PHILOSOPHY AND RACE CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

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Keynote Address: A Thing Called Race

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To President Dr. Carolyn Mahoney, Dr. Ann Harris, Dean of the School of Arts and Letters, Dr. Bruce Ballard, Dr. Laurence Rohrer, Dr. Jeffery Freelin, distinguished guest presenters, other members of the faculty and staff, and of course students-good morning. Thank you for the invitation to attend and present the keynote address for this 3rd Annual Philosophy Conference. I am honored that you have given me this opportunity to discuss a central part of my work.

I begin this address by telling a racist joke. It is a joke that sets the context of what I wish to discuss with you. The joke is by Whoopi Goldberg. Question: Do you know why so many black and brown soldiers were killed during the Vietnam War? Answer: Because every time someone would shout, "Get Down!" black and Latino soldiers would bust a move (dance!).

Many people find the joke funny—or do we? Should we laugh given the imbedded stereotypes in the joke? A greater question to ask is, what is it about race that causes us to be hesitant and reluctant, or openly defiant when speaking about race? The fact is that we who make up this great democratic experiment are constantly race thinking or talking about race. Therefore since the focus of this conference is on the analysis of race and philosophy, I can think of no better way to begin than to ask, what is this thing called race?

Let me be clear: this is not a discussion about racism *per se.* All serious conversation about race will include a discussion of racism, how racism is or is not deeply ingrained in the very institutions and systems that operate in this country, how racism still determines who has access to privilege and power and who does and does not have access, etc. However, *this presentation wants to examine racism another way. Racism, etymologically, is a body of*

knowledge concerning the nature of race. This presentation is an evaluation and examination of our epistemological commitments, our thinking, about race. This presentation will explore what mental images and/or paradigms best describe our conceptual framework for race talk and race thought. Because of the negative baggage associated with the term racism I will instead use racialism(s), a term used by Kwame Anthony Appiah, although I maintain that what we are really doing is engaging in a conversation about different notions regarding the nature of race.

Today, I suggest that there are four concepts of race operating and clashing in this society. Each one vies for dominance and all of them together create the chaotic state of race talk we experience in contemporary American society. The first concept is the concept of *race as a biological manifestation*. In the early days of racial thought and talk, classical racialism was believed to be the correct way of thinking about race. It suggested that every race had a racial essence and that every member of the racial group shared the same racial essence. That essence determined three things about the individuals within the racial group: their intellectual ability, their moral capacity, and their physiology. Under the classical racial conceptual framework one could know every important aspect of a person's character if the racial essence was taken into consideration. Take for example the 'one drop rule.' The one drop rule stated one drop of black blood made a person black. Why? Because, they claimed, that the racial essence of a racial group was contained in the blood of each member of the group. For example if a person is Asian, one can predict that the person is good in math, or if the individual is Black then she will be great at sports—but not in academics, if the person was Latino, then he carried a knife, etc. We are well versed in the stereotypes perpetuated by classical racialism. What is important here is to notice that for classical racialism one's racial essence determines intellectual ability, moral capacity, and physiology. The U.S. Census Bureau still operates by this principle in that it assumes that all

Americans can check their appropriate racial box during a national census. What is important here is to notice that for classical racialism a) everyone has a racial essence; b) a person is aware of her appropriate racial essence and thus her correct racial group; and c) the racial essence of each group determines the intellectual ability, moral capacity, and physiology of every member of the designated group.

The first problem with classical racialism is that if the anthropologists are correct (and I think they are) humanity began in Africa in and around the regions of Kenya. From Africa humans migrated to various parts of the world. You can imagine how disturbing this fact is for the classical racialist. If the first people were African then all of us are descendents of Africa. If we are all descendents of African, then all people share the same essence which makes the establishment of a racial hierarchical invalid. Thus, the hierarchical structures that classical racialism purports are obviously false. The second and perhaps the most important problem with classical racialism is that its history is one full of too many examples that defy racial types classical racialists maintain. George Washington Carver can easily be seen as the Michelangelo of our time. One needs only to watch Oprah Winfrey's attempt to keep time by clapping and the observer will soon realize that all Black people do not have rhythm.

A new form of classical racialism has emerged since the Human Genome Project of 2000. The research, preformed primarily by Nei and Roychoudhury, has led some to believe that there may exist a significant genetic connection to race. What is clear from the research is that of our genetic make-up as human beings 98.1% of our genetic coding is the same. The research also demonstrates that 1.9% of our genetic make-up is different and the difference seems to follow racial groupings as we know them. As a result of the research race specific drugs have emerged as never before. Let me give three examples.

1. If I (as an African American male) have a heart attack the EMS personnel will not give me the usual bi-carbonate injection given to white males. Instead they will give me a solution called BiDil which has a history of being very effective with African American males.
2. Most women of African decent will never get osteoporosis. The early Bovina commercials use to state at the bottom of the advertisement, "This product is for women of Caucasian and Asian descent."
3. The National Bone Marrow Transplant Network lists race as the first category of consideration for donor matches—even before alee count! The claim here is that the statistical chances of a successful match increase significantly when the race of the donor and recipient is taken into consideration.

These examples are just a few among many that have some arguing that there is a connection between race and genetics. Many in the intellectual community want to attribute these differences to diet, geography and other factors. However, it seems that an important link between race and genetic structure does exist, though the importance of the link is still very much up for debate.

The second concept of race operative in this society is that *race is a social construct and it is a construct with objective status.* This idea of race is the dominant concept of race in the intellectual community. While neither time nor space will allow a thorough examination of social constructionism and its relationship to race, let me suggest that social constructionists make a distinction between natural things like rock and quasars and things that are created by human enterprise. The things created by human societies are social constructs. A social construct can be weak (e.g. shaking hands when greeting another) or strong (e.g. money). Social constructs

are of two main kinds: real and therefore having objective status (either ontologically or epistemologically) like money, national flags, language; and, social constructs that are operative but do not have objective status like the Easter Bunny or the Tooth Fairy. The proponents of race as a social construct with objective status purport that race is a strong social construct and is real. Racial constructs with objective status determine for us how we think about ourselves as racialized populations. In other words, they tell us who we are and what to think thus having objective status.

Under this conceptual framework race is a) ontologically real and b) epistemologically real. Since the construct directs our thinking and sets the paradigms for identity, race as a social construct with objective status states for us what it means to be a racialized person in the same way the rules of the game determine how one thinks of the game. For example, the game of baseball has a body of rules that determine how the game is to be played. Because baseball is a relatively older game it has a historical perspective that informs our thinking of the game, and a set of established conventions that prescribes how one participates, codes of decorum, etc. By analogy race as a social construct serves our race talk and race thinking in like manner: what it means to play/perform in a particular position, team/group identity, proper and improper decorum as a racialized person, etc. The rules and conventions set out by race as a social construct with objective status determine what it means to be black, white, Asian, etc., as well as how I should think about what it means to be a member of said group.

One of the problems of race as a social construct with objective status is the problem of Passing. This is the social phenomenon where individuals of a socially constructed racialized group chose to willfully "pass" as a member of another racial group. African Americans and Latinos are familiar with this term and activity. In some circles it was a way of gaining social

benefits otherwise denied to them. Social constructionists will dismiss this action as simply an attempt to gratify a minority person's quest for access to privilege and power. But passing is a much more troubling concept considering the fact that the racial constructionists maintain that the *strong* social constructs of our lives tell us, without exception, 'who' we are and 'what' to think. Given that race is a strong social construct with objective status it would seem to be impossible for the passing phenomenon to exist given the power of the racial construct. After all, what lies outside of a social construct by which one could create an alternative identity? The answer is clear-nothing! Either we have to say that passing does not occur, which is blatantly false; or that considering race as a social construct with objective status is an insufficient model for telling us what race is or is not. I suggest that the passing problem causes major problems for race as a social construct with objective status.

The third concept of race which we should consider is the belief that *race is a social construct without objective status*, or as some thinkers in the field call it 'racial eliminativism'. The defenders of this position believe that to think that race is real is to have a naïve and unsophisticated belief like believing in the Easter Bunny or that the world is flat. The racial eliminativists maintain that once one matures and gains a sophisticated epistemic framework, one realizes that the Easter Bunny does not exist, the world is not flat, and there is no such thing as race. There is only one race and it is the human race.

They further claim that by thinking of race as real like rocks, quasars, and/or chipmunks is an absurd activity. Eliminativists point to the majority opinion within the biomedical community that points to the fact that all humans are 98.1% genetically the same. The very thinking about the human community in this fashion –as racialized groups—divides the human race against itself, disseminates the antiquated and erroneous thinking of the past, and perpetuates the

historical horrors of racism. If we quit thinking about race in this manner humanity can get on with the business of being 'human.'

There is something worth noting with the eliminativist position. The first part of their position is ontological in character. Isn't it a fact that there is more that we, as human beings, have in common as complex neuro-physiological organisms than we have dissimilarly? Again the Human Genome Project seems to say yes. In fact if pure physiology is the only criteria we employ in our racial categorizations, 21st Century citizens must acknowledge that many individuals are, strictly DNA speaking, 'White- looking Black people', and 'Black- looking White people', and every other combination one can think of in this context. Particularly with the presence of bi-racials, human beings have multiple classic racial characteristics. My physician, for example, refuses to call me an 'African-American' because he states, that I may have as much 'white' blood in me as the white looking person in the lobby. Of course, I remind him of the racial dissimilarities in things like, osteoporosis for example, and then he wants to change the subject. But I get his point: since we as human beings share so much in common why talk and think in racial terms at all?

Another point of the eliminativist position is an ethical-historical objection. They suggest that racial thinking and talking is too often accompanied by racist thinking and talking. The very concepts employed in discussing race have been drawn on in the past to legitimite the denigration and subjugation of racialized communities. If we stop talking about each other in racial terms, we will stop thinking racist thoughts which cause certain groups to think they have a right to privilege and power and that other groups do not.

There are two problems for me with this objection. One problem is that racial eliminativism fails to acknowledge how deeply race is embedded in the very fabric of this society. Race

determines access to privilege and power regardless of class and/or economic status. If nothing else the phenomenon of President Barack Obama points to the reality of race. During the presidential primaries the media was obsessed with questions of whether Barack Obama was too black or too white. Once President Obama won the election, America has shown its real colors. The establishment of the Tea Party, the failure of the Republicans to work with the president, the onslaught of bumper stickers that proclaim '2012-America like is use to be;' or 'Never Again-Returning to the True America,' suggests that race and racism is real. If one speaks about this, one is charged with playing the race card. The point I am trying to make is that race and racism are real in everyday life and only with further open discussions about race can we start to make some sense out of nonsense.

The second problem is that not talking about race will not make racism disappear. There is a kind of wholesome naïveté in racial eliminativism. It is as if we do not look at the elephant in the room, or talk about the elephant, the elephant will go away. It seems to me that we need more conversation about race and racism if we are ever going to overcome the elephant once and for all. Rational discourse about race can move us toward some clarity of thought which hopefully will move us toward a post-racialized society in reality instead of the one we live in now.

The fourth and final concept of race is the idea that race is an existential choice grounded in 'lived' experience. Existentialists who support this conceptual framework maintain that there is no human essence: biological, religious, socially constructed ontological ousia, or of any other imaginative kind. They affirm that there is only existence, and that existence confronts us as both an ontological and ontic reality to which we may either live en soi, that is according to the prescribed racial mode; or, pour soi—for self. The individual therefore chooses each day what it means to be a black woman, a Latino man, Mung or whatever one chooses. The emphasis is

placed on the creative choice of existence rather than on facticities like skin color, tribal nuances, phenotypes, genotypes, etc.

