A Re-Definition of Black Folks: Implications for Education.

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Various issues involved in the redefinition of black people, especially as it concerns their education, are addressed in this paper. The cultural context is especially pertinent, as it forces black educators to be explicit about the issue of a distinctive black subculture. Other issues addressed include the following: the society's and in particular, the public school's failure to prepare the majority of black people for the complex, technological society of the present or future, the concept of culture and the problems involved in its definition, factors that set blacks apart from other immigrants in America, slavery, black self-concept, federal funding for the education of the disadvantaged, the dual culturalization processes, language and communication systems and the preservation of culture, the role of the church in the development of the personality of black folks and the role of music — especially jazz and the blues. Various policy implications derived from the discussion are suggested. Among these are that there should be opposition to the philosophy and value system of this country based on the definition of black people which proclaimed as the supreme law of the land the status of black people as property. The importance of research on the concept of dual, simultaneous culturalization is also stressed. (Author/AM)
A RE-DEFINITION OF BLACK FOLK: IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION

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W.E.B. DuBois Conference
ON THE AMERICAN BLACK

October 4, 1974
Introduction

It is a pleasure and an honor to be a part of this significant Conference honoring our most prolific and prophetic scholar-artist, W.E.B. DuBois.

Such a conference on the American Black offers us an excellent opportunity to re-examine and re-emphasize some of his ideas and strategies. As Joyce Ladner has stated so well,

Blacks are at a juncture in history that has been unprecedented for its necessity to grope with and clarify and define the status of our existence in American society (Tomorrow's Tomorrow, p. 4.)

We now have more black people in traditional positions of power than any time since the Reconstruction, more elected officials at every level, especially in the South -- mayors, school superintendents, college presidents, deans, faculty at all sorts of colleges and universities. As black scholars, we have an obligation to provide these people with new arguments, different rationales, more accurate data, better theories and hypotheses so that they will have a basis on which to develop new, and hopefully more effective, policies and programs.

I offer my remarks toward that end.
Let me begin with several quotations that I feel will provide the frame of reference and background for my remarks entitled: A Re-Definition of Black Folk: Implications for Education.

First, The Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second sight in this American world, — a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, — an American, a Negro: Two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africani.America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face.

(DuBois, Souls of Black Folk, pp. 16-17)
Second, they (that unfortunate race) had for more than a century before been regarded as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race, either in social or political relations; and so far inferior, that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect; and that the negro might justly and lawfully be reduced to slavery for his benefit. He was bought and sold, and treated as an ordinary article of merchandise and traffic whenever a profit could be made by it. This opinion was at that time (i.e. signing of the Constitution) fixed and universal in the civilized portion of the white race.

(Dred Scott decision, quoted in Blaustein and Zangrando, p. 162).

Third, today education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments. Compulsory school attendance laws and the great expenditures for education both demonstrate our recognition of the importance of education to our democratic society. It is required in the performance of our most basic public responsibility, even service in the armed forces. It is the very foundation of good citizenship. Today it is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment. In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms...

We conclude that in the field of public education, the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.

(Brown decision, quoted in Blaustein and Zangrando, p. 436)
Fourth, it behooves the educators to first recognize that the purpose of any educational system within a society is to be supportive of its cultural philosophy.

The birth and development of this notion has been the direct consequence of the Euro-American culture, the vitality of its institutions and the successful reciprocal relationship between institutions and the dominant constituency. A chief socializing agent for Euro-America has been the public school system. The function of the education system has been to imbue in Euro-Americans the virtues of individualism, democracy, and a sense of self-determination. It is obvious that these values are and have always been taught by the schools as a mandate from the American economic system, which has been the dominant force and thus most efficacious entity within the culture.

(Gerald Thomas, in Black Scholars on Higher Education in the 70's, pp. 58-59.)

I am sure that most of you will recognize at least one if not all of these quotations. The first and perhaps most familiar is from the Souls of Black Folk written in 1903 by W.E.B. DuBois, the man we honor with this Conference. For any of you who have not read this book or his other works, I urge you to do so. He was that rare combination of creative artist and scholarly social scientist from whom all of us can still learn so much.

The second selection also describes black folks. It is the obiter dictum from Chief Justice Taney's decision in the 1857 Dred Scott case, which proclaimed and confirmed as the supreme law of the land the status of black people as property. In this famous (or infamous) passage, Justice
Taney felt compelled to go beyond what was required to decide the issue of the case and express this opinion shared by many in American society — then and now.

The other two quotes speak more directly to education. The first is from another famous Supreme Court decision — Brown v. Topeka Board of Education in 1954. Chief Justice Warren, speaking for an unanimous Court, spoke unequivocally about the central position of education in today's society. At the same time, the Court overturned the legally established segregation of public school facilities. Even though we may be disturbed at the pace and nature of the implementation of the decision, there can be no question that this was a significant milestone in the struggle of black people to achieve those rights we thought were guaranteed after the Civil War. It also underscores the dominant role the Supreme Court has had in that struggle.

The final quote places education in the perspective of the total society and its relation to culture. It is only within this larger context that I think we can talk about education and more specifically the role of public schools.

Since my primary interest, like DuBois, is the education of black people, the cultural context becomes especially pertinent. It forces us to be explicit about
the issue of a distinctive black subculture. Moreover, this approach means that we have to face the fundamental question, Education for What?

It would probably have been easier to begin with yet another litany of the failures of this society, and the public schools in particular, to prepare the majority of black people for the complex, technological society of the present or future. On almost any goal from the broad ones such as preparation for life or participation as a citizen in a democratic government to the more specific ones of reading, writing, and arithmetic, there is substantial evidence of failure. A recent report provides more evidence — as though we really needed it — of what has been consistently reported over the years: young people, seventeen years of age in rural areas or who are poor or black lag behind the national levels in the seven subjects traditionally taught in schools: science, writing, citizenship, reading, literature, music, and social studies. This data is from the summary report of the first five years of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a longitudinal study to measure achievement levels in the United States at four different age levels (eight, thirteen, seventeen, and young adult) and in different parts of the country.

