me. Now to be honest, like, I may do that, depending on what type of people I get around that look like me (B)(C). I might change up or whatever because like I said, I'm not vibrating low, but because most of the people that, because I work in a gym, so most of the guys that I end up around a lot, right, you know, a lot of them always talking about women, sleeping with women, or whatever. So depending on that I might end up changing just to kind of entertain, you know.

The two "hybrid" women emphasized that they had engaged in code switching in the past but refrained from it in the present. Both cited this as a conscious choice.

Deloris/Hybrid-Working Class/Female: Not as much, I think, being in my mid 30s, I'm kind of just going through this for so long, over three decades of like, the code switching and you know, straightening my hair, doing whatever, it's just like, in my early to mid 20s, it kind of just like, I was like, I can't do this anymore. Like, it's so draining, and I felt like it was holding me back from myself, in a way, you know, I felt like I wasn't in touch with myself."

Dondria/Hybrid-Working Class/Female: No. I don't. I know that people do code switch but I don't....It's just not something and like I said, if you would've asked me this 10 years ago, it would've been different. But it's like, I am very much at you know, my big age, I'm very much aware of a lot of things. I'm very conscious of a lot of things and the same me you gettin right now is the same me, you gonna get wherever I'm at. I don't change.

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While code switching can be interpreted as psychologically and mentally taxing as evidenced in the accounts from these two women, in Black spaces or in more mundane encounters code switching can be used for cultural protection as opposed to an assimilation tactic.

> Marco/Working Class/Male - I feel like I can't use African American Vernacular, or Ebonics around White people. Un not necessarily because I think it makes you sound like ignorant or anything but I feel I also don't want to encourage like, like anybody who doesn't typically use AAVE around like in their regular social settings, just saying like, "Oh, well (Marco) is around so I'm going to start talking like this, because I think that just makes things very awkward. Um, so I will say that I probably am responsible for some code switching.

This alludes to the maintenance of "boundaries" practiced by middle class Blacks (Lacy, 2007). In the previous example African American Vernacular English or AAVE presents as both something that is not deemed as appropriate or understood by hegemonic culture but also vulnerable to co-option to be protected and kept safe within "the culture" (Black culture).

Space: Where does code switching take place?

Language was perceived as having symbolic importance (AAVE, "lingo") especially in the workplace environment which linked it to material and social gain. Working class Black Americans, mostly navigated White spaces for work or expressed more comfort being around people that looked like them. Most of the examples of code switching in general have come from middle class professionals working within corporate or government institutions. Many of whom cite their work places as spaces where code switching occurs most often. Trey expresses a sense

that his behaviors and norms that would be appropriate culturally are under surveillance in his workplace.

> Trey/Middle Class/Male: "I still do (code switch). Because at work if I'm around older White people, and it's like a Black colleague comes in, I'm not going to just say 'hey, what's up man?' Because I noticed when I do stuff like that, I get stares."

Black millennials mentioned ownership of space and enterprise as a mechanism for acquiring more cultural freedom through insulation from dominant cultural expectations and norms. According to respondent Ben/Middle Class/Male, other Black millennials are using entrepreneurship, so that they don't have to be in proximity or assimilate into White spaces and institutions. The only example of business ownership as "Black space" within the sample was respondent Shay/Middle Class/Female.

> Shay/Middle Class/Female: You know, for instance, my salon, I don't have that many White clients, but I've had about three. I've not changed my voice, have not changed my music, I've not changed anything about my space, because you're coming into my turf. But when we're talking, when I need something from them, or you know.. I code switch. Yeah. Yeah. I code switch for sure."

While she mentions engaging in code switching to obtain resources her response affirms the sense that having a physical space under Black control can offer reprieve from the dominant social world. Shay also speaks to the benefits of Black professional space as a tool for networking and community. In which she uses her business as a platform within her community.

> Shay/Middle Class: I use my salon as my platform or my medium to share information and to disseminate information….

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The creation of "Black space" through the business endeavors of Black people has inclusionary elements that contradict "Black spaces" created through exclusion or racial segregation. It makes sense that it would be a strategy or vehicle for placemaking and insulation whether intentionally created as such or used for that purpose consciously as Shay/Middle Class/Female uses hers.

Twoness - Pressure from Above and Below

Tia describes living in a racialized society from her perspective as:

Being true to yourself, but then also realizing that you're living within a society that might not see you as your true self (A)(B).

Some respondents acknowledged a sense of "twoness" or different selves in their responses. This dual identity was conceptualized in racial and economic terms. David alluded to having a western/European self in his workplace, similar to the dynamic put forth in Du Bois' double consciousness theory where a racial or nationalist dynamic is described.

David/Hybrid/Male: No, I feel most comfortable around our people to be honest with you (B). I feel uncomfortable when I go to work and have to, like, convince myself and present my Western self if that makes sense. Western European self (A).

Respondents also referred to a dynamic between economic striving and values within that frame and a desire for more human centered values like, fairness and equity. Much like the warring ideals Du Bois describes from a nationalist/racial perspective, the double consciousness expressed by Tressa alludes more to a capitalist/human perspective.

Tressa/Middle Class/Female: I said, myself, you know, half of me is very much at work, I do the capitalistic thing, but I still, at the end of the day, believe that people should be treated fairly and equitably and have certain things. But, you know, again, what does that

look like? What scenario are we talking about? (A)(C) And, you know, what does that look like?

As represented "twoness" stems from misalignment between Black millennials and hegemonic American culture and an awareness of the misalignment. Tension and pressure is felt from both aspects simultaneously in terms of race and in class. In this sample middle class respondents seemed to express this "twoness" more explicitly. When asked whether he perceived division in the "Black community", Marco commented on the link between class and race consciousness in middle class Black people stemming from proximity and racial identity. His view actually differed from that of many of the other respondents who perceived division within the Black community in America.

> Marco/Working Class/Male: I think people want to think there is but, I feel like even like your, your well to do black people still have a sense of understanding to the plight of your, of African Americans on the low, on the poor end of that spectrum, you know, they recognize, like, the struggle that maybe their predecessors had to go through to get out of such a situation.

Working class individuals that did not work in hegemonic institutions or have to go into White spaces as often, did not express feeling this "twoness" as strongly as those in the sample that did. They expressed a knowledge of social inequalities and structural issues stemming from hegemonic American culture and talked more about "hypocrisy", "manipulation" and division among people generally rather than a dual identity conflict within themselves. The respondents that expressed the most conflict between their racial identity and class identity were hybrid respondents and middle class respondents. David who talked about his experience having

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worked on an assembly line and in higher positions in his industry explains his perspective and his view of "hybrid" as a class position.

> David/Hybrid-Middle Class/Male: I would call myself, or people like me hybrids man…..you can interchange between both and you can see things a lot better. I mean, you are more efficient, I ain't gonna say more efficient but you can move more efficiently….and I think those people that are hybrid have, like, some of their purpose should be to bring both of them [class positions] together, or, like, connect everything together so everyone can see and understand each other.

David also expressed a sense that other people that shared a similar experience to his most likely felt a desire to help others with less access to resources. He talked about there being two sides alluding to one being better in regard to opportunities, lifestyle and access to resources.

> David/Hybrid/Male: I think most of them are because they know where they came from, and they starting to understand that those resources are not there as much but when you're over here it's like…'Okay. This is a different side. So let me try to help a few people out'…..

David also mentions a sense of disconnection that he associates with his position and expresses a desire for people that are like him racially to be able to enjoy the resources and opportunities that he has been exposed to, yet in exchange has had to give up some sense of community.

> David: Yeah, because. I mean, at the end of the day, I still want to be able to enjoy life with people that I relate to the most (B). I mean. I really don't have fun on this side (A)(B). Like, like a true connection, if that makes sense (B).