The claims of racial existentialists further state that for people of color, in particular, attention to existence is paramount given the presence of bad faith experiences and structures of economic and political oppression, systemic racism, sexism, and xenophobia. These manifestations of bad faith constantly confront the individual with the possibility of annihilation and meaninglessness on the ontological level, and dread and anguish (to mention just two phenomenon) on the ontic level. It is the individual that must defiantly create and assert her racial existence over and against these threats. Each day is the creating and defining what it means to be (existence)—a process of identity and responsibility—that must precede the social racial prescriptions that attempt to annihilate the right of individual racial identity (essence). Therefore we create for ourselves what it means to be X. Take Dustin Hoffman in Little Big Man as a commercial example. He convinced us of the possibility of creating race. We were moved by his ability to be Native American and by the end of the movie were convinced that *he was Native American.*

This view of race has definite strengths. It places race at the individual level and maintains the integrity of race within the context of lived experiences. It must be admitted that a significant part of our racial self-reflection is shaped by the experiences of life. Indeed, at some point every individual must make a cognitive choice regarding who and what one is in relationship to the question of race. The problem, however, with the idea of race as purely an act of existential choice is the problem of creative imagination. Suppose one morning I wake up and due to positive relationships with Swedes, or my fascination with Swedish culture, I decide that I am Swedish. In spite of the facticities of being born of African American parents, reared in an

African American cultural context, having a bio-genetic African American phenotype, have African American offspring, etc., I continue to maintain vigorously that I am Swedish. For me to make a decision of this type would seem obviously ridiculous. Yet according to the concept of race as an existential choice such a leap of faith would be valid. We must ask: at what point is our self creating a exercise of imagination without substance and when is it a fearlessly active moment of identity creation? Until the rules are clear we are left with the impossible task of distinguishing between the racial knight of faith and the madman.

I am encouraged however with the new frontier that is emerging regarding race. The challenge posed by bi-racials urges us to think not in terms of the old paradigms but toward new frontiers in our thinking and talking about race. Perhaps race is the culmination of each, and yet not one. Perhaps the question of race is actually a call for new epistemological and metaphysical categories to adequately address the question. However, that is a discussion for another day. Until then I leave you with a question: What is this thing called race?

Comments on Clanton Dawson's "A Thing Called Race"

Laurence Rohrer

I would like to begin by saying that after Clanton's talk I am reminded why he was such a formidable debater in our seminars in graduate school. And his talk reminded me how much I miss those debates. Clanton has researched every aspect of race thoroughly, and his presentation raises several important ontological, epistemological and ethical concerns. While I in no way claim to be an expert on the philosophy of race, I would like to comment on at least one interpretive remark that Clanton makes in his criticism of the eliminativist position. My remarks will not pose an argument against Clanton's overarching concern about the position but are, rather, an internal criticism of one of his objections.

Clanton states that one of the key points of the eliminativist position is the ethical-historical objection that "racial thinking and talking is too often accompanied by racist thinking and talking. The very concepts employed in discussing race have been drawn on in the past to legitimate the denigration and subjugation of racialized communities." Clanton then indicates that the eliminativist infers that "if we stop talking about each other in racial terms, we will stop thinking racist thoughts…". Clanton's second objection is to point out "that not talking about race will not make racism disappear." He then compares the mentality of the eliminativist to people refusing to talk about an elephant in a room, when the creature is clearly standing before them.

I have two concerns about this objection. The first is that the key premises of the eliminativist argument seem to be empirical claims with good sociological evidence behind them. The ethical concern of racism remains the same regardless of whether or not there are ontological differences of race – what I take the ethical concern of the eliminativist position to

be, is that we have taken racial differences (i.e. secondary characteristics) to be ethically important historically, and that is the problem. In order to combat racism this kind of talk must end. Talking now, and in the future about the mere genetic component of race would not undermine their concerns; rather it would underscore the moral irrelevance of the concept.

The second problem that I have is that I don't believe an eliminativist must make the inference that Clanton attributes to them. The problem is not that we continue to speak about race, but how we have done so, that is, in such a manner that treats the notion as morally relevant to distinctions between human beings. The conclusion that an eliminativist could easily accept, and one that would not be missing the point of their own premises, is that people need to be reeducated about race and that future generations are taught that secondary physiological characteristics have no bearing on moral worth because "race" is an ontic, biological feature and not an ontologically (human) *differentium.*

As I have already stated, I am not an expert in this area, so I would welcome Clanton's response to my remarks, and some further discussion of the eliminativist position which I do not pretend to fully understand.

Post-Rawlsian Movements, Multiculturalism, and Black Americans

Brian Thomas[1]

For those interested in describing and ameliorating racial exclusion and subordination, the work of John Rawls and his continuing legacy have been sources of frustration. The frustration owes itself to an inability or an indifference on the part of Rawls and his followers to conduct any analysis of racial hierarchy. This problem can be understood in different ways deriving from the methodology laid out in *A Theory of Justice*. The problem is, critics maintain, that Rawslian theorizing is preoccupied with abstracting away features of persons in an attempt to determine the normative character of the basic structure rendering the theory ill-suited to be of any use in describing or ameliorating racial inequality. The problem shows up in at least four ways. Charles Mills writes in the *Racial Contract*

> The frustrating problem nonwhites have always had, and continue to have, with mainstream political theory is not with abstraction *itself* but with an *idealizing* abstraction that abstracts *away* from the crucial realities of the racial polity. The shift to the hypothetical, ideal contract encourages and facilitates this abstraction, since eminently *non*ideal features of the real world are not part of the apparatus. There is, then, in a sense, no conceptual point-of-entry to start talking about the fundamental way in which race structures one's life and affects one's life chances (Mills 1997).

Thus, first, the idealizations found within liberal political theorizing present theoretical barriers to capturing the character of racial exclusion and subordination. And the attack is pushed further in *Blackness Visible* while Mills argues that failing to incorporate in any meaningful way the

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history and theoretical significance of racial exclusion not only has the effect of preventing liberals from capturing the significance of racial exclusion, he also claims that theorizations of the remedies to address racial exclusion will not become "theoretically visible"(Mills 1998Mills 1998). That is, the remedies for unjust distributions of rights and opportunities that owe themselves to race would not be theorized as remedies to *racial* injustice because that project itself presupposes a theoretical account of racial justice. Third, since race is not in the theoretical vocabulary normative political theory racial justice has to be understood in terms of neutrality. These features of normative political theorizing create a further problem, namely that failing to pay attention to features of race has the effect of *reproducing* injustices (Mills, 1998, p. 108).

Fourth, what is more, Rawls's discussion and limitation of the fundamental problem of social justice, instead of to the actual histories of distributions of rights, resources, and rights, has the effect of concealing the injustice of the basic structure. So on Rawlsian grounds, Rawls's theory is underdetermined in its effort to remedy the injustices lying within the basic structure by insufficiently characterizing the extent and the scope of the injustice located within the basic structure.

To no surprise the discussion of the merits and demerits of the attacks on Rawls and of the propriety of the Rawlsian enterprise to describe and ameliorate racial inequality has spawned its own cottage industry.[2] And for many individuals, Rawls exemplifies the impotency or disinterest of the liberal tradition towards racial injustice.

[2] For recent discussion of some of these issues see Thomas McCarthy, T. (2009). Race, empire, and the idea of human development. Cambridge, UK ; New York, Cambridge University Press. and Tommie Shelby, 'Race and Social Justice: Rawlsian Considerations' (2004) LXXII: 5 Fordham Law Review 1697-1714. Shelby seeks to defend Rawls against some of Mills's claims while McCarthy attempts to weave a path between rejecting Rawls while recognizing the problematic features of ignoring race. For views sympathetic to Mills see Howard McGary (1999). *Race and Social Justice.* Oxford: Blackwell) and McGary, H. and B. E. Lawson (1992). Between slavery and freedom : philosophy and American slavery. Bloomington, Indiana University Press.

But the preoccupation with Rawls has blinded us in the profession from thinking more clearly about post Rawlsian attempts to accommodate the various criticisms that we find against Rawls. For in other theories we might find modes of theorizing that are not bogged down by claims about ideal theorizing or preoccupations with societies abstractly construed.

And my aim here is to consider Will Kymlicka's work in this vein. Kymlicka's work is clearly in the Rawlsian tradition, as I note below, but Kymlicka seeks to avoid some of the charges leveled at Rawls and Rawlsian methodology. Kymlicka's work is worthwhile for several reasons. First, his theory is an instance of the ways in which one might bring to bear non-ideal theorizing to address particular kinds of injustices. This strategy is promising because it seeks to avoid the problems found in ideal theorizing that have bogged down discussions of the remedies for marginalized groups.

Second, his work has been prominent as a theoretical justification for actual state sponsored policies of multiculturalism in Canada. The upshot of this, though this is a point that I cannot address here fully, is that we can ask about the relationship between actual policies and the theoretical justifications that might generate them. This is a far more realizable project than asking abstract questions about the relationship of actual policies to broader theories of the basic structure as we find in discussions about the relation between, for instance, Rawl's difference principle and affirmative action policies.[3] Third, by considering a theory that attempts to accommodate group rights with individual rights we avoid another source of frustration with theories such as Rawls, and *ipso facto* the liberal tradition, namely that his view perpetuates an antagonistic towards group rights. Fourth, appealing to Kymlicka looks promising because we can appeal to a mode of theorizing that is self-consciously interested in prescribing social arrangements that recognize the continuing heterogeneity of nation states. And finally, perhaps

[3] For recent discussions see Taylor, Robert S. (April 2009). "Rawlsian Affirmative Action." Ethics 119(3), 476-506.

most importantly, Kymlicka's is the only discussion of African-Americans by any of the "mainstream" Anglo-American analytic philosophers.[4] Indeed, the recent historical experiences of black Americans plays a key role in Kymlicka's argument in *Multicultural Citizenship* that liberal antagonism towards group rights is a recent phenomenon arising from the civil rights era.

If Kymlicka's theory accommodates the experiences of black Americans, we will have a powerful theoretical tool to criticize particular arrangements that ignores the interests of racialized groups. But also we will have a theory that is sensitive to issues of race.

In what follows I consider Kymlicka's discussion of black Americans. And while black-Americans find themselves near center stage in normative theorizing, Kymlicka's diagnosis and remedies for their disadvantages are mistaken. I argue that he fails to apply his theory where it applies and his failure to apply the theory derives from mistaken conceptualizations about the experiences of black-Americans and mistaken conceptualizations within his theory.

I.

Let me begin with a clarification. Although my interest lies in understanding how recent non-ideal theorizations offer new ways of conceptualizing particular forms of social injustice, the remarks I say about Kymlicka's view should not be thought to be exhaustive. Kymlicka's work has spawned its own cottage industry and even if one finds his theory plausible in my discussion, there are a considerable number of objections from the left and from the right towards his theory. And so insofar as I endorse his general strategy of theorizing particular modes of social injustice, I do not defend the propriety of using the concept of "culture" to characterize modes of group differentiated difference in this paper.

[4] I will use the expressions "African-American" and "black-American" interchangeably. And in some cases, to ease exposition, I will simply refer to black-Americans as "blacks."

Kymlicka's view seeks to marry liberal principles to social identity.[5] It is liberal in that it recognizes the individual as the primary unit of value and it recognizes the importance of such values as equality, autonomy, and freedom. Contrary to Rawls, Kymlicka's view takes seriously the role that social identities play in a person's ability to flourish and to realize the normative values that the liberal political theory privileges. Kymlicka's commitment to the significance of social identity is manifested in the self-conscious attempt to combine policies of redistribution with policies of recognition.[6]

Kymlicka's theory involves abstraction but, unlike Rawls, it is not a project of making prescriptions from idealized positions. Kymlicka's view begins with the idea that individual lives flourish when left to the choices of the person whose life is being lead, but to make choices one needs various resources. Among the resources that a persons needs to lead a life of their choosing one is a context of choice in which various choices are made available and intelligible to that person. Kymlicka understands this domain under the notion of "culture" to capture the ways in which one's involvement in a social collective is important for the ways in which persons come to recognize, understand, and makes various choices. The problem is that the resources required to make effective the cultural conditions in which one chooses effectively are unequally distributed within liberal nations, putting particular social groups, and subsequently particular individuals, at risk of failing to flourish in ways that put liberal theory in its most favorable light. And Kymlicka's theory aims to isolate and to remedy these disadvantages.

[5] Will Kymlicka's work appears over several publications. I will consider his Kymlicka, W. (1995). Multicultural citizenship: a liberal theory of minority rights. Oxford: New York, Oxford University Press; Kymlicka, W. (1998). Finding our way : rethinking ethnocultural relations in Canada. Oxford University Press., Kymlicka, W. (2001); Politics in the vernacular : nationalism, multiculturalism, and citizenship. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

[6] We might also understand Kymlicka's theory as a theory that attempts to fuse recognition of one's worth as a moral agent with recognition of one's individual identity.