The unemployment rates of young black people, even many
who may have graduated from high school, demonstrate yet again that the schools have not prepared people for the world of work. When the enrollment of black and poor students in colleges was greatly increased in the 60's and 70's, it soon became clear that too many of them had not been prepared for college either. Remedial programs seem to be needed at every level -- even second grade in some schools!

The argument that public schools have not been successful with other 'immigrant' groups should not give us much comfort. I have been persuaded by the evidence compiled by critics such as Colin Greer and Michael Katz, that schools have failed to provide access to opportunity for most poor children. If, however, we accept the fact that schools are an instrument of the economic and political institutions of the society and reflect the values of that system, I am not sure that we should be surprised at the perpetuation of the Great-School Legend. We should expect that those who control what is taught, how it is taught, who will be the winners and who will be the losers would work hard to maintain the status quo and the system in which they are successful.

The only advantage this argument might have for black people is to combat yet another insidious argument offered by Banfield among others. It states that black people are
merely the last of the immigrant groups to move to the city. It is just too bad that we got there when all the unskilled jobs had disappeared. But, if we will only follow the lead of the earlier immigrants, have faith in the public schools, we will eventually make it into the mainstream too. Since I do not believe that we are "just another immigrant" group, I cannot find any relevance in this argument whatsoever.

While additional review of this type of data plus some critique of the many conflicting and often inadequate evaluations of the various projects and programs might be interesting, though depressing, I cannot be a part of this pioneering effort sponsored by Atlanta University called in the name of DuBois without at least attempting to restate the issues and suggest a different approach on which policy could be based. So let me now turn to a brief description of the cultural context for education.

Culture is a concept we educators have borrowed from the anthropologists. They, like us, seem to have difficulty agreeing on a definition of this concept which will mean the same thing to everyone. For my purposes, these two definitions seem to be clear and complimentary:

Culture, in other words, is the way of life of a society, and if analyzed further is seen to consist of prescribed ways of behaving or norms of conduct, beliefs, values, and skills, along with the behavioral patterns
and in formities based on these categories—
all this we call 'non-material culture.'
Plus, in an extension of the term, the
artifacts created by these skills and values,
which we call 'material culture.'
(Gordan, pp. 32-33.)

Essentially a culture is a way of life.
In this sense, every individual is a culture
individual. Every child rapidly acquires the
language, the eating habits, the religious
beliefs, the gestures, the technology, the
notions of common sense, the attitudes toward
sex, the concepts of beauty and justice, the
responses to pleasure and pain, of the people
who raise him. These general guidelines for
living vary remarkably from culture to culture.
What seems pleasurable or just to an Eskimo
may seem painful or criminal to me; but once
a person has acquired a particular framework
of values, beliefs, and attitudes, it is
devilishly difficult to modify and impossible
to erase entirely. Individuals come and go;
cultures remain. To be sure, cultures
change—sometimes rapidly—but the process
is usually measured, if at all, in generations
and centuries. A basic axiom that underlies
anthropological thought is that culture is
always learned and never inherited.
(Keil, p. 2.)

Both of these anthropologists elaborate on their basic
definitions in different ways. The further analysis of
social structure and subcultures by Milton Gordon is
especially related to my ideas. He describes four
factors or social categories which influence the formation
and continuation of subcultures in this society:
ethnic
group; social class, rural or urban residence, and region
of country. (p. 47) The ethnic group, according to Gordon,
is the primary group through which individuals gain their
own identity. This is where a pattern of networks of groups and institutions is established. The national culture is refracted through each group's own peculiar cultural heritage. Most individuals are also members of a variety of secondary groups usually in the areas of economic life or occupations, civic and political activity, public schools and mass entertainment. He makes an excellent argument for the continued existence of ethnic groups in America further negating the myth of the melting pot and lending some support for cultural pluralism as a more accurate description of America.

If we accept Gordon's analysis of the social structure of this society with sub-societies based primarily on ethnicity, we can then ask the question about a distinctive black subculture. For me, there is no confusion or question. Yes, there is a black culture. In fact, I would like to argue that our unique experience in this country produced a singular, different kind of ethnic group and a unique kind of culture. Let me list some of these differences--

- we did not come to this country by choice
- we were not helped to become Americanized or naturalized like the other immigrants; in fact, everything was done to prevent our ancestors from learning and assuming the role of citizen
- we were prevented from bringing any of the tangible artifacts of our country with us (the 'material culture' described by Gordon) -- for the most part, our ancestors came naked which says something about Christian morality
we did not come from one country but from many with different customs, beliefs, and languages.

we were forcibly prevented from publicly celebrating our ancestral customs (no St. Patrick's Day for us)

we were blessed or cursed with a dark skin so that we were easy to identify and for a few years at least, impossible to blend into the white society.

we were defined as property not human beings.

we were given a name and an ethnic identity which had no rational basis except the economic need to justify slavery.

One somewhat amusing way to demonstrate conclusively how different we were from the other immigrants is to look at the difficulty the society had in deciding what to call us. With every other immigrant group, a hyphenated label was soon attached, i.e. Irish-Americans, Italian-Americans and such. Even the Indians, who may have suffered more than us, had one label or could use their Tribal name. The problem for us was difficult enough during slavery, but once there were "freed" slaves many of whom lost their easily identifiable black skin or kinky hair, the search for appropriate labels soon bordered on the absurd. We have been called blacks, Africans, black folks, negroes (with a small 'n') and Negroes (with a capital N), freedman, coloreds, colored people, Colored Americans, mulattoes, quadroons, octoroons, people of color, creoles, Ethiopians, Racemen, Negro-Saxons, African
Americans, Afri-co-Americans, Afro-Americans, Afra-
Americans, American Negroes, Negro Americans. These are
just the acceptable names -- the list of pejorative labels
is much longer, i.e. coons, bucks, boots, toms, niggers,
pigras, darkies, boy -- the lists seem endless.

