The Pennsylvania State University
The Graduate School
College of Arts and Architecture

A CRITICAL EXPLORATION OF THE BOONDOCKS FOR
ART EDUCATION:
A PHILOSOPHICAL INTERPRETATION OF BLACK VISUAL
CULTURE THROUGH THE LENS OF DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS

A Thesis in
Art Education
by
Alphonso Walter Grant

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Science

August 2013
The thesis of Alphonso Walter Grant was reviewed and approved* by the following:

B. Stephen Carpenter, II
Professor of Art Education
Professor in Charge of Art Education Program
Thesis Adviser

Charles Garoian
Professor of Art Education

Paul C. Taylor
Associate Professor of Philosophy and African American Studies
Head, Department of African American Studies

Christine Marme’ Thompson
Professor of Art Education
Chair of Art Education Graduate Program

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School.
ABSTRACT

The intricacies and the complexities within Black visual culture in general and in the animated television series *The Boondocks* specifically have been disarticulated and not recognized sufficiently in relationship to curriculum theory in the field of art education. While some scholars have examined curriculum in art education, (Carpenter & Tavin 2010; Rolling 2010), or in curriculum studies (Pinar 2004), neither field has sufficiently applied non-dominant Eurocentric White American cultural ideologies to interpret or theorize Black visual culture. Furthermore, this thesis assumes art education as an academic discipline to advance the scholarship of W.E.B. Du Bois’s (1903) concept of double consciousness, a multi-dimensional incessant awareness of the lived experience of some Black people, as curriculum theory. With that said, authors have offered persuasive arguments about the salience of curriculum theory and the education system (Carpenter & Tavin 2010; Rolling 2010); however, Du Bois’s (1903) concept of double consciousness remains a relatively underexplored concept when it pertains to curriculum theory. This thesis augments considerations for exploring the complicated conversation (Pinar, 2004) of adapting double consciousness as curriculum theory in the field of Art Education. Drawing on sources from the academic disciples of Art Education, African American Studies, Visual Culture, and Curriculum Theory, this thesis builds a conversation about the interpretation of Black visual culture looking through the paired lenses of the three dimensions of double consciousness—sociological, phenomenological, and epistemological (Grant, 2013; Taylor, 2010)—and three threads of visual culture—substantial, phenomenological, and pedagogical (Tavin, 2003).
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To the members of my thesis committee, Dr. B. Stephen Carpenter, II, my thesis adviser/mentor, thank you for believing in me and giving me the opportunity to embark on this journey. There are not enough words to thank you for your support and your guidance. Dr. Charles Garoian, thank you for taking the time to engage with me, in the “not not” conversations, you have no idea how much I appreciate all of your help. My mentor, Dr. Paul C. Taylor, every time I thought that I was about to understand a concept and believed I was “prepared” for a conversation with you, you always reminded that I am and forever will be in a constant state of becoming. Thank you for keeping my grounded. I have to thank my mother, Mrs. Rachel Eleanor Logan Grant. Without her constant words of wisdom and continuously reminding me to keep my faith and trust in God, I would not have made it through life, let alone my Master’s Thesis.
Chapter 1

Problem Statement

In this chapter, I introduce the crisis within Black visual culture and briefly discuss the discourse surrounding the disarticulation of Black visual culture in the United States. Next, I provide a working definition of Black visual culture. Then, I state my hypothesis for the disarticulation of Black visual culture suggesting that dominant Eurocentric White cultural ideology is the crux of the problem for the disarticulation of Black visual culture. I introduce the animated television series *The Boondocks* as the example that is used for the articulation of Black visual culture informed by the discourse that surrounds the paired dimension thread lenses. I provide examples that reveal some scholarly interpretations of Black visual culture; however, the examples given are not informed by the paired dimension thread lenses. Next, the chapter provides a synopsis of the history of the Black struggle for equality and equity in the United States. This synopsis provides examples of the dominant Eurocentric White cultural ideology and their contribution to the disarticulation of Black visual culture in the United States. The chapter then situates the problem of the disarticulation of Black visual culture and stipulates that the field of art education is an academic discipline in which Black visual culture informed by the discourse that surrounds double consciousness can be discussed. Some art education scholars will be cited to reveal their endeavors in addressing curricular and pedagogical issues within the field of art education. These art education
scholars provide a path for studies like this one to take place. Next, the chapter reveals the significance of the study and the design of the study, followed by the limitations, the delimitations, the two research questions, and an overview of the entire thesis.

Employing interpretation and interrogation strategies from (Du Bois, 1903; Rolling, 2010; Tavin, 2003; and Taylor, 2010) this thesis discusses the crisis surrounding the discourse of the disarticulation of Black visual culture in the United States through philosophical interpretation. One of many ways Black visual culture can be seen is as a means of capturing the distinctive lived experiences of Black people by using visual imagery—visual imagery is an inner depiction of the lived experience. Some examples of Black visual culture include, but are not limited to, speech, clothing/gear, mannerisms, music, and food. Cartoons or satirical imagery, photographs, television shows, films, and social media all reside under the umbrella of how to depict, see, represent, or view Black visual culture. For instance, Black visual culture is a visual image of the reality of Black people, their cultural environment, or their individual lived experiences. I argue, when Black visual culture captures the reality of the Black lived experience, (the Black image, Black culture, and Black people), the interpretation of Black visual culture becomes complicated for someone who has not had the same or similar Black lived experiences. As a result, Black visual culture becomes blurred and disarticulated. The Black lived experience will be discussed in Chapter 2. This thesis also provides a didactic examination of the Black struggle for equality and equity in the United States by revealing the discourse surrounding Jim Crow, the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, and the Black Arts Movement in order to convey my hypothesis for the disarticulation of Black visual culture in the United States. I argue that the
disarticulation of Black visual culture in the United States comes from negative connotations about Black people from dominant Eurocentric and White Americans cultural ideology—that is, anyone who is non-White is inferior to anyone that is White.

Black visual culture and Black images have been looked upon in a negative way through the representation of Eurocentric White American cultural ideology. This ideology is so strong and embedded so deeply within White culture that Pieterse (1992) stipulated,

It is not that the images provide no information about blacks, but that the information is one-sided and distorted. They convey allegories of the relations between Europe and Africa, and between whites and blacks, viewed from the standpoint of Europeans and whites. The relations depicted are not those of dialogue but of domination. (p. 10)

Here, Pieterse (1992) refers to one problem with the disarticulation of Black visual images is not about the visual image of Black people themselves, but rather it is about how European and White Americans depict the visual images of Black people. Images are the representational and non-representational depictions of the external and internal forms of a person or the body, be it in the form of a painting, picture, sketch, or an animated television series. In addition to, the tools people use to record, share, see, present, and depict their cultural practices.

It is imperative that I establish an understanding of the history of Black people in the United States so that there can be an understanding of the prejudices that have permeated throughout the history of the United States. West (2008) stated,
I call it the niggerization of a people, not just [B]lack people, because America [has] been niggerized since 9/11. When you are niggerized you are unsafe, unprotected, subject to random violence, hated for who you are. You become so scared that you defer to the powers that be, and you are willing to consent to your own domination. And that is the history of Black people in America. (West, 2008, p. 18, 161)

To be niggerized, therefore, is to not be in control of your thoughts. Niggerization is being trained how to think, or better still, taught not to think at all. Niggerization is a historical backdrop of a people that have been so terrorized, traumatized, and stigmatized that they have been taught to be scared, intimidated, always afraid, distrustful of one another, and disrespectful of one another (West, 2008). This is only one example of why Black visual culture has been disarticulated in the United States.

At the surface, the animated television series *The Boondocks* for some can be explicit and at times can even be offensive. For example, this animated television series highlights cultural, contemporary, historic, niggerized, racialized, and societal issues in the United States through the display of existing stereotypes of Black people in the United States as portrayed through its characters. This study provides an interpretation of *The Boondocks* that is informed in part by the discourse that surrounds W.E.B. Du Bois’s (1903) concept of double consciousness—a multi-dimensional incessant awareness of the lived experience of some Black people, and a process of comparing and trying to reconcile one’s sense of self in relationship to the perceptions of others (Grant, 2013; Taylor, 2010).
While some scholars have interpreted Black visual culture (Pieterse, 1992; Bearden & Henderson, 1993; hooks, 1995; Doy, 2002; Lewis, 2003; Powell, 2003; Bolden, 2004) their scholarship has not engaged in interpretations of Black visual culture informed by the paired dimension thread lenses. Pieterse (1992) reveals the omnipotence of prejudice against Blacks throughout the Western world is conveyed through racist imagery. Bearden and Henderson (1993) observe the lives and careers of some Black American artists, and juxtapose their work to fundamental artistic, societal, and politically aware trends both in the United States and throughout the world. hooks (1995) replies to the continuing discourse about constructing, unveiling, and evaluating art and aesthetics in an art world consistently concerned with social justice and identity politics. Doy (2002) discusses that Black artists have been and continue to be slanted by the politics, cultures, societies, economies and histories in which they live and work. Lewis (2003) looks at the works and lives of Black artists from the eighteenth century to the present and reveals the rich legacy of work by Black American artists. Powell (2003) concentrates on the works of art themselves and on how these works, created during a time of major social disturbance and transformation, use Black culture as both subject and context. Lastly, Bolden (2004) highlights influential and important Black American artists from the early part of the twentieth century who were actively discouraged from following their artistic talent.

This study is inherently interested in building on the current conversation of the interpretation of Black visual culture. While some scholars have engaged in the tradition of interpreting Black visual culture (Pieterse, 1992; Bearden & Henderson, 1993; hooks, 1995; Doy, 2002; Lewis, 2003; Powell, 2003; Bolden, 2004) they have not included
double consciousness within their critical framework or interpretive methodology. Through the juxtaposition of interpretive approaches informed by the critical framework of double consciousness and specific literature on the interpretation of visual culture from the field of art education, this study offers a means to respond to the previously mentioned disarticulation of Black visual culture by scholars in the United States. This is to say that while previous scholars have offered meaningful interpretations of Black visual culture, they have not engaged explicitly in the interpretation of Black visual culture informed by the dimensions of double consciousness. The collocation that results from the inclusion of double consciousness is one that offers plausible possibilities unavailable previously. Therefore, this study is situated within this critical space and seeks to interpret Black visual culture informed by an awareness of double consciousness. As a result, this study uses the three dimensions of double consciousness combined with the three threads of visual culture. Furthermore, I take no stand on the exegetical or political questions about appropriating Du Bois’s (1903) work within the complex discourse that surrounds his theory. For that reason, in this study I stipulate to a plausible reading of the concept of double consciousness. This reading is done from the specific perspective of my own lived experiences as a Black man in the United States and, as such, I will see how far it takes me in this inquiry. By doing it in this way, this study offers an interpretive approach that builds on—supplements rather than supplants—an established tradition of interpreting Black visual culture in the United States.

As a result, I realize that no one art educator, philosopher, performing artist or scholar has the monopoly on impervious insight when it pertains to perceptions,
stereotypes, Black images, Black people, Black culture, or Black visual culture. However, Rolling (2010) discusses the plight of the Black image/identity as.

I was still looking for a face that I recognized amongst a multiple of possible identities. Possessing-and presenting-an African American body to the reader means that, in terms of the prevailing modernist normative discourse, I am supposedly presenting an ugly body; a pathological body; an exploitable body; an obsequious body; a primitive body; a binary body invisible unless viewed in subservience to White positional and institutional power. (Rolling, 2010, p. 142)

Within this context, this thesis is essential because it contributes to a body of knowledge concerning the disarticulation of Black visual culture and the image of Black people in the United States. Similarly, Jim Crow laws thwarted the image of Black people that are still in effect more than 50 years after Jim Crow laws were abolished.

**Jim Crow**

The term Jim Crow originated from a minstrel show character developed during the mid-1800s in the United States (Harris, 2008). A number of White American entertainers including some Black Americans applied black charcoal to their faces and imitated Black peoples dancing and singing routines. The name Jim Crow later became identical with the segregation law of 1896, Plessy vs. Ferguson, that resulted in the decision to uphold the constitutionality of segregating public spaces and facilities under the statement “separate but equal.” With this decision, the federal government of the United States failed to enact anti-lynching laws and Black people were forced into
survival mode in the South due to the legislation of the legalization of racial
discrimination and segregation (Birnbaum & Taylor, 2000). Jim Crow created a caste
system that gave preferential treatment to White Americans and was pernicious to Black
people.

After the turn of the twentieth century, the pragmatic author, activist, and a
founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
(NAACP), W.E.B. Du Bois was extremely vocal about the disdain bequeathed upon
Black people. The NAACP became the most powerful advocate for the repeal of Jim
Crow laws throughout the early to mid-1900s and fought numerous conflicts in two
significant areas: the court of public opinion and the courts of law.

In Brown vs. The Board of Education (1954) The Supreme Court of the United
States ruled “separate but equal” education for Blacks and Whites was unconstitutional
(Hine, Hine, & Harold, 2004, p. 391). Brown vs. The Board of Education was a
significant step against the ominous segregation created by Jim Crow. However, there
was still a considerable amount of work that remained, not only to dismantle the legal
restrictions placed on Blacks but also to remove the obstructions of bigotry, violence, and
civil upheaval that prevented equality and equity.

Civil Rights Movement

The Civil Rights Movement was a non-aggressive stand against the Jim Crow
laws that excluded Blacks from their constitutional rights. The situation was so grave
that, “Southern states proved enormously creative at translating white hatred” (Klarman,
2004, p. 384). The Civil Rights Movement's main objective was to prohibit the racial discrimination and violence suffered mainly by Blacks in the South. This movement was headed by Martin Luther King Jr., Charles Steele, and Fred Shuttlesworth, and others. The movement continued with marches, boycotts, lawsuits, and sit-ins. By the mid-1960s, the last remnants of legal segregation had ended by a series of federal laws, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968 (Birnbaum & Taylor, 2000).

Black Power Movement

During the course of the Civil Rights Movement and throughout American History a tension has remained between those wishing to diminish and disseminate racial inequality and those wishing to keep racial inequality intact. The Black Power movement predominantly achieved equipoise of balanced and humane ethnocentrism. This claim was becoming evident when Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton stated,

Black Power…a call for [B]lack people in this country to unite, to recognize their heritage, to build a sense of community…to define their own goals, to lead their own organizations…to reject the racist institutions and values of this society. The concept of Black Power rests on a fundamental premise: ‘Before a group can enter the open society, it must first close ranks.’ (Hine, Hine, & Harrold, 2010, p. 547)
The respect and attention given to the history and arts of Black Americans’ in both formal and informal settings today is largely a product of the Black Power movement in the 1960s and 1970s (Joseph, 2006).

In this thesis, I define Blackness as the “image” of oneself as some Black people see themselves through the eyes of White Americans. The Black Power Movement and the Black Arts Movement brought Du Bois’ (1903) concept of double consciousness to the forefront of the political climate in the United States; for some Black people involved with the Black Arts Movement were reconciling both perceptions of self and taking the “two-ness” that Du Bois (1903) speaks of - being Black and an American, and turning it into a love of self and a love of Blackness. Harris (2003) sums up racism in the United States by stating:

Race is pandemic in the history, structure, institutions, assumptions, values, politics, language, and thinking of the United States. It is so deeply embedded in the American consciousness that much of our language and imagery operates from racial assumptions that seem natural and therefore resist critical inquiry. (p. 1)

Race complicates the human condition in the United States. The human condition is the involvement of the experiences of being human in a social, cultural, and individual framework. “Race complicates gender and other human rights issues in the United States. It informs and often distorts African American self-perception and identity formation. Race is important because it codifies power” (Harris, 2003, p. 2). Black Arts Movement founders, LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka) and Larry Neal (1965), believed Black people needed to change the way they viewed themselves; Black people needed to break free of
the White norms and strive to be themselves and to love “Blackness” (Collins & Crawford, 2006, p. 175).