Self-Measurement: Inner Voice

Double consciousness was observed as an internal process or as internalization of hegemonic values and ideals as well as stereotypes and judgment associated with them. Respondents interpret hegemonic American culture both for physical survival and for economic success. For Black millennials, an understanding of how they are being perceived through the lens of hegemonic culture is internalized in order to "properly" navigate the social world and generally survive at times. For middle class Black millennials stipulations and tension are often felt in the workplace and associated with their economic strivings.

> Tressa/Middle Class/Female: "I felt like I've always had to put on that "front" or that "act" and that's hard to keep doing that, which is why I keep going back to mental health and things like that, because…you get burned out with things like that. But I definitely think those types of things are unfortunately needed to get us through and make sure that we have,"a seat at the table," (A) even though we might probably still won't (B).

In order to garner economic success or representation in mainstream society most middle class respondents felt that they had to appear a certain way even if that was not authentic to them. Black millennials of all class backgrounds articulated hegemonic American values and a desire to exemplify them when engaging in the world. These values, traits and achievements are interpreted as what should be done to reap the rewards in American society.

> Tressa/Middle Class/Female: Even when we do all those things of being determined (A), hard working (A), driven (A), you know, somebody analytical (A), someone that's sitting in there code switching (A/B), someone that's sitting up there that has degrees (A), someone is sitting up there and makes a certain amount (A), you still have to do more, and be "the best" (B).

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Work ethic, higher educational attainment as well as desire for success and the ability to "act" in a way that the hegemonic culture deems proper are all needed for a recognizable identity through the lens of the hegemonic culture.

Black working class millennials were more likely to interpret stipulations and tensions as situations where law enforcement could be involved or in which they were likely to be harmed by the system. Through the lens of Black millennials, we can see how subjugated groups are barred from being sole creators of their cultural identity and representation in the United States or any society in which groups are "othered" by hegemonic culture. The ways in which Black millennials experienced double consciousness was explicit in examples, stories and quotes from respondents. Responses showed how Black millennials thought they were being received through the lens of American dominant culture by proxy of the gaze of "White Americans, who may or may not have been in positions of power in social institutions. Whiteness was also associated with American social institutions like law enforcement, employers, teachers and other institutions and "spaces" that Black millennials had to navigate.

The connection between Whiteness and dominant institutions as hegemonic forces in American social life speaks to the need for Black millennials to constantly interpret and account for Whiteness in their daily lives. Stereotypical characterizations and expectations are encountered externally and taken into account internally by Black millennials in regard to how they expect to be received and treated by the dominant society. When asked about issues within "Black culture", respondents personified hegemonic culture in their inner thoughts as dialogue with White people and hegemonic institutions. In these inner dialogues Black millennials processed, analyzed and translated the rhetoric and stereotypes of themselves stemming from hegemonic American culture but anticipated from, and experienced through proxy of White

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Americans. In the examples below the "hegemonic voice" is underlined. Some examples were as simple as walking down the street:

Marco/Working Class/Male: Some people automatically assume like that….like <u>a Black person is maybe aggressive</u> (A). You know, I'm like…I have a pit bull. So people are automatically….when I've been walking down the street, a lot of times they're automatically wary of that, like, <u>'hey, this Black guy with a pit bull, he can't be up to.….He can't be up to any good.'</u> (A)You know?"

Some examples characterized perceptions of the dominant sense of justice and morality in America as unsupportive of Black people in particular..

Tia/Middle Class/Female: I think, even when we think about conversations around reparations, reparations for other groups. It's like. <u>'Oh, yeah, we should definitely, you know, provide some sort of support'</u> (A), or, <u>'Oh, that historic injustice was so terrible, like, of course, it makes sense'</u> (A). But then for Black people, it's like, <u>'nope. I didn't own enslaved people, like, why are you punishing me?'</u> (A) , And so there is a very ingrained mindset that I think a lot of, I will just say White folks have about Black people in general. And I don't know how to change that mindset (B).

Respondents spoke of misrepresentation in the media shaping the expectations of individuals belonging to hegemonic cultures.

Trey/Middle Class/Male: I grew up in like, Hispanic community but when I moved to the White community, because I'm not from a Black neighborhood, a lot of people were kind of, I'm not gonna say, like, really bully, but like, they were kind of, like, kind of tease me a little bit like, call me out. They're like, <u>"Hey, you're not acting Black? Why aren't you sagging your pants?"</u> (A) And are like, "Why aren't you…..talking in like heavy ebonics

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and everything" (A), I was being called up work was all they were exposed to on the TV. And I'm like, No, we don't, all act this way or act like we're from a music video but it was just kind of mind blowing that that was that that was the perception of who we are as Black people from other communities due to a lack of exposure (B).

This inner voice representative of hegemonic values was not negative for all respondents. For some the representation was positive or perceived positively. Particularly when asked about financial goals, private ownership, or success some respondents were motivated by ideals and practices associated with hegemonic culture. This indicates a level of buy-in to "strivings" and goals set forth and dictated by hegemonic values and dominant cultural mores in regard to material gain. For example Darius's response when asked how he felt about people owning multiple properties for economic gain. Others in the sample had shared similar thoughts regarding building "legacy" and upward mobility:

Darius/Hybrid/Male: I think it's dope (A)……"I mean, because it's inspiring, you know, regardless of how they got it, or how they got there, like, you know, it's something for me to, you know, use it as a guide to model off of or, you know, to put that initial fire in me like. "Bruh, go get it. You could do that, too" (A).

David expresses that the rules of business found in corporate America are not much different from the rules that structure business at the street level. He expresses the view that learning and translating the rules that White people use for economic and social gain could work for Black people as well. The difference is legitimacy and access. Two things that Black people and other subjugated groups historically have been denied and still struggle to obtain.

David/Hybrid/Male: Yeah, like, things even they talking about investments and stuff like that that kid is talking about, "oh my dad got me an ETF or mutual fund" (A) you like

what is this, like, like, there's a whole different type of thing, but it can be applied to, you know, our culture as well, but just look at it in a different aspect. Like for, you know, for drug dealers they might say re-up or something like that, it basically means to take some money and reinvest it and try to make something grow (B). So I started connecting the dots and I was like "this is the same exact thing".

Stipulations and Tension

The interview with Carlos was conducted in a public setting, during which a White female walked by and invoked an interesting reaction from him.

Carlos/Working Class/Male: Like ole girl over there (referring to the White woman walking by). If I walk up and just ask her about the interview she'd gone and pull the pole out (pull a gun out), 'what you doing all close to me?' You feel me, like dang girl. I'm just trying to say "hey", trying to take you on a date and you trying to fight me, shit. I didn't say that (laughs). Don't get them Karen's on me. I didn't say that (laughs)!…….

When probed further about the reaction his response yielded important information about expectations within social interactions that involve race dynamics, as well as the tension felt by individuals who are a part of "othered" groups. Even though Carlos mentioned in his interview that he thought that mindset could mitigate the "bad stuff" associated with stigma and stereotype in America his reaction proved how difficult that can be in practice. Although veiled in humor there seemed to be apprehension on his part to engage with this person. When probed further he alluded to racial difference being a factor in his thought process.

Carlos/Working Class/Male: It was just a joke. So I ain't, I ain't gonna lie but it's a high probability though. That most people feel like that outside of race....I'm just gonna put it

out there generally, it's hard for people that's one race to go and try and associate with people of another race because its stipulations you feel me.

"Stipulations" for Black millennials regardless of class position, outline a social contract of what is appropriate in White spaces, and in interactions with White people, as well as consequences for missteps. There was a sense that the "rules" for Black millennials were different and they were subject to more intense scrutiny and harsher judgment than other Americans.

Pressure felt from not meeting these stipulations and expectations dictated from dominant groups cause tensions in Black millennials as a subjugated group. There were four types of tension expressed by respondents in the sample; symbolic tension, appearance based tension, survival tensions, and intra-racial tension. These tensions are fluid and linked to each other for example symbolic tension and appearance based tensions have overlap but within this framing separating them is useful.