The group label is important to the group in seeking
its identification, to the individuals who are a part of
that group, and to others for what it implies about the
status of both individual and the group. Grace Sims Holt,
a linguist who has given much of her time and thought to
the significant role of language in the history of black
folks, comments on the use of "Blacks," our most recent
label:

"Blacks" adoption of the noun "black"
 represents a determination to call them-
selves by any name other than that used
by whites. Whites, by virtue of their
power, define black as representing all
that's bad. Blacks wrest from whites
the power to define; ergo, the term
'black' is made respectable and good...
forcing the 'mainstream man' to use the
term 'black' (noun) in its more potent
form, you create in him uneasiness,
discomfort, and embarrassment, and
hopefully, as a result of that, a
realization of the full derogatory/dis-
criminatory effect of the term as he
uses it and a realization of changes in
the value, force, authority, and honor
of the terms, the derogatory connotation
of 'black' (adjective) within the semantic
system becomes equatable and comparable
to the despised and powerless situation
of blacks within the social system... In
taking The Man's strongest weapon and
using it to your advantage, you have
denuded him of verbal power, and by implication freed yourself from the psychological bondage that 'hate' labels impose. Freedom from psychological bondage forces a change in power relations which presages a drive for self-determination and status. Liberation begins with language.

(Holt in Rappin' and Stylin' Out, pp. 155-156.)

I will have more to say about language and communication for I agree with Grace Holt when she says, "power is the ability to redefine."

But let me return to those factors which set us apart from the others who came to America, the land of the free and the home of the braves. What made slavery in this country different from the many forms of slavery which existed in other societies over the centuries was the caste system that developed -- there was no way to work oneself out of the enslavement. There was no period of indenture which could be completed and then earn freedom. Once a slave, always a slave. Freedom came from running away or from the master who had the power to free the slave.

A second significant difference in slavery in the United States was the classification of slaves as property. Since America was a democratic and Christian country, the power holders felt compelled to find a rationale to justify the perpetuation of slavery. The government was founded on the legal and moral doctrines of the equality of man, the uniqueness of the individual, faith in the rational faculties
of all citizens to make decisions on their own behalf. These doctrines were strengthened by the Christian message which spoke of the brotherhood of man, of love for one's neighbor, of all men created in the image of God. How could these Christian, democratic men justify the enslavement of other human beings? We must never underestimate our adversaries for they were able to devise some very clever and persuasive arguments to support their position.

The first reason was religious in nature: "that the Negro was a heathen and abarbarian, an outcast among the peoples of the earth, a descendant of Noah's son Ham, cursed by God himself and doomed to be a servant forever on account of an ancient sin." (Myrdal, p. 85) As time went on, this argument did not seem sufficient so the definition of the slave as property was inverted. The syllogism went something like this: if the slave is property like a dog or ass, he cannot be a human being; only human beings can be citizens; therefore, he cannot be a citizen; if he is not a citizen, he has no rights or privileges for they are clearly, according to the Constitution, only for citizens. This was the reasoning used in the Dred Scott decision with the added message from Taney that under these circumstances not even respect was necessary or deserved.
After the Civil War and the adoption of the 14th, 15th, and 18th Amendments to the Constitution, the property argument could no longer be used with impunity. Fortunately for the apologists, a shift away from the rationale rooted in theology and history to biology and ethnology had begun prior to the Civil War. This argument seemed to be even more plausible and rational. Anyone could see that those with the dark skins could not read, could not speak "proper" English, could not conduct themselves according to the rules of the majority culture. It was easy to mix a connection between the dark skin which was a physical difference to a difference in biological and genetic makeup which had to be inferior based on the available evidence.

In spite of more recent evidence and exceptions to this theoretical position, the belief in biological inferiority continues. In fact, it was given a new, more on life just a few years ago by that illustrious university up north when the Harvard Educational Review published Arthur Jensen's article, 'How Much Can We Boost IQ and Scholastic Achievement?' In some ways it is too bad that we cannot approach this question in a more rational, scholarly fashion for there are real issues related to practices which should be investigated. At the present time, however, I see many more fruitful lines of inquiry.
for black scholars. I am not even sure that we should continue to spend our limited resources and energies on trying to refute the Jensens of the world. Once we accept their premises, which I feel are still rooted in the property conception, we can never prove that we are truly human.

The other side of the nature-heredity rationale has also received attention over the years --- i.e. nurture or environment as responsible for shaping individuals, groups; and society. This side of the argument had a re-birth in the 1960's when America re-discovered the poor. Michael Harrington is generally given credit for arousing the conscience of American with his book, *The Other America*, published in 1962 along with James Conant's, *Slums and Suburbs*, and his alarm of "social dynamite."

One only had to look at the conditions in the inner cities (the new euphemism for the slums) to assume that living in such surroundings had to have some detrimental effect on learning: overcrowded apartments, dilapidated housing, high unemployment, female-headed household, one parent families, welfare recipients, no fathers in the house, no books, too much noise and distraction, loud music, dirty streets, poor health, high infant morality, all sorts of diseases, disorganized families, inadequate mothers, men on the streetcorner, unstable and weak black
families, dependency, illegitimacy, no sense of time; garbage uncollected, poor lighting in the streets; there was no end to the list of "bad" conditions.

All of these seemed to be the opposite of the conditions under which the middle class white child -- the norm by which others would be judged -- grew up. A new set of labels entered our vocabulary based on that norm: the Culturally Deprived Child of Reissman, the Disadvantaged Child of Deutsch, the Deficit Child, the Deviant Child, the Non-reader. In Dark Ghetto by Kenneth Clark, all the social and pathological arguments were defined in clear and precise terms by a black scholar. Blaming the Victim became the name of the game.

Out of this emphasis on the deviant and deficit child grew a new justification for self hatred and the negative self concept. Soon all black children were seen to possess a negative view of themselves with no power to control their own lives or destiny. At the time we did not raise our voices loudly to question what might be the reason for the social scientists to continue this approach.

The 'Self-hatred' thesis can be categorized with the many other myths that are propagated about Black people. It falls within the realm of institutional subjugation, that is designed to perpetuate an oppressive class. For, so long as the Black community is perceived as being composed of 'matriarchates,' 'self-haters,' 'criminals,' 'deserters,' 'oversexed individuals' and the like, then the
perceived 'institutionalized' pathological character is more than adequate justification for its subordination.