Kymlicka's theory contains a theory of disadvantage and a set of remedies for that disadvantage that collectives face in pursuing its interests. The kinds of disadvantages that attach to collectives attach to collectives in certain formations of which there are principally two, namely national groups and ethnic groups. National groups correspond roughly to what we might call nations.[7] They are "more or less institutionally complete" enjoying high degrees of territorial concentration, linguistic particularity, and history.[8] Examples of these groups include Canadian Anglophone, Puerto Ricans, and Native Americans. These groups are entitled to differential citizenship in the form of self-government rights. Such rights secure the full and free development of the group's collective identity by recognizing the group's political autonomy or territorial jurisdiction.[9] Under the category of self-government rights, Kymlicka includes linguistic rights, political veto powers, and land claims.[10] National groups are also entitled to *special representation*. These rights seek to address the lack of representation in political decision making and so they guarantee some number of seats set aside for members of the relevant groups.

Ethnic or immigrant groups in contrast, are not understood in terms of their institutional complexity but through voluntary immigration.[11] These are groups seeking integration into mainstream institutions. Such groups are typically interested in learning the dominant language(s) within host states because it allows them to better compete for opportunities and resources. To promote their own flourishing and to offset disadvantages to the flourishing of their collective identities culturally defined, these groups seek protection. Kymlicka calls these

[7] Kymlicka himself uses the term 'culture' synonymously with the term "nation." I don't think I misrepresent his view by using the term "nation" rather than the term"culture."
[8] Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, p. 18.
[9] Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, p. 27.
[10] Kymlicka *Multicultural Citizenship*, p. 109.
[11] Kymlicka uses the expressions "immigrant groups" and "ethnocultural groups" interchangeably with the expression ethnic group. In *Politics* he uses the expression "ethnocultural group" commonly. I will use these terms interchangeably as well for ease of exposition.

protections *polyethnic rights*. Kymlicka claims that this right entails public funding for cultural practices and exemptions to known work rules. These rights are meant to promote the integration of immigrants into dominant institutions.[12]

These are the main pieces of Kymlicka's theory. The next question is to determine whether and how black Americans fit in the theory. That is to say, to determine what remedies are appropriate to alleviate the disadvantages of black Americans we need to determine whether they fit into the Kymlickian typology.

Start with national group status. A collective is a national group if it enjoys high degrees of institutional presence and if it culturally seeks to keep its collective identity. These features provide evidence of a collective narrative identity. Neither of these features are satisfied by black Americans. In *Multicultural Citizenship,* Kymlicka claimed that black Americans did not desire, and I think we can infer, did not actively fight for the institutional features that satisfy the requirements of national group status. And as per institutional concentration, nor did black Americans possess the kind of territorial concentration, historical features, and language that might have allowed them to develop in ways similar to paradigmatic national groups.

In his later work, *Politics in the Vernacular,* Kymlicka corrects himself and notes that owing to the exclusion of blacks from dominant institutions, e.g. Jim Crow, many black Americans experienced institutional separation from whites showing many of the features exemplified by national groups: distinct schools, hospitals, churches, organizations, and financial institutions.[13] But even after making this concession, Kymlicka refuses to assign self-

[12] Since it is no part of my argument here, I do not consider Kymlicka's claim that promotion of a group's culture is normatively important for its members. This is of course the crucial claim for the argument, but it's intelligibility and plausibility matter little for this paper. I will simply assume its truth.
[13] The chapter in which Kymlicka makes these claims is reproduced verbatim in *Finding Our Way*.

government rights to black Americans, arguing that black Americans did not choose their separate existence, this was put upon them by exclusion.

If we can't demarcate a collective black identity by appeal to institutional features, can we demarcate black American identity culturally? Kymlicka thinks not. Kymlicka claims that the original African slaves did not share a common language and culture and that the common culture that black Americans now share is distinctly 'American.' Subsequently, black Americans lack the features constitutive of being a distinct society. And on Kymlicka's view, we can infer that the rights that attach to that status would be inappropriate for black Americans.

Next, consider the immigrant model and the rights and powers associated with it. Groups fitting this status are defined by their voluntary immigration and an interest in joining the larger political community. The barriers they face are barriers of access to dominant mainstream institutions. Kymlicka claims that black Americans did not voluntarily seek to become members of the new world. What is more, when African slaves were brought to the United States they were prevented from integrating into mainstream institutions and the many different culturally demarcated African collective traits were neither preserved nor consolidated into a common culturally demarcated collective.[14]

It seems that the main reason for excluding them from this category is that policies of integrating blacks into dominant institutions have been blocked. The virulent character of institutionalized racism has foreclosed the possibility of moving into mainstream positions and statuses in society. And so Kymlicka infers, following other social theorists that a new model of integration needs to be articulated to capture the experiences of black Americans.

Kymlicka therefore takes his theory to be of little use in explicating the disadvantage and of addressing the injustices black Americans face. But in admitting this Kymlicka's view

[14] Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, p. 24.

remains unclear. We don't know whether this concession means that the right to determine the character of the collective identity through culturally defined protections are inappropriate or whether such rights are inefficacious in bringing about or promoting access to dominant institutions. Perhaps Kymlicka's view would be clearer if he had critically considered whether the protections he considered, e.g. polyethnic rights or special representation rights, have an effect on the disadvantages black Americans experience. But Kymlicka does not and so we are left thinking that black Americans strike out on both accounts on his theory.

II.

But this analysis seems mistaken. One problem lies with the ascription conditions for the typology. For instance, where he excludes black Americans on the grounds that they do not want self-government, Kymlicka ignores the fact that separation and nationalism have been defining features of African-American political thought.[15] Nor does he take seriously enough the separate status that black Americans had as an instantiation of his view. Kymlicka attempts to deflate the status of their self-government claiming that they were forced into such a position, but other collectives, such as indigenous groups who have similarly been refused entrance into mainstream institutions, but enjoy self government status, remain unquestioned.

Second, Kymlicka's typology poorly reflects the communicative innovations that influence the discursive properties that the view requires. Kymlicka conceives of nations as collectives that occupy territorially contiguous spaces, but this picture is best suited for collections of individuals with fewer means of communication. In prior eras, living in close proximity to members of one's social group mattered because it ensured better access to co-members and to the events of one's community. In short, collective agency and coordination

[15] See Boxill, Bernard (1992-1993). "Two traditions in African-American Philosophy." Philosophy Forum 24(1-3), 119-135.

problems were tractable with members in close quarters. But recent technology in the form of television, print media, cell phones, and the internet extend public spheres and members of collectives can organize and communicate effectively with fewer face to face meetings. What this suggests is that the conception of National groups sharing a contiguous space needs to be re-interpreted and needs re-mapping onto the various new and burgeoning discursive public spheres (churches, suburbs, exurbs, etc.). For if he had done so in the case of black Americans he would have found numerous and multiple sites, churches, blogospheres, barbershops and hair salons to name a few, where black Americans routinely meet and display the features of the kind of ongoing construction of a collective identity that Kymlicka's view seeks to capture.

Third, Kymlicka's emphasis on culture as a necessary and sufficient condition for inclusion in the theory is problematic. This worry cuts across both categories of the theory. Recall that Kymlicka granted self-government rights when a collective possess a collective identity, culturally defined. This idea seems important for the immigrant model though it voluntariness is prior in the analysis. As I presented earlier, according to Kymlicka, black-Americans fail to display culturally demarcated collective traits, but for those that are effectively 'American.' But one might resist such a claim. Kymlicka does not consider whether the various Africans tribes formed over time and via the institution of slavery, Jim Crow, and Christianity, forged a common and unique collective of individuals, an imagined community with an overlapping consensus of culturally demarcated traits and properties. To claim that black American culture is simply American culture fails to note the contributions of black Americans to American culture and reflects parochial conceptions of black American and American culture. It is also sociologically and anthropologically naïve. Now if Kymlicka means that American culture includes black American culture in the way that Canadian culture includes Quebecois and

Inuit culture, then the claim is trivially true. But I suspect that he means the reductionist claim that black Americans have no distinct culture and as I said, even a brief survey of black American history will locate the presence of a distinct culture. So where the culture seems to matter for the theory, black-Americans satisfy the ascriptions conditions.

But more importantly, the presence of culture is not morally relevant for the normative project. What matters from the moral point of view a narrative identity with fixed points of historical significance and rituals that reflect the various values and goods of the collective. This is evidence that a group is autonomous. The fixed points of historical significance reflect the presence of a collective conception of the good that the collective seeks to enact, not a particular set of practices or performances.

Kymlicka's exclusion of black Americans is also equally problematic when we consider his typology of immigrant groups. Recall on this category, collectives that voluntarily immigrant to a new host country and seek to enter the host country's mainstream institutions are granted various rights. But black Americans did not voluntarily immigrate and have been denied access to mainstream institutions. Kymlicka is correct to note that black Americans (still) seek to integrate into dominant institutions even though they did not voluntarily immigrant to the New World. But Kymlicka locates the voluntaries of immigration in the wrong place and on mistaken grounds. What should matter from the moral point of view is that black-Americans have been invited to live as moral equals. Of course they were invited to the New World as chattel slavery, but one might infer, from the legal abolition of chattel slavery, that the US invited those black Africans on its soil to live as moral equals. The invitation of course, remains unfulfilled. But the normative point seems clear. The invitation of host states to would be-immigrants is what provides the justification for the rights Kymlicka offers, not the fact that immigrants

"volunteered" to leave or that they have demarcated collective cultural traits that are distinct from the dominant culture.

So I disagree with Kymlicka that black-Americans do not have the right kind of culturally demarcated traits and properties that make for inclusion into the theory. But I also deny that the possession of these properties should be necessary or sufficient for inclusion into the theory.

III.

Kymlicka's attempt to capture the disadvantages facing black Americans is problematic and it suggests a more general weakness in his theory to capture ethnocultural and ethnoracial disadvantage. Where the theory is problematic is in its application and in some of its underlying assumptions. Kymlicka's theory is not bogged down by idealizations and by creating a theory that applies to bare persons devoid of a history and tradition.

But while I think various underlying assumptions appear to be mistaken, they can be re-thought and perhaps put to use to aid those of us thinking about remedies for racial exclusion and subordination. Given the ways in which racial exclusion and subordination morph or intersect with other axes such a project would be welcomed. But if the reader is not convinced of these claims, one perhaps finds some amount of solace in knowing that Kymlicka's discussion of the experiences of black Americans puts him well beyond the work of John Rawls.

Racism and Liberalism: Comments on Brian Thomas's "Post-Rawlsian Movements, Multiculturalism, and Black Americans"

Bruce Ballard

Brian Thomas makes a convincing case for the inadequacy of Will Kymlicka's social philosophy in relation to the problems of racism Black Americans and Canadians face. As Thomas notes, Kymlicka fails both in his diagnosis of the problem and in his suggested remedies. Yet Thomas finds enough worthwhile in Kymlicka to try and refit the theory in relation to racism. Here I will argue that Thomas may be unduly optimistic.

Contemporary communitarianism arose in part as a reaction against liberalism. And while there are thinkers who have tried to draw from both theories, it isn't clear that a coherent synthesis is possible. The two may be incommensurable. Kymlicka wants to add to the rational self-interested individual of liberal theory a narratively situated individual whose good or well-being is understood only within a particular narrative tradition. Thus Kymlicka is prepared to acknowledge group rights, unlike traditional liberalism.

But how is this addition to be effected? In the service of the liberal individualist ideal, apparently. We are to acknowledge group rights when we recognize the importance of particular social contexts for the development and practice of autonomy, a liberal, individualist good. Kymlicka's theory recognizes the individual as the primary unit of value along with the primacy of liberal goods like equality, autonomy, and freedom.

Here I want to argue that liberalism as a social philosophy lacks the resources to reconstruct itself in face of devastating critiques by philosophers like Michael Sandel and Alasdair MacIntyre. On this account, Kymlicka's theoretical shortfall in respect of anti-black racism will be both predictable and irreparable.

For MacIntyre and Sandel, liberal individualism represents a misleading and impoverished view of the self and society. The liberal self has individual freedom as its highest good. Hence the choices it makes are sovereign, ultimately unimpeachable by others. Freedom of choice is seen as good in itself. As Sandel puts it, there is a virtual religion of self-worship here. This self is essentially individual or atomic. All its relations to others are voluntary and revocable, none constitutive. Hence it will be slow to act the citizen, quick to divorce, inclined to consign aging parents to the care of strangers, inclined to neglect children in favor of its individual pursuits or even to abort their lives should they interfere with its plans.

