

Which questions will you answer as a group?

- What evidence indicates that identities are socially constructed?
- How do prejudice and institutional discrimination shape certain individuals and groups life chances and impact their access to resources, rights, and privileges?
- How do popular representations of a group affect how members of that group see themselves and how others see them?

What sources will you consult?

- Who is an American?
- Color Adjustments

What is your working thesis or argument?

The color complex is a big factor that shapes the lives of the African American community.

How do you foresee organizing the parts of the essay/collective analysis as a group in a way that is agreed to by each group member?

We are going to come up with a basic outline for our paper together that focuses on the main points that we need to discuss. From our outline we will both take on an equal amount of responsibility of answering our question(s) and backing it up with evidence from the materials we have reviewed in class.

We will then put our individual work together to form our final paper and review it together to make we agree on what we have both done.

Feedback for

Suggested sources to consult:

- 2) Who Is an American?
 - Anderson and Taylor, Chapter 9, "Race and Ethnicity" in *Sociology*, 232-259
- 3) Women, the Mass Media, and the "F" Word
 - *Imitation of Life*
- 4) Color Adjustments
 - Benshoff and Griffin, "African Americans and American Film" in *America on Film*, 75-95
 - *Ethnic Notions*
 - *Color Adjustment*
 - Golden, *Don't Play in the Sun*
 - Russell, Wilson, and Hall, "Introduction" and "Masters, Slaves, and Lovers" in *The Color Complex* (Extra Credit)
- 7) Obama in '08?
 - Steele, *A Bound Man*

* I am fine with you using sources from only **four** (instead of the required five) of the seven units, as long as you use several sources from the Color Adjustments unit to support your thesis.

Working thesis:

"The color complex is a big factor that shapes the lives of the African American community."

Good start; specific and manageable. Still, work on sharpening your thesis. *Why* is the color complex a defining factor in the lives of many African Americans? *What* is the historical context that undergirds the color complex? *How* does it shape the lives of African Americans?

Example: "The color complex, an outcome of centuries of American slavery and racism, shapes the lives of African Americans, affecting their access to money, power, and opportunity as well as their definitions of beauty and worth."

Organizing writing the essay:

Make sure that you construct your essay using the Wiki – starting with the outline that you develop. Everything that you do from now on should be done on the Wiki so that I can see your individual contributions and progress. You should use this tool rather than email or Word documents to communicate.

Grade:

Which questions will you answer as a group?	5/5
Which sources will you consult?	2/5
What is your working thesis?	5/5
<u>How do you foresee organizing parts of the essay/editing and approval?</u>	<u>4/5</u>
TOTAL	16/20

American Identities (Summer '08)

Group C (permalink)

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Thesis: The color complex, an outcome of centuries of American slavery and racism, shapes the lives of African Americans, affecting their access to money, power, and opportunity as well as their definitions of beauty and worth."

The color complex is "a psychological fixation about color and features that leads Blacks to discriminate against each other." (2) It is a very important issue that the black community tries to keep secret. Many blacks turn their head to the issue because they try and pretend that it does not exist and they do not want the white community to know they discriminate against each other in their own race.

The Color Complex

To understand the effect of the color complex you need to look at how and who started it. The process of its development started in Jamestown, Virginia in 1607 when the first English colony was being developed. White men came to the continent and it was a long time before a ship full of English women set sail for the new world. These white men turned to the native women and seduced and raped them. (10) The same thing happened to the African American slave women. As a result of sexual relations amongst races mixed children were born. This was not a problem until the slave masters realized the ethical question of slavery would come into question if they didn't keep the races separate. The white colonist then began making laws claiming blacks were a lower life form and it was twice as evil to have sexual relations with a Negro then between two whites. The new laws that were beginning to develop were an attempt to scare the average people from having interracial relationships but it did not stop the slave owners from having sexual relations with their slaves. In most cases the slave masters were raping the black women and children were the end result. Over time and from state to state the laws changed about mulatto children and their status in society. The one thing that stayed constant is that they were seen as better than the pure African slave. Their skin color alone landed them higher status. As a result of this they didn't want to be associated with the "darkies." They wanted to keep themselves separate and not be seen as "one of them." The lighter skinned slaves also did easier labor and usually treated better. You found the light skinned slaves in the house doing domestic work and looking after the

children. The darker slaves were in the hot sun in the fields all day doing hard labor. The slave master alone was creating tension between the black people by favoring one group and the slaves themselves made the tension worse by turning on each other. "Light-skinned slaves returning home from their days in the "big house" imitated the genteel ways of upper-class white families, and the mulatto offspring of the master often flaunted their education. Many field hands both envied and resented the house servants."