(Ladner, pp. 107-108.)

Again, may I remind you that we should not underestimate the power of our adversaries. The invention and perpetuation of this myth of self-hatred reminds me of the myth of the slave, Sambo -- the docile, happy, accommodating slave who did what his master wanted. Why, if this was in fact an accurate picture of the slaves, did the master feel the need to have overseers with guns and constantly guard those docile beings? Maybe he did not believe that myth anymore than the self-hatred one but he did know that some of the victims would believe the stereotypes and his control would be just a little bit easier. Maybe some of his fears about blacks were justified -- i.e., that if opportunities were in fact given in equal measure, the blacks would "takeover."

Look around at what has happened to those professional sports where blacks have been allowed in -- baseball, football, basketball are now dominated by black players. Given just a little more time and opportunity we may see the same phenomena in tennis, hockey, and golf.

But back in the 60's the diagnosis of the problem seemed clear to those who determined policy and programs. The following quote is typical of the approach used,

Before we can expect any permanent improvement in the educational performance of Negro
children, we must strengthen Negro family life, combat the cultural impoverishment of the Negro home, and enlist the support and cooperation of Negro parents in accomplishing this objective. More intensive guidance services, utilizing Negro personnel are required to provide the socializing and supportive functions that are currently lacking in many Negro homes.

(Ausubel and Ausubel, in Education in Depressed Areas, pp. 135-136.)

Many of us truly believed that this was an adequate definition of the problem. If only the conditions of the ghetto were changed, equality of opportunity would indeed be assured. Many of us worked hard to persuade the power brokers that we could overcome such conditions and succeed just like the white folks. Maybe our vision was a little clouded to permit us to still put so much faith in education to change the world. Part of our cultural heritage was showing. We still shared that deep faith in education that our slave ancestors had. Because the slave was denied access to any kind of learning for so long, he tended to invest almost magical qualities in the power which could come from education. Grier and Cobbs in Black Rage express the same thought,

To have maintained a fervent interest in education and a belief in the rewards of learning required a major act of faith. Black people in América have been nothing if not idealists and devotees of the American dreams. It is a source of wonder where such unending faith had its origins.

(Cobbs and Grier, p. 141.)
Even though we may have been naive, there were significant changes which gave us reason for hope. There had been a series of Supreme Court decisions, especially in education, which forced the nation to live according to its own Constitution, culminating in 1954 with what appeared to be the final word on legally imposed school segregation.

There was also a complete turnabout on the part of the Federal government in regard to funds for local communities, especially school systems, earmarked for the "disadvantaged" and the "poor." First there was the Juvenile Delinquency Act of 1960 which made funds available for projects like Mobilization for Youth and MARYOU—entirely new, and different approaches to the problems associated with young people. Then in 1964 we had the Economic Opportunity Act with its many programs which have now become household words: Headstart, Jobs Corps, Neighborhood Youth Corps, Peace Corps, Vista Volunteers, Community Action, and CAP agencies with that glorious phrase -- "maximum feasible participation." A new Vocational Education Act was followed by one for Higher Education creating another set of programs -- Talent Search, Upward Bound, Special Services for the Disadvantaged. And for a while, increased scholarships and, grants for poor students to go to college were available from the Federal government.
The climax came with the monumental education bill, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, with a billion dollars just Title I. Just for Poor Kids. It appeared, that for the first time, schools and communities would have enough money to make a difference for those children who had not succeeded in the past.

The federal educational legislation was buttressed by a new Civil Rights Act and a wide-reaching Voting Rights Act. It appeared that both the Congress and Executive branches were finally joining the Supreme Court in creating a new climate and laws to assure the exercise of those rights guaranteed in the Constitution for all citizens.

At the same time there was a shift in the strategies within the black community. The 1960's were a time of ferment, of boycotts, of riots, the March on Washington, Black Power, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, the Black Panthers. There was extensive desegregation of public schools in the South despite massive resistance; continued court action, increased enrollment of black students in colleges, especially in white institutions in the North. A new sense of identity emerged symbolized by natural hairdo's and a search to discover the past -- the roots of our African heritage.

There were many similarities among the young college students who were in the forefront of this search for a
new identity and the third generation phenomena seen in other immigrant groups. Consider the possibility, still to be substantiated with scholarly research, that a good many of the college age and young adults of the 60's were third generation middle class, defined this time by the larger society standards not just those of the black subculture.

Their grandparents achieved middle class status (the first generation after slavery) through professions serving primarily segregated communities with relatively few gaining admittance to predominantly white colleges.

Their parents had greater opportunities to participate with whites in colleges and to a limited degree in employment and even some social situations. For the most part this was the generation of World War II when there was a breakthrough in the legal barriers to participation in society. While socially this generation remained protected from some of the greater discriminations during their growing up years, they were exposed to some contact with the white world. At the same time, being unsure of the Americanism of their heritage, there was a denial of their roots while still being imbued with the American tradition of hard work and individual worth. This was the group that attempted to prove their acceptance by the standards of the white society — many succeeded in moving
into the middle class, the Black Bourgeoisie. Many came from behind the veil but not without a price.

This second generation also internalized the middle class values and used Dr. Spock along with their white contemporaries to raise their children. Independence of thought was encouraged. For some, sufficient economic security permitted involvement in a variety of organizations both within the black community and larger white culture and a relatively more comfortable life for their children.

For the third generation the situation was different. Secure in their Americanism, there was a tendency to re-evaluate the heritage of their grandparents and slave ancestors. They were willing to embrace what their parents may have rejected or tried to avoid. Thus we find an acceptance of their African heritage, the adoption of natural hair styles, a bold insistent push for recognition as legitimate leaders of their own destiny. Their presence in white colleges created a new and different experience for all.

