Double Consciousness

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ABSTRACT

According to W.E.B. Du Bois (1903), double consciousness is looking at one's self through the eyes of another who views you with amused contempt and disdain. This study examines Du Bois' (1903) theory of double consciousness within the context of how African Americans see themselves through the eyes of European Americans, who view them with amused contempt and disdain, thus, resulting in the concept of double consciousness. In search of answers that may help to reverse some of the negative effects of double consciousness, the researcher developed a theoretical model representing Oneness. The theoretical model that was created as a result of this research shows multiple elements leading to the path to oneness. The research in this paper revealed that the need for a rich cultural heritage is a key element in regaining oneness.

INTRODUCTION

This study is being conducted in hopes that a deeper understanding will be developed from the conceptualization of Du Bois (1903) and from the sharing of his scholarly work with the world in the form of “The Souls of Black Folk”, as it investigates double consciousness. As a result of three centuries of slavery, double consciousness was developed by African Americans as an attempt to gain resources and to eliminate any past prejudices by mainstream culture. Double consciousness is the conscious splitting of the inner self in an attempt to create a character that would be accepted into mainstream society. Du Bois (1903, 3) defines double consciousness as “this sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of another.” This definition implies that a stripping of one's self identity has taken place and that replacement information has been internalized by African Americans. The type of replacement information referred to includes, but is not limited to: English philosophy that equates the color black to “foul, dark or dirty in purpose, malignant, sinister and wicked”, which is very much so within the limits of miseducation (Takaki 1993, 50). The miseducation goes even further by describing Africans as beastly without religion, God or law and that their dark skin makes them devil's incarnate (Takaki 1993). The impact of miseducation resulted in the loss of African generational heritage, self-identity, and the development of double consciousness (Du Bois 1903). Heritage/culture is in reference to the relationship between people rather than their physical appearance.
Double consciousness refers to the state of being cognizant of two experiences that impact life. Those experiences are the African characteristics on the one hand, and the American characteristics on the other with the hope that both will merge to create a union that is better than the experience that each provides as a single unit (Du Bois 1903, 4). The expectation for this cultural group goes beyond surviving to having the desire to thrive in a world that does not always welcome them with opportunities (11). When the African American realized no gain after the signing of the emancipation proclamation, he appeared to be unproductive, weak, and without power. Du Bois (1903, 4) attributes this to the contradiction of double aims (p 4). Dialogue on the issue of double consciousness is important because this failed strategy was a pivotal point and should be viewed as a stepping stone, not the end. Du Bois (1903) wrote that a dim feeling in African Americans was rising and making them feel that to gain a footing in society “they must be themselves and not another” to regain their true self-identity.

Civil conditions for African Americans have improved since The Civil Rights Act of 1964. No one is dragging African Americans out of their homes and committing horrendous crimes against them as a matter of business as usual. African Americans can buy homes virtually in any neighborhood. Funds are made available for everyone to attend schools of higher learning and the FAFSA application is not biased. African Americans are able to open their own businesses at will and employ people of their choice. Cultural bashing is not considered business as usual in today’s political environment. African Americans are at liberty to participate in religion as they see fit and some even incorporate religion with politics. There are many qualified African American instructors that are employed to teach. The improvement is inspiring but there is still much work to be done before an egalitarian society can be realized. In a journal article entitled “Education and Civil Rights” the importance of education is discussed in a manner that does not address the rich cultural aspects of education during early childhood. Education as we know it today is not enough to remedy the effect of double consciousness. It is merely a parting of information (Woodson 2005).

The discourse between African Americans is a reflection of internalizing the overwhelming negative influence by mainstream society (Du Bois 1903; Banks 1973; Frazier 1988). Influence about race as projected through mass media and the educational process caused many African Americans to internalize self-hatred and give up their culture (Banks 1973). This is the very thing that needs to be eliminated within the group; culture is an important element in reversing the effects of double consciousness (Du Bois 1903). To gain respect, the African American must learn to “be themselves not another” and this means actively seeking education that is wholesome, an education that leads to self-determination (Du Bois 1903, 8). Self-determination means the ability to
work and produce economic stability as a group and a cordial social order for generations to come.