Black Arts Movement

The Black Arts Movement (BAM) was founded in Harlem in 1965 by writer and activist Amiri Baraka and Larry Neal. BAM was the artistic branch of the Black Power movement. This movement inspired Black people in the United States to establish ownership of publishing houses, magazines, journals and art institutions. BAM sought to link, in a highly conscious manner, art and politics in order to assist in the liberation of Black people in the United States (Collins & Crawford, 2006). BAM produced an increase in the quantity and visibility of Black artistic production in the United States. Though many elements of the Black Arts movement are separate from the Black Power movement and the Black Panthers, many goals, themes, and activists are the same. For example, Stokely Carmichael, Huey P. Newton, Eldridge Cleaver, and Bobby Seale were key players in this cause for Black unity and the end of racial and political oppression of Black people. “The word ‘black’ was somewhat transformed because of the ideas behind the ‘Black is beautiful’ slogan popularized in the 1960s, when the Black Arts movement took form” (Harris, 2003, p. 9). Black people who were in tune with the BAM worked to reclaim the word black and change its meaning from a negative word to a positive word.

Neal (1968) stated, “Black Art is the aesthetic and spiritual sister of the Black Power concept. As such, it envisions an art that speaks directly to the needs and aspirations of Black America” (Neal, cited in Collins & Crawford, 2006, p. 7). Neal
(1968) continued, “In order to perform this task; BAM proposes a radical reordering of the Western cultural aesthetic. It proposes a separate symbolism, mythology, critique, and iconology” (Neal, cited in Collins & Crawford, 2006, p. 5). With this ideology, “The Black Arts and the Black Power concept both relate broadly to the Afro-American’s desire for self-determination and nationhood” (Collins & Crawford, 2006, p. 5). Both The Black Power and the Black Arts concepts are nationalistic; Black Power is politics and the Black Arts are the art of politics. These two movements have merged and the political values inherent in the Black Power concept have found tangible expression in a “self-contained black aesthetic walled from white culture” (Collins & Crawford, 2006, p. 43). As the founder of the BAM Baraka (1965) stipulated “The Black Arts Movement speaks directly to Black people…the motive behind the Black aesthetic is the destruction of the white thing, the destruction of white ideas, and white ways of looking at the world” (Baraka, cited in Collins & Crawford, 2006, p. 7). This self-contained black aesthetic suggests that Black artists were to take this to mean that their primary duty is to speak to the spiritual and cultural needs of Black people and confront the racist contradictions growing out of Black lived experiences in the dominant Western culture. “The Urban explosion of ‘Black Power’ ignited an explosion of ‘Black is Beautiful.’ This explosive black aesthetic led to an eruption of new criteria for creating and evaluating art” (Collins & Crawford, 2008, p.8). The Urban explosion inspired James Stuart’s (1968) statement “That models must be non-white. Our models must be consistent with a black style our natural aesthetic styles and our moral and spiritual styles” (Stuart, cited in Collins & Crawford, 2008, p. 9). And “After all, the [Black] artist is a man in society, and his social attitudes are just as relevant to his art as his aesthetic position. However, the [W]hite
Western aesthetics is predicated on the idea of separating one from the other—a man’s art from his actions; it is this duality that is the most distinguishable feature of Western values” (p. 9). “This shift would enable African American artists to free themselves from ‘white standards’ of judgment under which their work was usually deemed lacking” (Stewart, 1968, p. 8). Black visual culture began to make positive changes as Black artists embraced their Black consciousness and created their works to speak to Black people and they left behind the White societal constraints with regards to European and White visual culture.

The Wall of Respect was a direct connection to the Black community within the Black Arts Movement. The Wall of Respect was an outdoor mural created in 1967 on the South Side of Chicago on 43rd and Langley by a group of visual artists from the Organization of Black American Culture (OBAC) and gang leaders of the time. “The Wall was a cultural production that included people who lived in the neighborhood, the artists who painted the mural, poets who read their work at the Wall, photographers…and the many participants from other parts of the South Side” (Collins & Crawford, 2006, p. 23). It was a time when Blacks were primarily absent from mainstream media. As a focal point within the South Side’s community, the Wall became a catalyst of the revitalization of Chicago’s South Side and of the Black Power Movement. It became a place to meet and rally, particularly of two large gatherings: the August 1967 rally organized by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the October 1967 “black festival of creativity” organized by the 43rd Street Community Organization. The Wall quickly drew national attention and inspired the Community Mural Movement. The Wall inspired Black pride murals in Detroit, Boston, St. Louis, and Philadelphia, as well as
Latino and Asian American community murals. In 1971, the building was damaged by fire and subsequently demolished (Collins & Crawford, 2006). Luckily, there were photographers whose art replicated and preserved images of the Wall for future generations.

The Black Arts Movement was an ethical movement from the perception of the oppressed. And much of the hegemony and persecution confronting the Third World and Black America is directly traceable to the Eurocentric American cultural sensibility. This sensibility, antihuman in nature, has dominated the psyches of most Black artists and intellectuals; it must be destroyed before the Black creative artists can have a meaningful role in the transformation of society (Collins & Crawford, 2006). It is this natural reaction to an alien sensibility that informs the cultural attitudes of the Civil Rights, the Black Power, and the Black Arts movements. It is a philosophical ethical sense that makes a Black artist question a society in which art is one thing and the actions of men another. The Black Arts Movement believed that ethics and aesthetics are one. The irregularities between ethics and aesthetics in Western philosophy are indicative of a dying culture (Collins & Crawford, 2006). The Black Arts movement encouraged Black artists to consider their ancestral heritage when creating works that represent themselves and their people; a monumental revelation and something from which to catapult into creative expression. What makes this situation tristful is that Europeans as well as European Americans used African influences to become renowned artists; yet in the 1960s African influences in Black art was described as “primitive” by critics of that same period (Pieterse, 1992).
I argue that due to racialized relationships between White and Black people in the United States as exemplified above, the interpretation of Black culture, Black images, Black Art and Black visual culture within the context of White scholarship has thus been disarticulated. It is then even further indicated that Black people needed to unite and create equality and equity movements in order to reclaim Black identity and the Black image. Now, at a time in the United States when the debate over Black equality, equity, stereotyping of Black people, and perceptions of Black people is as polarized as ever, an awareness of the disarticulation of Black visual culture is needed from a pedagogical perspective. I argue that the field of art education is the academic discipline where the pedagogical discourse on the disarticulation of Black visual culture will excel. *The Boondocks* informed by the paired dimension thread lenses is a means for this transcendence.

**The Boondocks**

![Image of The Boondocks](image.png)

Figure 1.1: The Boondocks
The Boondocks, (figure 1.1) created by Aaron McGruder, is a politically radical animated television series based on an original comic strip that ran from 1996-2006. The animated television series (2005-present) is Black sociological/political commentary served up in humor. The Boondocks retells the nightmare of the hegemony of Blacks in the United States and the betrayal of the political and justice systems. The Boondocks is in direct correlation with the dimensions of double consciousness in the way that the series reveals the effects of oppression and disfranchisement are still in effect in Black society and Black culture as exhibited through the characters interactions with one another in this controversial animated series. Black culture is a way of life for Black people in the United States which can include but not limited to, traditions, customs, foods, language, music, dance, hairstyles, fashion, religion, slavery, rebellions, civil rights movements, Black power movement, or economic status.

Figure 1.2: The Freeman Family

In The Boondocks two brothers, Huey Freeman (ten years old) and Riley Freeman (eight years old), move from the south side of Chicago to live with their grandfather (figure 1.2) in the predominately White suburbs called Woodcrest. There is no mention of
their parents so it is assumed that they must have died. Huey is socially and politically aware of societal issues facing some Black people in America. Riley is a clichéd Black youth who likes gangsta rap and stereotypical Black culture. Socio-economic and political commentary follow as they meet a cast of characters that McGruder has created with perceptions, stereotypes, and images of Black people in America.

In a discussion of *The Boondocks*, Gournelos (2009) noted, “The first point to make is that *The Boondocks* is clearly what Herman Gray (1994) describes as a ‘multiculturalist’ production” (p. 237) as a production of a socially and critically aware cast in a series.

Television programs operating within [the] discursive space [of multiculturalism] position viewers, regardless of race, class, or gender locations, to participate in [B]lack experiences from multiple subject positions. In these viewers encounter complex, even contradictory, perspectives and representations of [B]lack life in America. The guiding sensibility is neither integrationist nor pluralist, though elements of both may turn up. Unlike in assimilationist discourses, there are Black Subjects (as oppose to black Subjects), and unlike in pluralist discourses, these Black Subjects are not so total and monolithic that they become THE BLACK SUBJECT. (Gray as cited in Gournelos, 2009, p. 237)

In this context Gray plays on the capitalization of words in order to explicate his point. His point is that when putting the controversial production directly in front of the spectator requires an instant confrontation of complex, contradictory perspectives, and preconceived notions of the Black lived experience in the United States. Additionally, he assumes that the reader understands his point in the method of manipulation of words.
The implications of this didactic rendezvous with Black identity actively disrupt any rational, unwavering, or even disjointed view of Black identity (Gournelos, 2009). One example of the many deep-rooted issues of Black identity dates back to the minstrel shows during the Jim Crow era, a time when black identity was a mockery and a source of entertainment for White Americans. Additionally, *The Boondocks* repeats the understanding of Du Bois’s (1903) theory of double consciousness in the physical bodies of many of its characters…as well as the radical “otherness” of its narratives. However, it adds an additional element of disruption in which the incoherence and absurdity of U.S. domestic and foreign policy that not only manifests in a critique of discourse. Instead, the roots and repercussions of U.S. policy is presented in a way that connects them, and renders them into an understandable picture of the construction of power, abuse, and fear (Gournelos, 2009, p. 244)

**Situating the Problem**

![Figure 1.3: Huey and Riley](image-url)
Black visual culture is an unattended, under examined, and an over-looked rich territory that has not been sufficiently reflected on by the field of art education in depth. Using Huey and Riley (figure 1.3), two of the main characters from *The Boondocks*, I discuss how they embody the characteristics of double consciousness. As a result, I believe that within the field of art education, Black visual culture has the ability to be informed by the discourse that surrounds the concept of the dimensions of double consciousness—a multi-dimensional incessant awareness of the lived experience of some Black people, and a process of comparing and trying to reconcile one’s sense of self in relationship to the perceptions of others (Grant, 2013; Taylor, 2010) in order to analyze, theorize, interpret, or interrogate Black visual culture.

Some scholars have explored curricular and pedagogical issues within the field of Art Education, (Carpenter & Tavin, 2010; Rolling, 2012). Carpenter and Tavin (2010) focus on the possibility of a reconceptualization in Art Education and discuss the probability of a shift away from traditional ways of approaching art making and thinking about art. They address the issues from the past and present within the field of Art Education, starting with the self-expressionist movement in the 1920s that gained prominence after World War II. They explicitly discuss the discipline–oriented movement that emerged in the 1960s and added distinction in the 1980s and 1990s that evolved into Discipline Based Arts Education (DBAE). Carpenter and Tavin (2010) have made considerations within their reconceptualization of Art Education for “major themes and movements such as visual culture, arts based research, and community based pedagogy, environmental and eco-art education, and Lacanian psychoanalytical theory are sketched out” (Carpenter & Tavin, 2010, p. 327).
Rolling (2010) explicitly argues the discourse surrounding Black identity, the Black lived experience, and the human condition in the United States without stereotypical dialogue. As a result, Rolling (2010) brings new connotation to [re]constructing narrative Black identity within arts-based [re]search and has created a framework for future art education scholars to use in order to place their own identity and lived experiences into their own work. Rolling (2010) stated,

…I have struggled to depict identity as a continuing and episodic work of art and the arts as a continuing work of identity – a network of the aesthetic organizing systems capturing all we hope for, need, feed upon, and desire. Cinderella, who once worked amongst the cinders, was saved from monstrous caricature just as I was, through a series of episodes in a constellation of reinterpretation. (p. 5)

Known for his stance on constructing narrative Black identity within the field of art education, Rolling (2010) [re]assures the reader that, “this new book will not present yet another narrative of the pathology of being Black in America” (p. 3). He noted, “In fact, the story of being Black in America has always been a story of transformation; as such, this book should be considered a Cinderella Story and so titled” (p. 3). Similar, to the way that Cinderella transforms from working with the cinders to becoming a princess, Rolling (2010) encourages the reader to engage in his self-transformation. This transformation is accomplished through his use of self-reflection as a Black male in the United States. For example, in Episode Six, he discusses the discourse surrounding awareness of self and identity. He is cognizant of the fact that out of chaos, incompletion, and uncertainty of his Black identity come order, achievement and inevitability.
However, Rolling (2010) stated, “certainty has been the precursor of injury to my body, injury to my sense of my body, injury to my representation of my body” (p. 92). Through self-reflection of being a Black male in the United States, he is able to ascertain the difference between arrogance and self-confidence along with pride fullness and humility. With every word on the page he sketches a visual imagery that allows the reader to walk hand in hand with him on his journey through Black identity and the Black lived experience.

In a *Cinderella Story*, Rolling (2010) inserts himself into his writing as a subjective individual and contributor and has juxtaposed new connotations to auto-ethnographic methodology which transcends the quintessential Black identity and Black lived experience to present day. He has [re]structured the complicated conversation of Black identity and the Black lived experience in the United States in order to [re]cast them as new information. He summons the reader to envision the theoretical lineage of a *Cinderella Story*, as transformational. In addition, Rolling (2010) encourages the reader to become a curious viewer and not settle for instant responses to what is seen. He argues that through [re]interpretation and [re]casting ourselves we learn about the art, the artist, and the spectator through self-reflection.

The language, photographs, drawings, designs, graphics, and sketches allow the reader to visualize Rolling’s (2010) journey step by step. For example in Episode Nine, he gives the reader the location of 1260 Lincoln Place, Brooklyn, New York, 11213; He stated;

> I grew up on Lincoln Place between Troy and Schenectady Avenues…

> My neighborhood, Crown Heights, had no tree houses, but was topped with
misshapen rooftops, full of tin hatchways, groping TV antennae, pigeon crap, and older kids doing improper things where no one could see. My neighborhood was bone ugly. The corner of Troy Avenue with its overcrowded, dimly lit, and alarmingly overlarge apartment buildings was notorious for its drug trafficking, gunshots going off at night from the rooftops, and all manner of whispered incidents. (p. 53)

This is the address where Rolling (2010) lived as a child. These details allow the reader to visualize the exact location of his address and the environment that he grew up in. These details also allow the imagination to flourish and the reader can walk down the same streets as him, go to the same stores, and ride the same subway trains; although, they may never fully comprehend Black identity or the Black lived experience. He allows the reader to participate in the journey.