But this decontextualized, dehistoricized, deracialized, denationalized, stripped-down self is the idealized hallucination of liberalism. As Plato shows so well in *the Republic*, societies are like factories for producing a certain type of individual. In this society, success can mean greater isolation from others (cf. Philip Slater's *Pursuit of Loneliness*). Isolated, we oscillate between what Robert Bellah et al termed competitive individualism at work and expressive individualism at home.

Is it any wonder then that the liberal self neither recognizes nor particularly acknowledges its own implication in the group harm of racism? Thus the familiar white disavowal: "I never held slaves or engaged in prejudicial practices, hence am innocent of my society's racist track record." But like it or not, the actual history of African America and its legacy to this day affords these whites an artificial, unearned advantage. Just as we may inherit certain social goods, so we may inherit social debts, a concept unavailable either in concept or disposition to the liberal self. Individualist stories about the self to the contrary notwithstanding, in actuality we are very much defined by our relations to others, perhaps most especially by those we have not elected.

The liberal notion of justice suffers similar maladies. Alasdair MacIntyre diagnoses these problems in his four stage description of liberalist justice. At the first level, individuals and groups simply express their preferences. So, for example, some Americans favor affirmative action while others do not. A rational address of differences at this level would require philosophical investigation and argument. But the liberalist obscures this need by reducing various positions about the good to mere preferences, as in a market system. Within such a system of preferences the ability to bargain becomes paramount. Anyone without the needed means to do so will be quite disadvantaged in liberalist society. The disadvantage will be greatest for economically marginalized minorities. Bargaining takes place through non-rational persuasion as the only kind available once claims of rational rightness are reduced to preference.

At the second level of liberal justice, preferences are tallied (as in utilitarianism) to determine what should be done. Such a vote would ideally tell us what to do regarding affirmative action programs, for instance. MacIntyre notes that such a tally presupposes a shared notion of rational principles. But if the various preferences are conclusions of conflicting philosophies, they are more than preferences: they are products of practical reasoning. To treat them as mere opinions is irrational and to tally them up together with the conclusions of antagonistic rivals absurd. So the lack of a shared rationality about the tally leaves it unsupported.

The third level of liberal justice is the debate between liberalists about what counts as a fair method for weighing preferences. Corrections for inequality such as affirmative action are debated at this level. As MacIntyre notes, the various liberal theories about this matter are as much at odds with each other as ever. So it is more the fact that such debate goes on, rather than any substantive conclusions, that is supposed to justify the liberalist procedures. Yet since these

deliberations are ultimately about practical policies, there has to be a tie-breaker between conflicting views.

The fourth level breaks the tie. The fourth level involves appeals to the rules and procedures of the legal system. We could take our affirmative action case to the Supreme Court, for example. The fourth level functions to enforce liberalist conflict resolution without invoking an overarching concept of the good or, rather, by pretending not to do so.

How then is Thomas able to make out the salient contours of anti-black racism where Kymlicka falls short? Thomas provides a thicker description of the black predicament by reference to the relevant narrative setting and history, describing a people, not simply a collection of individuals. This portrayal reflects a different frame of reference from the liberal, one more social and communitarian, the same frame reflected in documents like the Black National Anthem. Were this implicit frame developed sufficiently, it would provide a superior alternative to liberalism.

Warning Factors, Coping Mechanisms and Culturally Sensitive Intervention: An Evaluation of Efficacy and Accuracy in Addressing African-American Suicide

Che Wilson

Introduction

Suicide remains a complex issue to understand and diffuse. It is as such because its existence relies upon the skewed interpretations one has regarding society and him/herself. These two entities have become inadequate and, consequently, ineffective for the client. For the African American contemplating suicide, society does not, in general, provide an option for unlimited growth, help and opportunity. What little is available comes with strings attached, which a mind weakened by suicidal ideation cannot understand. That is why the social support systems of the family, the Church and religion are so important in the African American community. African Americans must create what society has often times denied- encouragement, commitment and resources given without bias. This bias, manifested in the forms of subliminal, institutional, and blatant racism along with individual and social prejudices, creates stress that, in turn, produces emotions that may influence suicidal ideation. These emotions include depression, anger, agitation and feelings of hopelessness. This paints a dismal picture, but it can be dramatically improved by the implementation of cultural awareness. If mental health professionals would begin to acknowledge, appreciate and, accordingly, integrate ethnicity into their method of treatment, not only would the client benefit from the responsive treatment, but the professional and the client would gain critical analysis skills. This new found knowledge would not be contained to the professional's office; rather, it would expand to be included in all interactions made, deliberately initially and later by nature This is the way in which society begins to change and shed its restrictions on providing effective

mental health services. When the client is fully actualized the goal of successful treatment can be actualized as well.

Risk Factors and Warning Signs

Depression, drug and/or alcohol abuse, feelings of worthlessness, neglecting friends and family.... The aforementioned are all common risk factors or warning signs of suicide.

It is believed that risk factors can highlight one's propensity towards committing suicide. Risk factors are those behaviors or conditions that the individual possesses or engages in prior to suicidal ideation. Identifying these risk factors requires asking questions of a client that he/she may not be willing to admit to. The mental health professional must ask these questions in such a way that the client answers truthfully and completely. The manner in which the professional questions the client must be deliberate, yet, not insulting. Getz, Allen, Myers and Liadner (1983) write in *Brief Counseling with Suicidal Persons,*

> Your client's perception of you is in part based in reality. It is determined by your actual behavior in the session but to some degree is influenced by distortions from the past. Reactions of your client that are not based on the reality of the counseling situation are termed *transference*. This is the phenomenon of displacement onto the counselor of feelings the client has about other significant persons in his life (p. 14).

The professional must also make the client aware of the risk factors he or she exhibits. Rudd et al. (2006) define risk factors as any factor empirically shown to correlate with suicidality, including age, sex, psychiatric diagnosis and past suicide attempts (p.256). Concerning African Americans, the two race specific risk factors for suicide are: 1) being male and 2) being in the age bracket of 15 to 24. African American males in this

age bracket committed 352 suicides in 2007, compared to 54 for African American women in this same age bracket (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009).

While a risk factor assessment is necessary to accurately evaluate the client's level of suicidal ideation, it may neglect the issues that are currently affecting the client. The professional must be able to look beyond the profile that has been created for the client and begin to evaluate the individual. There are characteristics that may make themselves known during a session that are more pertinent to the client's current state than the past mental health history that was divulged or how he or she scored on a battery of tests. Further, inquiring about the client's current mental state and overall emotional well-being implies that the professional is actively concerned about the client. Rudd et al. (2006) refers to these current behavioral factors as warning signs. Warning signs are defined as:

> The earliest detectable sign that indicates heightened risk for suicide in the near-term (within minutes, hours or days). A warning sign refers to some feature of the developing outcome of interest (suicide) rather than to a distinct construct (e.g. risk factor) that predicts or may be casually related to suicide (p. 258).

The following table outlines the differences in risk factors and warning signs in relation to nine characteristics:

Differentiating Warning Signs and Risk Factors for Suicide

Characteristic Feature	**Risk Factor**	**Warning Sign**
Nature of relationship to suicide	Distal	proximal
Definitional specificity	defined constructs (e.g., DSM- IV diagnosis	Poorly defined constructs (e.g., behaviors such as buying a

		weapon
Empirical Foundation	Empirically derived	Clinically identified/derived
Population	Population dependent (i.e. Individually applied clinical samples)	Individually applied
Timeframe	Implies enduring or longer-term risk	Implies imminent risk

Characteristic Feature	**Risk Factor**	**Warning Sign**
Nature of occurrence	Static nature (e.g., age, sex, abuse history)	Likely useful only within constellation
	defined constructs (e.g., DSM-IVdiagnosis	Poorly defined constructs (e.g., behaviors such as buying a weapon
Empirical Foundation	Empirically derived	Clinically identified/derived
Episodic or transient nature (i.e., warning sign resolves)	Limited implications for intervention	Specific intervention demanded
Implications for Clinical Practice	Limited implications intervention	Specific intervention demanded
Experiential Character	Objective	Subjective
Intended Target Group	Experts and Clinicians	Lay public and clinicians

This table has been extracted from "Warning Signs for Suicide: Theory, Research and Clinical

Applications" by M.D. Rudd, AL. Berman, TE. Joiner, M.K. Nock, MM. Silverman, M. Mandrusiak, K. Van Orden & T. Witte. (2006). Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior, 36, p. 287.

Closed-ended questions should be asked to determine if there are any immediate warning signs that need to be addressed. The close-ended approach is direct and very pointed. It is often used to gain specific information or when the client is unable to comprehend the vagueness of the open-ended approach. The close-ended approach can be extremely helpful. When the professional feels that the client may be withholding crucial information about a suicide plan, a close-ended question such as "You said you have pills at home?" should be asked (Getz et al, 1983). Close-ended questions force the client to admit to or deny crafting a strategy for committing suicide. In this assessment, the professional can better understand how serious the client's intentions are.

In regards to risk factors and warning signs, race plays a role in the assessment of possible risk factors and a connecting role in assessing warning factors. Since the risk factor serves as a profile for the client, it can only be trusted to a certain degree. While African American women between the ages of 15 and 24 committed 54 suicides, 3.4% of the total deaths for that age bracket, in 2007, it should not be assumed that a client of this background would only be depressed and not suicidal (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009). It is imperative that mental health professionals assess the individual and not a stereotype of behavior. Each client has his or her own individual mental health needs, which cannot fit into a pre-measured profile. Race connects the risk factor and warning factor in instances that involve race as a contributor to the overall problem. For example, the client is an African American male who has unsuccessfully tried to find work for three months. He has sought professional help on his own to treat his self-diagnosed depression. The professional must take into consideration the stress

that the man carries due to his minority status and how that affects his interactions with potential employers. He has also the stress of being unemployed, a defined risk factor of suicidal ideation. There is a possibility that he attributes his lack of employment to racial bias, and will soon no longer attempt to look for employment. Inherent stress has then been multiplied by two (no prospect of a job or money) and intensified by a feeling of anomie. The professional must assess the immediate warning signs and determine if the client has the appropriate coping mechanisms to ward off any possible self harm.

In comparing African Americans and White suicide attempters for risk factors, Roy (2003) hypothesized that there are no significant differences in risk factors for either ethnic group. Roy (2003) used a sample of 253 substance abuse patients who had attempted suicide, 158 of which were African American and the remaining 95 White. All participants were given the following questionnaires: the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ), the Foulds Hostility and Direction of Hostility Questionnaire (HDHQ) and the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ) (Roy, 2003). On the CTQ, Roy (2003) found that African American participants scored significantly lower on the emotional abuse subscale (28.0) than White participants (31.8). This is indicative of the role social support plays in the African American community. African Americans tend to live in larger households and an increase in the number of supportive familial ties in the support system has been posited as a protective factor against suicide (Roy, 2003. p. 446). Otherwise, there were no statistically significant differences in the overall scores for each questionnaire. While there may not be a difference in risk factors pertaining to suicide for different ethnicities, it is important to consider differences in coping mechanisms various ethnicities use to combat suicidal ideation.

Coping Mechanisms

Getz et al. (1983) suggests that professionals pose 16 questions to the client to determine the severity of the suicide risk. These 16 questions are as follows:

1. What prompted the identified client to seek help now?
    a. Family, community pressures?
    b. Self-referral
2. In the client's words, what happened that caused this crisis?
    a. What arc the unconscious determinants as you understand them?
    b. What are the dynamics involved?
3. How is the client trying to solve this crisis? Is it working?
4. How was the client functioning before the crisis?
5. Is there any noticeable difference between then and now?
6. Has anything like this happened before?
    a. How effectively or ineffectively was it handled?
    b. What was the outcome?
7. How has this client handled other similar situations?
    a. What worked?
    b. What did not work?
8. What are the client's environmental supports? (Family, friends, Church, work, recreation)
9. Is this a chronic or an acute situation?
10. What does the client say is the most important problem to be worked on right now? Do you agree?
11. What do you the counselor see as the most important issue(s)?