With all this activity on so many fronts, why do we still have reports like the one from the National Assessment? Why after ten years of more money for education than ever before, do we still feel that public school systems are not doing an adequate job, that newly appointed black administrators are inheriting bankrupt systems?
I am sure there are many reasons. I will only cite two. One, for which there seems to be much evidence, is that most, if not all, the money went to the same institutions and people who had, in effect, failed the poor for generations. There was very little attempt at basic or fundamental reform of school systems. Re-examination of goals or creation of new delivery systems was not given serious consideration. The requirement that poor parents be included may have come too late for real impact. The whole idea of "allowing" poor parents to do what rich parents had always had the right to do seems to me just more evidence that we had still not earned the right of respect talked about a century ago by Taney.

Gordon and Wilkerson in their now classic review and critique of the compensatory programs in operation in the 60's cite another reason:

They (i.e., compensatory programs) are attempts to compensate for, or to overcome, the effects of hostile, different, or indifferent backgrounds. Their aim is to bring children from these backgrounds up to a level where they can be reached by existing educational practices. In other words, the unexpressed purpose of most compensatory programs is to make disadvantaged children as much like the kinds of children with whom the school has been successful, and our standard of educational success is how well they approximate middle class children in school performance. It is not at all clear that the concept of compensatory education is the one which will most appropriately meet the problems of the disadvantaged. What is needed is not
so much an attempt to fill in the gaps as an approach which asks the question: what kind of educational experience is most appropriate to what these children are and to what our society is becoming? (pp. 58-59.)

The key phrase in their quote is, "what these children are and to what our society is becoming." It seems to me that the framework for all of these programs for the black poor reflect the value orientation of a society which is still rooted in the property definition of black people. The labels changed but not the fundamental belief that there was something wrong with them -- the children and their people -- not the basic institutions of the society and the cultural value system on which it is based. We were not in a position to object to the earlier definition for we did not yet have the kind of power which "could have only come from the ability to provide the definitions of one's past, present and future." (Ladner, p. 2.) I propose that we take another look at DuBois' double-consciousness and see if there may be new ways to start our own re-definition.

It was two white scholars studying language of black children who first suggested another theory about culture which would differ from either the biological inferiority or social-pathological approaches. Stephen and Joan Baratz in an article in the Harvard Educational Review, suggested a "culturally different" model which they defined as a
"coherent, structured distinct American Negro culture which represents a synthesis of African culture in contrast with American European culture from the time of slavery to the present day." (p. 127.)

While this theory seemed to offer some hope of getting away from the property definition, it was Charles Valentine, an anthropologist who suggested another model which he calls the bicultural or dual culture approach—a process through which members of a subcultural group are simultaneously enculturated and socialized in two different ways of life.

Biculturation strongly appeals to us as a key concept for making sense out of ethnicity and related matters: the collective behavior and social life of the Black community is bicultural in the sense that each Afro-American ethnic segment draws upon both a distinctive repertoire of standardized AfrO-American group behavior and, simultaneously, patterns derived from the main stream cultural system of Euro-American derivation. Socialization into both systems begins at an early age, continues throughout life, and is generally of equal importance in most individual lives. The obvious ambiguities and ambivalences of all this are dramatized and sharpened by the fact that mainstream Euro-American culture includes concepts, values, and judgements which categorize Blacks as worthy only of fear, hatred, or contempt because of their supposedly innate characteristics.

(Valentine, p. 7.)

I would like to elaborate on this bicultural theory suggested by Valentine by describing some of the conditions, first of slavery and then of the deliberate
discriminatory system following Reconstruction, which produced a distinctive culture and repertoire of responses by which black people were able to survive and to thrive in two worlds. For me, there is persuasive evidence that we had no choice but to create our own black culture in order to survive physically and psychologically, to give meaning to life. At the same time, we had to devise ways to live and to communicate in the majority culture under a set of circumstances different from any other group in America. What has emerged is a synthesis of our African heritage and American society—an unique dual enculturation process. For a few—probably more than we realize—have by conscious effort achieved a merging of their double selves into a better and truer self, comfortable in both worlds, able to live on both sides of the veil. For some the struggle to master both cultures seems possible but question whether the battle is worth the prize. For most, the warring ideals, unreconciled striving continues with only dogged strength sustaining body and soul.

Over the years, there has been disagreement among white and black scholars about the preservation of our African heritage in passage and in slavery. It is true that certain elements of the African culture were destroyed.
There was no way to maintain the political and economic institutions or marriage and family life as developed in Africa under slavery. But to equate these institutional facets of culture or even the tangible artifacts which were left in Africa with the whole concept is to misinterpret the meaning of culture. Here, as with many of the myths and stereotypes invented by our adversaries, there was a reason. Herkowitz in the opening statement of his book, The Myth of Negro Past, states,

"The myth of the Negro past is one of the principal supports of race prejudice in this country. Unrecognized in its efficacy, it rationalized discrimination in every day contact between Negros and whites, influences the shaping of policy where Negros are concerned, and affects the trends of research by scholars whose theoretical approach, methods, and systems of thought presented to students are in harmony with it."  

(p. 1.)

His voice was not the one heard by the policy makers, however. Instead, it was a statement like the following from Glazer and Moynihan in Beyond the Melting Pot which became popular and accepted as truth,

"But more important, it is not possible for Negros to view themselves as other ethnic groups viewed themselves because -- and this is the key to much of the Negro world -- the Negro is only an American and nothing else. He has no values and culture to guard and protect."

(p. 50.)

But times are changing. We now have books like The Slave Community by John Blassingame which talk about the
life of the slaves from inside the slave quarters; Joyce Ladner's insightful study of black girls showing up in a housing project in St. Louis; linguists like Grace Holt and Claudia Kernan documenting the verbal skills evident in black communities -- all are calling attention to our dogged strength rather than our deficiencies as measured by the tape of another. Let me now suggest some dimensions of the dual culturalization process which have developed over the years and have implications for policy directions in education and other fields.