These scholars mentioned above have created a path for studies like mine to evolve. For example, Carpenter & Tavin (2010) discuss reconceptualization and a shift from the old ways of thinking. Rolling (2010) interjects Black identity into arts-based research and creates a disturbance within the fields of art education and curriculum theory. They have challenged and questioned the norms of society through disruption, and inquiry. As a result, the examples given by (Carpenter & Tavin 2010; Garoian, 1999; and Rolling’s, 2010) are meaningful, pedagogical, and curricular examples from the field of art education and are significant to this study.
Significance of the Study

In this study, the paired lenses of the dimensions of double consciousness and the threads of visual culture is central to working toward this thesis because it is in direct correlation to the lived experience of some Black people and the field of art education. In addition, *The Boondocks* is presumed to be an influential representation of Black visual culture and cultural behaviors. On a larger scale this study brings racism and politics to the forefront of the discourse surrounding the under interpretation of Black visual culture. In order to add and to augment the prospects, challenges, probable uses and effects of employing the paired lenses of the dimensions of double consciousness and the threads of visual culture for the use of interpretation of Black visual culture in the field of art education. Additionally, curriculum theory is influenced by disciplines and subjectivities within the academy and provides the space to link double consciousness through Black visual culture to art education; therefore, providing the fertile space to theorize the paired dimension-thread lenses as curriculum theory in the field of art education..

Design of the Study

A philosophical interpretation of The *Boondocks* in this study utilizes a qualitative analytical research method (Altheide, 1987, p. 66). In addition, this study employs ethnographic content analysis (Altheide, 1996) An ethnographic content analysis methodology enables the interpretation of statements and behaviors made by characters in *The Boondocks* to reveal significance within three dimensions of double consciousness – sociological, phenomenological, and epistemological because “…when we do research
on dialogue…we are dealing with a writer’s perception of the world…because writers create texts for large numbers of people, who presumably share perceptions, we can assure that analyzing dialogue in mediated text is not different from analyzing dialogue in everyday situations” (Berger, 2000, p. 151).

Interpretations and assumptions about the world involve qualitative analytical research method (Cresswell, 2007, p. 37). “Qualitative research begins with assumptions, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Cresswell, 2007, p. 37). Additionally, “…qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes” (Cresswell, 2007, p. 37).

Three episodes of *The Boondocks* were selected, (a) “Pause,” (b) “A Date with The Health Inspector,” and (c) “A Huey Freeman Christmas” as the data for analysis. The episodes and the characters in them were analyzed utilizing the framework of semiotics. A semiotic framework refers to a general discipline that studies signs and linguistic signs that can convey meaning (Eco, 1976, pp. 3, 30). Through observing the dialogue and actions of the characters in *The Boondocks*, I documented Huey and Riley’s double consciousness representation and dialogue while interacting with other characters. Huey and Riley’s behavior and speech was examined to identify traits of the registers of double consciousness.
Limitations

This study is limited to three episodes of *The Boondocks*. There is no claim of transferability with this study, meaning that this study can only be applied to the three episodes of *The Boondocks* that have been examined in this study. That said, one might speculate on how the results of this study might transfer to other examples of Black visual culture.

Delimitations

While the series is comprised of 45 episodes, only three episodes of *The Boondocks* were subjectively selected and analyzed. I selected these three episodes because they seemed to me to best exemplify the characteristics of *The Boondocks* series.

Research Questions

This study addresses the following questions:

1. In what ways does *The Boondocks* exhibit the discourse of the dimensions of double consciousness and the threads of visual culture?

2. How might the discourse of the dimensions of double consciousness and the threads of visual culture exhibited in *The Boondocks* provide a fertile space for theorizing curriculum in Art Education?
Overview

This chapter sets the background for the current study which is inspired by the climate surrounding the under interpretation of Black visual culture. Guided by two research questions, the chapter provided a history of Black people in the United States through description of Jim Crow Laws, the Civil Rights Movement, Black Power Movement, and the Black Arts Movement and their efforts to reclaim a positive image of Black people in the United States. The chapter describes the under interpretation of Black visual culture as central to the significance of the study.

Chapter 2 reveals the literature that contributes to a foundation for the study and explores the significance of the concept/theory of “double consciousness” and “the veil,” and provides linkage to visual culture and art education.

Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology and design. This chapter also reveals the rationale behind the data collection and samples chosen for examination in this study. Methodologies such as semiotics Eco, (1976) and ethnographic content analysis Altheide, (1996) are vital to the analysis of this thesis.

Chapter 4 analyzes three episodes of The Boondocks, (a) “Pause,” (b) “A Date with The Health Inspector,” and (c) “A Huey Freeman Christmas.” This chapter examines the significance of the paired dimension-thread lenses within these three episodes in response to the two research questions central to the study.

Chapter 5 discusses implications of this study and possibilities for future studies.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter is a review of the literature that surrounds the key concepts and areas of this study. This chapter signifies Du Bois as a scholar, examines the concepts of the veil and double consciousness, sheds light on the discourse surrounding double consciousness, and discusses the complicated world of visual culture and its existence within the field of art education. Moreover, this Chapter discusses *The Boondocks*, and explores the complicated conversation (Pinar, 2004) of curriculum theory. This chapter also builds on the discourse in Chapter 1 surrounding the Black struggle for equality and equity in the United States, the discourse surrounding Jim Crow, the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, and the Black Arts Movement as context for the problem statement of the study. Building on the discourse in Chapter 1 is essential in order to solidify my hypothesis that the disarticulation of Black visual culture in the United States is because of the negative connotations of how Black culture/Black people are classified through dominant Eurocentric/American cultural ideology in the United States. This chapter justifies and explains the theoretical framework on which this study is built.
Signifying Du Bois as a Scholar

In times of brutality and intolerance, when the laws of the land oppress the people there comes a time when someone must stand up and fight for what is right. This time was at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth Century and the man strong enough to speak on the issues of despotism and inequality was W.E.B. Du Bois. While Du Bois was a student at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee he encountered something startling and upsetting, the hostile and difficult struggle of racism in the South, Du Bois was from the North and was not accustomed to dealing with racism. He stated:

I came to a region, where the world was split into white and black halves, and where the darker half was held back by race prejudice and legal bonds as well as by deep ignorance and dire poverty. But facing this was not a lost group, but at Fisk a microcosm of a world and a civilization in potentiality. Into this world I leapt with enthusiasm. A new loyalty and allegiance replaced my Americanism: hence forward I was a Negro. (Du Bois, 1968, p.10)

In this passage Du Bois speaks of the harsh realities of being Black in America and how he embraced his identity with vigor and passion. The desire within him to better himself and to help create change for Black people was a prominent force in his life which helped him to become one of the most significant Black men in United States history.

In Du Bois’s book Darkwater: Voices From Within the Veil (1920/1999), Manning Marable (1999) stated, “Du Bois was the most influential [Black] intellectual in American History,” Manning goes on to state, “The truth stings not because Dr. Du Bois
is bitter, but because we are vulnerable,” (p. viii) as a result, White Americans did not know how to respond to Du Bois’s (1920/1999) intellectualness, they were unaccustomed to being lectured to about their behaviors by an intelligent, self-assured, and confident Black Man; hence, some White people gave him the name “The Negro,” labeling Du Bois as a quandary. He does not ask for equality and equity for Black people from White America, he demands it (p. v),

Lo! we are diseased and dying, cried the dark host; we cannot write, our voting is vain; what need of education, since we must always cook and serve?
And the Nation echoed and enforced this self-criticism, saying: Be content to be servants, and nothing more; what need of higher culture for half-men? Away with the black man’s ballot, by force or fraud, - and behold the suicide of a race!
Nevertheless out of evil came something good, - the more careful adjustment to education of real life, the clearer perception of the Negroes’ social responsibility, and the sobering realization of the meaning of progress. (Du Bois, 1903, p.8)

Du Bois (1903) had very little tolerance for the White Americans who embraced White supremacy and even less for Black people who did not fight for their basic constitutional rights.

was familiar with several writing styles, wrote five novels, many short stories, and editor of *The Crisis* and this is only a snippet of his work (Gates, 1989). Du Bois was a wordsmith and a master craftsman of the English language; Du Bois’s repertoire can go on and on.

Cornel West (1996) claims “Du Bois is the brook of fire through which we all must pass in order to gain access to the intellectual and political weaponry needed to sustain the radical democratic tradition in our time” and, “Du Bois is the towering [B]lack scholar of the twentieth century” (West as cited in Gates & West, p. 55). One of the many reasons that Du Bois is seen in this light is due to the fact that he held academic appointments in higher education in the departments of the classics, history, sociology, and economics (Gates in Du Bois, 1903, p xiii). In order to emerge as a Black scholar one must have an understanding that, “The scope of his [Du Bois] interest, the depth of his insights, and the sheer majesty of his prolific writings bespeak a level of genius unequaled among modern black intellectuals” (West as cited in Gates & West, p.55). In many ways, Du Bois has served as the prototype for interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary methodologies in most Black studies departments today.

**The Souls of Black Folk: The Veil and Double Consciousness**

There are times within a culture that are significant enough to be deemed revolutionary, times when a people, as a whole, experience a great change that alters the culture in a progressive fashion, and if that major change or movement proves to be monumental for that culture, then it is aptly defined as a “renaissance.” As with any
significant movement, there is usually a precursor, something that foreshadows the
direction of the movement. For America, that precursor came in the form of an eloquently
written book in 1903, a text held in moral value as highly as a bible for many Black
American families. This text is *The Souls of Black Folk* and Du Bois (1903) begins his
text with,

> Herein lie buried many things which if read with patience may show the
> strange meaning of being black here in 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. (Du Bois, 1903, p. 1)

*The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), the blueprint for White America on how to
equally co-exist with Black people, was introduced in 1903. It was published notification
that a people were on the move physically, mentally and emotionally. Du Bois (1903)
stated,

> 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
> truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost…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. This, then, is the end of his striving: to be a co-worker in the kingdom
> of culture, to escape both death and isolation, to husband and use his best powers
> and his latent genius. (p. 3)
In this passage Du Bois’s (1903) focus is on the fact that Black people possess certain gifts and talents that would be beneficial for America. He also reveals that Black people in America want equality and equity. Du Bois (1903) further explains to the intended audience that a movement is coming, a movement comprised of people born into freedom and who would insist on practicing that freedom, as well as be acknowledged as “American” citizens. He points out the benefits of the educated Black person to society as a whole, and the immeasurability of the contributions to the American composite by countless Black Americans if allowed. While there is not any specificity on exactly what the movement will be, my speculation is, some of the movements were the Harlem Renaissance, the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, and the Black Arts Movements.

In 2003, at the centennial celebration of *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois was honored as being among “the pantheon of America’s greatest thinkers and the prime political architect of the Civil Rights Movement” (Marable, 2011, p. 70). Few in the audience probably knew that in 1951 Du Bois was accused of being a Marxist and a spy for the Soviet Union during the height of McCarthyism—the practice of making accusations of betrayal or treason to the United States Government without evidence and that “*The Souls of Black Folk* and other works by Du Bois were frequently removed from libraries as examples of communist-inspired propaganda” (Marable, 2011, p. 70). Additionally, Black America’s poet laureate, Langston Hughes was summoned to testify before Senator Joseph McCarthy’s subcommittee after which, Hughes removed Du Bois from a revised edition of *Famous American Negroes* (Marable, 2011). Furthermore, The NAACP, an organization with which he was a co-founder, chose not to sponsor a public
celebration of Du Bois ninetieth birthday in 1958, due to the hostility and fear that was once attached to Du Bois name (Marable, 2011).

*The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) served as what Gates (1989) called, a “political hermeneutic” for some Black Americans in the dawning of the twentieth century. In this work, Du Bois (1903) brings to the forefront two concepts that describe the embodiment of some Black peoples lived experiences in America: “the veil” and “double consciousness.” Du Bois (1903) uses these terms separately, even though their inner importance in his writings is deeply intertwined. These two concepts articulated what some Black Americans felt at the beginning of the twentieth century but at the time did not have the prowess to express clearly. Du Bois (1903) gives the most influential early account of the condition of what it feels like to be Black and American simultaneously in the early 1900s. During this time the dominant Eurocentric and White cultural ideologies had distinguishable definitions of the role of the Negro in American society and they are as follows;

a. Black people are violent by nature…BUT, in their attitudes and behaviors towards [W]hite people, these same [B]lack people are by nature childlike, docile, and affable.

b. Black people are possessed with unlimited potency and primitive sexual energy…BUT, these same [B]lack people are impotent and sexless when it comes to [W]hite women.

c. Black people live under these conditions of extreme and prolonged oppression…BUT, these same [B]lack people are happy this way, and actually appreciate and love their oppressors.
d. More than ninety-nine percent of the light-skinned Black people in America, who now constitute at least seventy-five percent of all Black people, are a result of White men mating with Black women…BUT, it is the Black man who is the cause of mongrelization of the races. (Hernton as cited in Baraka & Neal, 1968, p. 84).

The severe violence enforced against Black men and the contradictory definitions that label them begin to form an identity that has them saying, “they are invisible, or that they do not know who they are” (Hernton as cited in Baraka & Neal, 1968, p. 84). The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man by James Weldon Johnson (1912), and The Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison (1947) both discuss the discourse of what it feels like to be Black living in The United States during the late nineteenth going into the middle of the twentieth century. The concepts of the veil and double consciousness still hold value today in conveying my own experience as a Black Male in the United States in 2013.

The veil concept thrives on the following perceptions: Black people have darker skin and White people see Black people as inferior, subservient, and less than significant; some White people refused to view Black people as “Americans” or as their equal. Additionally, one aspect of the veil concept makes the statement to Black Americans acceptance of seeing themselves as less than what they really are, because of White pre-eminence; as a result, the intertwining of double consciousness and the veil.

Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil. I had thereafter no desire to tear down that veil, to creep
through; I held all beyond it in common contempt, and lived above it in a region of blue sky and great wandering shadows. (Du Bois, 1903, p. 2)

With this Du Bois realized that being a Black person in White American society is a problem. However, the contempt that he held for White America began to fade “for the words I longed for, and all their dazzling opportunities, were theirs, not mine” (Du Bois, 1903, p. 3). In this sense, “theirs” refers to White people and “mine” refers to Black people. This dichotomy between “theirs” and “mine” is central to more clearly understanding what it means to be veiled, or in other words, to embody the Negro Problem. “To embody the ‘Negro Problem’ is to be excluded from ‘the [W]hite world’” (Gooding-Williams, 2009, p. 73). With this awareness Du Bois knew that he was forever foreordained to walk behind the veil.

The dichotomy within the veil concept is that some White people have contempt for some Black people, because of the way Black people are viewed by some White people; some Black people have the same contempt for some White people. Du Bois (1903) describes this time in America for Black people as, the Black experience in a racially prejudiced society, when Blacks were in a category between man and animal (Du Bois, 1903).

The second thought streaming from the death slave ship and the curving river is the thought of the older South, the sincere and passionate belief that somewhere between men and cattle; God created a “Tertium Quid” and called it a Negro – a clownish simple creature, at times even lovable within its limitations, but straightly foreordained to walk within the veil. (Du Bois, 1903, p. 67)
In this passage Du Bois focuses on the fact that Black people were insignificant to some White people and that, as long as Black people remain docile they will not be a danger to anyone except themselves. White America had control over such things as government, politics, real estate, voting, and education. As a result, White people were able to use their authority to keep Black people segregated from White people, enforcing their shrewdness and deception to further manipulate an already imbalanced situation.

In eloquent style, Du Bois (1903) explains the inner workings of Black people, their hopes, their dreams and their desires. He expresses, on behalf of his people, the emerging attitude of a new generation of Black people; people willing to prove themselves intelligent, self-sufficient, and equal, if not superior to their counterparts who sought to continuously oppress them. The controversy around the discourse of double consciousness and the veil is interesting because awareness of double consciousness comes from the individual and their lived experiences. Here, I juxtapose myself with the controversy and I limit my examination of double consciousness to my lived experiences, the way I believe Du Bois intended for his concepts to be interpreted. I say this because of “Du Bois’s consistent use of the first person, his insertion of himself as a subjective student and participant in [B]lack life and culture” (Griffin as cited in Marable, 2006, p. 86) was monumental in bringing his thematic coherence to a struggling people; albeit, my interpretation of double consciousness is informed by Du Bois (1903), Fanon (1952), Kirkland (1997), and Taylor (2010).