12. If there is a difference between what the client sees as important and what you see as important, what if anything can be done to resolve the difference?
13. Are you and the client working together?
    a. Do you have the potential to form a working alliance?
    b. Do you have the support of the client's family and friends?
14. What is the client's suicidal status?
15. What is the client's mental status?
16. Are there community resources available to help? (pp. 81-82)

In regards to coping mechanisms, the professional would focus on questions one (1) through eight (8). If the client came on his own volition, rather than by prodding or force, that shows that he/she is fully aware that his/her coping level is not optimally functioning. That is not to say that the client that was forced to come is not aware of his situation. Embarrassment, fear or feelings of shame could prevent an individual from receiving help even when he/she knows that help is desperately needed. When the second question is posed, the professional can begin to connect the emotional response to the physical problem. The answers to questions three (3) through eight (8) will tell the professional how the client copes with stressful situations and who, if anyone, serves as a coping mechanism for him/her.

Within African American[16] society, the Church has served as the core of the community by providing spiritual nourishment, serving the community at large as an agency of social services, providing a platform for politics and creating a safe haven from the majority society in which African American mores flourish and strengthen the bond among all who attended. In a study by Taylor, Lincoln and Chatters (2005), the relationships among African American church members were analyzed. It was noted by Chatters, Taylor, Lincoln and Schroepfer (2002) in a

[16] The terms African American and Black are used interchangeably.

previous study that slightly more than half of the respondents surveyed received help from both their family and church networks (Taylor, Lincoln and Chatters p. 502). For the 2005 study, 680 respondents to the National Survey of Black Americans (NSBA) conducted between 1979 -1980 and 1987-1988 were asked to be interviewed via telephone for a third time regarding their church relationships. The respondents in this sample ranged from 24 to 92 years of age (M=49.66, SD 15.93); approximately 67% of the respondents were women and 46.7% were married; and, more than half (56%) of the sample resided in the South (Taylor, Lincoln and Chatters, 2005, p. 505). With regard to socioeconomic status, the average income was $21,848 (SD= $16,973) and the average number of years of education was 11.80 (SD=3.337) (Taylor, Lincoln and Chatters, 2005, p. 505). The three variables measured were closeness, interaction and support. Approximately 278 respondents (40.9%) said that they were very close to their church members, while 326 respondents (47.9%) reported being fairly close (Taylor, Lincoln and Chatters, 2005, p. 505). Of the remaining 76 respondents, 68(10%) responded that were not too close to church members and 8(1.2%) reported not being close at all (Taylor, Lincoln and Chatters, 2005, p. 505).

For the variable of interaction, 174 (25.6%) of the respondents said they interacted with fellow church members everyday (Taylor, Lincoln and Chatters, 2005, p. 505). 226 (33.2%) interacted with each other at least once a week. Seventy nine (11.6%) reported interaction a few times a month, while 53 (7.8%) reported interaction of at least once a month (Taylor, Lincoln and Chatters, 2005, p. 505). 44 (6.5%) respondents interacted with church members a few times a year, 72 (10.6%) hardly ever and 32 (4.7%) never (Taylor, Lincoln and Chatters, 2005, p.505). Those reporting receiving support from the church often numbered 203 (29.9%) (Taylor, Lincoln And Chatters, 2005, p. 505). 210 (30.9%) reported receiving support sometimes, while 117

(17.2%) said hardly ever and another 150 (22.1%) said never (Taylor, Lincoln and Chatters, 2005, p. 505). It would be beneficial to know if those receiving support "hardly ever or never" were those that supply the support to those responding "often or sometimes."

When responses were broken down by the subscales of age and gender, older congregants and women interacted more with fellow congregants, and, as a result, received more support (Taylor, Lincoln and Chatters, 2005). The majority of the respondents, 88.8%, expressed being very or fairly close to fellow church members and 58.8% reported interacting with each other daily or at least once a week. The church family, then, plays a pivotal role in the lives of many African Americans. It is a social network in which the participants are well acquainted with one another and share the common bond of religion. Religion and strong social support are two strong combatants of suicidal ideation, as they both foster hope and inner strength.

It has been proposed by many that religiosity serves a coping mechanism or protective factor against suicide. Gibbs (1997) hypothesized that high social support, religiosity and southern residence all serve as protective factors against suicide for African Americans (Wingate, Bobadilla, Burns, et al, 2005, p. 615). Wingate, Bobadilla, Burns et al. (2005) considered the roles of religiosity in combination with southern residency and social support in suicide among African American men. The study employed the use of The National Comorbidity Survey (NCS) administered between September 14, 1990 and February 6, 1992. There were 5,877 participants that completed the entire survey, but, for this study, only African American and white participants were selected, reducing the number to 5,125 (Wingate et al. 2005). Of those 5,125 participants, 299 were African American men and 384

were African American women; 182 of the 299 African American men resided in the South (Wingate et al., 2005, p. 619). To measure religiosity, the following four questions and scripted answers were asked:

1) In general, how important are religious or spiritual beliefs in your everyday life? (very, somewhat, not very, not at all important)

2) How often do you attend religious services? (more than once a week, 1 to 3 times a month, less than once a month, never)

3) When you have problems or difficulties in your family, work, or personal life, how often do you seek spiritual comfort? (almost always, often, sometimes, rarely, never)

4) When you have decisions to make in your daily life, how often do you ask yourself what God would want you to do? (almost always, often, sometimes, rarely, never)

(Wingate et at, 2005, pp. 619-620)

To measure social support, the following (6) questions and scripted answers of a lot, some, a little, and not at all were posed:

1) How much do your relatives really care about you?
2) How much do they understand the way you feel about things?
3) How much do they appreciate you?
4) How much can you rely on them for help if you have a serious problem
5) How much can you open up to them if you need to talk about your worries?
6) How much can you relax and be yourself around them? (Wingate et al, 2005, p. 620)

The same six questions were asked again, this time replacing relatives with friends. To measure suicidality, participants were asked to answer yes or no to the following four questions:

1) Has there ever been a period of 2 weeks or more when you thought a lot about death either your own, someone else's, or death it general?
2) Has there ever been a period of 2 weeks or more when you felt like you wanted to die?
3) Have you ever felt so low you thought 4out committing suicide?
4) Have you ever attempted suicide? (Wingate et al, 2005, p. 620)

There were 2,896 Whites and 130 African American men that answered the questions regarding suicide. Data collected revealed that all 5,125 respondents scored 0.62 (SD= 1.02) on the suicide scale. Possible scores ranged from zero (0) to four (4), with four being the highest score possible (Wingate et al, 2005, P. 620). Order correlations were performed between suicidality and religiosity for the African American male participants. A regression analysis was then performed using social support, religiosity and region as independent values and suicidality as the dependent value. It was found that there was a positive correlation between region and religiosity, resulting in those from the South (compared to those in all other regions of the country) with a higher sense of religiosity (Wingate et al, 2005). There was a negative correlation between region and suicidality, resulting in those from the South having lower levels of suicidality (Wingate et al, 2005). Region did not have a strong correlation, positive or negative, with social support, though there was a positive correlation between religiosity and social support. Social support had a negative correlation with suicidality, which lacked a significant correlation with religiosity (Wingate et al, 2005, p. 621). The regression analysis showed that region was more of a controlling factor against suicide than religiosity, although those from the South reported higher levels of religiosity.

Tested on its own, religiosity failed to have a strong negative effect on suicidality. It could be proposed that religiosity is viewed by many as a component of social support

and regional mores. Assuming that this is a valid position, social support increases one's participation in religion. The effect of group size and solidarity upon an individual's sense of completeness should be considered when speaking of religiosity. In a study entitled *Suicide Acceptability and Religious Well-Being: A Comparative Analysis in African American Suicide Attempters and Non-Attempters* by Anglin, Gabriel and Kaslow (2005), 200 low income African Americans, 100 male and 100 female, who had either attempted suicide and were in psychiatric treatment or had no history of suicidal ideation or completed attempts, were chosen for the purpose of proving the hypothesis that religion has a negative correlation with the acceptance of suicide. The Demographic Data Questionnaire, an original measurement created by the authors, was used to assess gender, age, educational level, marital status, monthly income, religious affiliation, physical and mental health history and access to guns (Anglin, Gabriel and Kaslow, 2005,p. 143). The Suicide Acceptability Scale was modified to include three, rather than one, questions regarding the acceptability of suicide for men, women and oneself. The Spiritual Well Being Scale was also used with the Religious Well-Being (RWB) sub scale.

The 200 participants ranged in age from 18-64 (M=32.8). Fifty two percent were at least high school graduates, 43% were employed, 82% were not homeless, 56.5% had a monthly income between $500.00 and $1,999.00, 50.5% identified themselves as Baptists and the average number of children per participant was 2.4 (Anglin, Gabriel and Kaslow, 2005, P. 144). Using univariate analyses of variance (NOVA), the only significant differences in demographics was that the age of suicide attempters was younger (6.7years) than non-attempters and non-attempters also did not identify themselves as religious (Anglin, Gabriel and Kaslow, 2005). There was a significant negative correlation between religion and acceptance of suicide.

Univariate analyses of covariate (ANCOVAs) was used to compare suicide attempters and non-attempters on the Suicide Acceptability Scale and the RWB subscale. Attempters scored higher in acceptance of suicide and lower than non-attempters in religious well-being (Anglin, Gabriel and Kaslow, 2005, p. 145). Again, religion is seen as a protective factor against suicidal ideation and attempts. This study does use a socio-economically biased sample, all participants of low income and basic educational background and employment level, but does employ a scale that measures individual spirituality. Although religion is tested in a subscale, spiritual well being implies one's own connection to God, not a form of worship dictated to those that follow it. This allows for a more accurate assessment of a person's spiritual beliefs and their application of those beliefs in everyday life.

Revisiting question eight (8) from the list of 16 used to measure severity of suicide risk, "What are the client's environmental supports?" (Family, friends, Church, work recreation), a professional would want to ask an African American client about his/her support systems, specifically inquiring about family and friends, church attendance, a church family and his/her personal relationship with God. As the study by Anglin, Gabriel and Kaslow (2005) confirmed, religiosity has a negative correlation with suicidal ideation and the act of suicide itself. Even if the client denies close relationships with family and friends, it is highly unlikely that he/she will deny a relationship with God. Religion has strong, deep roots in the African American society. Behavioral health issues can distance this relationship, but it cannot erase it. Harold Koenig, M.D., a presenter at the Mental Health Needs for Returning Soldiers and Their Families conference held in Columbia, MO March 8-10, 2007, said that religion serves as a buffer to hopelessness, which is a huge contributor to suicidal ideation. Dr. Koenig stressed that religion should not be forced upon or introduced to clients, but, rather it should be recognized as a valid

and efficient coping mechanism. In *Treating Suicidal Behavior* by Rudd, Joiner and Rajab (2001), six (6) questions are suggested for determining a patient's level of hopelessness:

1. What is the structural content of the patient's suicidal belief system?
2. Why does the patient want to die by suicide at this moment?
3. What is the meaning attached to the precipitant by the patient?
4. What conditional rules/assumptions are operative (i.e. what conditions has the patient established to support his/her suicide?
5. What are the most prominent symptoms that essentially fuel the patient's upset and dysphoria?
6. What strategic and concrete steps could be taken to 1) disprove the conditional assumptions, 2) restructure the meaning associated with the precipitant, and 3) diffuse the most prominent symptoms? (p. 165).

If the precipitant is race related or a by-product of institutional racism, then it may be more difficult for the professional to diffuse the suicidal ideation without engaging in a conversation on race that produces coping mechanisms that the client is comfortable with and willing to use.

Jang and Lyons (2006) applied Agnew's general strain theory (GST) to African Americans and utilized coping mechanisms. Agnew's strain theory proposes that strain, a negative relationship with others in which the individual is not treated as he or she wants to be treated, produces a negative effect that leads to deviant coping behaviors to alleviate strain and subsequent emotions (Jang and Lyons, 2006). Agnew posited that anger is the driving force behind deviant behavior. This anger can be directed toward others or inwardly confined. Since

African Americans experience higher levels of strain due to accepted societal racism, GST can be applied to social problems confined to the African American community. The three (3) types of strain identified by Agnew are the failure to achieve positively valued goals; the removal of positively valued stimuli; and, the presentation of negative stimuli (Jang and Lyons, 2006, p. 252). Jang and Lyons (2006) noted that at the time of publication, only one study of GST and its relationship to African Americans had been published since the theory was introduced in 1992. Agnew (Jang and Lyons, 2006) went onto theorize that social support has a negative correlation with deviant coping behavior. Two (2) of the previous three (3) articles mentioned in this paper have concurred, showing that social support is a consistent buffer to suicidal ideation among African Americans.