Research on the idea of double consciousness is important because statistics reveal a vast disparity in unemployment as an ongoing process. This is directly related to the sustaining of double consciousness because double consciousness was developed as a method to acquiring resources. During the civil rights era, many important gains were acquired, but unemployment statistics for African Americans have not improved. For example, according to CNN Money (Fox 2012), African American unemployment rates have been consistently twice that of European Americans between January 2007 and June 2012. When unemployment for European Americans was 4.2%, it was 7.9% for African Americans. When it rose to 7.4% for European Americans, it rose to 14.4% for African Americans.

Going back even further, unemployment rates for African Americans have doubled that of European Americans since 1960, the dawning of the civil rights era. In an article on the crisis of African American unemployment (Algernon 2011), reference is given to the unemployment rate of African Americans when compared to European Americans. Further research is needed to determine the disparity in quality of jobs that are attained by African Americans. In this investigation, consideration is given to the difference in political climate of African Americans between 1903 and present. Therefore, in view of the fact that unemployment rates may be near 8% for African Americans, this also means the employment rate is a substantial difference of 92%, following emancipation when few to no jobs were available for African Americans in northern states and only menial jobs were available in the South.

In consideration of African Americans’ mindset of today and in relation to double consciousness as defined by Du Bois (1903), this author hopes to disclose any semblance of information that may lead to oneness. Oneness is an element of the character that Du Bois (1903) considered powerful. In discussing the power of Booker T. Washington, Du Bois (1903) spoke of Washington’s power through “singleness of vision and oneness of his age” without mention of culture, but it may be implied within the structure of oneness. In other words, it is not clear if Du Bois is referencing Washington’s cultural awareness in conjunction with his business prowess. Nevertheless, Booker T. Washington was one of the most powerful men of his day and Du Bois defines his power as oneness in spite of their differences. And, Du Bois (1903) makes it clear throughout his works that cultural awareness is an important element in the building of self-esteem and self-awareness.

According to Du Bois (1903), the three elements of work, culture, and liberty, when used simultaneously make up the formula that leads to complete freedom. History, as a matter of ethical practice should be recorded with accuracy so that culture may be passed truthfully from generation to generation. Altered or
diminished history lessens the reader’s information base. To deny one’s historical information base, may result in psychological injury (Banks 1973). Cultural Studies should be taught as a matter of course. Cultural Studies research should not be about just writing, it should reflect the author’s concern for an improved society and governing bodies by reporting past truths, according to the evidence.

**Literature Review**

Dr. William Edward Burghardt Du Bois was a historical writer and political motivator for Africans of the Diaspora and for social justice worldwide. His one hundred eleven year old account of the political atmosphere of African Americans when “Souls of Black Folk” was published in 1903 is applicable today because double consciousness still exists and is still widespread (Ciccariello-Maher 2009). Du Bois (1903) was a social scientist who investigated the political/economic/social structure of his environment and came to the conclusion that African Americans’ minds have been strongly influenced after hundreds of years of abuse. Du Bois (1903, 2) begins by asking the question “how does it feel to be a problem?” which set the stage for an enormous amount of dialogue. He goes on to describe it as like a feeling of not being acknowledged as a human being of equal standing in society. In Du Bois’ (1903) words, it seemed like being behind a “veil”, of not being seen or acknowledged by mainstream society, a type of non-existence unless needed for service of the dominant culture. Du Bois’ (1903) first encounter with racism was from a peer in early childhood who shed light on the fact that two worlds exist based on skin color. Skin color is the foundation that the concept of race is built on. Europeans created racism to create economic advantage (Banks 1973). The concept of race is a social construct for economic advantage for one group and in turn creating economic hardships for many others (Mosupyoe and Ramose 2011). The concept of race played an important role in the development of double consciousness (Vincent 1973). In other words, if a person begins to believe another’s definition of who they are and what their history is, then the believer becomes imprisoned in a world with no self-identity, which is in direct conflict with finding oneness.