When looking at duality of perception or “double consciousness” as termed by Du Bois (1903), there are many questions that must be considered, such as; (a) who are the ones experiencing the perceptions, as opposed to the ones being perceived; (b) what are
the hidden reasons behind the perception and (c) what the causes and effects of each circumstance have on the person that is doing the perceiving, as well as the person being perceived. Because double consciousness is embedded in the foundation of the United States, the causes and effects of double consciousness are massive.

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 an amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two un-reconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (Du Bois, 1903, p.3)

In this passage Du Bois focuses on the feelings of some Black people seeing themselves from the perspective of a racially prejudice White world, as well as some Black people allowing themselves to be judged by the standards of the dominant Eurocentric and White American cultural ideologies.

I once understood Du Bois’s (1903) concept of double consciousness as a process of comparing and trying to reconcile one’s sense of self in relationship to the perceptions of others. However, through further research my foundation of double consciousness has shifted and now my understanding of double consciousness continuously evolves.

Currently, I understand double consciousness to be a multi-dimensional incessant awareness of the lived experience of some Black Americans.

Double consciousness is a state of becoming, (I am using becoming in the sense that, one knows where they have been, knows where they are, and knows where they are going), with sociological, phenomenological, and epistemological dimensions (Grant,
Sociological refers to the cultural aspects of Black life and the stratification and social exclusions and class cleavages that cut across the Black community. Phenomenological refers to the perceived notions due to the cultural aspects of Black life. Epistemological refers to the legitimacy of knowledge that builds from the cultural aspects of life. Additionally, epistemological also is concerned with the perceived notions of life that also deal with self-consciousness and in particular with its vagaries and limitations. Albeit, from my lived experiences maneuvering within the dimensions of double consciousness, as a male who is also Black, being born “behind the veil,” as Du Bois (1903) puts it, I have become increasingly aware of my distinctive societal position. For example, I have found a historical concept on race that is a perfect example of what is discussed in current day on a theoretical level.

Du Bois’ masterpiece, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) provided a term and meaning to what is a major part of my life, and to feelings I could not reconcile within myself. I felt drained from the longing for equality and equity. I was searching for understanding, but not finding the answers anywhere from the feelings of anger, frustration, hate, prejudice, rage, and revenge. I have learned that perceptions are often dangerous both for the perceiver and for the perceived. For example, I have a speech impediment and some people perceive me as unintelligent because of this. In these situations, I feel like I have to persevere harder than my counterparts to achieve success, and my perception is that I only get a minute portion of the recognition equal to my peers because of my speech impediment. With this cognizance comes an inner awareness with which I am most comfortable. Du Bois’s (1903) concepts are relevant today because they provide the discourse for what many would debate are a part of the problem of White
cultural ideology in the United States. As long as racially prejudiced White privilege exists and extinguishes the dreams and the freedoms of human beings, Du Bois will remain germane as a theorist.

The Controversial Discourse of Double Consciousness and the Veil

Du Bois (1903) stated, “I have sought here to sketch, in vague, uncertain outline, the spiritual world in which ten thousand thousand Americans live and strive” (Du Bois, 1903, p. xxxi). Is Du Bois (1903) giving a vague outline of double consciousness? Is he saying that in order to understand double consciousness there has to be vagueness? Is vagueness the means of deconstructing a metaphor of oppression/double consciousness? Is vagueness the breakdown of representation of some Black lived experiences? The effects of vagueness are all encompassing; vagueness is not clearly expressed and is not visibly defined nor is it clear; vagueness is blurred and murky. As a result, the blurred vision or the vagueness of double consciousness leaves a level of ambiguity to the level where ambiguity begins to deconstruct the absolute characteristics/language of a historically constructed fixed metaphor like double consciousness. For example of my own experience of double consciousness, as a male who is also Black living in a White dominated world, I live amongst some extremely racist people, both Black and White who have preconceived notions about me because of my distinctive societal position. With my awareness I strive to embrace this position and put forth vital information that will result in a deeper awareness of the other, or he who is marginalized. As a result, double consciousness can be understood in more than one way and the concept of double
consciousness has more than one meaning when it is examined and analyzed. A further analysis of double consciousness in this section exposes Reed’s (1997) argument on how scholars use Du Bois’s concepts for their own purposes.

The controversy around the discourse of double consciousness and the veil is interesting because the perceptions or the awareness of double consciousness come from the individual and their lived experiences. For example, “Du Bois was a child of his age. He was shaped by the prevailing presuppositions and prejudices of modern Euro-American civilization” (West as cited in Gates & West, 1996, p. 55). Du Bois was a part of the era of Jim Crow; he underwent lifelong struggles and had great courage against White supremacy and through it all, he was a proud Black man of intellect and academic achievement. It can be said that enduring the horrors of Jim Crow is what gave him the wherewithal to write about double consciousness. Du Bois’s consistent use of the first person, his insertion of himself as a subject in his writings was monumental in bringing his thematic coherence to a struggling people.

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, 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. (Du Bois, 1903, p. 3)

This passage makes reference to the history of Black people in the world and that Eurocentric ideology enforced that Black people did not have a history and that Black history is European history. The passage also refers to the power of second sight as an ability to see the world as it is disclosed to a social group that is different from one’s own
and the world as disclosed to the sight of White Americans (Gooding-Williams, 2011). In addition, this second sight allows Black people to see the reality of the world as Black people see the world and it allows Black people to see themselves as White people see Black people.

Some scholars (Drake, 1997; Gates, 1988; Gooding-Williams, 2009; Meire, 1997; Reed, 1997) have different viewpoints with where their focus begins when it comes to *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). “Sundry intellectuals misread Du Bois ahistorically and instead project their own thinking onto him” (Reed, 1997, p. 92). Double consciousness has been reminiscently characterized as the Black American condition since 1903. “These appropriations have clustered, roughly chronologically around three ideological programs: intergrationist-therapeutic motive from the 1920s to the mid-1960s, a nationalist-therapeutic one from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s, and an academic race-celebratory” (Reed, 1997, p. 92) to present time.

No one else has preserved the image of double consciousness nor have they “revealed the impact of oppression and of the American creed in creating ambivalent loyalties toward race and nation in the mind of American Negroes” (Meire as cited in Reed, 1997, p. 92) like Du Bois. Similarly, Du Bois was acknowledged for identifying that “Negro identity has remained blurred, obscured behind the veil of alienation, ambivalence, confusion, and duality” (Isaacs as cited in Reed, 1997, p. 92). In the same way, St. Clair Drake zeroed in on Du Bois’s descriptions of the veil as having unveiled a universal Black “sense of isolation from the mainstream…[which] not only generates distorted perceptions of the total society and occasionally bizarre definitions of situations, but…also results in cognitive crippling” (Drake as cited in Reed, 1997, p. 92).
In the nationalist-therapeutic appropriation Carol B. Stack makes reference to double consciousness as “conflicting and warring identities between being Black and an American in a white world” (Stack as cited in Reed, 1997, p. 92). Stack’s goal was to substantiate a concept of an independent Black culture to rescue it from dominant Eurocentric White American ideologies. Similarly, Charles Valentine’s view was “a more elaborate social scientific notion of how Afro-American ethnicity operates in the American cultural system” (Reed, 1997, p. 92). Nathan Huggins noted, “[Du Bois] opens double consciousness to the Negro—through his own quest and passion—a unique insight into the vulnerable and unfulfilled soul of that other world” (Huggins as cited in Reed, 1997, p. 93) and BAM co-founder Larry Neal called for the elimination of American identity altogether (Reed, 1997).

In the academic race-celebratory view, Reed (1997) classifies this appropriation as “the mode of appropriating Du Bois’s passage as a universalistic claim about empirical Afro-American life” (Reed, 1997, p. 93). It is suggested that this cluster comes into play due to the decline of national politics outside of the university because of the institutionalization of Afro-American Studies departments on the university level. Thomas F. Slaughter Jr. believed, “Blackness begins in double consciousness” (Slaughter, cited in Reed, 1997, p. 95) and Reed (1997) claims that Slaughter’s intention was to reinterpret double consciousness in the language of phenomenology of the body. Cornel West proclaims, “[Du Bois] eloquently described…the dialectic of black self-recognition [that] oscillated between being in America but not of it, from being black natives to black aliens” (West, cited in Reed, 1997, p. 95). West positions double consciousness as a, “[1]broader dialectic of being American yet feeling European, [2]of
being provincial but yearning for British cosmopolitanism, [3] of being at once incompletely civilized and materially prosperous, a genteel Brahmin amid uncouth conditions” (West cited in Reed, 1997, pp. 95-96). In this context, West elevates the cognizance of double consciousness from two-ness to three-ness and makes this notion of double consciousness only a part of the equation. *The Souls of Black Folk* is a “‘classic’ not because of the phase of Du Bois’s ideological development that it expresses but because of the manner in which he expresses his ideology” (Gates cited in Reed, 1997, p. 96). Clearly, from this statement it is evident that Gates is only concerned with *The Souls of Black Folk* as a literary device. Albeit, the three appropriations that have been discussed, intergrationist-therapeutic motive from the 1920s to the mid-1960s, a nationalist-therapeutic one from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s, and an academic race-celebratory. These appropriations have provided the discourse that supports Reed’s (1997) claim concerning the strategic manipulation of Du Bois’s (1903) concepts in order to support individual points of view about Black ideology, Black identity, and racism in the United States.

Reed (1997) discusses the philosophical appropriation of double consciousness and references the connection of Du Bois’s (1903) concept with philosophers Hegel, Emerson, and James. He goes on to stipulate that West reveals the correlation between Du Bois and Emerson. West noted that Du Bois “attempts to turn the Emersonian theodicy inside out” (West, cited in Reed, 1997, p.98) in *The Souls of Black Folk*. “In addition, I should point out that my categorizations in some cases do not do justice to complex scholarship that overlaps the boundaries artificially imposed by my categories” (Reed, 1997, p. 98). The point that Reed (1997) is constructing is that though his attempts
to position Du Bois biographically or canonically are genuine, the specific scholars that he cites to discuss the discourse surrounding double consciousness provide uneven quality. Even though Reed (1997) wants to stand on the side line accusing other scholars of having personal agendas with the interpretation of Du Bois’s (1903) concepts, it is evident that Reed (1997) has his own agenda as well. In addition, Reed (1997) makes the claim that Du Bois (1903) only mentions the concept of double consciousness once and never mentions it again in any of his writings (Reed, 1997). This reference is another factor surrounding the controversy of the concept of double consciousness. In my reading, it is not necessary for Du Bois to revisit double consciousness again in his subsequent works as Reed demands, simply because Du Bois builds on the foundation of double consciousness in his later writing by further exploring what it means to be Black and American in a White dominated hegemonic society. He does not need to repeat it, he has already laid the foundation.

The topic of what it feels like to be a problem, a key element of Du Bois’s theory, is the only aspect of double consciousness with which Reed agrees.

Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter round it. They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, How does it feel to be a problem? they say, I know an excellent colored man in my town; or, I fought at Mechanicsville; or, Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil? At these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may require. To the real question, How does
it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word. And yet, being a problem is a strange experience, - peculiar even for one who has never been anything else…

(Du Bois, 1903, p. 1-2)

In this passage Du Bois refers to being excluded and denied access to White American society in the United States because he is Black and that being Black is a problem in White American society. For example, Du Bois, the first Black man to receive a Ph. D. from Harvard University; however, he was not able to receive a teaching position at the University of Pennsylvania, a White University. How does it feel to be a problem? Du Bois does not give an absolute answer to this question. He complicates this query by providing the “gentle reader” with insight on what it is to be Black and an American in the United States in the beginning of the twentieth century. Du Bois provides his individual knowledge of the Black lived experience from what he has learned as a Black man living in the United States during the era of Jim Crow. Furthermore, Du Bois has taken a subjectively felt social condition and provided visual imagery within the ways that he describes the concepts of the veil and double consciousness.

Visual Culture

Visual culture is a contemporary discourse that allows visual imagery and cultural production of positionality within the visual (Rose, 2012). “Visual culture refers to a plethora of ways with which the visual is a part of social life” (Rose, 2012, p. 4). Rose (2012) references Mitchell (1986, 1994) who states “images and language are
inextricably entangled” (Mitchell as cited in Rose, 2012, p. 4). With the representation of visual culture that is already available to people in the world there are scholars who make arguments for representation and non-representation of visual culture. “This diversity obviously makes generalizing about studies of visuality a difficult task” (Rose, 2012, p. 11). Here, Rose (2012) suggests there are five aspects of the recent literature that engages with visual culture with respect to the social effects of images (Rose, 2012).

First, “the literature on (or against) ‘visual culture’ is its concern for the way in which images visualize (or render visible) social difference” (Rose, 2012, p. 11). “A depiction is never just an illustration…it is the site for the construction and depiction of social difference” (Fyfe & Law as cited in Rose, 2012, pp. 11-12). For example, the reference is made to video games and how the representations of race in these games are typically White people. While there are an increasing number of Black and Brown bodies within these games, they hold stereotypical forms such as drug dealers and athletes. “This [declaration] is that humanity will only be understood within the fantasy world if it is primarily coded White” (Rose, 2012, p. 12). Therefore, Fyfe and Laws (2012) proclamation on how images perpetuate social power,

To understand a visualization is thus to enquire into its provenance and into the social work that it does. It is to note its principles of inclusion and exclusion, to detect the roles that it makes available, to understand the way in which they are distributed, and to decode the hierarchies and differences that it naturalizes. (Fyfe & Law as cited in Rose, 2012, p. 12).

In this context, Rose (2012) is looking carefully at images and thinking about how they represent or portray social classes such as, class, gender, race, and sexual
orientation. Therefore, images are very powerful, and the meanings that they convey can be explicit or implicit depending upon the context in which they are being delivered and viewed.

Second, writers on visual culture are concerned how images look and how they are being looked at, a major component focused on by Sturken and Cartwright (2009). “They argue that what is important about images is not simply the image itself, but how it is seen by particular spectators who look in particular ways” (Rose, 2012, p. 13). Similarly, John Berger (1972) uses the term “ways of seeing” to reference, “we never look just at one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves” (Berger as cited in Rose, 2012, p. 13). His understanding of this concept focuses on who is doing the assessing and whom the image is meant to attract.

Third, the focus goes to the emphasis of universality of the visual image in mainstream society. Visual culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language (Rose, 2012, p. 13). The vastness of visual culture is encompassing a whole way of life. It has many multiple meanings and to pigeon hold visual culture into one definition should not be done. This critique of visual culture parallels with the paired dimensions-threads lenses that I use for analysis of *The Boondocks*.

Fourth, the writers of visual culture argue that the particular spectators of an image will bring their own interpretations to the image from their lived experiences. “To the way of seeing invited by a particular image and its particular practices of display” (Rose, 2012, p. 15). Not all spectators will be capable, equipped, or enthusiastic about responding.
Fifth, Rose (2012) stipulated “there is an insistence that images themselves have their own agency” (p. 15). And the important focus is “not how images look, but what they can do” (Pinney as cited in Rose, 2012, p. 16). Visual images work in juxtaposition with other kinds of representation. For example it has become practice to accompany visual culture with text whether spoken or written (Rose, 2012). Mitchell (1994) coined the phrase “image/text” to emphasize the interdisciplinarity of images and written text.