For this study, Jang and Lyons (2006) used data collected from the 1980 National Survey of Black Americans (NSBA) to test these hypotheses:

1) strain is positively related to negative emotions
2) social support is negatively related to negative emotions
3) negative emotions are positively related to withdrawing behavior with inner-directed emotions being more strongly related to the behavior than outer-directed emotions
4) any direct effects of strain and social support on withdrawing behavior decrease when negative emotions are controlled for.
5) social support weakens the positive relationships (a) between strain and negative emotions (b) between strain and withdrawing behavior and (c) between negative emotions and withdrawing behavior (p. 258).

Of the 2,107 respondents, 1,281 were female. The survey asks the respondents if they or

their significant other have a personal problem that cannot effectively be dealt with. Of the respondents said 1,281 "yes," 763 said "no" and 63 responded "don't know", which was treated as missing data (Jang and Lyons, 2006, p. 259). Those that claimed to have a personal problem were then asked about their social networks, specifically family and friends. This same group was also asked about potential support from religious networks. The ordinary least squares (OLS) regression was used to test the hypotheses, using the method of listwise deletion of missing cases, resulting in a final sample of 1,211 respondents (Jang and Lyons, 2006, p. 261). It was found that strain and potential support had a measurable effect on emotions in the way originally hypothesized. The hypothesis of negative emotions and withdrawal behavior being more strongly related to inner-directed emotions than outer-emotions was not proven to be statistically significant.

Potential support was proven to weaken the relationship between negative emotions and withdrawing behavior, but, overall, potential nor perceived support significantly decreased strain itself. Broken down demographically, women were more likely than men to respond to strain with inner-directed emotions, such as depression and anxiety, and thus more likely to engage in inner-directed, self- destructive forms of deviance, such as drug use and eating disorders rather than outer- directed crime, such as violence (Jang and Lyons, 2006, p. 268). Men were found to report lower levels of negative emotions in reaction to personal problems than women, as Mirowsky and Ross (1995) found in a sample of mostly White Americans (Jang and Lyons, 2006, p. 267). African Americans of various socio-economic levels answered this survey, and it was found that the majority experience anger as well as depression in dealing with problems in their lives. Overall, it was found that strain is directly linked to negative emotions, which can be minimized by social support.

Another study involving coping mechanisms unique to African Americans was done by Utsey, Ponterotto, Reynolds and Cancelli (2000). Entitled *Racial Discrimination, Coping, Life Satisfaction, and Self-Esteem Among African Americans*, 213 African American college students, 137 of which were female and the remaining 76 male, completed four surveys to measure how they dealt with instances of racism. The Coping Strategy Indicator (CSI), the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS), the Index of Race Related Stress (IRRS) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) were completed by all respondents. The CST was modified from asking respondents to think about a worrisome situation to asking respondents to think of a situation when they experienced racism. To ensure that equal distribution of the types of racism would be reported, each group of college students was primed for a specific racism type (i.e. individual, institutional, cultural) (Utsey et al, 2000, p. 76). The three subscales of the CST, problem solving, seeking social support and avoidance, would be used later in a regression analysis. The RSE was also modified so that a higher score, not a lower score, on the survey were indicative of higher self-esteem.

After collecting data from the four surveys, it was found by Utsey et al. (2000) that women (M=2.24, SD=5.46) scored significantly higher on the CSI subscale of seeking social support than men (M=10.06, SD=.546) did. Utsey et al. (2000) also noted that it was statistically significant that the seeking social support CSI subscale and the cultural racism condition were the best predictors of racism-related stress (p. 77).

From this determination, it was hypothesized that the scores on the CSI subscales along with the subscales of gender and racism conditions could predict one's score on the IRRS, SWLS and RSE. This hypothesis did not prove to be true. The avoidance subscale score provided a negative

Score provided a negative beta score when applied to the SWLS and RSE. This suggests that the CSI avoidance subscale is the best predictor of life satisfaction and self-esteem for African Americans (Utsey et al., 2000, p. 78). One prominent reason for the hypothesis not testing true was the fact that the respondents were all students attending a Historically Black College or University. They may be biased in their low incidences of perceived racism because they were learning and maturing in a race-friendly environment. The age, as well, (M2 1.35) may have biased the results of the scores on the CSI subscales. Generally youth, especially those in a positive, upwardly mobile environment, will have a more optimistic view of life and themselves. The CSI subscale scores, therefore, maynot correlate with an overly upbeat assessment of the respondent's self.

All of the four articles analyzed for coping mechanisms unique to African Americans have listed social support, especially amongst women, as a dominant coping skill relied upon by African Americans experiencing problems in their lives. Separate or intertwined with social support is religiosity. Revisiting the 16 questions asked by Getz et al. (1983), when interviewing African American clients the professional must receive firm answers from the client regarding questions eight (8) (What are the client's environmental supports?) and nine (9) (Are there community resources to help?). It is important for the professional to differentiate between existing support systems, potential support systems and support systems that are available, yet unfamiliar, to the client. The client may realize, while making this distinction, that his/her existing support systems may be enhanced by potential and unfamiliar support systems. Likewise, a client that claims to have no support system, existing or potential, may be enticed to familiarize him or herself to available support systems that will become his/her main support system in the future. Again, religion should not be forced upon a client, but it should be offered

as a coping mechanism that can provide hope and social support through a church family. The professional should also introduce the concept of spirituality, meaning emphasize the client's individual relationship with God. The client may be resentful of church and even fellow church members who, in the eyes of the client, have done nothing to help him/her. This negative opinion of the church should not taint the omnipotent presence of God in the client's life.

Cultural Competency in Treatment

Now that coping mechanisms specific to African Americans have been identified as statistically significant and relevant to their treatment, the implementation of these skills in treatment will be examined. Few (2005) compared accessibility to and satisfaction of staff and assistance between African American and white residents in domestic violence shelters in rural Virginia. Rural residency in itself is a cultural factor to be considered, in addition to race. A Survey of African American women in Virginia found that 70% were unaware of domestic violence shelters in their local and neighboring communities (Wilson, Cobb and Dolan, 1987). This survey was not administered to white women, so it is unknown what their knowledge of domestic violence services was. The issue of advertising services to everyone in the community is addressed later by participants in the study. Three researchquestions guided Few (2005) in her study:

1) Are there differences in how Black and White battered rural women seek and receive help from their social networks and community?
2) How do battered rural women describe their experiences in domestic violence shelters?
3) What are battered rural women's perceptions of the efficacy of shelter staff and services (p. 490)?

Fourteen (14) domestic violence shelters in southwest Virginia agreed to take part in Few's (2005) study. Thirty (30) women, ten (10) African American and 20 White, agreed to be participants in

the 16 month study. These women completed a survey created by Few (2005) that asked about the forms of violence they had been subjected to by their partners, social support received, coping mechanisms and their overall experience in the shelter. The women then were interviewed, both individually and in "focus groups" of three (3) to four (4) women. All of the women were comfortable with the group interview. As Few (2005) noted, this allowed women to speak more openly about their experiences because they were shared experiences.

The interview protocol consisted of questions that asked the participants to recall, amongst other things, help seeking strategies, community response and shelter experiences. The answers to these questions were qualitatively analyzed to answer the three research questions previously mentioned. Five (n=3, Black, n=2 White) of the 30 women reported that they were aware of shelter services in their area. 12 of the white participants said that the police encouraged them to go to a shelter compared to only two (2) African American women (Few, 2005). 15 White women claimed using the police as a threat against their abusive partner, whereas no African American respondents reported doing so. For them, they felt that the police would not provide adequate protection.

Few (2005) went on to note that African American women had higher social support than their White counterparts. Nine of the ten (10) African American said that friends and family would provide temporary shelter for them whereas only five (5) out of 20 White respondents could agree with that statement (Few, 2005, p. 493). Four (4) of the ten (10) African American respondents came from communities where the African American population was less than five (5) percent (Few, 2005). These women reported experiencing racism outside of the shelter to Few (2005) and, in the beginning, were concerned about the racial attitudes of the staff. The remaining six (6) African American respondents resided in the only shelter in southwest Virginia with an all African American staff (Few, 2005). All of the respondents felt comfortable with the

level of care they received from the staff as well as the access to help they were given. One African American respondent summed up the experience with this quote," 'We're all just the same here. We see past the skin color and the bruises' "(Few, 2005. p. 495). This should be the mission statement of every mental health professional; in viewing the client as an individual first, the professional gains the advantage of gaining the client's trust which then leads to a smooth road to recovery.

In accounting for ethnicity in counseling, the professional must take into consideration his/her own ethnicity. Utilizing the process aspect, Collins and Pieterse (2007) look at the strengths gained in multicultural counseling competencies. The Multicultural Counseling Competenices (Sue, Arredondo & McDavis, 1992) are divided into three areas: knowledge, skills and awareness (Collins and Pieterse, 2007, p.l4). Specifically, Collins and Pieterse (2007) define cultural competency in counseling as a process that involves engaging in an honest exploration of one's experience of racial and cultural reality (p.15). This is an ongoing effort that requires the professional to be aware of the ebb and flow of the racial dynamics in society. It also allows the professional to confront any personally held prejudices he/she may have as well as become aware of the stereotypes associated with his/her own race. Collins and Pieterse (2007) believe that "applying the process perspective to the multicultural awareness component of the tripartite model, we derive a unique view of awareness (active racial/cultural awareness) that emphasizes engagement in and commitment to a daily process of increased and increasing levels of awareness" (p. 14). The training and implementation of cultural awareness in counseling has not become standardized. Some forms of training include reaction papers, journal writing, role playing, cross- cultural immersion experiences and cross-cultural simulation experiences (Collins and Pieterse, 2007). Feedback from participants suggests that these exercises do help the

professional, but with attitudinal changes being difficult to measure, it is often encouraged that training include different forms of training rather than focusing on just one form so that the professional can learn to apply cultural awareness in a variety of situations.

In addition to emphasizing the process aspect of multicultural awareness, Collins and Pieterse (2007) suggest employing the critical incident to further one's understanding of awareness in the moment. Critical incident analysis is described as" 'an observable human activity that is sufficiently complete in itself to permit inferences and predictions to be made about the person performing the act' "(Collins and Pieterse, 2007, p. 17). It involves two phases: the critical incident itself and the reflective examination of the incident (Collins and Pieterse, 2007). An example of a critical incident that a professional may encounter is as follows:

> An African American man comes to his weekly session, this time accompanied by his wife and teenage son. The counselor, a White woman, is pleased to see that her client has involved his family. She expresses her joy to the family, and in introductions, she says to the son, "Whoa, you're tall. I bet you play basketball. You even look like a basketball player, with your braids and, what do you young folks say-bling?" The son gives an awkward laugh, the client slightly rolls his eyes and the mother jumps in to say that he is on the basketball team, which is headed to the state championship for the second straight year. The professional is glad to hear the wife speak and moves onto begin the session, hoping that she won't say anything else offensive.

As the professional gathers her notes, she must begin the analysis of the incident. The first step is acknowledgement (Collins and Pieterse, 2007). The professional has acknowledged that she has said something offensive based upon the reaction from her client and his family. The second phase is confrontation (Collins arid Pieterse, 2007). At this stage, the professional should

confront her audience with her acknowledgement and encourage their acknowledgement of the situation as well. The third step is reflection (Collins and Pieterse, 2007). All four individuals need to reflect on the conversation, stating which words seemed offensive and why. The conversation may become muddled with comments about situations that happened outside of the office, which is great. All parties are opening up and reflecting on situations in which culture or race produced a negative response from someone. The professional should listen intently and add comments. She should listen to examples of behavior the client and his family find offensive and watch for them in her everyday life. This is intertwining the process aspect of multicultural awareness with the objectives of critical incident analysis. The fourth step is commitment (Collins and Pieterse, 2007), in which all individuals again acknowledge what happened; have openly discussed the situation coining to a mutual understanding and appreciation of each person's faults and strengths in regards to cultural awareness; and, finally, each individual commits to continuing to engage in open discussions regarding culture and race.

