

Individuality to group identity

[Sociology](#), [Identity](#)



Identity is a very difficult idea to grasp. There are an abundant amount of definitions and views for the individual to make sense of. Identity is strictly a self-image derived from patterns of behavior seen in society and attributing characteristics to one's self, based on similarities or differences. Those similarities or differences could be based on upbringing, physical attributes, goals, or interests. A group then becomes a set of individuals who believe they practically have the same identity. The group brings in thoughts and analysis on how other groups coincide with each other and if other groups share certain interests.

Politically, individuals have been able to identify themselves through candidates and elected officials as their personal representation based on their self-given identity. Those who find themselves sharing the same views as certain individuals further solidifies the concept of the group. A political ideology is a collection of ideas and often times is shared by those of a specific group and is used to advance that group in the direction that will support individuals of that group. There are many groups that are the basis of political ideologies; many based on gender, race, social status, economic standing, or any combinations of those. Surveys show that there are noticeable trends in decisions made and viewpoints that correlate with groups. In today's society these same groups have and continue to impact decisions that are made. As years pass and the world changes, some groups are separating because of altered views and other groups are forming because of the same reasons.

In 2010, this concept of group identity is vastly utilized to gain the appeal that will contribute to the campaign of different candidates. For example, in <https://assignbuster.com/individuality-to-group-identity/>

the past when Barack Obama has spoken in front of predominantly African-American crowds his demeanor has not always been the same when speaking in front of white American crowds. Often times when Obama has chosen to speak in front of black Americans, he has not shied away from choosing places like a barbershop or a church, while in front of masses that would be predominantly white, the settings have more likely been big assembly halls. Additionally, many politicians when speaking in California have made an attempt to use their few words of Spanish, or in New Orleans it is not uncommon if they reference jazz or gumbo. These are models of how many political figures have tapped into group identity to gain appeal. Furthermore, if a multitude of people in a group are in support of a politician, others in that same group are more easily influenced to think the same way. Not only do political figures use group identities to achieve goals, but so do the individual groups themselves.

They have not done so by trying to appeal to other groups, but instead have found ways to acquire recognition. Through that recognition they have set strides on gaining respect and with that respect have questioned the morality of the other groups, so that hopefully their major concerns can be addressed. Groups such as LGBT, Hipics, and African Americans have been able to have their specific issues attended to by making their voices heard. For instance, In March of 2006 500, 000 Hipics marched in the city of Los Angeles to help “ mobilize hundreds of thousands of people against HR 4437, introduced by Wisconsin Republican James Sensenbrenner, and approved Dec. 16 by the House of Representatives in a vote of 239 to 182. An LGBT march in October of 1987 known as the “ Great March,” set an exceptional platform for which

the opinions of LGBT could be heard. The fact that the disapproval of gay marriages went from 42% in 1999 to 28% in 2006 demonstrates that these movements based on group identities have been effective.

In 2010 the concept of group identity is used to make the same type of impacts. When it comes to African Americans using group identity, there is much debate on whether the group identity is effective or if it takes away from the progress blacks have made in America. African American group identity is a very complex part of society. Historically it originated with the transport of African natives to America. The treatment of African Americans and their descendents enabled them to identify with one another. Physical attributes such as skin color, hair, facial expressions, and tone of voice set the basis of much hatred and discrimination. Many people recognized themselves as those who fit in those categories and reached to each other for companionship and comfort.

As the number of people who found themselves in the same situation increased, a group formed. In that group cultures formed. Common interests, music, style, cooking, and attitudes towards subjects were adapted and shared throughout. A political ideology was formed based on history and culture which led to the promotion of equality becoming the most important goal. With the use of a group identity African Americans have had the most success in reaching strides to attain goals. The idea that 50 years ago, many schools were not integrated, but now in 2010 all forms of segregation and discrimination based on race are illegal, explains how much progress has been made. There is a debate on whether the group identity is

still a relevant concept for African Americans to address public policy forms of institutional racism.

A poll was taken in 2008 revealing that "nearly 56 per cent of African-Americans believe that leaders in the government care very little about blacks." It is understandable why some people believe racism is no longer a factor, since racism has become a "closed door, under the table issue," people might have not had to experiences where race was a serious matter. For those who have been victims of racism or have seen victimization of racism, they most likely believe racism is prevalent. Racism has very much shaped American society. In the early 1900's citizens were very open about the issue. Now people are scared to be racist and that within itself produces a form of racism. "Often, white people like myself don't want to talk about it, don't want to face it, don't want to get outside of their skins and get into somebody else's skin," said Phyllis Watts.