For me the best example is in the area of language and communication. In many ways, the essence of the African culture which was preserved is also evident through our language. As most of you know, the African countries from which most of our ancestors came were not literate societies. Unlike the Jews who carried the printed Torah and Bible with them wherever they went, our ancestors came from a different tradition. As slaves they were prohibited from learning to read which tended to enhance the already existing oral tradition. Charles Keil describes how we as a group differ in this respect from whites,

... the shared sensibilities and common understandings of the Negro ghetto, its modes of perception and expression, its channels of communication, are predominantly auditory and tactile rather than visual and literate. Sensibilities are of course
matters of degree, and the sense of 'rationality' of a particular culture can't be measured precisely. Nevertheless, the prominence of aural perception, oral expression, and kinesic codes or body movement in Negro life -- its sound and feel -- sharply demarcate the culture from the irrational white world outside the ghetto.

In white America, the printed word -- the literary tradition -- and its attendant values, are revered. In the Negro community, more power resides in the spoken word and oral tradition -- good talkers abound and the best gain power and prestige, but good writers are scarce. It is no accident that much of American's slang is provided by Negro culture. Nor is it strange that Negro music and dance have become American's music and dance.

(pp. 16-17.)

During slavery, there was a need for the master and the slave to develop some kind of communication in order to get the job done for the master and for the slave to survive. Here was perhaps the first evidence of our creative and adaptive skills. Some English, the language of the master, had to be taught and learned by all the slaves no matter what their native tongue. Just enough had to be learned to understand the orders given. It seems plausible to me that this might explain why colored folks use what modern day linguists call a "restricted code" i.e. short curt sentences rather than elaborated talk when confronted with whites or people in authority. For hundreds of years "yessir" was sufficient talk for the slaves; and the master didn't hardly engage in long
philosophical conversations with his slaves. Thus, one form of communication and language developed for this sphere of the slave's life. Evidence of this type of communication is still prevalent when some Blacks are confronted with the institutions of the white majority culture. Could this be a partial explanation for some of the difficulties experienced by black children in school?

At the same time, the slave had to develop some protection against the physical threat of extinction and the psychological damage of the enslavement. What better way than to use the white man's language as protection against this kind of potential destruction. Let me quote Grace Holt again,

The Negro had to find a different type of resistance in order to continue to multiply and grow in spite of every sadistic effort to destroy him in some areas... Adapting to an unbearable and unbeatable system therefore necessitated the production of a special form of communication interaction between master and slave. Blacks were clearly limited to two responses: submission and subversion, since overt aggression was punishable by death. There was no process by which grievances could be redressed. White verbalizations defined blacks as inferior; whites regarded only black responses acceptable to them.

Blacks gradually developed their own ways of conveying resistance using The Man's language against him as a defense against sub-human categorization. The sociocultural context formed the basis for the development of inversion as a positive and valuable adaptive response pattern.
Blacks clearly recognized that to master the language of whites was in effect to consent to be mastered by it through the white definitions of caste built into the semantic/social system. Inversion therefore becomes the defensive mechanism which enables blacks to fight linguistic, and thereby psychological, entrapment. (Rappin' and Stylin' Out, p. 153.)

Grace Holt goes into some detail about "inversion" which became for the slave (and continues for many Blacks today), one of the most creative and adaptive mechanisms for dealing with discriminatory situations. The heart of the process, familiar to every black person no matter where he is in relation to mainstream culture is "the contrast in referential and contextual functions. In essence, the idea is to make any word of denigration used by the power group take on shades of meaning known only to the inverter. As a consequence, the most 'soulful' terms of referents in black usage today are those which traditionally have been the symbols of oppression." (Holt, p. 154.) The use of the word, "nigger," is no doubt the best example. We use it as a term of endearment as well as derision. The listener must, however, be in tune with the tone of voice, the context and situation in which it is used to understand the meaning intended. The illustration of the use of "Blacks" cited earlier is another example of this process. One now in current vogue among young people is "b*d." Could this use of inversion,
so well developed in most black children, be yet another
reason for difficulties in school with teachers unfamiliar
with the rules of the game or unwilling, if they are
black, to recognize this remnant of our culture in their
understandable eagerness to help children adapt to the
majority culture?

Another dimension of the communication system first
developed by the slaves and continued by the freedmen was
the use of nonverbal communication. There had to be
many times when it was not safe to speak at all, yet a
signal had to be given in the presence of the white
masters. Thus, there developed a more extensive repertoire
of facial expressions, eye contact, body movements as ways
of communicating among each other than white people ever
had to develop. The meaning of this behavior was
deliberately hidden from whites. The fact that body
expression was highly valued by the countries of our
ancestors made it easier to build on such skills. We
are all familiar with the way a black mother can communicate
with her children with a cut of the eyes, the meaning of
standing akimbo, the way young men can walk to convey
different meanings and intentions, the look across the
room between blacks which makes a comment about a speaker
without a word being spoken. Could this highly developed
nonverbal behavior be misunderstood by some teachers not
familiar with the culture out of which it has developed?
Could conclusions be too easily reached based on faulty assumptions? Have we as black scholars explored the meaning and value of the nonverbal behavior of black folk so that it could be used more effectively in the teaching-learning process?

But our ancestors did not live in just the one world of the master and the slave. He had another life in the slave quarters which allowed for and encouraged the development of another communication system. For too long we have accepted the judgment of outsiders as to what life was like in the slave quarters. We were taught to be ashamed of whatever went on without realizing that this was yet another clever way for our adversaries to maintain the status quo. If we could be made to believe -- as most of us were -- that we had no past, no culture, no life that we controlled, no family in the slave quarters, no sense of who we were except as defined by the outside world, then control would be so much easier.

We are only now willing to look inside the slave quarters and the present day black communities to see and make legitimate that part of our cultural heritage and development. It was in the slave quarters that a sense of identity developed to provide some basis for the slaves to view themselves as worthy human beings. Here, through a positive group identification, the slave could find some
source of personal esteem without which one cannot live.
The black community of today -- not just the "ghetto or
low income community" but the total black community
irregardless of class or geography -- continues to play
the role described by Blassingame in *The Slave Community*.
The most important aspect of this group identification was that slaves were not solely dependent on the white man's cultural frames of reference for their ideals and values. As long as the plantation black had cultural norms and ideals, ways of verbalizing aggression and roles in his life largely free from his master's control, he could preserve some personal autonomy, and resist infantilization, total identification with planters, and internalization of unflattering stereotypes calling for abject servility. The slave's culture bolstered his self-esteem, courage, and confidence, and served as his defense against personal degradation.