Symbolic Tension

Tension through symbolism deals with language, representation and/or misrepresentation from the hegemonic or dominant culture. Symbolic tension comes from the stereotypes and negative representation of Black millennials from the perspective of mainstream society and the awareness of this in their interactions with hegemonic culture (white people, institutions, e.t.c). Cultural symbols, codes, values and ways of being that affect relationships and interactions are sources of tension. Symbolic tension can be considered fixed or static in that Black millennials can attempt to alter their speech, dress, appearance and other related factors or traits but the negative stereotypes and portrayals of them that they are attempting to mitigate for physical, economic or social survival are external and static in the hegemonic culture. For example hair for

Black women in the sample was often talked about both as a source of apprehension related to the comfort and ease of certain hairstyles due to physical differences in hair texture (appearance based tension) but also how these hairstyles are perceived in their work places and professional environments, due in part to media and societal perceptions of Black women with those hairstyles (symbolic tension). The meaning and rationale behind things like hair and dance are often what is misconstrued by hegemonic cultures into stereotypes. Tia expresses "second sight" in relation to the veil as represented in this example as the 'color line'. Tia explains that she possesses knowledge and understanding of White people but also is aware of their lack of understanding of her.

> Tia/Middle Class/Woman: "I often find that it's hard to relate to them. Or I have more experience with their interest, then they have mine. So for example, in high school, I ran cross country. I can talk to them about marathon training and all that. But they can't talk to me about, like haircare stuff and like, finding products with certain ingredients and things like that. So yeah, I often find that I'm kind of leveling up to their interests, instead of them doing the same for mine."

Trey mentions the media and how portrayals of Black people damage the perspective of Black people themselves and other Americans.

> Trey/Middle Class/Male: Like media, like we're not projected, or we're not given, like positive role models. Because you don't see…every time you turn on the TV, all you see is like gangs, or just violence or dysfunctional families. It's not a lot of positive. We're not really projected in a positive light and I believe like, since we're such a media consuming culture, that kind of impacts are conscious, and the way we see ourselves whether we acknowledge it or not.

Deloris demonstrates how symbolic based tension and appearance based tension syncopate to influence the everyday lives of Black Americans. This speaks to the point Trey made about the media influencing the consciousness of Black people and reinforcing negative stereotypes as well as the awareness in Black people that they could be or are being perceived in certain ways in their interactions with the hegemonic American culture and its values that structure society.

> Deloris/Hybrid/Female: I just know, there's, like this negative kind of viewpoint of black women still, for sure. It didn't go away. It's kind of changed a little bit or like the language changes but I don't…. I still think there's kind of the old kind of stereotypical objectification maybe in black women, but everyone loves black women features. Like Ariana Grande. The baby hairs and like tanner scan and like people eat it up. Right? But let Megan the stallion do it, and then it's…

Appearance Based Tension

Appearance based tensions are similar to symbolic based tension in that both relate to stereotypes and how subjugated groups are perceived by hegemonic culture and society, as well as how individuals see themselves through their interpretation of that view. Though appearance based tension and symbolic tension are both linked, the difference between symbolic tension and appearance based tension is that appearance based tension addresses double consciousness from a physical sense (dark skin, hair texture, body type and shape). Appearance based tension comes from the actual physical changes Black people make (or can not make) to their appearance. Black millennials can attempt to manipulate these physical features in certain ways to mitigate appearance based tension and symbolic tension but the physical features are still inherent. Symbolic tension represents the mental aspect. The internalization and awareness of hegemonic

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culture and values that deem these changes necessary as well as the decision making process

involved in whether or not to make changes or the degree to which they should or will alter their

appearance in relation to economic or physical survival. Both tensions put pressure on Black

people to mitigate stereotypes and negative perceptions of them. The tension here occurs as a

physical and "real world" effect on the daily existence of Black millennials because appearance

is still perceived by Black millennials as "weaponized" by the dominant culture symbolically.

Weaponization is both economic in relation to "professional appearance" and the Eurocentric

standards surrounding it as well as physical in that respondents expressed that how they looked

had potential to influence interactions with white people and/or law enforcement, which for

Black Americans can sometimes carry the potential for physical harm or death. Women in the

sample were more likely to express tension surrounding their appearance in the workplace and

men, particularly working class men, alluded to their appearance being caricatured as dangerous.

> Shay/Middle Class: I got to talk about hair. You know, historically hair is a big thing in
> our culture, the hair dressing, the dressing or the decor of the hair, you know, we express
> ourselves with our hair, a lot of times locs, cornrows, braids, protective styles, natural,
> wear your hair out natural, you know. I think those things are not always embraced and
> often almost like weaponized like, we're judged or, you know, start to perceive us a
> certain way or having a certain type of personality or character because of our hair.
> Starting to judge whether we would be a good employee, whether we would fit in with
> the culture at your workplace because of our hair.

Jill talks about her reluctance to wear a turban at work and her navigation of appearing

professional in her workplace. Tia also makes the point about the physical comfort of certain

hairstyles related to the physical attributes of Black hair.

Jill/Working Class/Female: "I don't care what other people think of me, per se, it's just more of you know, the way you talk in the professional world that you have to be like, you know, keep a professional mind, you know, dress and talk a certain way whereas a turban is not really being professional (A)(B). Although it's comfortable for me, and it's like because my hair is long and you know, kind of heavy so pinning it up is kind of more convenience for me (B), but um.. and a lot of workplaces now, I don't I don't recall about this job because I haven't actually looked at that inside the handbook. I didn't see anything in the handbook about having anything on your head, but most jobs that I've had, that's something that they don't allow."

Tia expressed similar anxiety about hair and perception in her professional life.

Tia/Middle Class/Female:And so, like, hair is a big thing. I remember when I started this job, I had box braids, or I was getting box braids and I was like, oh, like, I'm gonna have these box braids, my first week on the job. But like, I have my hair pulled back in my interview, like, I don't want to go blonde like, "I don't wanna, I don't want to scare them away." It's like, "Who's this person that we interviewed and then hired?" And so I mean, that was anxiety like, how am I gonna be perceived in my first week with these braids? When I'm traveling for client meetings, it's you know, how am I matching the perception that I give off in virtual meetings versus in person? Like, how am I dressing?

Carlos and Ryan explain how their appearance influences their interactions or potential interactions with white people.

Carlos/Working Class/Male: Most dudes, they get preconceived or judged just from their appearance so it's already, like it's already hard for you to be able to present yourself or approach other people because if you can't stop the cycle and keep repeating yourself you

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gonna feel like you need to distance yourself from that and I'm just…. I'm gonna just put it that way because I ain't worthless you feel me….. I ain't never had a reason to be mad at somebody for another race or something like that but other races don't look at it like that bruh. I ain't gonna lie, it's funny. Me for example, nevermind you know, like, I'm basically like a little military kid and a little pastor kid when some people see me they like, 'oh he might rob me', you feel me. I'm the one not trying to rob you, that's the bad part (laughs). Imma keep it all the way 1000. That's the bad part, shawty and it just be awkward because even the other people that fall into that category just trying to be cool and friendly. They don't get no opportunities because of their appearance or their skin tone and that shit dont be it.

Ryan/Working Class/Male: Instantly seeing me being an African American covered in tattoos, this and that and you know, I know if I'm loud and then this and that , it's just gonna bring a certain stigma and certain assumptions that might not even be true of who I am, but because they see these other images of other people that look like me with tattoos and are loud they gonna immediately just assume that that probably might be what I am. So immediately, I'm just gonna just come in a different approach to let you know, I'm not what you might be assuming.