Colonialism strips the colonized of group identity, cultural heritage, language, and any semblance of who they were before crusader presence (Perinbam 1982). According to Banks (1973), taking over the body and mind of a person leaves that person void of any worthy information. Replacement knowledge is controlled by the ruling class, and therefore no useful information comes forward for those excluded from mainstream society. As a result of cultural stripping, mental and physical injury, and conflict; double consciousness is born, and a mental slavery ensues. Du Bois (1903, 182) states that a “truer self-knowledge” is the one thing that has been an ongoing process for African Americans and for many years was retained through folklore and “animal stories”. Animal stories are used to create visions of
African history and culture. For example, “the lion is the protector of the pride”, as you must be the protector of the community in which you belong. This would be part of the educational process of an adolescent male approaching manhood at about the age of twelve. In an article entitled “John Henrik Clarke: Historian, Scholar, and Teacher”, one of Clarke’s most influential statements for African Americans and the world is recorded. Here, Clark reminds us that keeping history in its true perspective is important; he writes, “history is a clock that people use to tell their time of day”, and “It is a compass that people use to locate themselves on the map of human geography”. This means that we should look to African American scholars and compare their versions of history to other versions of history. African Americans who reject the importance of learning clear, concise histories of Africa before outside intervention may suppress the political growth of African Americans for generations to come (Horne and Young 2001).

Three hundred years of forced labor, emancipation, and being ostracized from mainstream society, left the freedman in a precarious situation. The problem with being emancipated and not having government support until recovery could be realized was defenselessness against racist doctrines. The Freedmen Bureau was shut down within a five-year period after emancipation; this led to cultural bashing in many Southern states and some Northern states (Frazier 1988). African Americans had to find a way to pay the bills and create stability in their daily lives. During this era Booker T. Washington gained enormous financial support from Southern planter-class residents because of his agreement to surrender political aspirations for African Americans. He had little support from African Americans of the time, but Southern land owners were attracted to Washington’s theory of African Americans surrendering political aspirations and becoming strictly a hands-on work force. Southern land owners provided huge financial support for Washington’s theory (Du Bois 1903). Although Du Bois (1903) believed in the internal remaking of society without violence, he drew the line and defended his position that African Americans should not surrender political aspirations in their search for work, as Booker T. Washington promoted. Du Bois (1903) believed that Washington’s strategy for economic stability would obstruct African Americans’ political aspirations for an undetermined amount of time and would add fuel to the negative effects of double consciousness. Freedom, citizenship, and suffrage had not worked, and the bleak hope for education had not yet been realized. There were few exceptions to the rule in 1903. African Americans who had been exposed to and influenced by a system of slavery and racial stratification needed to be mentally replenished with new ideals (Du Bois 1903) because the door to prosperity had been closed abruptly.

Du Bois (1903) describes his encounters with Europeans as an uncomfortable experience, almost as if some Europeans acted awkward, knowing the injury imposed on African Americans. In Du Bois’ day, one might hear, “I know an
excellent colored man”. Today that would mean that “one of my closest friends is black”. Another example is that in 1903, “Southern outrages make their blood boil” might be translated into, “I know how you feel” in modern times. The injury imposed on African Americans through slavery was devastating, but the idea of reparation for the African American descendant has been consistently denied. The door to prosperity being closed lead to double consciousness becoming the catalyst of hope for equality in the late 19th century. The influence of racist practices that caused double consciousness has been a negative input for African Americans and served no political advantage (Banks 1973). In a CNN Time article (1997), President Clinton acknowledges that discrimination, past and present is a problem for African Americans, but Clinton does not offer a concrete plan to eradicate the problem. He makes clear that today’s African Americans are so far removed from slavery that it would be too difficult to compensate them all.

According to Banks (1973), early childhood education is the critical point for encouraging a student to grow in a positive, productive direction. The child must learn that in order to be successful in the social order of things, cultural heritage must be surrendered, and a complete remaking of identity must be completed before induction into middle class America (Banks 1973). To deny cultural heritage in early childhood education is to alter history. When policies are implemented that systematically omit or change history in a profound way, history becomes fiction, and racist practices do not diminish (Banks 1973). Denial of heritage alters a person’s personality and causes them to detach from their family history; “either they must betray family and heritage or they must settle for socioeconomic failure”, which leaves the student with two choices that are most undesirable (14). Observable indicators of political/economic/social prejudices, such as unemployment rates, disparity in median wealth, and institutional racism, illustrate the difficult struggle for African Americans in the pursuit of equality. If the healing process from generational slavery is not addressed in a rational, balanced way, African Americans may be stagnated politically and indefinitely. Political stagnation means that economic planning and development, correct historical education, youth intervention against criminal behavior on the macro level, and the spiritual connection of people in general has not begun (Williams 1987). Correct history of African Americans taught in early childhood appears to be one of the main missing links in reversing the negative effects of double consciousness. Moore (2005, 757) states it in a clear and concise manner “when history is read correctly, double consciousness is not needed” which signifies the importance of epistemological limits when recording history.