(18)

The history of how this complex was started is evidence that identities are socially constructed. The white man started the color complex and these feelings of superiority and envy still exist today. You see examples of this complex that light skin is better than dark all over the place. All you have to do is be aware of it and the examples are endless what you may or may not ever experience is the effect that it has on the Black community. The color complex, an outcome of centuries of American slavery and racism, shapes the lives of African Americans, affecting their access to money, power, and opportunity as well as their definitions of beauty and worth. ☺ ^ ,

The first example that I'm going to relate this issue to is the movie, Imitation of Life. By relating this movie to the color complex I am going to be answering the question, How do prejudice and institutional discrimination shape certain individuals and groups life chances and impact their access to resources, rights, and privileges?

In this movie you have two women Lora, who is white and Annie who is a dark-skinned black woman. They both have children Susie, the white girl, and Sarah Jane, Annie's daughter, who is very light and can pass as a white girl.

Although Lora had struggled in the past she ended up being a successful actress who gave her daughter the best of everything. Annie became Lora's live-in maid when their daughters met at the beach and she was in desperate need of work. Annie accepted her role in society and was just grateful to have a roof over her and Sarah Jane's head and be employed. Sarah Jane on the other hand was unhappy. She was jealous of Susie who had endless opportunity because she was white and was ashamed that her mother worked for Lora.

Throughout the film Sarah Jane is always telling people she is white. When she pretends to be white her life chances and her access to resources, rights, and privileges are all better. She feels that she is living the "good life" when she lies about her race and develops hatred for her mother for exposing her true identity. Sarah Jane even had a white boyfriend who treated her very nicely until he found out that her mother was black and then he broke up with her and beat her. The color of her skin did not matter to people when they thought she was white. They treated her as an equal and she had better opportunities in life. As soon as they found out that she was black she was seen as being underneath white people. Her rights and privileges were taken away and her access to resources and her life chances were very slim.



American Identities (Summer '08)

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AMS 110

Megan Williams

July 29, 2008

Wiki Essay

This class has been a very eye opening experience for me. The topics that we have discussed over the course of this semester have been thought provoking as well as important to the world we live in and its many different people. This class was perfect because of the diverse nature of each class period due to the students enrolled in it. We had a person for almost every point of view. It was also very helpful for me to be paired with Courtney. She and I were able to discuss questions in class, and become aware of each other's stance on different matters. This was very important because we were able to see where the other was coming from and truly understand new and different ideas. So overall I feel that this class is a very important experience that every KU student should have the chance to absorb and in turn better understand the lives of other races, or sexual orientations that other people may have.

The questions that I am going to be discussing in this essay are very important in understanding the way that other groups are treated, and the effects that treatment has on them, as well as the way they see themselves and their people as a result of this treatment. The first one is, "How do prejudice and institutional discrimination shape certain individuals and groups life chances and impact their access to resources, rights and privileges?" Well for this question we will look at the treatment of Blacks during the time after slavery through the civil rights movement of the 70's. This time in American history was a very volatile one, Black people were being discriminated against in every way. Prejudice and institutional discrimination were problems that the white people were responsible for creating. This was done by excluding blacks from many of their freedoms, including their right to equal treatment under the law, and many other ways as well. This was the most important part about the treatment of Blacks during this time. They were segregated to be "separate but equal" and in many ways that statement held no truth to it. Blacks were not allowed in the same restaurants, they were not allowed to use the same drinking fountains, they were made to enter the back of some establishments, as well as a million other things that made them unable to live their lives freely in the manner they pleased. Also this discrimination would deny these people many of the resources that they needed. These resources would include things like not being able to get adequate education, not having any say in political issues because of their lack of political representation and also they were not given the right to earn the money that their white counterparts were able to earn. This would in turn play havoc on their families because

they would not be able to keep their families fed, clothed and educated. For my second project I decided to use the Brown v. Board of Education court case, which was decided in Topeka, Kansas in 1954. This case was to disprove the idea of separate but equal being ok for the African Americans of this country. This was a good example of the lack of resources that the Black community was faced with. Even with the decision of this case in favor of Black interests, it still is a good sign of where things were coming from.

My second question is going to deal more in the ways that popular representations of specific groups can be detrimental to that group's ability to see themselves in the context of the world they live in. The question is; "How do popular representations of a group affect how members of that group see themselves and how others see them." When I think about popular representations of groups I think about the film we watched in class called *An Imitation of Life*. This film was very interesting to me because I grew up in a very similar situation to the one that the children in this film grew up in. The family that I grew up in was supplemented by a Black woman named Gwen Tony who would come and do our laundry as well as tidy up the house and watch after me. There is however background to my story, because Gwen was also my mother's nanny growing up. This made her as close to family as possible. Even today Gwen still comes to our house every week and has easily assumed the role of grandmother for me, since I lost all of my grandparents before I turned 10 years old. Gwen still does our laundry not because we pay her, but because we are family. This is something that is impossible for people outside my family to understand, but it made this film mean something different to me than the rest of the class. This is very similar to the situation that takes place in the film. Also I grew up in a home where my mother and father worked full time and in turn my mother was not there to be a full time mother.