Survival Tensions

Survival tension concerns anxiety regarding consequences from "stipulations" being broken or worst case scenarios from the other two tensions mentioned. Respondents expressed differences in how stipulations were perceived and expressed different expectations for following stipulations and different consequences for broaching those expectations. Stipulations were related to either economic survival or physical survival. Engagement with law enforcement could

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mean loss of life and a mischaracterization at work could mean the loss of a career or opportunities. When talking to working class men that had experience in or with environments that have been historically, socially and economically marginalized. There was a slight difference between the expectations and conceptualization of what consequences could be for breaking those stipulations or garnering negative attention from White people. There was more of a sense that consequences for them could come from law enforcement and result in loss of freedom or harm. They were still concerned with symbolic expressions of tension but more so mitigating stereotypes related to appearance, rather than adjustable and situational behaviors like code switching for professionalism articulated by middle class respondents. Two of these individuals had previously experienced incarceration and one hadn't but all expressed more of a tendency to avoid situations that could potentially put them in danger. Translating to either avoiding situations where they were the only Black person in that particular space (Carlos and Ryan), adopting an alternative view of the American system as it is (Ryan, Ben) or in the case of Trey, Huey, David and Darius by learning, internalizing and adopting hegemonic values like work ethic, higher education, or self-sufficiency to achieve a certain level of social mobility even though none of them expressed total alignment with the negative effects they attributed to American culture and values.

Tension for middle class respondents was expressed most in the form of symbolic and appearance based tension related to navigating their workplace and career. These respondents were in close proximity to white people more often and expected to code switch, dress appropriately, talk professionally, and adhere to hegemonic cultural values for the sake of their socioeconomic status. Survival tension for these respondents and the other tensions they

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expressed related to race as it was a factor in economic interest. This was not an either or finding or hardline distinction between class groups.

Marco/Working Class/Male: I think the way African Americans have to educate their kids on their etiquette around law enforcement is a lot different than other typical Americans. Like, as it being more of a caution….looking at officers sometimes as like, supposedly being a service to you. [Instead] making sure you stay out of their sights, you know.

Carlos talks about changing the way he acted around white people for the purpose of not risking misunderstandings.

Carlos/Working Class/Male: Nah, sometimes maybe but the only reason I say that is because they jump to different extremes you feel me like it'll be some nonchalant, not serious stuff going on you know they're gonna resort to calling the police or anything like that. And it's crazy how awkward situations happen and stuff like that, and I don't want to say it's the whole race (that) does you know unnecessary stuff or you know, jump to conclusions which lead to you know, police getting involved and awkward situations it's just unfair….

Ryan/Working Class/Male: Even with the way we've seen the police you know, well granted the last one was you know, black cops killing a black man. But you know, if I see a white officer, you definitely right I'm gonna address him differently, you know not saying like, I wouldn't address a black officer with sir but just seeing that uniform for sure so you know, yeah. I don't act different around them, I'm still me……but yeah, if I'm in a room full of them, and it's just me, I'm quiet, I'm secluded. You won't even probably know I'm in there. You know what I mean, like, I might… "hey" (gestures wave) and

keep it moving because I just…I'mma feel out of place. Like you said a room full of white people, and just me. I'm gonna feel out of place.

Tara captures the other side of survival tension in the workplace, or the possibilities when the barriers that enable symbolic and appearance based tensions are rendered mute through technology. Tara speaks about confidence and mentions that she feels as though she can thrive when she feels that she doesn't have to worry about her performance or appearance being judged through a racial lens.

Tara/Middle Class/Female: I definitely feel held back by my race, and my gender. I've been working from home for four years. I think I started at the beginning of 2019. I noticed a huge difference in my interactions with people, when I can be behind a computer, and I'm really just a voice most of the time I don't get, we don't use our cameras very much at work at all, even though I interact with people. I feel like not having to show up a certain way, you know, gives me freedom to, I don't know, to to thrive, you know, I don't feel like I have to answer for who I am, I don't feel like I experienced a lot of microaggressions I don't feel like, you know, it's just, I feel like I can just be myself much more than when I'm face to face. There's a lot of interactions, especially with white women, but also with white men. But there's a lot of interactions with white women that are strained. One, when they view you as kind of equivalent to them. So like, if you have an equivalent education equivalent background, you have a similar job and you're doing similar things. A lot of times, I feel like white women view that as competition, like they need to have something that they can say, this makes me better than this black woman, and then they're comfortable engaging with you. But if they view you as like, higher or on the same level, then they have to, it might even just be

subconscious, but they have to do something to make sure that they can bring you back down to, you know, your appropriate level. So yeah, I definitely have noticed a huge difference when I don't have to show up as a black woman, and I can just show up as Tara and do my job.

Intra-racial Tensions

Intra-racial tension can account for other ways of experiencing identity based tensions associated with the "double consciousness" framing. While almost all respondents in the sample expressed feeling more comfortable around Black people relative to people of other races, many acknowledged that they changed how they talked or acted around, "certain types of Black people". Tami offered this explanation.

> Tami/Middle Class: So sometimes some Black people Yeah. Because like I said, it's like, "oh, you're not Black enough. Because whatever." Because I like a plethora of different things. I like this, that and the other. So it just may just depend on who I'm around, or which Black people I'm around. Like, I'm never going to be fake, I'm still going to always be me. But I just know, like certain topics and certain things. I won't maybe bring up around certain types of Black people."

No one used the term "code switching" in this regard but "omission" is still used as a tactic. It could be thought of as "reverse code switching". Working class respondents did not express the need to reverse code switch as much as middle class respondents and hybrids. Middle class and hybrid respondents also acknowledged that they had been referred to as "sell outs" or "bougie" by other Black people. In this context these terms implied that they had abandoned Black culture or that they thought they were better than other Black people. This was voiced in responses from one middle class respondent and one respondents that experienced upward social

mobility during their lifetime. David describes feeling out of place in corporate America but also

feeling disconnected from the mindset associated with home.

> David/Hybrid/Male: I felt out of place, didn't fit in for a while and then you know, the
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> whole, you know, you a sell out thing or, you know, you go back home and you start
>
> talking different, and it's like "Who are you?" Like, that type of thing.

Some respondents also mentioned feeling pressure to "perform" Blackness in

recognizable ways and ridiculed when they didn't do so.

> Deloris/Hybrid/Female: I do feel looking back that people were maybe scrutinizing me
>
> for not being Black enough. They were really just kind of bothered that they felt like I
>
> wasn't like, performing Blackness the way that they were expected to…"

Notions of "authenticity" are not created solely by the subjugated culture as media and

environmental conditions shape the subjugated cultures' understanding of itself consciously and

unconsciously. Socioeconomic class position, access to educational and financial resources all

shape the proximity of Black millennials to "ideas of authenticity" related to their culture.

Here middle class Black millennials experience double consciousness and tension

centered around cultural authenticity. Twoness for Black millennials invokes pressures to be

authentic or "act Black" within individuals that also experience pressure to not be "authentic" or

"act Black" when they interact with the dominant culture. This is a bit different from the

framework and historical period in which Du Bois introduce double consciousness centered

around two warring negro and national identities (Itzigshohn and Brown, 2015). Tami sums up

her view of the "Black community" as an oxymoron. There is a sense of community and

competition that contributes to divisiveness and stifles progress. This seems to indicate a sense of

racial solidarity based on shared experience and marginalization but a lack of cohesion in relation to class solidarity.

> Tami/Middle Class/Female: It's weird. It's kind of like, the way we look at the black community is almost like an oxymoron, where we have this big sense of community and helping each other and, you know, wanting everyone to succeed, because we're just like, we're all we got, the rest of the world is against us. So we gotta stick together…. But at the same time, we are competing with each other and not supporting each other and tearing each other down and, oh, I gotta one up this person, or I gotta one up that person. But I remember when I was growing up, I used to always hear people say like this crabs in a barrel mentality, where instead of sticking together, and we're all crabs, right, so we should be working to help each other, but instead, we're steadily pulling each other down, because we don't want someone else to get there before we do but if we all work together, we could all get out of there at the same time.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Observations

The characterization of the "Black community" as oxymoronic is interesting. A group that defines itself by a sense of community and shared experience, yet many cited divisiveness and lack of unity. Despite the positivity and advocacy for personal responsibility and work ethic within the sample, the fact that so many respondents attributed the divisiveness and lack of unity in the Black community to historical and external factors like white supremacy and capitalism is important. This circles back to what this study set out to do. This research study set out to explore the ways in which hegemonic American values affected "othered" or subjugated populations. The major takeaways of this study are that:1) the feeling of having a separate identity or "twoness" specifically was expressed by middle class and hybrid respondents with professional careers and higher incomes but double consciousness is still very much relevant for working class respondents.; 2) tension from double consciousness is expressed fluidly but perceived outcomes and anxieties were expressed differently within the sample and 3) double consciousness continues to persist as an inner struggle amongst Black millennials of all class positions within the sample. The first takeaway is linked to my hypothesis.In regard to how double consciousness was expressed in Black millennials of different class positions my hypothesis stated:

(H): Double consciousness is largely a middle-class phenomenon and will therefore not be as observable among working-class respondents.

