

Double consciousness assignment

[Psychology](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The term double consciousness, simply put, refers to the psychological challenge of reconciling an African heritage with a European upbringing and education. Similarly, the term the veil refers to the physical and metaphysical differences between blacks and whites. These expressions originated from an Atlantic Monthly article by W. E. B.

Du Bois called " Strivings of the Negro People," which was later republished and mended under the title " Of Our Spiritual Strivings" in his famous 1903 collection of essays The Souls of Black Folk. It is interesting to note some of the ways Du Bois was ahead of his time. In the introduction to " Of Our Spiritual Strivings," he writes, (Du Bois 2011: 147) Herein lie buried many things which if read with patience may show the strange meaning of being black here at the dawning of the Twentieth Century.

This meaning is not without interest to you, Gentle Reader; for the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line. By saying this he is not only confirming that he will talk about his experience as a black man at the turn of the century in this essay, but also prophetically anticipating that the greatest problem the sass will face is the issue of race equality. After that, he begins the essay with a poem from a European writer using his nostalgic connection to the ocean as a metaphor for his spirituality.

This is followed by two or three measures of a Negro spiritual. Du Bois uses this juxtaposition to communicate how these two cultures have contributions to make to each other. Here he is predicting the future of multiculturalism where different ultras are promoted because they can offer varying perspectives on life. To start the discussion of double consciousness, Du Bois

(2011) describes it as “ this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others” (149). In other words, the identities and actions of black people arise as a result of their interactions with others.

This is an idea that is echoed in George Herbert Mead’s 1931 book *Mind, Self, and Society* about his theory of the generalized other in which he details how in everyday life people rely on others to figure out how to behave themselves. The example Mead (2011) uses is a baseball game; he relates how “ The attitudes of the players which the participant assumes organize into a sort of a unit, and it is that organization which controls the response of the individual” (128). In layman’s terms, the actions of the group are the same as the actions of the generalized other.

Mead additionally includes that the generalized other is a major instrument of social control because it regulates the behavior of the individual. Du Bois (2011) continues his conversation on double consciousness stating (149) One never feels his townies- n American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unrecognized strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. What he is recounting here is the struggle within an African American’s person to level Walt n tenet Dalai ala alt Ana tenet American lambently.

I Nils two competing halves of a person concept is repeated in Mead’s work on the social self in *Mind, Self, and Society*. He contended that inside every person there is a mental dialogue between the “ me” and the “ I. ” The “ me” represents the generalized other, while the “ I” is the response by the person’s personality. Or as he suggests, “ The attitudes of the others

constitute the organized 'me,' and then one reacts toward that as an 'I' (Mead 2011: 131). So, in the case of double consciousness the "me" could be the American part on an African American, and the "I" could be their own since of what it is to be black, or vice versa.

Du Bois (2011) goes on to explain this war going on inside every African American in more detail, by asserting (149) In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize 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 fellow, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face.

This means that African American men or women would like their African and American sides to exist in harmony because the two worlds have great lessons to teach each other, like what is promoted by the practice of multiculturalism mentioned earlier. In "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," W. E. B. Du Bois framed double consciousness as solely a race issue, although it can be felt in other situations. For instance, this spiritual conflict was also the subject of George Simmer 1903 essay "The Metropolis and Mental Life. He holds that in big cities it is particularly difficult to juggle one's own background with the influences of modern life. In Simmer's (2011) own words (113) The deepest problems of modern life derive from the claim of the individual to preserve the autonomy and individuality of his existence in the face of overwhelming social forces, of historical heritage, of external culture,

and of the technique of life. Indeed, these two men are talking about the same phenomenon in different contexts.

Du Bois approaches this mental battle from his perspective as a black man, while Simmer approaches it as a man at the center of the industrial revolution. It is important to recognize that Simmer borrowed heavily from Max Weber's notion of an "iron cage" from his book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* in that Simmer pessimistically concludes that this new industrial age is hindering personal freedoms. Another example would be the internal conflict experienced by an immigrant to America trying to preserve their old cultural identity while still assimilating into this nation.

If English is not their native language, the immigrant faces the challenges of not only keeping up in an English language dominated society, but as well maintaining the speech of their "mother language" at home where future generations can learn and grow from it. Furthermore it can be difficult for the person to uphold the practice of cherished cultural rituals, holidays, or customs, while at the same time eyeing expected to participate in American traditions. Unfortunately, then because they are viewed as a foreigner in both the U. S. ND back home, this individual can develop a sense of not belonging anywhere. It is for this reason that in many large enough cities there are organizations through which people from the same nation or room Deterrent matrons can come together to Tort a community winner teen can snare their feelings or celebrate their cultures together. Later on in the essay, Du Bois defines what he means by the term the veil. He first alludes to it when he says, " In hose somber forests of his striving his own soul rose

before him and he saw himself- darkly as through a veil” (Du Bois 2011: 151).

The veil primarily refers to three things. First, the veil brings to mind the literally darker skin of African Americans, which is a physical marker of the differences between black people and white people. Secondly, the veil implies that white people lack the open mindedness to see black people as real Americans. And lastly, the veil proposes that black people lack the clarity to see themselves as Americans too because they cannot imagine themselves outside of the roles whites prescribe to them.

Though he uses the veil and double consciousness separately, their connotations are deeply intertwined. These two concepts give a name to what many African-Americans underwent but could not express beforehand. The implications of these ideas were far-reaching not just because they succinctly describe the plight of the black U. S. Citizen during the early sass, but also because it still rings true to what it is like to be an African American today.