Du Bois (1903) goes on to explain his findings that suggest African Americans had not made any significant political improvement in the forty years since emancipation as a result of being ostracized by society. As a result of not being accepted into mainstream society and being denied resources, double
consciousness was developed as a strategy to prosper and alleviate the slave stigma (Du Bois 1903). The very definition of double consciousness suggests that self-awareness and self-determination have been lost or compromised. Self-awareness and self-determination may be realized through African Americans becoming fully aware of their potential through cultural retention (Banks 1973). The type of culture must be of a rich nature that provides insight that is supported by evidence into the distant past of African Americans.

Du Bois (1903) also explores the issues of quackery and demagogy of the Negro minister, as it applies to the sustaining of double consciousness in the sense of a lowly task. According to Frazier (1988), Western Christianity is directly related to controlling people in relation to the slave trade. Western society has used Christianity to make merchandise of people, namely Africans. History based on evidence and archeological finds are not taught as a matter of Christian doctrine, whether it be Catholic, Protestant, or Methodist; rather beating slaves until little life remains in the body is the history of Christianity in relation to Africans (Frazier 1988). American missionaries are sent to convert so-called heathens while subjecting men, women and children of African descent to the most horrific crimes known to mankind (Frazier 1988). These religious concepts are directly related to the sustaining of double consciousness in that they are oppressive conditions that exclude prosperity and happiness. Prosperity and happiness is another way to say work, culture, and liberty, qualities that Du Bois (1903) defines as the three key elements to finding oneness of purpose that leads to freedom. African American ministers teach the doctrines of Christianity, which have historically been involved in the “The Atlantic Slave Trade” (Frazier 1988). The rebellious fugitive slave gave African American religion new meaning with liberation at the forefront of their doctrine (Frazier 1988). At the onset of colonizing America, Shakespeare was a major source of public influence for western expansion. His plays The Tempest and Stephano portrayed indigenous people of America as savages and unworthy of owning land and living in peace (Takaki 1993). In the present day, newspapers and public broadcasts replaced posters and plays for creating public opinion. Mass media reigns with absolute power in the persuasion of public opinion. This widespread control over public opinion suppressed the individual efforts of the rebellious fugitive slave who began churches with politics as part of their agenda.

According to Karenga (2008) in an article titled, “The Moral Anthropology of Marcus Garvey”; he discusses the concept of “African American Political Thought” in view of problems that govern people of ancient times and in today’s world about humanitarian issues and African liberation worldwide. Garvey’s anti Judeo-Christian analysis of history is at the core of this scholarly work. Black Nationalism, whom Garvey is the father of, is intent on shedding light on the welfare and prosperity of African folk; this is a direct line of defense against
double consciousness (Karenga 2008). Garvey’s ideas of Black Nationalism were a result of direct activism and engagement in defense against racist doctrines and to invalidate the implementation of those doctrines (Karenga 2008). It should be noted that many assaults against Africans were a result of recorded guidelines and European hegemony that demands the power to control African lives in a way that benefits Europeans most; free labor and free resources (Karenga 2008, 171). Garvey holds steadfast that “The Power that holds Africa is not divine” and can be undone. This observation clearly takes the Judeo-Christian belief systems out of the equation which paves the way for critical thinking. The development of critical thinking is a necessary element in the process of merging the two aspects of double consciousness. Critical thinking is the individual ability to absorb information and use it in a productive, rational, and reasonable way.

Dr. Du Bois spent most of his life courageously trying to mitigate social injustices brought about by prejudices and discrimination based on skin color. One of his most notable contributions to society, post slavery, is encouragement of self-determination across cultural lines. Du Bois (1903) believed in a culturally rich education and an internal remaking of governing bodies as a recovery strategy from double consciousness. Du Bois (1903) strongly suggests that a careful study of historical events worldwide will help to reduce the level of stress that racist practices create (Horne and Young 2001). He believed that the only way an egalitarian society may be realized is through African Americans examining and fixing the divided character through true world history and a critical discourse analysis of African American’s successes, stagnations and failures since emancipation. The type of history needed is the accurate experiences of Africans before crusader wars.