This was not seen in the sample. Double consciousness was observed in all the respondents in the sample but twoness was only expressed by middle class respondents including the two hybrid men. Working class millennials did not state that they engaged in code switching

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or held two identities or experienced "twoness" but did experience tension directly related to double consciousness. The tension expressed by some of the working class respondents in the sample stemmed more from anxiety related to interactions with White people and hegemonic institutions. They expressed an awareness of how they could potentially be perceived and this translated into a desire to distance themselves from interactions with White people rather than be in close proximity. Respondents like Carlos, Ryan, Deloris and Huey all alluded to this.

On the other hand, middle class Black millennials were more likely to express feelings of "twoness" or grappling with different identities than working class respondents, and some expressed this "twoness" explicitly as a feeling of having different "self's". Respondents' professional status and workplace settings associated with it seemed to contribute greatly to this framing. Having to put on an "act" or feeling that race "held them back" was expressed more from middle class respondents and those that worked in corporate environments. Working class respondents were not as likely to report that they "put on an act" but expressed similar tensions even if they did not state explicitly that they felt two identities. There were non-racial descriptions of "twoness" among middle class respondents also. Respondents mentioned "doing the capitalist thing" or having an identity adapted to the American lifestyle and cultural values. Even Darius who did not attach as much meaning to his racial identity described "masks".

Darius/Hybrid/Male: You got people that wear masks, then you get ones that don't, like you see them for who they are. But then like if the system wasn't the way it was then like the ones that wear the mask could probably get so much farther because they wear a mask, you know what I'm saying, and a lot of people that wear masks they never figure out ways to achieve. I mean, when I think about it, everybody, you know, finds a way to get over on the system.

2) The second takeaway is the expression of tension and the forms of tension that appeared in the sample. Tension was expressed among working, middle and hybrid respondents, stemming from double consciousness, as double consciousness relates to their interpretation of and interaction with hegemonic culture. In their experience this interaction is proxied through white people, their professional work spaces, and other hegemonic institutions (justice system, media, e.t.c.). Certain stipulations or possible consequences were perceived from transgressing or missteps in these interactions. Analysis of the types of tension Black millennials faced yielded four related and interconnected types of tension experienced: symbolic tension, appearance based tension, survival tensions, and intra-racial tension. What stood out in the sample was the fluid nature of tension among Black American millennials.. Tensions experienced through symbolism are directly linked to appearance based tensions and both of those forms affect situations where tension is related to survival. Symbolic tensions stem from media portrayals of Black people and stereotypes perpetuated and internalized by the hegemonic culture and Black people themselves. Symbolic tensions and appearance based tensions are linked in that anxiety stems from distancing oneself from negative stereotypes. This was expressed in the sample regardless of class position.

Survival based tensions are both economic and physical and the risk, level and type of potential threat that is perceived or encountered is based upon setting. Survival tensions could be thought of in terms of physical survival related to the avoidance of interaction with white people. Avoiding direct interactions with the police, or direct interactions with white women ("Karens") or white people in general for fear they might call the police for minor or perceived infractions. The other context for "survival" means economic survival through omission of culture - which entails having the "proper" hairstyle or haircut (not wearing locs, cornrows, protective styles

e.t.c.), code switching or talking with "correct" diction and "articulating" (not using AAVE or "lingo"). Working class males expressed the former iteration of survival tension more, while middle class respondents expressed more of the latter but both iterations are applicable across class positions depending on the setting and situation.

      Intra-racial tension was expressed in the sample as well. All the respondents in this study expressed feeling tension while navigating American life as a Black person,even if that tension was not experienced as a conflict with American values or ideals. Darius, who expressed that he didn't ascribe to labels like race, still experienced intra-racial tension evidenced in his acknowledgement of a desire to remove himself from the mentality and negative experiences linked to people that "looked like" him. This mentality and negative experience associated with Black people however, is linked to systemic marginalization and poverty. This manifests in the environment as the physical"hood" and the lack of opportunity and access that can lead to the negative mentality that many of the respondents, working, middle class and hybrid stated they were familiar with. Either through personal experience or proximity of loved ones and associates. David expressed this desire to separate himself as well but did not express a desire to abandon "Black culture", nor did anyone else in the sample. This alludes to strategic assimilation in which like immigrants from the third world subjugated groups choose to keep connection to and identify with their racial identity while interfacing with the white world (Lacy, 2004). This did not seem to be the case in Du Bois time evidenced by Du Bois explanation of assimilation as abandoning black organizations for those of whites (Itzigsohn & Brown, 2015). This gives credence to Allen (2002) who makes the point that the cultural lens of race which is dominant today was not the lens at which Du Bois imagined double consciousness in 1903. This does not negate the importance or utility of the theory.

Du Boisian double consciousness of 120 years ago is still relevant today among Black millennials amidst the economic and material gains of the Black middle class, amidst the gains in civil rights and political representation that have since come to fruition. This speaks to the continuation of systemic barriers and the veil that is still visible to respondents in the sample. Though scholars like Mocombe (2009; 2014), Allen (2002), point to misreadings of double consciousness and the necessity to include class dynamics in the discussion of the theory, scholars like (Ciccariello-Maher, 2009), Itzigsohn & Brown, 2015), (Walker, 2018) point to the continued utility and importance of double consciousness.The fact that Black millennials of different class positions express tension associated with it supports the idea that double consciousness has universal utility (Olson, 2004 as quoted in Ciccariello-Maher, 2009). However, it does not necessarily challenge the notion that double consciousness enables middle-class consciousness to stand in and speak for Black people as a whole (Olson 2004, as quoted in Ciccariello-Maher, 2009). Mocombe (2009; 2014) suggests that double consciousness trickles down from hegemonic white middle class/bourgeoisie values and strivings to middle class Blacks that are able to gain sufficient economic and social capital, then to lower and working class Blacks. More or less a striving for a Westernized, middle class lifestyle and existence fueled by values that serve productivity for material gain under a global capitalist social and economic structure are adopted and affect people that are subjugated by it as well (Mocombe, 2009).

Mocombe suggests that Du Bois missed this in his early formulations of double consciousness and that class dynamics should be considered. The fact that Du Bois was middle class, highly educated and "cultured" within the white, Protestant, male oriented social world of

his time no doubt informed his early thinking around double consciousness and his "Talented Tenth" ideology (Du Bois, 1903). An idea that a few exceptionally talented Black men and women would be able to "uplift" the Black race through attainment of liberal education and entrepreneurship for social and economic gain (Du Bois, 1903). Responses pointed more to shared experiences and tensions associated with race but not as much to shared political, economic or ideological strivings or leaning towards movements based on race or class. Many respondents thought of community in racial terms and expressed an awareness to support or help people that looked like them but also pointed out intraracial division. A few of the respondents talked about race from nationalist or political standpoints (racial separation, reparations). A few respondents shared ideas about work ethic, capitalism and systemic barriers associated with leftist thought (anarchism, labor union involvement, expanded social welfare unattached to labor). Out of 16 respondents in total only four responded favorably to the scenario question asking whether free healthcare, free food, free housing or free assistance should be given to people without the expectation of labor attached. Middle class respondents Ben and Tia, and the two hybrid women Deloris and Dondria.