Visual culture is concerned with visual events in which information, meaning, or pleasure is sought by the spectator (Mirzoeff, 1999). Postmodernity is ocular-centric—privileging the vision over the other senses. “The fascination with the visual and its effects that marked modernism [the conformity to modern ideas from the past] has engendered a postmodern [the rejection of modern ideas from the past] culture that is most postmodern when it is visual” (Mirzoeff, 1999, p. 3). This explosion of visuality, “how we see, how we are able or made to see and how we see things and the unseeing therein, has made film and television the second largest export after aerospace” (Mirzoeff, 1999, p. 3). Popular visual culture can address the most serious topics with results that traditional media could sometimes not achieve (Mirzoeff, 1999, p. 21). For example, in the animated television series The Boondocks, Black characters are depicting the Black lived experience so, it can be considered as being more sensitive to a serious topic. The reason behind this is that one is able to see the actions and the movements of the character rather than just watching someone just reading the news from a teleprompter. The integral parts of visual culture here are between the viewer and the viewed. “For some critics visual culture is simply ‘the history of images’ handled with a semiotic notion of representation” (Bryson et al as cited in Mirzoeff, 1999, p. 4).
Semiotics is that which is seen and that which is meant—the signifier and the signified. This connotation of visual culture creates a body of material that is so massive that no one department or program could ever cover the field. Visual culture is challenged, argued, and transformed as a constantly challenging place of social interaction and definition in relationship to class, gender, race and sexual identity (Mirzoeff, 1999). Visual culture is definitely an interdisciplinary subject and as a result, visual culture can be juxtaposed to double consciousness and curriculum theory in that they all are in a constant state of change.

Mirzoeff has been critical of the origins of visual culture coming from Western thought, beginning with the philosophy of Plato. “Plato believed that the objects encountered in everyday life, including people, are simply bad copies of the perfect ideal of those objects” (Mirzoeff, 1999). He gives the example of shadows cast by a fire on a cave wall—you can see who or what casts the shadow; even though, the image is distorted from the original appearance. In other words, everything that we see in the world is only a copy of an original. However, Descartes believed, “perception, or action by which we perceive, is not vision…but is solely an inspection of the mind” (Descartes as cited in Mirzoeff, 1999, p.43). In other words, the judgments of perceptions with which we perceive are just a series of recurring images in the mind. From these recurring images the mind is enforcing what they should represent.

Within this vastly complicated world of visual culture Mirzoeff (1999) comes from the field of communications and Rose (2012) comes from the field of cultural studies. While their views help to round out the concept of visual culture in this study, art
educators Freedman (2003) and Tavin (2003) are also essential by providing their theories in order to link visual culture to art education and curriculum theory.

**Visual Culture and Art Education**

Art educators have embraced visual culture as a new paradigm (Duncum, 2006) targeted at providing art educators with new tools to help students create meaning of the visual environment they live in. Freedman (2003) provided a comprehensive definition for visual culture:

> The visual arts make up most of visual culture, which is all that is humanly formed and sensed through vision or visualization and shapes the way we live our lives. Use of the term visual culture inherently provides context for the visual arts in its effects and points to the connections between popular and fine arts form. It includes the fine arts, tribal arts, advertising, popular films and video, folk art, television and other performance, housing and apparel design, computer game and toy design and other forms of visual production and communication. Visual culture is inherently interdisciplinary and increasingly multi-modal. (Freedman, 2003, p. 1)

Following Duncum (2003), Freedman (2003), and Tavin (2003) many scholars also agreed that visual culture should be an intricate part of the art education curriculum. Darts (2007) plausibly summed up the reasoning of these scholars when he stated, visual culture is “examining the popular images, stories, and products that inform, legitimate, glamorize, and communicate our evolving beliefs, values, and understanding is now not
only a natural component of contemporary art education but, increasingly, a necessary one” (Darts, 2007, p. 83). Several other scholars have showed their support for a visual culture curriculum that allows students to make meaning of their everyday visual experiences, through interpretation and analysis images into the ways in which visual culture could find its place within the art education curriculum (Duncum, 2003; Hermann, 2005; Gude 2007; Rolling 2010). Visual culture is, therefore, about engaging students in the discovery of the visual in their everyday lived experience (Duncum, 2004).

Additionally, Freedman (2003) discusses de Lauretis’s (1987) theory suggesting that visual culture has manifested itself within several cultural dichotomies—establishment versus antiestablishment, male versus female, and nature versus culture. Freedman (2003) theorizes visual culture within the context of the field of art education. Similar to Mirzoeff (1999), she positions visual culture as a term that does not necessarily require an agreed upon definition to discuss it in the field of education. Just like the numerous definitions of art have encouraged change to keep freshness within the art. Freedman (2003) states,

An education in the visual arts takes place in and through the realm of visual culture, inside and outside of the school, at all education levels, through the objects, ideas, beliefs, and practices that make up the totality of human conceived visual experience; it shapes our thinking about the world and leads us to create new knowledge through visual form. (Freedman, 2003, p. 2)

In this passage Freedman (2003) makes reference to life outside of the classroom as a rich territory for cultivating students at all levels of education. Stipulating that art
education is a field of study that embraces “objects, meanings, purposes, and functions of the visual arts students make and see every day as much as the art in museums” (Freedman, 2003, p. 2).

Two strains of critical theory have particularly influenced the discourse around art and education since the 1960s. European neo-Marxist theory particularly the work of critical sociologist, Theodor Adorno, of the Frankfurt School and the other is Paulo Freire’s theory of critical pedagogy that supports the literature from John Dewey’s pragmatism and ideas about progressive education (Freedman, 2003). These two strains focused on social theory responding to political and economic oppression, which is very similar to overarching theory of Du Bois’s (1903) double consciousness. Additionally, there are vital connotations with respect to visual culture and its influence on identity, in terms of art making and viewing as well as what is being seen and what is perceived. “The creation of self is based on the subject being invested with certain characteristics through symbolic representation” (Lacan as cited in Freedman, 2003, p. 2). For example, people can be prejudiced through images that are subjective in their connotation.

Tavin (2003) identifies three threads of thought emerging from the literature on visual culture within the context of art education, while Rose (2012) focused on the literature from cultural studies. These threads include the substantial, the pedagogical, and the phenomenological. The substantial thread is “an inclusive register of images, artifacts, objects, instrumentaria, and apparatus” (p. 202) while the pedagogical thread is a “transdisciplinary project that attempts to interpret and analyze the wealth of visual experiences in and through contemporary culture” (p. 202). The phenomenological thread involves a “description of present-day conditions in which experience, subjectivities, and
consciousness are profoundly affected by images and the practices of seeing, showing, and imagining” (p. 201). These classifications suggest that visual culture can be understood as (a) a cultural condition in which human experience is profoundly affected by images, new technologies for looking, and various practices of seeing, showing, and picturing, (b) an inclusive set of images, objects, and apparatuses, or (c) a critical field of study that examines and interprets differing visual manifestations and experiences in culture (Tavin, 2003). Similar to the three dimensions of double consciousness—sociological, phenomenological, and epistemological—Tavin’s (2003) three threads of thought emerge from literature in art education and link directly to my own interpretation of double consciousness. As a result, in this thesis, I focus on Tavin’s (2003) three threads of thought within visual culture and juxtapose them with the three dimensions of double consciousness as the basis for my research questions and the methodology I employ to interpret three episodes of *The Boondocks*. I provide further discussion on this juxtaposition in Chapters 3, 4, & 5.

Some scholars in and out of the field of art education are holding steadfast against the shift to visual culture art education (VCAE,) arguing that merging these two disciplines will be the end of art education. When referencing VCAE, Dorn (2005) stated, “What some consider most radical about the VCAE approach is its attempt to shift the Art Education field from its traditional emphasis on studio art into a dialogue about art as a socially constructed object, devoid of expressive meaning” (Dorn, 2005, p. 47). Michelle Kamhi (2010) is another scholar who believes the future of art education is in jeopardy.
If the hijacking of art education by “social justice” and “visual culture” advocates prevails, students will be disserved in multiple ways. They will not only be politically indoctrinated, in a context relatively insulated from opposing views. They will also be more and more deprived of the truly humanizing experiences that the making and appreciation of art can provide - art dealing not just with issues of social justice but with the myriad other themes of personal and social significance that art everywhere has always been concerned with. Finally, they will be subtly led to believe that the only things that really matter in life are those in the social realm; that the private, personal dimension of their lives is of trivial significance. That, perhaps, would be the most lamentable consequence of all. (Kamhi, 2010)

Kamhi (2010) argues if students are oppressed, it is due to their own ignorance and that of their immediate family and community. She references the film Precious as “moving testimony to that truth;” (Kamhi, 2010) however, she fails to account for the fact that the film Precious is a form of visual culture that informs students outside of the classroom that can be taught inside of the classroom as well. As a result, I argue that Kamhi (2010) contradicts herself with this example.

Nonetheless, Duncum (2003) recapitulates how art educators visualize what the study of visual culture could possibly mean to students in their classrooms.

What matters the most is that we ground art education in the opportunity for students to inquire critically into their own cultural experience in such a way that they come to know not only something of the contemporary pressures and...
processes acting upon them but also to discover the chance to have their own voice. (Duncum, 2003, p. 24)

Here, Duncum (2003) gives precedence to another reason why art educators should care about the information in this study as he argues the visual is what we see, the physical aspects of the world around us that we observe every day. However, the visual is much more than this; it is also a process of vision, judgment, and perception. Visual culture has origins in anthropology, art history, critical theory, cultural studies, and philosophy. Visual culture focuses on the ways that culture can be represented through visual connotations and the ways that culture is manifested through the visual in the ways of reproduction and presentation of visuality. Visual culture is the perpetual delivery of beliefs, identity, or persuasion; it is the visual interpretation of culture, philosophy, and ethos by using visual images to communicate with society (Grant, 2013). The animated series The Boondocks is an example of visual culture that encompasses this framework.
The Boondock

I am the stone that the builder refused
I am the visual
The inspiration
That made lady sing the blues
I’m the spark that makes your idea bright
The same spark
that lights the dark
So that you can know your left from your right
I am the ballot in your box
The bullet in your gun
The inner glow that lets you know
To call your brother son
The story that just begun
The promise of what’s to come
And I’m a remain a soldier till the war is won

-Asheru, theme song

The Boondocks, created by Aaron McGruder, is a politically radical animated television series based on an original comic strip that ran from 1996-2006 (Figure 2.1). The animated television series (2005-present) is Black sociological/political commentary served up in humor. The Boondocks reveals that the effects of oppression and disfranchisement are still in effect in Black society and Black culture as exhibited through the characters interactions with one another.
The opening song of this series by Asheru, discusses the discourse of dominant Eurocentric White American cultural ideology. The song, at the beginning of this section, focuses on the fact that oppression and disfranchisement are still in effect on Black society and culture in the United States. The theme song is in direct correlation with Du Bois’s (1903) concept of double consciousness in *The Souls of Black Folk*. The song explains the inner workings of Black people, their hopes, their dreams and their desires. It describes the attitude of some Black people willing to prove themselves intelligent, self-sufficient, and equal, if not superior to their counterparts who continuously oppress them. For example, in the line, “I am the stone that the builder refused,” the stone refers to Black people and the builder refers to the dominant Eurocentric White American society who refused Black people entrance in the mainstream society. The dichotomy of the lines, “I am the ballot in your box, The bullet in your gun” suggest change in American culture can happen in one of two ways. For example, these lines in the theme song also refer to double consciousness. As well as to figure 2.2 in which Huey is visibly both non-violent and potentially violent. Another example would be, there is the “Martin Luther
King Jr. non-violent approach” and there is the “Malcolm X by any means necessary approach” which implies the possibility of extreme violence. The theme song speaks to White America by telling them that they can decide how to go about handling the situation of oppression and disfranchisement because they were given two options. The lines, “The promise of what’s to come, And I’m ‘a remain a soldier till the war is won” suggest Black America has told White America what the problems are and how they will be handled if not addressed. Black people will not stop combating the controversy of oppression and racialized prejudice until there is equity and equality for all Black people in the United States of America.

Figure 2.2: Huey Freeman, two images

Huey Freeman is the principal narrator of the series (Figure 2.2). He is the voice of reason and moral compass in his family. A voice for modern Afro-centrism—a cultural ideology mostly limited to the United States and is committed to the history of Black people. Afro-centrism can also be seen as Black American motivated ideology that establishes a validation of Black people in a White cultural ideological society. Named after Huey P. Newton, one of the founders of the Black Panther Party, Huey is an
intelligent, judicious ten year old who is a passionate reader and knowledgeable about a variety of academic disciplines. He is deeply influenced by the theories of various left wing social movements and social justice leaders, such as his name sake Huey P. Newton, Stokely Carmichael, Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and Amiri Baraka. Huey is constantly ridiculed and undervalued by his family. While Huey promotes several social causes, he is openly derisive of Black urban culture as portrayed in mainstream American media for glamorizing wasteful extravagance, self-defeating lifestyles, and ignorance. Huey can be compared to Du Bois in that he is self-aware and cognizant of his surroundings. In other words, Huey has the mindset of multiple and simultaneous perceptions of self concurrently.

Riley Freeman, Huey’s younger brother, is a devoted enthusiast of Black urban culture (Figure 2.3). He is magnetic, cunning, and creatively gifted. Riley upholds a loyalty to Black urban cultural ideology, even in the face of his self-destructive behavior. Some episodes of the series focus on Riley's experiences with gangsta rap, his desire to imitate the Black ideology that he admires, and the various outlandish schemes his
grandfather often approves of and assists in carrying out. Riley encompasses double consciousness through seeing himself through the eyes of others. In doing so, he has taken on many of the negative attributes that are associated with underprivileged inner city youth. For example, using Black cultural colloquialism, he tags houses, and he has resulted to a form of hustling to make extra money.

While *The Boondocks* focuses on the Black family, Black culture, stereotypes, perceptions, and the sociopolitical climate in America, there is also an underlying foundation of critical race theory that builds from the construct of White privilege. *The Boondocks* exemplifies the omnipresent status of second-class citizenship and the extreme levels of stereotypical perceptions that are inflicted upon Blacks due to White privilege through the interactions “with culture and politics, even though many of the events are condensed into single episodes” (Gournelos, 2009, p. 233). Further, the “ethos of the show remains the same, and its engagements with the politics-as-such, hip-hop culture, identity politics, and other topics appear throughout the series as the central topics of almost every episode” (Gournelos, 2009, p. 233). *The Boondocks*, draws upon the lived experiences of some Black people and provides informative insight into the challenges that some Black people face on a continuous basis. *The Boondocks* addresses complicated conversations (Pinar, 2004) by focusing on controversial topics in the episodes.
Curriculum Theory and Art Education

The “complicated conversation” (Pinar, 2004) of curriculum is the essential theme surrounding the discourse of curriculum theory in the United States. “Curriculum theory is a distinctive field of study, with a unique history, a complex present, and uncertain future” (Pinar, 2004, p. 2). In short, curriculum theory is “the interdisciplinary study of the educational experience” (Pinar, 2004, p. 2) and is a vastly symbolic notion that incorporates complicated conversations surrounding the discourse of the dominant Eurocentric White American cultural ideologies. The theorization of class, race, gender, socio-economic status, identity, and sexual orientation encompass this complicated conversation.