Du Bois (1903) asserts that the development of double consciousness by African Americans was an attempt to bring an end to striving, thus allowing for the use of energy in a more productive manner. Productive manner means living a life that is enshrined with gainful “work, culture, and liberty”; the three must be utilized simultaneously to achieve this aim for complete freedom (Du Bois 1973, 11). A practical definition of these three themes may be helpful in the search oneness.

Work

Within three years after emancipation, the Freedmen Bureau was established as leverage for African Americans to regain life skills needed to thrive in a world without biased laws and protocols that restrained the group to subservient roles. During early reconstruction after the civil war, freed men experienced high hopes of re-gaining footing on the world stage (Du Bois 1903). The Freedmen Bureau was established by the act of 1866 and served the freed man in many aspects (Du Bois 1903). The Bureau made laws and enforced them, defined and punished
crime with military force and sought to find a balance in the new order. The Bureau was responsible for selling and re-distributing land in the South, setting up schools and medical treatment accommodations, and providing food in the South (Du Bois 1903). However the Freedmen Bureau was short lived and did not have sufficient amount of time nor personnel to restore to full form all that had been lost by African Americans. After Lincoln’s assassination and the swearing in of Johnson, the Bureau evolved to a point of corruption. In one single day “all the hard earned money of the freedman disappeared” with the crash of the Freedmen’s Bank (Du Bois 1903, 36). Du Bois (1903) stated that a debriefing period should have followed slavery in order for the freed man to regain some sense of mental balance which may have prevented the strategy of double consciousness. According to Du Bois (1903) “a handicapped people should not be asked to race with the world, but given time to work out their own social problems” (Du Bois 1903 9). This cannot be done without government approval and support.

After emancipation, employment opportunities for African Americans were less abundant in the North than those in the South (Frazier 1988). Oppressive conditions were blatant in the South. African Americans were only allowed to do certain kinds of work, usually work that no one else wanted (Frazier 1988). African Americans in the South knew what jobs to apply for and which jobs they could get (i.e., picking cotton). Those in the North were in competition for jobs with immigrant populations of European descent (Frazier 1988). Although they were able to get work of some sort, those in the South had social boundaries that the so-called freed men dared not cross on threat of life and limb (Frazier 1988).

The problem with this type of work is that it was not productive for the needs of the family. It was common practice immediately following emancipation to hire the freed man and refuse to pay a fair wage or resort to paying no wage at all (Shaw 2013). Therefore the freed men in the North and South were deliberately cast into slave-like conditions after emancipation (Frazier 1988). The liberal Republican Party of 1877 became indifferent to Black political aspirations and looked the other way as the White south re-gained free reign to deal with African Americans as they chose (Frazier 1988). Mississippi was the first southern state to legally restrain Africans Americans from suffrage through violence and intimidation (Frazier 1988).

The problem in the North was that trade unions would not accept African Americans, which forced them into unskilled or domestic labor or no labor (Frazier 1988). With the great migration of the Irish to America, jobs became even less accessible for African Americans, even unskilled jobs. This conflict in the job market led to the bloody Draft Riots in 1863, in New York City, when Irish hoodlums beat, burned and destroyed the homes of African Americans at random (Frazier 1988). It is common practice in the job market of today to hire African
Americans last and all others first through the passing of jobs through inheritance and endogamous practices (Banks 1973). This information is consistent with evidence on unemployment rates presented earlier in this article.

The hope for a happy, prosperous life immediately following emancipation was short lived due to discontinued funding of the Freedmen’s Bureau in 1870 (Frazier 1988). A lack of funding caused the Freedmen’s Bureau in 1870 to withdraw much needed support for African Americans, thus causing them to regress into a slave-like state of being (Frazier 1988). Land that was granted by the Freedmen’s Bureau to African Americans was taken back, and slavery, in the form of share cropping ensued (Frazier 1988). In 1883, courts ruled the Civil Rights Act of 1875 unconstitutional, which in effect gave the green light for discrimination (Frazier 1988). There was little difference between sharecropping and slavery (Takaki 1993). In 1870 the Freedmen’s Bureau closed, and the 15th amendment became the hope (Du Bois 1903).