History is showing that as time advances, the public's opinion as a whole on racism's prevalence decreases. "A 1997 nationwide Gallup Poll found 76 percent of whites thought African Americans were treated the same as whites. However, only 49 percent of African Americans agreed. In, 1998 a nationwide poll by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a Washington-based think tank, found 44 percent of African Americans say they face a lot of discrimination, while only 16 percent of whites agreed. Most whites -- about three-quarters -- believe discrimination is largely confined to history, polls show." As a result, the concept of group identity for African Americans to address public policy forms of institutional racism also

declines. Of course racism is still a part of society in 2010 so any issue of race is still relevant.

Behind any large movement, there have always been sub-groups that have benefited by also having their concerns addressed as well. One of the most acclaimed sub-groups in the United States has been that of the black-feminist. Many people believe that the fates of sub-groups are linked with those of the major groups. A good example of that is found in Michael Dawson's book entitled *Black Visions* in which Dawson illustrates that the average salary of African American women has steadily increased alongside the average salary of African American males. The feminist revolution has indeed benefited from its stance as a sub-group of the African-American group identity. In theory, these signs should be consistent for years to come. If African Americans are struggling there is no possible way black females can advance because they too are African American.

There have been cases in which the concerns of a sub-group have clashed with those of a major group. An example of this happening is the Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill trial. In this controversy, Anita Hill, an African American woman, spoke out on the problems of sexual harassment that she faced when she worked for Thomas. At the time, Thomas was a nominee for a spot in the Supreme Court and allegations against him could have jeopardized his chance at the position. Black nationalists believed that Hill should not have said anything because in her doing so, she was holding African Americans back. A poll taken in 1991 revealed that only 34% of African Americans agreed with Hill's decision. Then the question remains,

can sub-groups have their issues adequately addressed within the context of a racial group identity? The Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas debacle gives reason to believe that it is not possible.

Sub-groups have to find a way to completely stand on their own if their matters are going to be equally represented. The Free Dictionary defines the prefix sub with words like below, under, beneath, subordinate, and secondary. A group cannot be secondary to another group and expect the same amount of respect. Conclusively, sub-groups need to form some sort of independence and make decisions that only benefit them. As of today many leaders in the African American community debate on what should be the core components of a relevant ideology to address current issues that plague the African American community. Statistically it seems that all issues that holdback the African American community have had some sort of connection to education. According to a report by the Justice Department in 2000, “ there were 791, 600 black men in prison and 603, 032 enrolled in college.

In 1980, there were 143, 000 black men in prison and 463, 700 enrolled in college. ” CNN reported that in 2007 more than one in five blacks dropped out of high school. In 2010 the average salary of someone who has graduated college is 52, 200 for all citizens and all races, while the average salary of someone who only graduated high school is 30, 400. In 2004 the average household income for African Americans was around 31, 000 dollars. Many people focus just on the unemployment rate, but education is the main component. The percentage of African Americans that dropped out of high

school in 2007 was 20%, while for whites, there was only a 12% dropout rate. People who wonder why the number of black Americans employed is much less than white Americans can start by looking at high school dropout rates.

People with higher education degrees are more likely to get jobs than those that lack them. If blacks are not equally employed, that means that more are inclined to do whatever they can to survive, even if it means living the lives of criminals. This might explain why in recent years there have been more blacks in prison than in college and why the average household income for African Americans was 31, 000 dollars in 2004. Not only is education important for employment and avoiding incarceration, it is also important for health. Those who are not educated are less likely to be able to detect symptoms and attribute them to a certain disease or know ways to avoid them. As of 2010, African Americans are 1. 6 times more likely to die from one of the 10 leading causes of death in the United States than European Americans.

Much of this also attributes to the fact that families in poverty are less likely to go to the hospital because they might not have health insurance due to economic situations. With all of this in mind it is very important that ways to improve education for blacks is the core component to improve the problems that hold back African Americans. A second core component that should be stressed is taking responsibility. There are many problems with race in America, but people tend to act as if it's not an issue as the statistics show. If people are going to brush racial matters to the side it is up to the people who

believe it is a problem to address it as much as possible and do whatever it takes to have people listen. The race issues do not only need to be addressed to whites, but to everyone because there are individuals from all ethnicities who do not believe race is even relevant. Ideologies have shaped society since the beginning of time, whether good or bad.

Today it is important that groups target the most important issues because the core components can affect the other concerns individuals in the group might have. Sub-groups are beneficiaries of these major groups, but will need to create their own identity to have their issues adequately addressed. The complexity of these sub-groups and major groups have been the reason for many discrepancies, but also the cause of the resolutions soon after. History shows that disparities between groups will progressively be solved through forms of compromise. Works Cited Batch, C. B. (2007, february).

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