Conclusion

The strengths of the African American community lie in the social support systems of the family, Church and religion. These three strengths often overlap, which, in turn, creates a tight-knit community in which assistance is available on several levels. The dominant society, though, does not reflect this constant presence of aid. This can be remedied though the implementation of cultural awareness in the mental health field. Should an African American seek professional help for a mental crisis, he/she should be assured that the professional is culturally competent to see beyond stereotypes; to understand that certain treatment methods may be more beneficial than others; and, be willing to incorporate the client's strengths in the plan for recovery. Cultural competency is more than an understanding of a particular people, it is

an acceptance of the mores that group values and the commitment to include those mores in all exchanges.

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Black Music as a Reflection of Black Life: Black Political Music, Hip Hop & the Changing Same

Derek J. Evans

> "The most expressive Negro music of any given period will be an exact reflection of what the Negro himself is. It will be a portrait of the Negro in America at that particular time. Who he thinks he is, what he thinks America or the world to be, given the circumstances, prejudices, and delights of that particular America. Negro music and Negro life in America were always the result of a reaction to, and an adaptation of, whatever America Negroes were given or could secure for themselves." (Jones 1963, p. 137)

Within a decade of the release of the first rap record, rap music had solidified itself as a commercially successful commodity form. As artists were selling out record store shelves and concerts worldwide, those immersed in hip hop culture began making claims that rap had become the political "voice" of Black youth. Early political rap releases by artists like Kurtis Blow and Grandmaster Flash & The Furious 5 opened doors for the late 1980s success of political rap groups like Public Enemy and Boogie Down Productions. Public Enemy front man Chuck D has since labeled rap the "Black CNN", suggesting it is one of few ways that people could get informed about Black life in urban America. (256). Boogie Down Productions rapper KRS-One would later say that rap is the "last voice" of Black people in America (Toop xix).

These claims that rap is the "last voice" can be read in two ways: 1) as an assertion that it is the *only remaining* outlet for articulating messages about Black political realities in America and 2) that rap is the *most recently* employed means of communicating Black political discontent. Perhaps rap is both. By no means, however, is it the *first* "voice" of Black Americans. In *Black Noise* (1994), a pioneering scholarly work on rap and hip hop culture, Tricia Rose opens

the chapter on the politics of Black cultural expression with a brief examination of the Public Enemy song “Prophets of Rage”. In “Prophets...”, Chuck D raps “To the poor I pour it on in metaphors / Not bluffin', it's nothin' we ain't did before”. Rose points out that the lyrical passage “It’s nothin’ we ain’t did before” is a recognition by Chuck D of the “long history of black cultural subversion and social critique in music and performance” (Rose 1994, p. 99) – resistance, she further explains, that emerged as a response to the similar social situation of generations of Blacks living in a white supremacist society. In this paper I explore this relationship between the lived reality of Black Americans and the characteristics of Black American political music, then conclude with a brief section on rap music's unique place in post-Civil Rights politics.

Black Music as a Reflection of Black Life

It might be inaccurate to suggest that the current subordinate social location of Blacks in America is the same as Blacks' past subordinate social location. However, it would be equally inaccurate to suggest that they are not comparable. No doubt there have been huge transformations in the lived realities of Blacks in America, but as Howard Winant (2004) explains these changes have been marked with, at worst, the same goal of domination and, at least, the same resulting racial inequalities. Centuries of slavery gave way to emancipation to be followed by Jim Crow disempowerment. Decades of “separate but equal” gave way to the “great migration” of Southern Blacks to the to prosperous industrial North…and the creation of largely black urban ghettos. White racism weakened after World War II as anticolonial and antiracist movements strengthened and worldwide demographic shifts led to a browning and yellowing of US citizens, both of which set the stage for the Civil Rights movement. Yet, Winant argues, the Civil Rights movement took a number of “accomodationist” stances by 1) failing to push for

more sweeping policy and 2) acceding to many of the more "moderate" movement demands. In sum, while racial politics changed drastically, the underlying objective of domination remained intact.

Amiri Baraka (as LeRoi Jones) has argued that the styles and sounds of Black music evolved in response to transformations in the social world, including changes in the way Whites continue to dominate racial minorities. For example, he suggests that many African customs, philosophies, and ideas brought to America with the first generation of slaves had survived well into the 20th century as a result of new genres and artists borrowing elements from older musics and making them their own (Jones 1970, Ch. 5). For Baraka, there aren't "new" Black styles of music. Rather, Black music changes as Black reality changes and remains a reflection of "consistent attitudes within changed contexts" of Blacks in America (Jones 1963 p. 153). He refers to this process as "the changing same".

The earliest Black music in America had its roots in West African worksongs and religious music. Once Blacks were brought to America, such songs were suppressed by White slave owners and "after a time changed into other forms that weren't forbidden in contexts that were contemporary" (Jones 1963 p. 20). The slaves incorporated "acceptable" European secular and religious traditions into their own, creating a European/African "hybrid" music. This hybrid served as the immediate predecessor of later generations of slave music, including the spirituals and early rural blues.

In antebellum America, music served a number of emancipatory and political functions. The slave folk songs and spirituals were "the first cultural form of both resistance and affirmation of identity by oppressed blacks in U.S. history" (Pratt 1990, p. 53; see also Jones 1963 p. 42). Slaves were typically kept from engaging in any sort of independent activity,

individually or as a group, outside of those permitted by their masters. For example, the slaves, stripped of their native religions, were only allowed to openly follow Christianity, albeit a very narrow interpretation which seemed to condone the social standing of both master and slave.

This does not, however, mean that such social critique was not shared in the face of the powerful. Slaves used music as one way of responding to the control imposed upon them. Directly under the noses of the overseers, slaves would sing religious/Christian songs that could be interpreted as showing reverence for and submission to the God of the dominant culture, thus providing "proof that their [masters'] socialization efforts were having desired effects" (Neal 1999, p. 38). In reality, however, they were often singing about things like escape to the North, revolt, or they were sharing information about the Underground Railroad (Ellison 1989, p. 49-52). These calls of resistance were camouflaged through the creation of what Mark Anthony Neal calls "metaphoric landscapes" through the use of "mystified language" (Neal 1999, p. 2). The use of disguised messages found in the spirituals was one way that the slaves could create an additional social space wherein they had the power to denounce their oppression in the immediate presence of their oppressors.

"Emancipation" also created the conditions for the emergence of a Black Public Sphere that included social sites where emancipatory music could flourish. After emancipation, Blacks continued to be denied access to white social spaces, from public schools to places of business, and were often threatened with or experienced physical violence when they attempted to enter them. Out of necessity came the creation of covert, yet social, Black Public Spaces to counter this constraint and provide alternatives to the isolation that came with it (Neal 1999, p. 4).

A few of the more notable such spaces could be found within institutions where music was at the forefront of the social experience. For example, the Black church was a

"quintessential institution" around which the Black Public Sphere emerged before and after the Civil War (see also Jones 1963 p. 48). While Black slaves were critical of the brand of Christianity being forced upon them by their White owners, many accepted some of the basic tenets that coincided with a version of American democracy that they sought, one where "all 'men'" were created and treated equal. While the slaves were covertly singing about freedom from white domination, the formation of the Black church after the Civil War allowed for a site where Blacks could openly sing the same songs.

There were, however, divisions within the newly emerging Black Public Sphere as the Black church often "privileged the sensibilities of the liberal bourgeois" (Neal 1999, p. 6). Amiri Baraka (Jones) (1963) argues that this schism became wider in the post-bellum South, a time when, he claims, "the Negro…stood further away from the mainstream of American society than at any other time" (Jones 1963, p. 59). Not only did Blacks continue to be segregated from Whites as a result of Reconstruction and Jim Crow, but lower-class Blacks grew further away from many middle- and upper-class Blacks attempting to assimilate into the larger White society. The status of the Black church as the definitive site of the Black public sphere diminished as the larger population of lower-class Blacks resisted bourgeois criticism and authority and attempted to create social sites that privileged working and lower class sensibilities, hidden from both the Black church and the larger White public sphere. What emerged were informal and "underground" jook-joints, honky-tonks, and after-hours clubs – spaces where musicians refrained from imitating the music of the Black church, which itself had begun to imitate European musical forms, and instead borrowed more readily from African call-and-response and shouts creating an early version of what we today know as the blues (Jones 1963, Ch. 5; see also Pratt 1990, Ch 4).

Soon after "Emancipation" gave poor Southern Blacks the "freedom" to compete economically with poor Whites, Jim Crow stacked the deck against them. Many Blacks were forced to travel across the South in search of work, often times alone, navigating the social terrain as an individual as opposed to part of a slave collective. Being required to participate in a (Western) social reality that demands individuals look inward, Baraka (1963) argues, directly influenced the focus of Black secular music to change from that which highlighted the "exploits of the social unit" to that which drew attention to "the life of the individual and his individual trials and successes" (Jones 1963, p. 66). Coupled with the increased leisure time of many post-slavery Blacks and the growing use of instruments like the guitar and harmonica, the blues increased in popularity over the course of the latter decades of the 19th century.

Early blues and jazz soon became popular in Southern cities, but it too was transformed as a result of control from above. In New Orleans, for example, light-skinned Black "Creoles" were allowed to play jazz-like instrumental tunes (with a decidedly heavy European influence) and entertain in public spaces even before Emancipation. Shortly before the turn of the century, however, de jure segregation put a number of these entertainers, many of whom were working for whites, out of work. Blacks were divided – again – along class/status lines and these early instrumental performers separated themselves from the growing number of blues performers that were beginning to play in the urban saloons and jook-joints. While divided, Jim Crow required that both groups be in close physical proximity to each other (and away from whites), which led to the formation of more modern jazz as the European-sounding "instrumental blues" blended with classic blues.

Later, Black public spaces began to emerge in cities of the urban North – first Chicago and, later, cities like Saint Louis, Kansas City and New York. When poorer Southern Blacks

migrated in the early 20th century, they brought with them the same blues and "dirty" jazz that was met with disapproval by the Southern Black bourgeois and lighter skinned musicians. The response by the emerging middle-class of Northern Blacks was similarly unwelcoming. The separation of this segment of the Black Public Sphere allowed Blacks to continue their critiques of the social world, though changes in their social realities resulted in changes to the objects of criticism. Whereas "country blues" criticized inequitable treatment by slave owners and landlords, the new "urban blues" brought to light issues concerning unemployment and ghetto living conditions (Ellison 1989, p. 3).

During the first decades of 1900s, what became known as the "classic blues" had flourished in the Northern cities, spurred in part because of the attractive mobility narratives found within such songs. By the 1920s, blues and, especially, its Europeanized offshoots like jazz and ragtime had become increasingly popular, helping to spur the development of the recorded music industry which, in turn, helped propel the radio industry as white businessmen began to realize the commercial potential of narrowcasting to niche Black markets and Black-culture voyeurs (Neal, 1999). Nelson George (1988) notes that during the "Roaring Twenties" and the Interwar Period, jazz and "white jazz", or swing, became so popular among Whites that they were actually seen by their fans as "white music".Most, however, considered it "race music" and despite its increasing popularity it was met with still more criticism from above. White cultural critics especially and Whites more generally branded jazz as "vulgar, filthy, and suggestive". Black elites, ever aware of the images of blackness made visible to whites, agreed and felt that such displays by Black jazz performers "hindered the advancement of the race" (George, 1988 p. 8).

The Great Depression and World War II put a halt to the success of "race" recordings, but

relative prosperity following the war put radios in a large number of lower-class Black homes allowing popular Black music – now repackaged as "rhythm & blues" – to thrive. Initially, R&B remained "underground"…popular, but still outside of the larger commercial market for swing music which, by now, had according to Amiri Baraka "submerged all the most impressive acquisitions from Afro-American musical tradition" (Jones 1963, p. 181). Repulsed by the increasingly watered-down (white) sound of swing and other popular Black genres, many artists began producing music that intentionally sounded much more abrasive (Jones 1963, p. 188). Bebop and hard-bop, for example, took on a "willfully harsh" and "anti-assimilationist" sound as young musicians reacted against the "sterility and formality of Swing as it moved to become a formal part of the mainstream American culture (Jones 1970, p. 16). Bebop and R&B musicians were "reclaiming the critical edge of black communal expressions from the arms of mass consumer culture" and "recreating the vitality of the covert spaces of the rural South and 20th century urban North" as they toured the Chitlin' Circuit, a network of venues that provided the only outlet for Black musicians playing this brash new sound. Opponents, once again, "descended on the new music with a fanatical fury" (Jones 1963, p. 188). Members of the emerging Black middle class where quick to express their disdain. And for the first time, white music critics and writers were voicing their negative opinions of bebop not simply because it was a Black music, but because of the sounds and the content of the music. They failed, Baraka argues, to examine the music outside of "white middle-brow standards of excellence" and question bebop's "social and cultural intent" or the reasons why the particular sounds and content existed at all (Jones 1970, Ch. 1).