Soon after reconstruction failed, empirical studies by Du Bois (1903) revealed that two worlds existed in the same space; those who lived in the wallows of prosperity and those who lived at the very bottom of suffering; even though they were both born into a land of plenty, it would seem logical that all would prosper equally. Quite to the contrary, it led the Negro to plunder in the quest for self-determination by having to choose between the divided inner self; i.e., one attempting to live up to the standards of those who hate and oppress and the other suffering from the void of no genuine identity, both as a direct result of the caste system based on race (Cameron-Wedding and Mosupyoe 2008). The concept of race appears to be an intricate part of sustaining the idea of double consciousness and hindering the recovery process of African Americans in their quest for meaningful work.

It is important that African Americans learn how to generate revenue for themselves to eliminate the effects of rejection by mainstream society. A college degree may help but is not absolutely necessary in finding a niche for income. For example, a great sandwich sold in the right location may provide enough income to support a family in today’s world and has even made some millionaires. Beauty supplies have always been a great seller in the African American community. Sarah Breedlove better known as Madam C.J. Walker was a self-made millionaire in late 1800s who manufactured and sold African American beauty supplies (Grimm 2002). African Americans must become innovative and creative in basic skills that lead to independence. Those that are career and trade bound should learn according to their aspirations but must not detach from their humble beginnings and use their achievements to enhance the political status of African Americans (Du Bois 1903).
Rich Cultural Heritage

Du Bois recognized a valuable connection between African Americans and Africa, according to Horne and Young (2001). According to Du Bois (1903), a rich cultural heritage is an important element for the development of self-awareness. Rich cultural heritage refers to the entire scope of a group's background, instead of an imposed starting point like slavery. The importance of correct history about Africans from an historical viewpoint is relative to recovery from double consciousness and to finding oneness. African Americans need to be taught the history of Africa before slavery in the same light as the “a twice told tale, that the white world teaches Greek to his own flesh and blood” (Du Bois 1903) to give African Americans a sense of self-esteem from early childhood. A rich cultural heritage means African Americans learning their ancestral contributions to society as far back as the evidence supports. Woodson (2005) affirms that African Americans have the same rich history enshrouded with great accomplishment, contributions to society, and defeats as everyone else when history is presented in truth.

The 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments to the constitution were important constitutional transitions for African Americans but did not remedy the psychological comparison of dark skin with evil. The 13th amendment (1865) freed the African slave and put him/her in a position that many European Americans perceived as a threat to job security despite the fact that African Americans had been culturally bashed for centuries. These amendments served little to no purpose in 1903. When the Freedmen Bureau collapsed and no longer was allowed to give much needed support and protection to the freed slave, social conditions reached an all-time low for African Americans (Du Bois 1903). In addition to not being allowed to use skills in a manner that would provide for their families, they were constantly under attack by racial extremists (Frazier 1988); there was no time for cultural regrouping and cultural remaking. The 15th amendment (1870) was like pouring gasoline on a fire, racial hatred for African Americans by many European Americans became more intense and more detrimental because of a perceived threat by the vote (Frazier 1988). The vote was suppressed by violent influence upon the voters, and African Americans had to resort to other strategies like double consciousness, in an attempt at equality (Du Bois 1903). And so, in the midst of much suffering, consideration was not afforded to African Americans in the creating of historical truth that leads to rich cultural heritage.

Du Bois (1903) was a teacher who believed in the Declaration of Independence and actively sought its enforcement. An indirect method of enforcement was educating African Americans to the detrimental effects of colonizing people (Horne and Young 2001) and its impact in causing double consciousness to be developed and the cultural heritage of African Americans to be suppressed. The
basic concept that helps to sustain double consciousness is society judging people by skin tone and nothing else (Banks 1973). This powerful spoken and inferred belief system of racism could only be diminished by African Americans becoming aware of the rich culture, raw materials, creation, inventions, and civilizations that Africans sustained for centuries before crusader wars (Horne and Young 2001).