Curriculum has been so institutionalized and formalized in schools that conversations on what changes need to take place sometimes rarely even happen. However, a more open-ended and personally driven conversation needs to happen in order for students to think more critically and reflect on the world they live in and how this world affects curriculum. “Such a complicated conversation illustrates a curriculum in which academic knowledge, subjectivity, and society are inextricably linked. It is this link, this promise of education for our private-and-public lives as Americans, which curriculum theory elaborates” (Pinar, 2004, p. 11). For example, curriculum should not be presented as completed constructs, but rather it should include the student’s preconceptions and should incorporate how the student views his or her own world (Dewey, 1934).
Pinar (2002) stated, “Du Bois’ concept of the psychic duality of African-Americans, of a ‘double consciousness,’ suggests the importance of an academic ‘safe haven’ for a divided self to engage in healing, understanding, and to advance” (p. 350). While Pinar (2002) makes reference to double consciousness and he positions double consciousness as a theoretical concept to be used with curriculum theory. However, he does so without the detail to the racial, cultural, social, and political content and complications that are crucial in having an awareness of double consciousness.

Similarly, Gaztambide-Fernandez (2009) discussed how minority students create and internalize their identity while in a predominately White school to which race, class, and gender are the core issues for this construct of identity. Unfortunately, in his study some minorities created a double consciousness within themselves that put limits on their claims to privilege and title. Gaztambide-Fernandez (2009) also makes reference to double consciousness; however, he does not take the concept of double consciousness to use as a lens for the interpretation or the interrogation of his study (Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2009). Although, he is using double consciousness in terms of constructing a view of identity of students and perhaps educators but not in terms of Black visual culture as curriculum theory.

Postmodern curriculum theorists are having the complicated conversations surrounding the movement away from modernistic ways of thinking with respect to curriculum theory. For example, “The dominating ideology is a product of the dominant power” (Watkins, 2001, p. 9). In art education, Freedman (2003) cites Patrick Slattery, a curriculum theorist, who notes, “curriculum should focus on issues of the self, because that is where learning takes place, and that educators can use autobiography to better
understand educational conditions” (p. 108). Additionally, curriculum theorists are using a conceptualized process in where students learn outside as well as inside of the classroom. In this context, the intended structure of the curriculum is changed or altered due to what is learned outside of the classroom such as identity conflicts and stereotypes (Freedman, 2004). Learning about identity conflicts and stereotypes can come from watching the animated television series *The Boondocks* as it draws upon Black American culture ideologies and stereotypes that focus on race, class, gender, socio-economic conditions, identity, and sexual orientation.

Freedman (2003) discusses five conditions of the curriculum process as they might take place within art education. “At least five conditions illustrate this reconceptualization of curriculum as process, and these conditions, at least symbolically, refer to conditions of postmodern aesthetics” (Freedman, 2003, p. 108). First, “curriculum is a form of representation. It embodies, in ephemeral and concrete ways, the hopes and dreams of people as well as what they know” (Freedman, 2003, p. 109). It is not just about knowledge; it is also about the shape of knowledge formed in relation to beliefs, values, and social structures (Freedman, 2003).

Second, curriculum is like a collage, according to James Clifford’s (1988) “conception of ethnographic studies of culture can help us to understand the social problem of curriculum. He speaks of culture as a collage of many cultural identities that are selected and translated on a continuous basis” (Freedman, 2003, p. 110). This example sees curriculum theorizing, research, and implementation as having collage qualities that are pieced together, layered, sometimes fragmented, and originating from different sources to construct a whole.
Third, “curriculum is a creative production. It is sketched, formed, and enacted and it continually changes as it is implemented, criticized, and revised” (Freedman, 2003, p. 110). There is also the belief from curriculum theorists that curriculum is ever changing and that acts of teaching and learning is part of the curriculum process.

Fourth, “curriculum suggests what Clifford (1988) calls ‘likely stories,’ rather than objectified and disembodied truth. As such, it can be conceptualized as an interaction between teachers, students, and a range of texts and images” (Freedman, 2003, p. 110). One story is that modernist curriculum focuses the student to singular positive knowledge. While postmodernism makes curriculum more transparent so that students understand it as highly complex and makes sense of punitive qualities, curriculum can be viewed as a collaged grouping of information. However, leaving curriculum open-ended allows for reinterpretation and reconfiguration of new theories and concepts within the curriculum.

Fifth, “curriculum should be made transparent” (Freedman, 2003, p. 111). Revealing the entirety of the curriculum to the student and having such transparency can have a positive effect on the student. Additionally, having the student work hand in hand with the teacher can foster confidence in the student and aid in their theoretical growth.

Through the five conditions of the curriculum process, student’s connotation of attaining knowledge can grow through the process. For example, being explicit with the students and allowing them to incorporate their experience into the curriculum to establish meaning is one way that allows for educational growth for the student through engagement of the curriculum. The use of these five conditions of curriculum is another
entry point to introduce the paired dimension-thread lenses into curriculum theory in the context of art education.

“As a distinct interdisciplinary field (rather than subfield of a single academic discipline such as educational psychology or the sociology of education), curriculum studies may be the only academic discipline within the broad field of education” (Pinar, 2004, p. 2) that is modeled after the behavioral and social sciences. In Episode Eleven of his book, Art Educator, James Rolling (2010) argues the discourse surrounding invisibility and “in/di/visuality”—“the agency to reinterpret misrepresented physical or conceptual bodies” (p. 173) and its relevance within the field of art education as a “transformative pedagogical practice that can inform and promote social significance” (p. 173). He uses the discourse of in/di/visuality as the intersection to the ongoing complicated conversation of curriculum theory. Rolling stated,

*Currere* is defined as the verb form of curriculum. *Currere* is an autobiographical method that asks us to slow down to remember even [re]enter the past, and to meditatively imagine the future. *Currere* is thus a precedent for elaborating a practice that transforms prescribed masks of identity from places of capture to sites of gestation. (p. 176)

Drawing from Pinar (2004) and his theoretical construct of the complicated conversation of curriculum theory, Rolling (2010) ingeniously intersects the constructs of [re]casting narrative Black identity with curriculum theory in his text. For example, when presenting old data with new connotations the old data are capable of creating new meaning. In a *Cinderella Story*, Rolling (2010) unequivocally addresses the discourse surrounding Black identity, the Black lived experience, and the human condition in the
Chapter 3

Approach

In Chapter 3 a philosophical interpretation of Black visual culture is the overarching methodology supported in this thesis by other methodologies as well. The discussion in this chapter centers on the research methods I use for the analysis of the data in this study. Ethnographic content analysis and semiotics are the methodologies for this study. Qualitative methodology is valuable because of its use to observe and interpret behaviors and language of the characters in *The Boondocks* to determine how they possess double consciousness characteristics through the paired dimension-thread lenses.

Methodology

Danto (1992) stated, “To distinguish symbolic expressions from manifestations requires that we recognize how the former demands an interpretation” (p. 58). With that, a manifestation simply necessitates an explanation. Danto’s (1992) formula of interpretation is: “find the world in which an expression in this world would be a sign in that one. Then the expression is a symbol of that world.” (p. 59) For example, in the episode “Pause,” Riley uses a facet of Black English Vernacular or Urban Slang in order to show a separation from what is said to what could be a perceived notion. However, it can also be seen as how perceptions from White America become signs to Black people
or how reactions from Black people due to racial inequality become stereotypes of Black people in White America. “A sign stands for its cause, as a footprint stands forensically for a footstep, or a sigh for sadness, or a scar for a lesion, or clouds for rain” (Danto, 1992, p. 62). Ultimately, we learn what things mean when we know what they are effects of, and then they become signs.

Moreover, “symbolic expressions…are communications and they presuppose a code that is supposed accessible to those to whom the communication is addressed” (Danto, 1992, p. 68). This hypothesis parallels with the theories of the Black Arts Movement, in that art needs to speak to and be for Black people and not conform to Eurocentric White American aesthetics. “Symbolic expressions, as communications, in general define communities of implicit understanders – individuals whose feelings and thoughts will be modified upon grasping the meanings conveyed or transformed by the expression” (Danto, 1992, p. 70). Through the interpretation of three episodes of The Boondocks in this study, the implicit symbolism of double consciousness becomes evident.

This study employs ethnographic content analysis (Altheide, 1996). Because, …when we do research on dialogue…we are dealing with a writer’s perception of the world…who presumably share perceptions, we can assure that analyzing dialogue in mediated text is not different from analyzing dialogue in everyday situations (Berger, 2000, p. 151). In other words, research is being done on the subjectivity of the writer’s interpretation of linguistics. Ethnographic content analysis “…is used to document and understand the communication of meaning, as well as to verify theoretical relationships”
An ethnographic content analysis methodology enables the interpretation of statements and behaviors made by characters in *The Boondocks* and related experiences in my own life to reveal significance within the three dimensions of double consciousness: sociological, phenomenological, and epistemological and the three threads of visual culture: substantial, phenomenological, and pedagogical.

Interpretations and assumptions about the world involve qualitative analytical research methodology (Cresswell, 2007, p. 37). “Qualitative research begins with assumptions, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Cresswell, 2007, p. 37). Additionally, “…qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes” (Cresswell, 2007, p. 37).

**Research Design**

From October 2011 to August 2012, I researched the data of double consciousness and Black visual culture within scholarly texts, images, photographs, novels, short stories, comic books, websites, journals, and videos to understand out how others had documented this history. While information exists on double consciousness and black visual culture, there is limited information or data that analyzes Black visual culture through the lens of double consciousness.
The Boondocks series is comprised of 45 episodes to date. The first episode aired in 2005. I watched all 45 episodes of The Boondocks 10 times from March 2012 to September 2012. Of these episodes, only three were subjectively selected to be analyzed for this study; (a) “Pause,” (2010/S3/E8) (b) “A Date with The Health Inspector,” (2005/S1/E5) and (c) “A Huey Freeman Christmas” (2005/S1/E7). These three episodes were chosen because, in my view, they exhibit the characteristics of the discourse that surrounds double consciousness.

I collected the three complete seasons of The Boondocks on DVD. My goal was to examine the content and context of the three dimensions of double consciousness—sociological, phenomenological, and epistemological. Sociological refers to the cultural aspects of the Black lived experience. Phenomenological refers to the perceived notions due to the cultural aspects of the Black lived experience. Epistemological refers to the validity of knowledge that builds from the cultural aspects of the Black lived experience and perceived notions of the Black lived experience that was exhibit through Huey and Riley and other characters within the series. Through listening to the dialogue and observing the actions of the characters in The Boondocks, I identified double consciousness representation in each of the episodes. After careful examination of each episode I narrowed my focus to only three episodes. I found a portion of the scripts of each episode on the Internet and use excerpts from each script for the use of this study. Each of the three episodes was viewed 10 additional times, from what is stated in the paragraph above, from September 2012 - December 2012.
Below, I provide an example of the synopsis of an excerpt from “A Huey Freeman Christmas” 2005, Season 1, Episode 7 of *The Boondocks* to demonstrate the interpretive methodology in this study only using the epistemological dimension lens of double conscious. However, there is a full synopsis and analysis of all three of the dimensions of double consciousness and the threads of visual culture in Chapter 4 of this study. The epistemological dimension refers to the legitimacy of knowledge that builds from the cultural aspects and perceived notions of the Black lived experience that also deals with self-consciousness and in particular with its vagaries and limitations (Grant, 2013; Taylor, 2010). Some examples entail the foundation of knowledge and its scope of validity in addition to justified beliefs of racism, hegemony, domination, segregation, ghettoization, niggerization, and isolation.

An example is as follows, Riley revives an old grudge he has against Santa. Riley, is in the food court at the mall waiting for the right moment to strike (figure3.1).

![Figure 3.1 Riley throwing a chair at Santa](image-url)
Riley: (throws chair at Santa, then hits him with a golf club) (figure 3.2)
That’s yo ass, Santa. I’m gonna get that ass. (sees the security guards coming)
Uh-oh. (He flees)

Santa: What the fuck? You’re all just gonna stand there and watch me get
my ass kicked? Nobody had my back? Huh? Nobody’s got Santa’s back? Ain't
this a bitch. (Gets into some kid’s face) That’s fucked up with ya’ll (figure3.3).

Child: Santa said the F-Word?
After Riley attacks Santa with a chair and a golf club at the local mall he writes a letter (figure 3.4) threatening more action if Santa continues to refuse, according to Riley, “to pay what he owe.” Riley feels that Santa owes him a set of rims he had wished for years ago and never received. Riley especially feels that he was wronged because he only asked for the rims and not a car.

Figure 3.4 Riley writing Santa a letter

**Riley:** Dear Santa, you are a bitch nigga. Wait Hol’up. Hol’up. Hol’up. (he erases) Dear Santa, you are a bitch ass nigga. I heard the mall is hiring extra security to protect you. That’s a bitch move, Santa. I’m coming for that ass again untill you pay what you owe. Sincrrly yours, the Santa Stalker [as written in original script]

Riley’s reaction to Santa not giving him what he asked for, for Christmas years ago, while living in the South Side of Chicago, builds from the cultural aspects of the Black lived experience and perceived notions of the Black lived experience. These perceptions fall under the category of the epistemological dimension of double
consciousness. However, Riley as an eight year old child also believes that Santa is a real
person and purposely did not bring him his gift. As a result, Riley resorted to what he
knows, physical violence, and that is the gangsta mentality that was discussed in Chapter
2. For example, in (figure’s 3.1, 3.2, and 3.4) Riley goes after Santa with a golf club and
writes him a threatening letter. Riley feels that only through violence will Santa bring
him the gift that he asked for, for Christmas. Riley’s validity of knowledge builds from
the cultural aspects of the Black lived experience. Hence, the reason why this example
symbolically refers to White America (Santa) making promises to Black people (Riley)
and not following through. Two specific examples are the promise of equality for Black
people with the “separate but equal” ruling with Plessy vs. Ferguson 1896 and the fight to
get the Civil Rights Bill passed in the 1964. These broken promises led to the Black
Power Movement in 1965 as discussed in Chapter 1.

The initial purpose of this study was to examine the discourse surrounding the
under interpretation of Black visual culture. For the purposes of this research I use a
qualitative methodology primarily informed by the discourse of double consciousness to
observe and interpret the visual representations, behaviors, and language of the characters
in *The Boondocks*. Initially, I intended to use the three dimensions of double
consciousness—(a) sociological, (b) phenomenological, and (c) epistemological—to
interpret the ways in which the episodes and the characters in them exemplify double
consciousness. Through the course of my synopsis example in this chapter, I had to go
back to my literature review and I determined that Tavin’s (2003) three threads of visual
culture parallel my own interpretation of the dimensions of double consciousness as they
comprise (a) substantial, (b) phenomenological, and (c) pedagogical threads. That is, Tavin’s three threads offer (a) a cultural condition in which human experience is profoundly affected by images, new technologies for looking, and various practices of seeing, showing, and picturing, (b) an inclusive set of images, objects, and apparatuses, or (c) a critical field of study that examines and interprets differing visual manifestations and experiences in culture (Tavin, 2003). In order to strengthen the interpretive possibilities of this methodology and its application to art education, I have paired each dimension of double consciousness (Grant, 2013; Taylor, 2010) with its parallel thread of visual culture (Tavin, 2003). These three dimension-thread pairs are Sociological-Substantial, Phenomenological-Phenomenological, and Epistemological-Pedagogical (See Table 3.1). I use each dimension-thread pair as a lens through which I interpret one of three episodes of *The Boondocks*. In addition, I fold in examples from my own lived experiences into the three philosophical interpretations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Double Consciousness Dimensions</th>
<th>Visual Culture Threads</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Grant, 2013; Taylor, 2010)</td>
<td>(Tavin, 2003)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sociological</td>
<td>Substantial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phenomenological</td>
<td>Phenomenological</td>
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<tr>
<td>Epistemological</td>
<td>Pedagogical</td>
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Table 3.1: Dimension and Thread Pairs

The relationship of double consciousness and the three threads of visual culture are used in Chapter 4 as paired lenses in order reveal the complexities and the intricacies
in Black lived experience as depicted in three episodes of *The Boondocks*, an example of Black visual culture.
Analysis of The Boondocks

Chapter Four analyzes three episodes of The Boondocks: (a) “Pause,” (b) “A Date with The Health Inspector,” and (c) “A Huey Freeman Christmas” through three dimensions of double consciousness (Grant, 2013; Taylor, 2010) and three threads of visual culture in art education (Tavin, 2003). Each dimension of double consciousness is paired with its parallel thread of visual culture to provide three lenses through which I interpret one of three episodes of The Boondocks. A synopsis of each episode is provided along with an analysis constructed through one of the three dimension-thread pairs. Each dimension-thread pair is described prior to the synopsis and analysis of its corresponding episode. In each episode analysis, the episode is analyzed through a double consciousness dimension first followed by an analysis through its corresponding visual culture thread. The chapter ends with a synthesis of the analyses of the three episodes and provides a transition to the final chapter in which I discuss implications for the importance of this study within the field of art education.
Sociological Dimension and Substantial Thread

“Pause,” 2010, Season 3, Episode 8 of *The Boondocks*.