(p. 76.)

A part of that life in the slave quarters was the development of verbal skills. There were few if any artifacts, objects, or even instruments until the slaves found ways to improvise drums and other musical instruments. Consequently, they had to depend on themselves for entertainment and release from the oppressive conditions which they faced daily. The folk tales were repeated time and time again; new ones invented and improvised. Songs were written and sung without accompaniment -- work songs, joyful songs, spirituals, the blues. Double meanings were incorporated into the words of the spirituals to fool the white man. In addition,
verbal games were invented to pass the long evenings. Today we see evidence of these same verbal skills—playing the dozens, signifying, inversion, rapping are some of the labels present day linguists have given to these verbal arts. *Rappin' and Stylin' Out* is an excellent collection of language studies outside the majority culture's institutions. We need to support more studies like these based on the assumption that our language is not deficient or 'bad' English or any of the other negative labels imposed by others. We need to recognize the richness of the language used in the black community as descendant from our creative slave ancestors. We need to examine the verbal arts, highly developed in most black communities especially by young black males, to see how those skills can be used as a basis for learning to cope with the majority culture and its emphasis on the printed word.

Knowing what we do about the verbal skills of black children, how could any of us have allowed the label of "nonverbal" to be applied to black children?

A second facet of our past and present that deserves our attention in exploring the validity of the dual culture thesis is the role of the black church. Here in the South, more so than in the North, the continued dominant role of the church in the life of black folks is obvious. The Southern preacher continues to play a major
leadership role in both worlds. It is no accident, it seems to me, that our most effective black leaders have come out of the tradition of the Southern black preacher. The church, then and now, played a significant role in the development of the personality of black folks:

A primary function of the church was to nourish and maintain the souls of black folk by equating them with the essence of humanness. Religion was molded into an adaptive mode of resistance to the dehumanizing oppression, degradation, and suffering of slavery. The black church developed as the institution which counteracted such forces by promoting self-worth and dignity, a viable identity, and by providing help in overcoming fear.

Its ancillary functions were aimed at making survival endurable, it was through these secondary functions that the church became the matrix out of which black society was to be cohesive by developing the social contacts necessary to provide intercourses between isolated plantations, by providing an outlet for musical and linguistic expression, and above all by concealing from the dominating eye of the master the activities of his slaves, regardless of their form or content. It was in this latter cast that a language code emerged to facilitate in-group communication and conceal black aspirations from the dominant white society. The black church thus also served the need to be devious in a white world.

(Holt pp. 189-190.)

After slavery and the end of Reconstruction, the church continued to play this role. Under the oppressive conditions of Jim Crow and discrimination in all phases of life, black folks still needed to be devious, still needed to use inversion, still needed the protection of
their black community to develop new strategies and plans for freedom was still to be achieved.

We as educators need to look at the various forms of language that were highly developed in the black church such as the call and response of the preacher and congregation. Why not use this form of communication in teaching black children how to decode the printed words of standard English? Have our teachers listened to black children and teenagers in their own milieu to find out how they do communicate with each other?

Let me mention another facet of our culture which illustrates the synthesis of African heritage with the American society as a result of the dual enculturation process -- music, and more particularly, the blues and jazz. As Leroi Jones (Amanu Baraka) stated:

It was, and is, inconceivable in the African culture to make a separation between music, dancing, song, the artifact, and a man's life or his worship of his gods. Expression issued from life, and was beauty. But in the west, the triumph of the economic mind over the imaginative, as Brooks Adams said, made possible this dreadful split between life and art. Hence, a music that is an 'art' music as distinguished from something someone would whistle while tilling a field. (Jones, p. 29.)

There are at least two books which should become required reading for anyone attempting to find new ways to educate black children -- they differ in emphasis, appear contradictory, provoke differing opinions but are important
to our understanding of our own past: AmamuBaraka's (Leroi Jones) Blues People and Charles Keil's Urban Blues. They demonstrate the connection of black culture with the African past and elaborate on the contribution of music to mainstream culture. These books are important for their content as well as suggesting a process or method of teaching-learning to which I do not feel schools have given near enough attention. The improvisation, riff style of the blues singer and jazz musician parallel a style of communication and mode of thinking which does not depend on some prescribed set but instead calls for creativity and flexibility to respond to what one feels in a given situation.

I see another advantage in the recognition and use of our heritage of music as we attempt to evolve new strategies for self definition and action. Our third generation middle class kids, the products of the Black Bourgeois, enjoy the same music as their black brothers in the "ghetto". We need this bridge as we search for ways to help all blacks to adapt to the dual enculturation process. I see a reaffirmation of what Baraka said about the role of Negro music and the middle class:

Only Negro music, because, perhaps, it drew its strength and beauty out of the depths of the black man's soul, and because to a large extent its traditions could be carried on by the 'lowest classes' of Negroes, has been able to survive the constant and willful dilutions of the black middle class and the
persistent calls to oblivion made by the mainstream of the society. Of course, that mainstream wrought very definite and very constant changes upon the form of the American Negro's music, but the emotional significance and vitality at its core remain, to this day, unaltered. It was the one vector out of African culture impossible to eradicate. It signified the existence of an Afro-American, and the existence of an Afro-American culture. And in the evolution of Negro music it is possible to see not only the evolution of the Negro as a cultural and social element of American culture but also the evolution of that culture itself. (p. 131.)

A serious study of the evolution of music through the eyes of black people, extending the work started by Baraka and Keil could provide new insights into the ways we have adapted to our two cultures.

Since others in this Conference will be speaking more directly about black families, let me only underscore how important this area of study is to the development of any new approaches to education. Robert Staples and Robert B. Hill have followed the tradition of Andrew Billingsley and others in focusing on the strengths rather than weaknesses of black families. Joyce Ladner's study provides a new frame of reference for discussing the issues of illegitimacy, childbirth, children and marriage within the black culture. I hope that the sociologists will join us educators as we can continue the process of re-definition together. Here, too, the concept of dual culturalization
might be a helpful tool in understanding certain behaviors and values where the black culture and mainstream dominant culture coincide and overlap.