**Liberty**

Du Bois (1903) observed a new platform that African Americans believed necessary to become truly free. Du Bois (1903, 7) wrote that in the following years after 1876, “A new vision began gradually to replace the dream of political power, a powerful movement, the ideal of book learning” is still the hope for African Americans today. These words strongly suggest that suffrage in standing alone for the African American had failed to produce reasonable results toward freedom (Woodson 2005), and therefore, the movement shifted to education. However, today the vote is still a strategy used by African Americans as represented with the election of President Obama. But, the endeavor of book learning gave the freed man a sense of dawning self-consciousness, self-realization, and self-respect (Du Bois 1903). The idea was to gain what the oppressor had that the slave did not have, book learning. However, African Americans found that book learning of the era fanned the flames of racism by teaching that the black face is associated with evil and that the plight of African Americans was hopeless (Woodson 2005). This did not hinder the determination to learn to read, write, and do arithmetic. The aim was to open schools for the freed men and fill them with qualified African American teachers (Du Bois 1903). Schools for African Americans had three serious flaws to overcome which slowed the progress of recovery from slavery and its residual effects of double consciousness. First, the schools were little more than shacks with few, if any supplies and often times had dangerous floors that could prove to be fatal during nap time (Du Bois 1903). Second, qualified educators of African descent who could teach not just the letter but teach a people who had been denied ideals about culture and life itself were too few (Du Bois 1903). Third, and probably the most severe flaw was the problem of the color line (Du Bois 1903). The color line represented being judged and categorized by skin tone and nothing else; the darker the skin, the less the opportunity (Du Bois 1903).

The idea of book learning coupled with rich cultural images was a promising prospect for the African American to gain equality. Du Bois felt it was a great place to begin to regain that which was lost to the African during the slave trade; a great rallying point in the face of colonial wars (Horne and Young 2001). Early on, book learning was a steep, uphill climb, and even if some degree of education was acquired, job opportunities for African Americans of the era were used to create dissension within the group which created internal hatred thus allowing
The ruling class to benefit from cheap labor (Du Bois 1903). The stage for the development of double consciousness was well established.

The ideal of book learning is an ongoing process for African Americans. The type of book learning needed to reverse the negative effects of double consciousness is an interdisciplinary cultural studies curriculum in early childhood education (Banks 1973, 55). Failure to teach children their rich cultural histories leaves the path open for attempting to attach to another culture’s reality. A rich cultural/historical investigation may lead to mitigation of confused thinking about heritage and African contribution to society. Reading about the past in a truthful light supported by evidence may reverse the effects of double consciousness. Historical truths may lead to a more healthy internal self-analysis and oneness.

Fanonian Perspective

Dr. Frantz Fanon (1961) was also a prolific writer whose analysis of the indigenous Algerian’s conflict mirrored that of Du Bois about the African American strife, but with a diverse perspective about resolution. Fanon’s (1961) analysis of the problem with the Algerians was colonization and the remedy was decolonization. Fanon (1961) was steadfast in defining the problems that faced indigenous Algerians and believed “the yardstick of whiteness that devalues black consciousness and results in cultural and psychic genocide” must be reversed to reflect cultural and historic pride as a means of recovery to realigning the character into oneness. Fanon’s (1961) more direct approach was geared toward educating the masses for rejecting the culprit with equal or greater force and for leaving the responsibility of revolution with the masses. Fanon (1961, 2) was clear in his belief that indigenous Algerians could not achieve any degree of liberation through begging administrators of the colonial system for handouts:

“Decolonization, therefore, implies the urgent need to thoroughly challenge the colonial situation” and his position was not negotiable. One similarity between Du Bois (9103) and Fanon (1961) was the fact that colonial rule was at the core of creating double consciousness and that the system of governing needed changing or fixing. During the initial colonial implementation of American government, the founding fathers believed that slavery was a necessary element in Western expansion. History reveals that when governments invade and colonize indigenous people, it is necessary to destroy any semblance of originality in language, culture, lifestyle, leadership and to dehumanize the native to a state of animal excluding them for resources (Kimenyi and Scott 2001). The purpose of establishing colonies is to gain control of precious metals, gems, raw materials and to exploit indigenous people (Horne and Young 2001). Once people of Algeria and America were successfully colonized, double consciousness became a group strategy in an attempt to be accepted by the new mainstream society. In accord with his revolutionary spirit, Fanon quit his job working for the French government to engage in revolutionary activities whose aim was to remove French
rule from Algerian soil (Moore 2005). Like Du Bois (1903), Fanon (1961) argues that finding any semblance of oneness can only be done through education of the masses and perhaps not just any education (Fanon 1961). This means that oneness can only be realized by African Americans through regaining and internalizing the history of Africa before colonialism.