This episode is an example of the sociological dimension and substantial thread pair. The sociological dimension of double consciousness refers to the cultural aspects of Black life and the stratification and social exclusions and class cleavages that cut across the Black community (Grant, 2013). Some examples of the cultural aspects of the Black lived experience include, but are not limited to, speech, clothing/gear, mannerisms, music, and food. The substantial thread refers to a cultural condition in which human experience is profoundly affected by images, new technologies for looking, and various practices of seeing, showing, and picturing (Tavin, 2003). Cartoon or satire imagery, photographs, television shows, films, smart phone apps, digital cameras, social media, and digital presentation software such as PowerPoint all reside under the umbrella of the substantial thread of visual culture. In short, the sociological dimension and substantial thread pair includes the tools people use to record, share, see, present, and depict their cultural practices.

Based on my lived experience, the title “Pause” refers to a cultural practice used by some self-identified Black American heterosexuals to remove any uncertainty about their sexual orientation after making a double entendre that may be possibly misunderstood as a claim or accusation of being a homosexual. For example, according to some facets of Black English Vernacular (BEV), if I am talking to a male friend and I say “You know I love you,” I have to say “pause” at the end of the sentence so he does
not interpret my statement as an indication of me being homosexual. I could also use the phrase “no homo” instead of or in addition to “pause.” The uses of “no homo” or “pause” are elements of BEV that fit under the sociological dimension and substantial thread pair because they seek to render visible the sexual orientation of the speaker as heterosexual.

BEV is contentious because of the complexities and the intricacies of its origin, the negative connotations that are associated with Black Americans, and the resistance of some Black Americans to be associated with that language because of its connection to slavery and the stigma attached because of the assumptions of inferiority in Black people. BEV is equally complex because of the inconsistencies of usage among Black Americans. Gates (1988) derives a definition of BEV from a “three-year National Science Foundation study released in 1985,” as recorded by Labov, and states that it is “a healthy living form of language” which shows “the signs of people developing their own grammar. The [B]lack vernacular, he continues, is reflecting [a larger social] picture [of segregated speech communities]” (p. xix). The culmination of the study to which Gates is referring as the most comprehensive definition on the dialect is that “the [B]lack vernacular has assumed the singular role as the [B]lack person’s ultimate sign of difference, a [B]lackness of the tongue. It is in the vernacular that, since slavery, the [B]lack person has encoded private yet communal cultural rituals” (p. xix). While BEV was ignored and denigrated for years, the significance of this language now is that it is the most studied of all of the English languages.
**Synopsis of “Pause”**

At the beginning of the episode, Robert (Granddad) plans to audition for the leading male role in *Ma Dukes Finds Herself a Man*, the latest play by Winston Jerome. Jerome is a celebrity Black American playwright, director, and actor. Huey describes his work as “a bizarre Christian homoerotic theatre cult that is mostly centered on an outrageous gun-blasting matriarch named Ma Dukes (Winston, in drag)” (The Boondocks, S3, E8). Granddad is excited at the opportunity, and announces his intent to give Winston “everything I’ve got.” Riley advises him that he has to say “pause” in addition. To Riley, the phrase “everything I’ve got” sounds suspect when one man says it to another man. In other words, Riley is saying that his granddad has to say “pause” after his statement in order to stipulate that he is not gay.

Below is an excerpt of dialogue between Granddad and Riley. In this exchange, Riley instructs his granddad on the proper use of the phrase “pause.”

**Granddad:** I gon’ really let him have it. Show him my stuff. Give that man everything I got.

**Riley:** Pause.
Granddad: Pause? Pause what?

Riley: You said somethin’ gay, so you gotta say “no homo” or else you a homo.

Granddad: But what did I say gay?

Riley: You said you was gon’ give this dude everything you got. No homo.

Granddad: That's not gay. I said I was gon’ give the man everything I got.

Riley: Pause, Granddad. If it sound gay, its gay and you gotta say “no homo.” How I know you not a homo, Granddad, if you don’t say “no homo?”

Granddad: I'm not sayin’ “no homo.”

Riley: Okay, you wanna be a homo.

Granddad: Stop callin’ your granddaddy a homo!

Riley: Then say “no homo!”

Granddad: I don’t wanna say “no homo!” Imma homo yo’ ass, if you don’t stop sayin’ pause! (figure 4.2)

Riley: . . . . Pause.

Figure 4.2: Robert Freeman – Granddad

Granddad passes the audition and meets Winston himself. Winston is revealed to be a devout, closeted evangelical Christian and claims Jesus Christ personally inspired him to write. Winston offers Granddad the part of Ma Dukes’ love interest and invites him to his compound and inner circle, on the condition that Granddad also accepts Jesus
as his savior and renounces Ice Cube and all of his work. At the compound, Winston makes a grand entrance (figure 4.3), descending on a golden elevator while singing “It's All Right to Cross-Dress for Christ.” Granddad quickly realizes that Huey was correct in that Winston leads a cult-like organization. Winston forbids the compound residents from contacting their family.

![Figure 4.3: Winston in Drag](image)

Forced to leave his family, Granddad undergoes grueling rehearsals and avoids repeated sexual advances from Winston. Later, Granddad has to kiss Winston in the play’s final scene. Regardless of the kiss, Granddad remains optimistic that as a result of performing in the play he will become rich and attract many women. Huey and Riley attempt to free Granddad from Winston’s cult, but are incapable of convincing Granddad to leave even though it means kissing Winston on stage (figure 4.4).
Following the performance, Granddad expects to be showered with adulation from attractive women, but to his disappointment finds that Winston’s women fans are obese middle-aged housewives. After the play, Winston summons Granddad to his office where he drops his pants and asks Robert if he going “to give him some ass or what?” Finally fed up, Granddad flips Winston off and returns home to be with Huey and Riley.

**Analysis of “Pause”**

This episode is an example of the sociological dimension of double consciousness and the substantial thread of visual culture because it is concerned specifically with cultural practices and ways of seeing or constructing homosexuality within Black lived experience through speech, dress, and mannerisms. In the Black community, “Gay men are belittled because they are seen as being like women, the stereotypical view of gay men as being ‘sissies,’ ‘faggots,’ or effeminate men” (Collins, 2004, p. 192). In some facets of Black culture homosexuality is seen as a cross-cutting issue and creates further marginalization among Black people within their own community (Cohen, 1999). “We
have to recognize that a gay sexual identity has been seen in [B]lack communities as mitigating one’s racial identity and deflating one’s community standing” (Cohen, 1999, p. 14). Being identified as gay in Black culture is to be ostracized from one’s own ethnicity. “That the condition of being excluded is (at least in part) a consequence of being denied the normative, deontic status of membership in American society through the betrayal of the sublime, ethical ideal of reciprocal recognition” (Gooding-Williams, 2009, p. 76). In other words, homosexuality is considered to be a problem within certain cultural aspects of the Black lived experience and can result in the exclusion from group life in mainstream (dominate White) society. This form of exclusion is similar to how Blacks were treated by Whites in the United States in the era of Jim Crow.

Through the analysis of contemporary mainstream media, Marlon Riggs (1999) discusses the discourse surrounding Black masculinity and Black gay men.

I am a Negro faggot, if I believe what movies, TV, and rap music say of me. My life is a game for play. Because of my sexuality, I cannot be [B]lack. A strong, proud, ‘Afrocentric’ [B]lack man is resolutely heterosexual, not even bisexual. Hence, I remain a Negro. My sexual difference is considered of no value; indeed, it’s a testament to weakness, passivity, and the absence of real guts – balls. Hence, I remain a sissy, punk, faggot. I cannot be a [B]lack gay man because, by the tenets of [B]lack macho, [B]lack gay man is a triple negation. I am consigned, by these tenets, to remain a Negro faggot. And, as such, I am game for play, to be used, joked about, put down, beaten, slapped, and bashed, not just
by illiterate homophobic thugs in the night but by [B]lack American culture’s best and brightest. (p. 307)

In this passage, Riggs (1999) reflects on the truism of what some judge what it means to be a Black gay man in American society. The societal segregation that homosexuals endure can be thought of as similar to Jim Crow—laws constructed by Whites that were based on prejudice against Black people in the late nineteenth century through the middle of the twentieth century. The paired lenses of the sociological dimension and the substantial thread enable the spectator to view homosexuality to be considered as a cult like experience. As a result, the images in figures 4.3 and 4.4 depict being gay as emasculating oneself by dressing in women’s clothing.

Being a Black gay male is taboo in some facets of the Black community mainly for all of the reasons stated above, but primarily because the sexual acts that would label one as gay most often take place in hidden places like a bathroom, a park after dark, a sex club, or an alley. Some Black men believe if no one sees a man having sex with another man then homosexuality does not exist, and they do not want to have the image of being gay attached to them. “Many Black men who are gay or bisexual hide their sexual orientation, preferring to pass as straight” (Collins, 2004, p. 173). This type of thinking has gained the label of on the “Down Low” or on the “DL.” This is in direct correlation with the substantial thread of visual culture as the condition in which human experience is profoundly affected by images and the men involved with this type of thinking do not consider themselves to be gay or homosexual. “The gay male upsets the social order for the straight male. Straight males want to celebrate male athletes or religious figures
without fear of being charged with an erotic or sexual attraction to them” (Dyson, 2009, p. 242). Hence, the phrase “pause or “no homo.” In some facets of the Black community it is more acceptable to be strung out on drugs, to be an ex-con, to be a womanizer, a dead-beat father, a murderer, or a gang-banger in comparison to being gay. Hence, the statement made by many Black mothers, “at least my son is not gay.”

Given the history of American society in its bigotry…we must acknowledge that we live in a heterosexist culture that privileges the viewpoints of people who happen to be ‘normal.’ Normal is defined as those of us who are heterosexual. Therefore, there is a particular kind if bigotry that is directed toward people who are gay and lesbian. It is sometimes a subspecies–that is the hatred of gays–of attempted murder and we have to have laws that deal with that. (Dyson, 2009, p. 248)

This passage also is in direct correlation of the debilitating hegemony of Jim Crow laws that enhanced societal condition for White people in the United States with the use of White supremacist ideology. This system of ethos devastates some facets of the Black community. Some examples are but not limited to, voter registration laws, not having the ability to own land in certain areas, and being denied access to all of the rights and privileges of being an American citizen.

The stereotypical Black church promotes much of the stigma of homosexuality. “Too often, the homosexual dimension of eroticism remains cloaked in taboo or blanketed in theological attack” (Dyson, 2009, p. 244). This Black church endorses that homosexuals are weak minded or the evil work of the devil. “There’s no homosexual
exemption to racial self-hatred. In fact, for the [B]lack gay [man]…there is greater
danger: with the [B]lack self and the gay self in tandem, there are more selves to despise,
resent, even hate” (p. 249). This is a direct link to the “two-ness” within the concept of
double consciousness. Dyson (2009) stated,

Unfortunately, differences within [B]lack life have been viewed by many
leaders and intellectuals as signs of our surrender to the corrupting influence of
the [W]hite world. On this view, homosexuality is for [W]hite folk, a perversion
they invented because they had too much leisure time gained in pillaging and
plundering non-[W]hite peoples. (p. 251)

In this passage, Dyson (2009) is referring to the notion that being gay is unnatural
and the only reason that some Black men are gay is due to effects of colonization. “A
discourse that constructs Black people as the natural essence of hyper-sexuality and
White people as the source of homosexuality hinders developing a comprehensive
analysis of Black sexuality that speaks to the needs of straight and gay Black people”
(Collins, 2004, p. 106). With this construct the rationalization of Black gay men becomes
a fallacy within Black culture. Black people were represented as the embodiment of
sexuality by White American Society and it was thought as though Black people
“fucked” like animals (Collins, 2004). With this mindset, homosexuality was considered
to be impossible for Black people because it did not result in procreation. “Holding fast to
dominant ideology, many African American ministers believe that homosexuality is
unnatural for Blacks and is actually a ‘[W]hite disease’” (Collins, 2004, p. 108). With this
type of thinking, Black gay men are seen consequentially as being disloyal to the Black race.

From the interpretation above inspired by “Pause,” I propose that Huey and Riley are worried that if they do not save their granddad from kissing a gay man he, granddad, will be looked at or seen as marginalized and segregated (Collins, 2004) within the Black community because he will be affected by the image of being seen as homosexual. Similarly, negative images that depict homosexual Black men parallel the negative imagery of Black people in general that the Black artists were fighting against during the Black Arts Movement. Furthermore, the actions of Huey and Riley are not uncommon in the Black community. For example, “the physical strength, aggressiveness, and sexuality thought to reside in Black men’s bodies” (p. 153) was challenged recently when National Basketball Association (NBA) player Jason Collins told the world that he was gay. Collins is the first actively playing Black athlete in the NBA to come out and openly say that he is gay. By doing this he has complicated the conversation of what a gay Black man looks like. Collins is 7 feet tall, 255 pounds and in the 2001 draft he was the 18th pick in the first round. However, through stereotypes and racial prejudices within the some facets of the Black community that surround homosexuality, Collins will face the ramifications of his actions. While he is confident and content within himself, how will other NBA players treat him in the future? Huey and Riley were concerned about their grandfather being ostracized due to the stigma of being gay in some facets of the Black community. This is why it was vital for them to rescue him from the cult like experience that was represented in this episode of The Boondocks.
Phenomenological Dimension and Phenomenological Thread

“A Date with the Health Inspector,” 2005, Season 1 Episode 5 of *The Boondocks*

This episode is an example of the phenomenological dimension and the phenomenological thread pair. This pair builds on the previous pair in that the phenomenological dimension of double consciousness refers to the perceived notions due to the cultural aspects of Black life (Grant, 2013). Some examples of the phenomenological dimension include, but are not limited to, critical race theory, affirmative action, socio-economic status, patriarchal masculinity, the prison industrial system, the criminal justice system, and incarceration. Phenomenological thread refers to a critical field of study that examines and interprets differing visual manifestations and experiences in culture (Tavin, 2003) such as, dreams, nightmares, mass media, music, semiotics, and pictures, for example. In a nutshell, the phenomenological dimension and phenomenological thread are grounded in what appear to be justifiable, the representation of reality, and the revealing or presence of cognizance along with the positioning of visuality examples of which are echoed in Jim Crow, Black Arts Movement, Civil Rights movement, and the Black Power movement (see Baraka & Neal, 1968; Collins & Crawford, 2008; Harris, 2003; and Pieterse, 1992).
Tom Du Bois has a recurring nightmare about being anally raped in prison by a muscular extremely tall inmate who calls himself the “Health Inspector.” [Tom is dreaming: In the jail shower, naked inmates shower, while Tom visibly shaken drops the soap.]