When explaining the system or the "veil" Black millennials pointed to both race in the form of white supremacy and capitalism in the ways in which inequality persists beyond America and beyond race. Mocombe (2009) refers to a reified consciousness and global capitalist social order that is informed by and spreads white, Protestant, heterosexual, male values as middle class values through international economic and social relations. He posits that middle class Blacks act as agents for this system so the values associated with this organizing structure or "reified consciousness" trickle down to working class blacks. Respondents have alluded to this dynamic taking place in examples given regarding colorism, patriarchy within the

Black community, respectability politics, classism, and practice of Black capitalism as a means for liberation.

These are all reactions to the veil and attempts at alleviating tension felt from double consciousness. Tension and the ways in which people navigate it and respond to the veil has implications for how Black people behave, what Black people strive for, and how people view their own success. Many of the respondents did not remove community from their own views of what makes a successful life. While all respondents did point out division and dissension among Black Americans and the sense that "not all Black people were on the same page". The identification of marginalization, its varied forms and its persistent effect on Black Americans were constant through the majority of interviews.

Acknowledging that double consciousness within minorities can encompass thought and tension beyond race and culture is important to make room for discussion of intersectionality and how hegemonic cultural values and subscription to them influence schisms in groups that might otherwise achieve unity through shared oppression or experience. Mocombe (2009) attempted to point out the"blindness" from hegemonic positions that even subjugated people can occupy. Du Bois through his own double consciousness became aware of this as evidenced by his revision of his "talented tenth theory" in later years to the "guiding hundredth" (Ciccariello-Maher, 2009) (Rabaka, 2003). Du Bois shifted away from the talented tenths ideological emphasis on elitism and individual attainment, and higher educational attainment to emphasizing character, and unity in struggle.

> Du Bois's evolving thought-and especially as embodied in his guiding hundredth
> thesis-took on a world historical tone that found the greatest promise and potential for
> radical social and global change not in the heads of intellectuals and academics but in the

hearts of "men and women of character"-regardless of their race, culture, class, and/or occupation. For Du Bois, character became the greatest gauge of radical political potential. (Rabaka, 2003)

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies

16 respondents participated in this study. 7 of which were categorized as middle class, 5 were categorized as working class and the 4 that did not fit class categories neatly, were considered hybrid with leanings towards working or middle class. This sample size was very small in relation to the demographic range within the sample. To generalize conclusions about race or class consciousness the sample size would need to increase and the demographic range would need to be narrowed to one or two categories. Future qualitative studies concerning double consciousness and race might narrow demographics to a specific gender or sex, a smaller age group, or examine one class position to draw more meaningful conclusions from a smaller sample.

Respondents in the sample were recruited mostly from social media pages. This limits the sample to demographics most likely to use or join those particular groups and those that have an online presence.The sample in this study was skewed towards millennials in their 30's, that were social media users and members of online groups that identified by signifiers like race, business ownership, parent, etc. Not many participants were from the lower end of the economic spectrum, including working class respondents.

Different class criteria for class categorizations might affect the results of a similar study. Respondents were able to self identify class status but some did not necessarily sync with the broad definition used in the study and those individuals were labeled as hybrid. It is acknowledged from several studies that middle class status particularly as it pertains to race is

nuanced. Lacy (2007) asserts among other scholars that there is a difference in experience among the Black middle class mostly based upon neighborhood location. Homeownership and proximity to neighborhoods that are homogenous in regard to income and socioeconomic standing are large factors in the typical "middle class" experience. Many Blacks considered "middle class" may not qualify based on income but not by their living arrangement or level of security (Lacy, 2007). This would serve to illustrate the views of a Black population that has more "typical" middle class features. By defining middle and working class broadly, those nuances were sacrificed within a small sample size. Future studies could take the nuances mentioned by Lacy (2007) into account as well.

Future qualitative work pertaining to double consciousness in Black Americans should address specific limitations concerning execution found in this study. Future studies should better refine the interview protocol used. Interview questions should address the racial identity of respondents as part of a racial collective. Questions designed around variables (values) could be tied more closely with behavior to indicate clearer differences in what participants see as worthy outcomes, goals, or strivings. There are other studies that amplify the voice and perspective of minority groups but few depict contrasts within those groups or intra-racial feelings towards each other. This interview protocol for this study did not address this properly but perhaps future research could explore the implications of this within other minority groups in different contexts and settings.

Work environment as well as more nuanced definitions of "class" should be considered in future qualitative studies regarding double consciousness. This likely had a strong impact on the ability for Black millennials to insulate themselves within their own racial and cultural groups. The only respondents in the sample to feel that insulation was possible were those that either had

their own businesses or did not work around White people. This connection between Black capitalism and the Black working and lower classes in regard to values and identity formation could possibly be explored in future studies. It makes sense to talk about identity negotiation among this specific subset of the black population, since middle-class blacks assume more responsibility for specifying how blacks will negotiate the black-white boundary than do lower-class blacks (Lacy 2015).

One of the respondents that did not express feelings of misalignment with the dominant American culture was the only respondent to not identify strongly with his racial or national identity. This respondent answered many of the interview questions from a perspective that he characterized as "spiritual". This lack of attachment to racial and national identity seemed to be a possible influence in the respondents differing perspectives regarding alignment with American culture or in his case detachment and the lack of racial tension he felt as a result. This sparked questions about racial identity and national identity as they relate to double consciousness.

All of the study participants were Black Americans that are descendants of American slaves or who based their identity within American culture. Two expressed having Caribbean family members but not to the extent where it made a significant impact on their individual perspective. This was unintentional, as "Black identity" as a label was meant to incorporate any American identifying as Black. It was the researchers desire to include Black Americans that also identified with other nationalities associated with the African diaspora. A larger study including participants that identify as Black Americans but also represent the perspective of the African and Caribbean population in America would provide insight into the full range of experiences and perspectives that fall within the range of "Black" in the United States and nuance regarding how Black people experience double consciousness.The same can be said for

studies that might include individuals of mixed race origin that identify as "Black". This perspective could have implications for qualitative studies focusing on "double consciousness" and "Black identity".

Justifications

Itzigsohn & Brown (2015) describe Du Boisian double consciousness as the phenomenological description of the self-formation of racialized subjects and shows that in a racialized society there is no true communication or recognition between racialized and racializing subjects. For Black Americans the "blind" or "racializing" group would be white people but misrecognition and blindness stemming from racial dominance or hegemony indicates other hegemonic or dominant economic and social positions as well. Middle class, male, cis-gender, Christian, and able-bodied status among other positions all have the potential to blind or induce misrecognition of subjugation. Individuals that hold these status positions have the potential to be complicit and perpetuate the systemic oppression of "others" outside of a strictly racial context (Mocombe et al., 2014). This is true regardless of whether an individual simultaneously holds a subjugated position such as a racial minority. Belonging to one subjugated group does not exclude anyone from this potential.

This research could be impactful to social justice movements among "othered" groups and those wishing to affect social change from more thoughtful positions. Understanding nuance in the identities of minority groups as well as hegemony and division as it pertains to race and class may have implications for narrative building and communication. This could be applied to organizations and political entities wishing to engage and address "othered" populations more effectively. Awareness of heterogeneity in groups that are thought of as homogenous is crucial to communication and targeted collaboration. Power dynamics often factor into whose voice is

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being heard. Awareness of power dynamics is crucial to community based researchers,

Non-profit organizations, grassroots organizations and in general organizations that are engaged

and focused on collective or community development.This has relevance in any project

implementing strategies for co-creation, coalition building or combating the negative effects of

top-down structural organizing and systemic oppression in various institutional settings.

In terms of social movements, understanding the myriad of different "strivings" within

racialized groups can offer nuanced perspectives on the dynamics within historical social

movements as well as possible social and political movements yet to emerge. For example the

ADOS movement American Descendants of Slavery (ADOS) is a relatively recent development

among young Black Americans and argues that racial affirmative action policies should favor

poor people who are descended from enslaved persons present in the United States before

emancipation and should not give equivalent weight to the children of recent immigrants from

Africa or the Caribbean and other more- privileged subsets of America's Black population

(Stockman 2019, as quoted in Charles, 2022).