Fanon’s (1961) theoretical framework mirrors Du Bois (1903) in that there was a problem with the Algerians not having equal footing in society. Being viewed and demonized by the new ruling class as absolute evil set the stage for physical and psychological genocide (Du Bois 1961). It is the same set of circumstances that set the stage for the creation of double consciousness in Western society (Takak 1993). Fanon’s (1961) strong inclinations toward rallying the masses to a revolutionary state of mind and action radiates throughout his writings.

**Magsig Analysis**

In consideration of the Master of Arts thesis submitted by Marla Jean Magsig, B.A., University of California, Irvine, Magsig (1995) argues that the Toni Morrison theory about language having the power to destroy or rebuild the body provides an adequate foundation for discussing double consciousness in a manner that seeks remedy. The argument here is that any language that creates hierarchy, results in opposing terms where one term is favorable over the other. For example, the favored terms “white” and “man” as opposed to terms regarded as subservient or lacking such as “black” and “woman” pave the way for destruction of the black body. Magsig (1995) further demonstrates the point by drawing a parallel example of Lincoln freeing the slaves. Here, Lincoln signed the emancipation proclamation but could not remedy the master narrative that black bodies are subhuman. The attractive force in declaring themselves a part of the established colonizers for incoming Europeans to North America was skin tone and nothing more. Demonizing of the word black and then relating it to Africans has been instrumental in the loss of self-identity and the development of double consciousness.

Restoring African Americans individual and cultural self-identity requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses both the depth and breadth of double consciousness. The author’s proposed process to reverse double consciousness is illustrated in [Figure 1] The Theoretical Model of Oneness (Magsig 1995). The model provides a foundational process for the renewal of oneness among African Americans by regaining and internalizing the history of Africa before colonialism. The model is made up of several components of cultural enrichment which contribute to the renewal of Oneness: Rich Cultural Heritage & Knowledge Building, Liberty, Political Power via Suffrage, Critical Thinking & Engagement, Work & Economic Development, Interdisciplinary Education & Practice, Strong
Family Ties, Entrepreneurship, Communication Skills, and Early Childhood Education via Historical Truths.

**Figure 1. Theoretical Model Inspiring Oneness**

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**Limitations**

A limitation that this writer encountered was not enough time to further explore and analyze additional works from W.E.B. Du Bois concerning double consciousness. This researcher was not able to expand the reading to incorporate more modern day, relevant works, journals, and articles, so the scope of the model may be limited. With more time allotted, a comparative case study could have been conducted comparing Du Bois’s theory of double consciousness in relation to the current political and social thought of African Americans. Another limitation could be researcher bias because of the writer’s African American cultural and historical experiences.

**Implications and Future Research**

Future research should include interviews with African Americans who have studied their history from an Afrocentric perspective and understand the rich
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culture that existed prior to European intervention and those that have relied on school curriculum written from a European perspective. Also, developing a survey that allows people to define their perspective of oneness from their own experiences and designing questions that will help determine how external factors contribute to a person’s sense of oneness.

Conclusion

When people are deceived as to their origin and historical background, it creates a vacuum that only the truth can fill. According to Du Bois (1903), history written in an ethical straightforward manner that includes all people of the earth is the remedy to distorted stories. True history reveals beauty, strengths, and weaknesses of all cultures and stays within epistemological limits. Without rich cultural heritage, oneness may not be regained, and double consciousness will continue to remain on auto pilot throughout generational lineage.

Double consciousness has not worked in the past, is not working in the present, and is highly unlikely to work in the future. Under the present order of society, African Americans cannot become full-fledged Americans because hegemony remains firmly in place (Moore 2005). Removing skin color from the equation may create an ideal for all people of the world to be acknowledged as human beings with full rights, to grow and prosper without opposition. According to Woodson (2005, 19), to become an egalitarian society, the educational system must not just be the “imparting of information, it must inspire people to live more abundantly”.
References