As the Civil Rights movement gained steam and the political terrain changed in the 1950s and 1960s, so did the nature of Black popular music. Attacks against Black leaders, artists and

intellectuals led to a reemergence of the Black church as a dominant (and safe) institution of Black expression. In turn, gospel music fused with rhythm & blues, linking the spiritual with the secular to form what would later be called “soul” music. Throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s Black artists on record labels like Motown and Stax found great success singing slick and “soulful” pop songs. But by the latter part of the decade, soul music had undergone a transformation that mirrored the changing and increasingly political rhetoric of the Black public sphere - “as the organized struggles for African-American empowerment intensified...the black popular music tradition began to convey the urgency of its historical moment” (Neal 1999, p. 62).

During the late 1960s artists like Curtis Mayfield, Aretha Franklin, and James Brown released Black protest music to both critical and commercial success. Neal (1999) argues that this segment of the Black Arts Movement culminated in the release of Marvin Gaye's album “What's Going On” in 1971. The reign of the Black Arts Movement would be brief. “What's Going On” was released in the wake of seemingly unrestrained state repression against a number of Black political groups, exemplified by COINTELPRO's (an FBI counter-intelligence program) surveillance of Martin Luther King and its infiltration into (and attempts at destroying) the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Black Panther Party. In addition, the years that followed saw a rise in corporate involvement in Black artistic expression and an ensuing depoliticization of popular Black music and art. That the content of Gaye's 1973 album “Let's Get It On” was overtly sexual and almost devoid of the political messages found on his album released just two years prior only makes sense given the larger social context, a “logical manifestation[s] of the effects of pervasive state-sponsored violence aimed, successfully, at destabilizing the most radical elements of the black protest movement” (Neal 1999, p. 66).

The increasing influence of corporate radio on Black music led to the beginning of what George (1988) described as the "death" of rhythm and blues and the reign of the "crossover" artist. By the early 1980's only a select few "urban contemporary" (Black) artists were garnering commercial success. Most of America, however, was unaware that for nearly a decade teens in New York were shaping the contours of an artistic subculture that featured its own brand of musical expression. Hip hop culture gave birth to rap music, a genre that, in the span of only a few years, would become a worldwide phenomenon and provide a platform for a Black (and Brown) underclass to tell their story.

Black Noise – The Rise of Hip Hop

Tricia Rose (1994) has suggested that part of the primary context for rap music's creation lies within Afrodiasporic artistic and expressive traditions. Many of the sounds of rap are similar to and can be rooted in West African forms of musical expression (Rose, 1994; Keyes, 2002; George, 1998). Words are recited in a poetic fashion with the cadence of the rapper's speech set to the heavy instrumental rhythms. Melody takes a back seat to drum beats, while singing is usually reserved as accompaniment. Rap is sometimes used to tell long stories or cautionary tales, a practice that some have traced back to West African griot storytellers. The African and early African American practice of "playing the dozens", where men boast about their masculinity and trade insults, today takes the form of the "battle rap" where rappers verbally spar to show their rap skills. "Toasting" or chanting rhythmically over instrumentals is a practice that can be traced back to early African-American slaves.

In addition, the urban context of New York City during the 1960s and 1970s also played a unique role in the creation of hip hop culture and rap music. In the 1950s government funding was approved for the creation of the Cross-Bronx Expressway, a thoroughfare intended to

provide a route from New Jersey to Manhattan by cutting directly *through* heavily working-class areas of the Bronx. By the late 1960s, many working class Blacks and Hispanics were forced to relocate south of the expressway to the increasingly deindustrialized South Bronx. Within the decade, the South Bronx would lose hundreds of thousands of jobs, income would dip to alarmingly low levels and youth unemployment would top 50 percent. Deteriorating housing projects were often burned to the ground by slumlords hoping to collect insurance money as post-Great society funding and services to aid those left in the aftermath had disappeared.

While the government and the outside world had become engaged in such "politics of abandonment" (Chang 7) of the non-White youth in New York City, the developing hip hop culture provided an outlet that helped lead many of them through the rough times. Disaffected youth flocked to parties where the earliest hip hop DJs, armed with two turntables and a crate of records, would provide b-boys and b-girls ("break dancers") and their audiences hours of relief from the dire realities of the streets of New York. By the late 1970s, DJ performances became increasingly more complex and entertaining, leading some to enlist the help of emcees to redirect dancers' attention from the turntable acrobatics to the dance floor. Charismatic members of a DJs crew would hop on the microphone and sing, lead the crowd in call-and-response chants and perform rhythmic rhymes over the percussive breaks of the records being spun. In 1979, The Sugarhill Gang released the first successful rap album and by the late 1980s,groups like Run-D.M.C and The Beastie Boys. were multi-platinum superstars. As the turn of twenty-first century approached, rap music would become one of the most successful of all commercial music genres.

Rap Music and the Changing Same

Not only did the urban context of New York spur the creation of rap and hip hop, but the larger post-Civil Rights context contributed to the development of what I call a Hip Hop Generation

political standpoint. The idea that there exists within generational groups a particular political standpoint is similar in many respects to the ideas put forth by feminist standpoint theorists. Patricia Hill Collins, for example, argues that "group location in hierarchical power relations produce(s) shared challenges for individuals in those groups" (*Fighting Words* 201). Subordinate group standpoints emerge not simply because members of a group share a particular demographic, but, she continues, because their shared challenges – products of their shared social locations – help create "similar angles of vision" (25) about the world around them.

While serving as editor of The Source magazine in the 1990s, Bakari Kitwana began applying the "Hip Hop Generation" label to Black Americans born between 1965 and 1984. As a group, he argues, they have shared experiences that have contributed to the creation of a specific set of attitudes, values, and understandings about the world. While the Civil Rights generation formed their values and identities around "traditional" institutions such as family and the church, today's Black youth are more likely to look to global images of (American) blackness in film, TV, and especially music (7). However, Kitwana also suggests that "the global corporate structure that gave young Blacks a platform [via hip hop] was the driving force behind their plight" (*The Hip Hop Generation*, 11). Increased visibility of pop-culture representations (and stereotypical misrepresentations) of Blackness in mass media since the 1960s occurred alongside and contributed to the development of new, covert, "colorblind" racism (Bonilla-Silva, *White Supremacy & Racism* 89-136; Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists* 1-8; Brown et. al. 36-43; Winant 39-49; Wise, *Between Barack* 83-110; Wise, *Colorblind* 63-152) and White backlash to increases in Black political power (Steinberg 97-164), both of which continue to create and reproduce racial inequalities . Kitwana proposes that these developments, coupled with the effects of post-Civil Rights era deindustrialization – increased unemployment, a rise in drug and

gang activity, and increasingly harsh policies aimed at curbing criminality – were catalysts for the creation of this generation's worldview (*The Hip Hop Generation* 25-83).

Much of the earliest rap records are littered with references to political issues associated with the Hip Hop Generation Standpoint. By the end of the 1980s, messages raps like The Stop The Violence Movement's "Self-Destruction" and Public Enemy's "Fight The Power" were topping Billboard's Year-End rap charts. These artists were some of the first in the Hip Hop Generation to grow up in a post-Civil Rights America and, thus, some of the first to recognize the Civil Rights Movement was not without its failures. Frustrated at their parents generation for being hyper-critical and out of touch with the realities of the post-Civil Rights era, early political rappers were, in fact, providing a voice for young Blacks, often times to audiences of millions.

The music industry was providing an opportunity for such artists to broadcast their views around the world. However, the same industry was also constraining in a number of ways. Criticisms of the status quo could only go so far before powerful interests would attempt to quell expressions of discontent. Following the release of N.W.A.'s 1989 song "F*ck The Police" and Ice-T's 1992 song "Cop Killer" - songs that paint a highly unfavorable view of law enforcement treatment of Blacks – both groups became involved in high-profile censorship battles. The group N.W.A. was even placed on an F.B.I. watch list. Meanwhile, industry analysts finally recognized that rap music had the potential for huge crossover appeal among whites and began heavily courting artists and offering them record deals.

My own research reveals that within 15 years, the political aspects of the most popular rap songs had become almost non-existent. For example, there were significantly less – only one (Chamillionaire's "Ridin'") – songs on Billboard's Year-End rap charts in 2005 and 2006 that addressed political issues to any significant degree. Over a dozen songs addressing political

issues were present on the 1989 and 1990 charts and many address these issues throughout. Further, political songs were relatively more successful during rap's commercial infancy. The #1 song in 1989 was the aforementioned "Self-Destruction" and the #4 song was "Fight The Power". Lastly, while a few recent popular songs address political issues, only the Chamillionaire song did so more than just in passing.

There are at least a few possible explanations for this decline in the presence of politics in popular rap music. For one, the success of rap singles depends, in part, on decisions made by music industry gatekeepers; these decisions follow a particular economic and cultural logic and are informed by a number of value judgments and cultural beliefs" (89) that can include stereotypical understandings of Black. Keith Negus suggests that music business personnel are often "uncomfortable with the politics of black representation" (86) and uneasy with artists that "keep it real" by writing lyrics littered with profanity and candid discussions of politics. As a result, powerful industry executives will often promote only those rap songs that are "safe" and non-controversial.

Further, early in rap's commercial ascendency white audiences had become a majority of rap's buying audience. In an era of post-Civil Rights racial politics and colorblind racism, many Whites are convinced that racism is a thing of the past and believe, for example, that because slavery is over the *plight* of Blacks in America is solely the *fault* of Blacks in America (Bonilla-Silva, *White Supremacy and Racism* 137-166; Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists* 75-101). It would make sense, then, that some Whites – even fans of rap music – might be uncomfortable listening to songs that, for example, address racism they believe does not exist. Record labels hoping to score a popular hit might, thus, prioritize "safe" rap songs featuring themes most White and Black Americans can relate to – dancing, sex, consumerism, etc. – over songs

featuring, for example, counter-hegemonic themes that will resonate with a much smaller percentage of consumers.

Changes in the structure of the same music industry that gave rappers the opportunity to voice their opinions must be taken into account as well. Since the 1980s, all forms of mass media have come under the control of fewer and more powerful owners – from fifty corporations in 1980 to five massive global conglomerates by the turn of the 21st century. As a result, some suggest the range of political ideas that are readily available to the public, including those within popular rap music, has become increasingly narrow (Bagdikian 11-26; McChesney 2-7; Klinenberg 20-24). During the 1980's, many major labels failed to sign rap artists because they did not see them as guaranteed profit-makers. As such, independent labels like Tommy Boy, Profile, and Sleeping Bag were responsible for many of the era's most successful releases, perhaps providing for a greater diversity of rap messages than in later years when major labels controlled a greater bulk of rap's releases (Negus 84-103).

So, to argue that rap was and remains a political voice requires at least a few qualifications. The most popular rap music does not address political issues to any great degree. If Baraka's concept of "The Changing Same" is still applicable, one might examine popular rap music and conclude that it is reflecting a Black reality where political dissatisfaction is absent and money, cars and sex with an endless number of beautiful women are present. As I explained above, it is a bit more complicated than that. Black reality is, perhaps, being distorted by a commercial music industry that acts as a carnival mirror. Meanwhile, the context of rap production continues to evolve. Underground "scenes", wherein rappers are able express themselves without the music industry intervening, exist in cities large and small all across the United States. The networking capabilities of the Internet have allowed for rappers to create

music in the privacy of their own homes and broadcast it to a potential audience of millions. As well, the POST-Hip Hop Generation will be coming of age in a few short years. This is a generation that will have experienced the optimism that may have come from the election of the United States first Black President as well as the pessimism resulting from growing up during the worst economic recession in 80 years. Only further research on the increasingly complex character of rap music will be able to determine the nature of its relationship to (or even the applicability of) the concept of The Changing Same.

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