The ADOS movement can be thought of as reactionary in relation to Black Americans

identity contrasted with Whiteness. Even the intra-racial conflict between iterations of

"blackness" (African and Caribbean identities) is predicated on it's historical relationship with

"Whiteness" in the social and historical context of the racialized American social structure.

Another example on the opposite end of the spectrum is Black capitalism - the advancement of

Black people through entrepreneurship and economic means as well as the belief that this

advancement will ease racial and systemic oppression (Weems & Randolph, 2001). Black

capitalism is still presented as a viable solution for Black Americans. As an ideology it aligns

with the "pick yourself up by the bootstraps", brand of individualism characteristic of

mainstream American thought. This is evidenced by Richard Nixon's 1968 presidential campaign, in which he promoted Black capitalism as a major remedy for America's racial ills (Weems & Randolph, 2001). The Nixon administration responded with the Office of Minority Business Enterprise (OMBE) as a result of this stance in 1969 (Weems & Randolph, 2001). Black capitalism was viewed positively by many respondents in the sample, regardless of their views of America and white supremacy; those within the sample that didn't reject it outright, and even some who held negative views of capitalism expressed a desire to participate through real estate or business ownership. Understanding the range of influences and who within subjugated groups are likely to ascribe to certain ideologies is valuable. Understanding the ways subjugated individuals experience tension in American society gives clues as to what they might choose as prescriptions to alleviate those tensions or how they might react to systemic barriers. This could be important for "marketing" a social movement or creating narrative around certain causes.

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION

It has been 120 years since W.E.B. Du Bois introduced his very important work "The Souls of Black Folk", and invoked double consciousness to explore and articulate the inner struggle of Black Americans in early 20th century America. Du Bois introduced double consciousness through the paradigm of racialized longing for national identification and representation. While double consciousness has been critiqued for lack of scope by other scholars Du Bois also realized that there was room for expansion.

In later years, Du Bois revised his talented tenth theory emphasizing individual attainment for the sake of the group to the "guiding hundredth" incorporating "group-leadership" and other racial and class perspectives (Rabaka, 2003). Ciccariello-Maher (2009) notes that the discovery and relationship to the"veil" is not born overnight and introduces the sense that double consciousness is malleable. This speaks to the dynamic nature of double consciousness within the person and the possibility for change in perspective or growth over time in regards to race and class consciousness and its intertwinement (Ciccariello-Maher, 2009). The veil represents systemic barriers both racial and economic that subjugated groups see clearly through proximity and experience, while racializing or hegemonic groups can not. For Black Americans double consciousness often seems to stop at race or culture.

Expanding double consciousness as Du Bois did in his later work calls for a global consciousness. The struggle and warring within the souls of Black folk could speak to the strivings and interests of subjugated groups of all types in conflict with a dominant "reified, single consciousness" as Mocombe (2009) puts it. A global system of "progress" that is not solely American, Chinese, British, French or Dutch although these nations are benefactors. A complex of institutions, ideologies and power dynamics that benefits select groups through

hierarchical organization. Hierarchical social structures that disenfranchise "others" through discrimination, subjugation and oppression in different forms for the purpose of economic exploitation. This privileges wealthy, straight, White, males and sets the standard for which female, non-gender conforming, racial minorities, working class, special needs and economically disadvantaged people of all skin types are measured and constantly measure themselves against. This seems to ensure a small resource rich population at the top (regardless of skin type) and an exploited and poor population with limited access at the bottom who occupy the other side of a veil based on economic access not totally unlike Du Bois veil describing the color line.

Hegemonic culture and values are relevant to subjugated groups as far as division and intra-group tension. Agents within subjugated groups (re)-present the same organizational structure within these subjugated groups through their own intersectional social positions (cis-male, middle class, wealthy, able-bodied, e.t.c.) (Mocombe, 2009). In Black Americans, (re)-presentation of the hegemonic culture is apparent in intra-racial tensions in the form of class, hierarchy, patriarchy, racism (colorism), and values that perpetuate competition in the spirit of individual and material gains. Race plays a part as evidenced by the tension that Black millennials feel in relation to whiteness but economic survival is just as much a factor in the strivings of individuals. The root of the divisions and schisms of which all people share a relative position to, and potentially experience double consciousness in relation to.

The tension and sense of "twoness" found in Black millennials relative to the values associated with the American Dream and interaction with hegemonic culture through white people and hegemonic institutions speak to the continued relevance of double consciousness as sociological theory. Du Bois and others spoke of the "Negro Problem" and the "color line" in the early 20th century and "problem" populations persist in the 21st century (Du Bois 1903). The

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Black American was represented as a problem from the Reconstruction era through to the 1960's, and the migrant or "illegal" immigrant from the global south represents this "problem" for the hegemonic social order in the present day. In 2023, Black Americans are still grappling with the cultural environment to assert their own sense of who they are, live to honor that sense of self, and survive economically at the same time. Although double consciousness is often interpreted racially and culturally, this struggle transcends race. There is not just a struggle between the consciousness and strivings of Black people and the dominant culture (White people, the United States, Eurocentrism etc). That accounts for some but not all of the equation.

In 2023, Black millennials saw capitalism and economic striving as well as White supremacy when they looked through the veil at American values. Despite the horrors of slavery, and the struggles for recognized personhood that still persist in the responses of the participants of this study, Black Americans in particular have made progress, although painful and at great cost. With the "racial reckoning" following the death of George Floyd in 2020, there has been more focus on identity, race and many of the systemic problems in the United States. Smartphones now capture the consequences for violating"stipulations" whether it be death by traffic stop or a child being forced to cut his "locs" to participate in a wrestling match. The veil is made visible and legible to all who are willing to look and listen. These issues have been understood long before, through experience in the "Black community" and other minority communities, but lost in translation or ignored and unheard in the dominant consciousness.

Whether we as Black Americans know the extent of our position and participation in the world capitalist system or not, there is "real knowledge" in the experience of the "Black community" and our attempts to navigate life behind the veil. Our second sight, a gift and a frustration. A unique ability to see America for what it truly is when America can not, or refuses

to realize the potential for greatness that "others" have repeatedly attempted to call forth within it. Greatness which is still possible but not yet realized. This study attempts to shed light on the possibilities and the importance in recognizing where our strivings come from as a racialized people. Questions we might ask ourselves going forward is who benefits in the end from our strivings? Is the scope of our imagination for a better world limited to our own success? As Black Americans we can see the veil but are we able to see others affected? We might imagine what could be when those that "know" are able to see their position in the world and use it to amplify the voices of those who are still unheard.

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APPENDIX A: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

This is a guide for a conversational style, semi-structured interview. The main questions or ideas are numbered and serve to guide the focus of the interview.

Questions indicated with a letter (a, b ,c or i, ii, iii etc) are sub questions or possible follow up questions. They may or may not be included depending on the context or the nature of the response.

1. Tell me about yourself?

   a. Where are you from? Where did you grow up? How was it living there? How would you describe yourself or how do you think your friends and family would describe you?

2. What were some of the values that you learned growing up?

   a. Would you describe the values you were raised on as American values or something different? If from a different country ask about values in relation to the country they are from?

   b. What would you say those values are rooted in -race/Blackness, religion, where you were from?

3. What do you think American values are? - You can use words, phrases, examples or whatever else comes to mind.

   a. Have those values changed? If so, what do you think is responsible for those changes?

   b. Are American values, Christian values?

      c. Are they similar?

4. Do you think that there are values unique to. Black people ?

5. Do you have to have a good work ethic to be successful in the U.S.?

      a. In America is having a good work ethic smart or necessary?

      b. What is hard work to you?

      c. Can you be successful without working hard?