What then does all this mean for the education of black children; for those public school systems that are becoming predominantly black; for the new breed of black administrators who are being given those positions which have traditionally signified authority, power, status? Let me try to summarize some of the policy implications from what I have said. I will not, however, offer the kind of specific recommendations that too often appear as a panacea or a quick solution to deep seated, complex issues. If we have learned anything over the centuries it is that change is constant. It is also slow, painful and always resisted.

First and foremost we must recognize and continue to oppose the philosophy and value system of this country which is based on that definition of black people pronounced by Chief Justice Taney more than 100 years ago. Or, the labels and stereotypes have changed. Euphemisms continue to be invented to perpetuate the myth. As long as we are convinced that we are inferior, are without a past or culture to preserve, are defined as property, we will not become powerful. Much has been done over the years, and especially since the 60's, to shift our strategies to
define ourselves. We must not only continue this tradition but become even more outspoken and positive about who we are, who we were, and who we will become -- by our own tape.

Second, we need, in rejecting these past negative labels, to seriously investigate the concept of dual, simultaneous culturalization. For some, there should be continued research into our African cultural background. However, trying to find out how much of what we have become represents continuities of the past and how much are newly invented adaptations to America is a little like trying to decide what percentage of our present identity came from genes and what percentage from the environment. In both cases it seems so obvious that it is an interactional process, a both/and not an either process. I would like us to spend more energy examining the interaction as evidenced by the behavior of people in their informal and formal relationships and settings so we can plan more rationally for the future.

Within the dual culture thesis, there could be fruitful and interesting research on the role of the black church in the development of personalities; the black preacher; the language codes and skills he had to develop to live in the two worlds: keeping "up a good front" with the white man and at the same time developing strategies
so that the slave and then the freedman could indeed become free. I would guess that the black principal under legal segregation had to develop some of the same skills and strategies.

The distrust or healthy paranoia that Grier and Cobbs speak of has been a necessary and successful defensive mechanism when all power was controlled by the "enemy." But what happens to this distrust when the person in that power position becomes a black person, a fraternity brother? Are the same strategies appropriate? Because we have not had the luxury within the black society of real differentiation by class, our social relationships are different. Our expectations about roles have been conditioned by our dual culture. The acknowledged leader in the black church might have a very low status position in the majority culture. What does this mean when we talk about leadership? I feel that this framework opens a new approach to the examination of roles and can lead to new insights in how to prepare black people for these new roles.

Certainly there must be more study of language and the communication patterns that our children bring to school. We have an obligation to enter into the debate about Black Dialect or English. From this perspective, it seems we can draft a series of new questions about language and its relationship to reading, and the other skills that we must develop in young people if they are to
cope with the complex, technological society of which they are very much a part. It just seems inconceivable to me that we do not have enough imagination, knowing how skilled in verbal language our young people are, to find some way to use that skill in teaching them how to decode the printed word. We also need to look into the role of music, body movement, and non-verbal behavior in the teaching-learning process.

Finally, we must face realistically the racial composition of the school populations of the large cities. Atlanta is 82% black, Washington, D.C. at least 90% and Detroit is close to 80% to cite only three well known cities. What are we to do? Can we continue to promote only one approach to the problem of segregation-integration? That one approach, the physical mixing of black and white children in schools throughout a city, certainly seemed the best and most feasible approach 20 years ago. There appeared to be sufficient evidence that legally enforced separation of children based on race was detrimental to their development. I do not question that conclusion.

But we again may have been clouded in our visions, a little like our slave ancestors when granted "freedom." We underestimated our adversaries then and we may have done it again in 1954. Let us learn from the past and not lose the Second Reconstruction.
We cannot afford to let another generation of children go through our schools unprepared for a productive future or even prepared for effective undermining of the present system. Let us try to capitalize on the little political power we seem to have. Let us try to help black people in positions of power, like school superintendents, recognizing at the same time how limited their power may be. We can provide new data which should begin to shake the theories and ideas on which public policy was determined in the past. This Conference is evidence that we can re-capture the initiative of the black scholars of the past. We no longer need to apologize for ourselves or our background. We know that we have influenced the development of this country even while being rejected. Ours was a special gift which we must never lose as we try to become a part of this society and be recognized as citizens. In our zeal to become enculturated in the values and beliefs of the majority culture and to gain access to the material comforts which bombard us every day on television, let us not lose that gift our ancestors brought with them and continues to give some reason for education other than to be prepared to enter the economic competitive system.

Let me close with two more quotes from DuBois' *Soul of Black Folk* which describe first that gift and secondly helps answer the question, education for what?
Above and beyond all that we have mentioned, perhaps least tangible but just as true, is the peculiar spiritual quality which the Negro has injected into American life and civilization. It is hard to define or characterize it -- a certain spiritual joyousness; a sensuous, tropical love of life, in vivid contrast to the cool and cautious New England reason; a slow and dreamful conception of the universe, a drawling and slurring of speech, an intense sensitiveness to them, tell of the imprint of Africa on Europe in America. There is no gainsaying or explaining away this tremendous influence of the contact of the north and south, of black and white, of Anglo Saxon and Negro.

(DuBois, p. 178.)

Today, we call this soul. Finally,

We are training not isolated men but a living group of men, -- nay, a group within a group. And the final product of our training must be neither a psychologist nor a brickmason, but a man. And to make men, we must have ideals, broad, pure, and inspiring ends of living, -- not sordid-money-getting, not apples of gold. The worker must work for the glory of his handwork, not simply for pay; the thinker must think for truth, not for fame. And all this gained only by human strife and longing; by ceaseless training and education; by founding right on righteousness and Truth on the unhindered search for Truth; by founding the common school on the university and the industrial school on the common school; and weaving thus a system, not a distortion, and bringing a birth, not an abortion.

(DuBois, p. 72.)
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