This film gave its audience a very interesting look at Black people. It portrays Black people in a way that suggests that they want to be white. This was done through the character of Sara Jane Johnson who always wants to be white through the entire film and finally runs away, only to return for her mother's funeral. So it is easy to see the way that popular culture affects the minds of the people in these groups by portraying Black characters in a way that suggests that they want to be white. Also the film introduces the stereotype of the Black mammie. This was the stereotype used in portraying Annie Johnson. She is portrayed to be basically good at all things motherly. Annie was great with the children; she was great at cleaning the house and many other things that Lora was not good at. This stereotype was something that portrayed Blacks as doomed to servitude. Although this movie does portray Blacks in ways that are not true, or at least not always true, it also shows the love that the family has for Annie Johnson and how much they appreciate her. I was very glad that I got to see this film because of the way that it really hit home for me in my life experiences.

This class was very important in understanding the race relations that have been evident in the

world that we live in since the time of slavery. Also it has given me perspective about the way that different groups are portrayed in our society and the affects that changed the way these people look at themselves. This class has taught me that although we cannot change or forget the past, we still must try to understand the point of view of other people. And through that understanding we must realize that we cannot assume that we know what is best for others, and instead try to collaborate and make the world better for all who live in it.

P.S. I'm very sorry that my paper is late. I would not have had a problem, but I was planning to go to Lawrence to move out of my house on Sunday and Leave Monday mourning. But it rained all day yesterday and I have a flat trailer that I filled up with stuff that really can't get wet; bed, furniture and other stuff, so I had to leave this morning. My plan was to be home before noon, then finish it up and send it but I had to stop a few times to adjust the tarp I had to buy to try to keep stuff dry. Of course it rains for two days the one time that I need it to be dry. I would have just done it here, but I was almost done with the essay but didn't bring my computer, because I thought I would be back in Wichita Monday to finish it. Sorry about all this that you have had to put up with, but I really have been swamped with stuff for my job and other things that have been unavoidable. Just wanted to let you know...

Thanks

Reflection Essay on Wiki Grading Criteria

The project is worth 200 points and 20% of your final AMS 110 grade. Papers will be evaluated in four areas or categories each worth 50 points. These categories are:

Category	Evaluation	Score
Thesis and Content	<p>Original and clear thesis with consistent, sufficient, persuasive, unified, and well-organized support and illustration. Ideas and points are original, significant, and well-developed. Answers one of the questions outlined in the project description. (50 - 47)</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clearly stated thesis, but the paper inadequately sustains the argument; thesis is unclear, but the paper sustains an argument; attempts to answer one of the questions outlined in the project description (46 - 44)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Poorly stated thesis, inadequately supports argument, poor organization; doesn't answer one of the questions outlined in the project description (43- 38)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No thesis or argument; does not answer one of the questions outlined in the project description (37 - 0)</p>	44
Use of Sources	<p>Convincing analysis using quotes from at least six sources (these sources must meet the requirements outlined in the project description). Clear connections between points and supporting quotes (50 - 47)</p> <p>Analysis using only four or five sources; or the connections between the points and supporting quotes are unclear (46 - 44)</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Analysis using two or three sources; or only incorporates or analyzes two to three quotes from sources (43 - 38)</p> <p>Paper uses no or one source to make argument; does not incorporate any quotes from sources (37 - 0)</p>	43
Writing Style and Mechanics	<p>The paper has a tone and perspective appropriate to academic writing. The paper meets academic standards in punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, and overall appearance. The paper is typed in 12 pt. Times New Roman font, with 1" margins (50 - 47)</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The paper lacks one of these conventions (46 - 44)</p> <p>The paper lacks two of these conventions (43 - 38)</p> <p>The paper is incomprehensible due to errors in language or usage (37 - 0)</p>	44
Citation Format	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The paper correctly and consistently uses MLA format - parenthetical citations and a bibliography - when citing (50 - 47)</p> <p>The paper attempts to use MLA format when citing but does so incorrectly (46 - 44)</p> <p>The paper uses a citation style used in another discipline (43 - 38)</p> <p>Citation is unclear or missing: remember that lack of citation is plagiarism and may be grounds for failing the project or, in certain cases, the course (37 - 0)</p> <p><i>*See "Citation Format" tab on Blackboard for more information on how to cite correctly using MLA</i></p>	50

181/200

91%