6. Should rich/wealthy people be able to keep all of their wealth or should they be required to redistribute it?

7. Should people in the U.S. who choose not to work and are able-bodied be given free or reduced housing, education, healthcare, food?

      a. Do they have a right to these things?

8. How would you define self-sufficiency?

      a. What do you need to be successful/self-sufficient?

      b. Does being self-sufficient mean that you are independent?

      c. Is being self-sufficient necessary to live a good life?

      d. If someone receives assistance from family members or friends does that count as self-sufficient?

      e. If someone receives assistance from the government does that count as being self-sufficient?

      f. Name 5 words or items that come to mind in relation to the word "self-sufficiency"

            i. Why? If you'd like to talk more about your choices, feel free?

9. What do you think of the idea of being a "self-made" success (someone becoming successful on their own)?

10. What does success look like to you?

    a. Does your view match American cultures view of success?

11. Do most people have a fair chance of being successful in America?

    a. What does it take to be successful in the United States?

12. How do you know that someone is successful in the United States?

    a. Can you have success without physical/material means

13. What is more important: The success of an individual person or the success of a group?

    a. Does your answer reflect your own opinion or do you think this is culturally American?

        i. If the group is more important then are there specific groups that you feel you are invested in or wanting to see succeed?

14. How do you define community?

15. Is a college education (4 year degree) necessary for a successful life (education)?

    a. Is a college education the best type of education? Is it the most valuable type of education you can have?

16. What are some of the main problems facing Black people in America, currently?

    a. Who or what is responsible for those issues? What is the cause?

    b. Do you feel an obligation or duty to help or get involved in those issues?

    c. What do you think would help those issues?

17. Do you think that there is division among Black people?

a. How do you view the Black community, what is Blackness in the US? (Nation,

    race)

18. Is culture an issue in the Black community?

19. Do you perceive any major differences between Black people in the United States?

20. Do you feel that you have to change the way you act around White people?

    a. If so, how?

    b. Why?

21. Do you feel you have to change the way you act around Black people?

22. If you bought property, what would your long term goals/plans for the property be? If

    you currently own property would you be comfortable sharing your current long term

    goals?

    a. How do you feel about individuals owning multiple properties?

23. Should homeless people be able to occupy and live in public spaces like parks without

    threat of relocation or arrest?

24. Do you have a preference between renting or owning? Is one better?

25. Scenario: A dense apartment complex is going to be built next to your neighborhood.

    How do you feel this affects you?

26. Would you rather have: no restraints, barriers or obstacles or unlimited choices/ options?

27. Should people be given more responsibility over their lives or should the government

    play a bigger role?

28. What kind of things should the government stay out of? What kind of things should they

    be more involved in?

APPENDIX B: PRE-SCREEN SURVEY

Screening Survey

ID # (For PI/Researcher): _____

1. Were you born between the years 1981 and 1996?

    a. Yes

    b. No (If you selected "No", you do not have to continue the survey)

2. What is your age?

3. Do you identify as any of the following: African American Descendant of Slavery

    (ADOS), African American, Black?

    a. Yes

    b. No (If you selected "No", you do not have to continue the survey)

4. Do you live or work around the Durham/Raleigh/Chapel Hill area?

    a. Yes

    b. No (If you selected "No", you do not have to continue the survey)

5. How long have you lived in:

    a. Durham _____

    b. Raleigh _____

    c. Chapel-Hill _____

    d. The United States _____

    e. N/A (If you selected "N/A", you do not have to continue the survey)

6. Do you consider yourself religious or spiritual?

    a. Yes

    b. No

7. What religion most closely reflects your spiritual/religious belief system (Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Daoism, etc)?

    a. Religion:_____

    _____

    b. Other (example - Atheist, Agnostic):

    _____

8. What is your sex?

    a. Male

    b. Female

9. What is your gender identity (woman, man, transgender, non-binary, etc)

    a. _____

10. Indicate the highest level of education obtained:

    a. High School Diploma

    b. 2 year Associate's Degree

    c. 4 year College/University Degree

    d. Graduate Degree

    e. Other (Certificate, etc) _____

11. Yearly Income Range (Individual)

    a. $0 - $25,000/year

    b. $25,000 - $50,000/year

    c. $50,000 - $75,000/year

    d. $75,000 - $100,000/year

    e. $100,000+/year

12. Yearly Income Range (Household)

    a. $0 - $25,000   Household Size #:_____

    b. $25,000 - $50,000

    c. $50,000 - $75,000

    d. $75,000 - $100,000

    e. $100,000+

13. What is your profession?

14. What socioeconomic class would you say you best fit?

    a. Working Class

    b. Middle Class

    c. Upper Class

15. Why did you choose your answer for number 14?

APPENDIX C: RESPONDENT QUOTES

Blackness

Marco: I think people want to think there is but I, I feel like even like your, your well to do

   Black people still have a sense of understanding to the plight of your, of African Americans on

like, the, on the low on the poor end of that spectrum, you know, they recognize, like, the

struggle that they're maybe them or their, their predecessors had to go through to get out of such

a situation.

Systems

Huey/Working Class/Male: Poverty….. everybody in poverty everybody that's poor is a nigga

and I aint talking about face value more systematically (C). You know what I'm saying? The rich

stay rich the poor stay poor. That's how they look at everybody so it's not that we are nigga by

color its systematic (C).

Ryan/Working Class/Male: I just don't believe in any form of these governments that they've set

up then so be it. But yeah, that's why I can't bind to no American systems, the judicial systems,

presidential system elections, man, I just don't support none of it. We need to, you know, in my

opinion, it needs to be all torn down and just rebuilt (C). So as far as American values, like I

said, there is no justice, there is no honor. There's no nothing in the eyes of America. We just a

land of savages (C).

Division

Dondria/Hybrid/Female: "People say that, like Black men are the White people of Black people

because of like, their…. the oppression that comes from Black men, is not necessarily the fault of

Black men but it comes from the close knit oppression that comes from White people (A). If you

listen to straight Black men talk about people in the LGBTQ communities, about the things that

they shouldn't have, or about like their lifestyles and all kinds of stuff like that. It's identical to the rhetoric that goes on about….. that White people have about Black people (A).

Carlos/Working Class/Male: A lot of whatever race quote unquote white people is. I don't even know what else we posed to call em besides Caucasian or whatever, you know, there's been a lot of incidents where they discriminate against other people of other races, which, you know, like, it's just crazy that they feel like it's okay, or was taught that yet, don't make the conscious decision and feel like maybe that's not okay. And that be the basis of a lot of stuff that carry over into America, politics, you know, and cultural stuff. Even fashion, which is pointless you feel me but we can't stop that. I don't know how that works.

Stipulations

Carlos/Working Class: "Nah, sometimes maybe but the only reason I say that is because they jump to different extremes you feel me like it'll be some some some nonchalant, not serious stuff going on you know they're gonna resort to calling the police or anything like that (A)

Appearance

Jill/Working Class: "I don't care what other people think of me, per se, it's just more of you know, the way you talk in the professional world that you have to be like, you know, keep a professional mind, you know, dress and talk a certain way whereas a turban is not really being professional (A)(B). Although it's comfortable for me, and it's like because my hair is long and you know, kind of heavy so pinning it up is kind of more convenience for me (B), but um.. and a lot of workplaces now, I don't I don't recall about this job because I haven't actually looked at that inside the handbook. I didn't see anything in the handbook about having anything on your head, but most jobs that I've had, that's something that they don't allow."

Tia:And so, like, hair is a big thing. I remember when I started this job, I had box braids, or I was getting box braids and I was like, oh, like, I'm gonna have these box braids, my first week on the job. But like, I have my hair pulled back in my interview, like, I don't want to go to blonde like, "I don't wanna, I don't want to scare them away." It's like, "Who's this person that we interviewed and then hired?" And so I mean, that was anxiety like, how am I gonna be perceived in my first week with these braids? When I'm traveling for client meetings, it's you know, how am I matching the perception that I give off in virtual meetings versus in person? Like, how am I dressing?