Figure 4.5: Tom in the shower

Figure 4.6: The dropped soap

Figure 4.7: Inmate aka the Health Inspector talking to Tom
Below is an excerpt of dialogue between Tom and an inmate who calls himself the Health Inspector. In this exchange Tom is dreaming that he is in jail and that he is about to be anally raped.

**Tom**: NNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

**Various Inmates**: you hear something? What? Huh? Oooohhhhh yeah,

**Tom**: [crying]

**Health Inspector**: Soap dropped nigga.

[**Tom gasps**]

**Health Inspector**: [Pauses] Oh, you think you just gon’ leave it down there?

**Tom**: NNN-no ...

**Health Inspector**: Huh? We don’t waste no muh-fuckin’ soap in here.

**Tom**: I’m...I’m finished.

**Health Inspector**: Naw. Naw, nigga. You ain’t finished. I been watchin’ you.

**Tom**: You have?

**Health Inspector**: You ain’t wash behind your ears or nothin’.

**Tom**: But I did...

**Health Inspector**: Look at me. See how I’m all clean, glistenin’ an’ shit? Dat’s hygiene nigga. You could call me the health inspector. NOW PICK UP THE SOAP!!!

[**Tom bends down to pick it up, obviously afraid**]

**Various Inmates**: Pray, baby, pray! I’m next.

[**Tom wakes up screaming**]
Analysis of “A Date with the Health Inspector”

Through voice narrative Huey reveals that Tom had lived his entire life with extreme caution due to his perceived notions of being sent to prison and being anally raped. Flashbacks during Huey’s narrative reveal a young Tom refusing to help his friend steal merchandise at a department store, declining to smoke marijuana in high school, deleting illegally downloaded MP3 files from his wife’s computer, and as an adult driving the speed limit. “Tom grew up to be a criminal prosecutor, which ironically enough was to send many [B]lack men to the very fate he most feared; and Tom knew firsthand that a [B]lack man didn’t have to do much to go to prison. Sometimes, he didn’t have to do anything at all” (Gournelos, 2009, p. 239). Some privileged groups in the United States argue that all deserving Americans live in decent areas and have ample opportunities to attend college in order to receive a respectable job (Collins, 2004). These same groups argue that “undeserving Blacks and Latinos who remain locked up in deteriorating inner cities get what they deserve and do not merit social programs that will show them a future” (p. 90). In this context, Blacks and Latinos are made to feel powerless and societal conditions similar to the ones depicted above are examples of the inhumane treatment of Black people that helped to kick off the Civil Rights Movement. As residents of these deprived inner city neighborhoods, they have to deal with the insensitive police officers, unresponsive social workers, and disinterested teachers who feel the same about them as the privileged group (Collins, 2004). The “A Date with the Health Inspector” episode focuses on many issues; however, this interpretation will
address: the societal condition of how easy it is for Black men to go to jail, the prison
industrial system, and what happens to Black men while they are in jail.

Based on my experiences living as a Black man in New York City prepares one
for life’s hardships and disappointments from a very young age. For example, as one of
the inhabitants of New York City in the 1990s, my survival skills were first learned as
police ran across my block shooting at Black men while people from the neighborhood
encouraged us to hit the ground and get behind something like a metal dumpster or a car,
if possible. The city motivates each of its residents in one of several ways to become
either socially acceptable for the system, militant against the system, complacent in the
system, or dependent on the system. The “system” refers to the governmental body that
operates on the premise of helping underprivileged people to reach the American dream
by offering financial support for survival, education and living expenses. However, the
system can be underhanded, conniving, and downright deplorable to some of the people
that it is supposed to be helping.

From my understanding, the Black lived experience has the propensity to breed
societal intellects, those who can maneuver and converse with any crowd of people,
individuals of true diversity, those who have book sense as well as common or “street”
sense, gifted with the ability to easily flow in any circle of society. The depiction given is
a prime example of some leaders within the Black community such as, W.E.B. Du Bois,
the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., and the Reverend Shuttlesworth. Du Bois was
influential during the times of Jim Crow and the latter were prominent in the Civil Rights
Movement. In juxtaposition, those same lived experiences can breed societal militants. It
can breed those who do not care to maneuver and converse in many crowds although they are no less intelligent than those who do. It can produce those who examine people closely as a way to understand the systematic approach of others in order to assess the manner in which the system abuses those not considered socially acceptable. Some influential individuals that have been produced in this type of environment are Huey P. Newton, founder of the Black Panther Party, Stokely Carmichael, who was very influential in SNCC and the Black Power Movement, and Amiri Baraka and Larry Neal co-founders of the Black Arts Movement. Additionally, it can mold individuals into people whose street sense and lived experience has birthed an unshakeable resentment and bitterness toward the system that strives to break their spirits.

Unwarranted police harassment in the Black community is an everyday occurrence. Similar to the persecution that Black people in the South dealt with in the height of Jim Crow, I witnessed the police harass my male friends and family, they have harassed hardworking men, non-working men, they have harassed gangsters, and white collar working men; they have harassed any type of male one can conceive, even myself. The only obvious factors that we all had in common were that we are human, male, and Black, and that was enough for unjustified provocation from the police. I had become aware of the fact that this combination of being human, male, and Black drew police to us, like flies to shit. On a regular basis it was expected that I, a Black man would get harassed by the police, and rarely was that a false assumption. For example, Powell (2008) has assembled a list of “Tips for Black Males When Stopped by the Police,” compiled by the American Civil Liberties Union.
1. Think carefully about your words, movement, body language, and emotions.
2. Don’t get into an argument with the police.
3. Remember, anything you say or do can be used against you.
4. Keep your hands where the police can see them.
5. Don’t run. Don’t touch the police officer.
6. Don’t resist even if you are innocent.
7. Don’t complain on the scene or tell the police they’re wrong or that you’re going to file a complaint.
8. Do not make any statements reading regarding the incident. Ask for a lawyer immediately upon your arrest.
9. Remember officers’ badge and patrol car numbers.
10. Write down everything you remember ASAP.
11. Try to find a witness and their names and phone numbers.
12. If you are injured, take photographs of the injuries as soon as possible, but make sure you seek medical attention first.
13. If you feel your rights have been violated, file a written complaint (bold in the original) with the police department’s internal affairs division or civil complaint board. (p. 224-225)

Here, Powell (2008) is providing Black men with some important instructions on how to help alleviate police abuse and violence. This was the same type of violence that Black people in the South dealt with during their sit-ins, non-violent marches, and protests during the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s and 60s. One’s life is constantly
in survival mode in New York City. There is always a siren blaring near or in the not-too-far distance providing information as to whether to listen or get out of the way of whatever may be coming around the corner or getting harassed by the police for walking while Black. Similarly, hooks (2004) discusses the discourse surrounding the lack of love for the Black male in American society,

Sad, the real truth, which is a taboo to speak, is that this is a culture that does not love [B]lack males, that they are not loved by [W]hite women, [B]lack women, or girls and boys. And that especially most [B]lack men do not love themselves. How could they, how could they be expected to love surrounded by so much envy, desire, and hate? Black males in the culture of imperialist [W]hite supremacist capitalist patriarchy are feared but they are not loved. (p. xi-xii)

Here, hooks (2004), makes reference to a brainwashing that takes effect in a culture that is dominated by White supremacy. This subjugation brings on a confusion of self within the Black male. It is a form of brainwashing of the Black psyche that is in direct correlation with Jim Crow laws enforced by White hegemonic control and a confusion that parallels the same notion brought on by double consciousness. “If [B]lack males were loved they could hope for more than a life locked down, caged, confined; they could imagine themselves beyond containment” (p. xii). Whether in prison or not, every Black male in the United States at some point has be forced to hold back the self he wants to express, he has had to regress and contain his actions for fear of being condemned, defeated, or destroyed (hooks, 2004). Black males frequently exhibit an institutionalization mentality from being in prison and often are unable to find their way
out. In a patriarchal culture when ethnicity and socio-economic conditions enter the equation “[B]lack males endure the worst impositions of gendered masculine patriarchal identity” (hooks, 2004, p. xii). Historically Black men are seen as animals, thugs, naturally born hyper-sexual rapists, and murderers. Stereotypical Black men do not have any real control when it comes to how the White dominating culture depicts them. As a result, “the radical subculture of [B]lack maleness that begins to emerge as a natural outcome of militant anti-racist activism terrified racist [W]hite America” (p. xii); however, as long as Black men remain savage animals and primitive “they can be seen as a menace to society that can be easily contained. It is the radical Black male pursuing liberation from the dominant Eurocentric White American culture that is the problem and White patriarchal masculinity believes this radical Black male must be wiped out. In this context, I reference back to Chapter 1 with the introduction of Jim Crow and Chapter 2 when Du Bois (1903) talks about seeing oneself through the eyes of others. “One ever knows his two-ness” (p. 2). When the stereotypical radical Black male demands equality and equity from White society he can become labeled as angry and hostile from the perspective of White cultural ideology. Additionally, this is direct correlation with the phenomenological thread due to the visual manifestations and experiences in culture that depict the Black male as a savage animal.

Nevertheless, “most [B]lack men [in the inner-cities] had made the choice to identify their well-being, their manhood with making money by any means necessary” (hooks, 2004, p. 17). As a result, the fight for equality and equity turned from political acceptance to community acceptance and some Black men started hustling, selling drugs,
as a means to provide for their families and to get their rightful share of the American dream. hooks (2004) describes,

As long as the stakes were respectable jobs, work that could lead into the mainstream, [White society], [B]lack men did not stand a chance at beating the odds. When money became the goal, [B]lack men had a chance. In [B]lack communities hustling for money, even if that meant lying and cheating, became more acceptable if it brought home the bacon. (p. 18)

In this passage, hooks (2004), discusses that a shift in Black life occurred when money became the dominating factor of survival. Black men who engaged in this practice could now display that they had money, and with money they became powerful. It was this type of thinking that allowed hustlers, in the Black community to compare themselves to their Wall Street counterparts (hooks, 2004). This is an example of comparing oneself to another and trying to reconcile one’s sense of self through visual manifestations and experiences in culture. In this I argue that, some Black hustler’s see themselves visually as equal to White men that work on Wall Street because they are able to provide for their families financially and give their families material items, such as clothing, cars, houses, and jewelry.

Even though some Black males were able to gain some power from acquiring money, they still had to “face a culture that tells them that they can never really achieve enough money or power to set them free from racist [W]hite tyranny in the work world” (hooks, 2004, p. 26). Mass media teaches young Black males the values of patriarchal masculinity through television and movies (hooks, 2004). There are few studies that look
at the correlation with “[B]lack male fascination with gangsta culture and early childhood consumption of unchecked television and movies that glamorize brute patriarchal maleness” (hooks, 2004, p. 27). The Black lived experience as a hustler, a drug dealer, teaches one “that only the strong and the violent survive” (hooks, 2004, p. 27). With strength being at the root of masculinity the Black man realizes that being a predator is the only way to endure. Mass media teaches Black youth that there are not accepted in White society and their only option besides being an athlete or a rap star is hustling on the streets. Similarly, Collins (2004) stated,

Mass media marketing of thug life to [Black] youth diverts attention away from social policies that deny Black youth education and jobs. It also seems designed to scare Whites and [Black people] alike into thinking that racial integration of seemingly poor and working-class Black boys (the allegedly authentic Blacks) is dangerous…the phenomenon in which young [Black boys] seemingly celebrate elements of thug life seems counterintuitive because looking and/ or acting like a thug attracts discriminatory treatment. (p. 159)

In this passage, Collins (2004) addresses the issues of how the media distracts the public from the pertinent matters about racism and segregation in American society. In addition, she also provides an example by asking the question, “who wants to live next door to a thug or sit next to one in school?” (p. 159). In this context, mass media is discriminating against thug life while glamorizing it for young Black youth. “Raps about drugs, crime, prison, prostitution, child abandonment, and early death may seem fabricated, but these social problems are also a way of life for far too many Black youth”
(p. 159). Nonetheless, rap music and hip-hop are one of the few outlets that poor Black men and youth have in which they can share their lived experiences with each other and the world. In 1993 rap icon Ice Cube produced a song about what a “good day” looks like for a Black man in the inner-city.

‘It Was a Good Day,’ describes a ‘good’ day for a young Black man living in Los Angeles. On a ‘good’ day, he didn’t fire his gun, he got food that he wanted to eat, the cops ignored him and didn’t pull him over for an imaginary infraction, and he didn’t have to kill anyone. (Collins, 2004, p. 91)

Just as some the Black men of Los Angeles and New York City learn to trust instincts at a young age—such as how to dodge bullets at a young age and how to think about negative consequences that could result from actions and reactions at a young age—some Black men learn that being Black is not a good thing and being a Black male is a downright problem. Living the life of a hustler, a person that sells drugs, has its consequences, two of them being death or imprisonment. This duality is inherently a factor of double consciousness, where being Black is always a consequence of not being White.

One of the ways for the dominant White culture to ensure that their power structure stays intact is through the privatization of the prison industrial system. “This industry consists of a network of private corporations that provide every single service imaginable to prisons and inmates, from prison construction and operation to telecommunications services, food, clothing, and medicine” (Collins, 2004, p. 80). In addition, the industry capitalizes on cheap prison labor and relishes huge profits at the
costs of Black lives. Similarly to the era of Jim Crow, the privatization of the prison industrial system has created a way for White America to make a profit from the incarceration of Black men. In this context, with the Black male out of the family structure the quality of life for the Black family is severely affected. In that, with a one parent household, usually headed by a woman, the family tends to live in extreme cases of poverty. Living in impoverished conditions leaves little or no hope for a lifestyle change and not being exposed to a different type of life leaves little aspiration or desire to have one. Additionally, these families move in and out of the public welfare system perpetuating the cycle for more young Black males to become statistics within society and the penal system. “In 1990, the non-profit Washington, D.C. based Sentencing Project released a survey suggesting that, one in every four [Black] men aged 20-29 was either in prison, jail, or on probation/parole” (Collins, 2004, p. 233). These statistics reveal that the incarceration of young Black men is a profitable business for the prison industry regardless of the effects that it has on the impoverished facets of the Black community; however, the problems do not stop there. With the progression of the prison industrial complex that has incarcerated a vast “number of young [Black] men had an important influence on American and [Black] American societies. Not only is American society more violent and infused with masculine ethos of aggressiveness and confrontation, Black men are more aggressive within this context” (Collins, 2004, p. 211). Once a Black man is arrested and goes to jail, there are other issues that are involved. Some of the main factors for a Black man in jail are living to see another day, maintaining his masculinity, and avoiding being raped by another man.
While, “the arrest and imprisonment of Black street gangs, many of whose members were involved in the drug industry, fostered more pronounced and organized gang structures in prison” (Collins, 2004, p. 211), joining a gang in prison could very well extend their life. Most street gangs stay interconnected with their corresponding prison gangs. “As the line between street gangs and prison gangs blurred, so did the distinctions among prison culture, street culture, and some aspects of Black youth culture” (Collins, 2004, p. 211). In this setting, to validate hood life in “Black youth culture, …homophobic violence targeted to gay…and bisexual [Black Men] all seems to be related to the incarceration of [Black] men and the ceaseless need to prove one’s manhood” (Collins, 2004, p. 211). This relationship of prison, street, and youth ethos generates an enormous amount of pressure on Black men to escape being categorized as weak.

While in prison the male who forces another male to have sex with him will not consider himself to be homosexual. However, other prisoners will view the male that has been raped or who has consented as homosexual if he is unwilling to kill or die to defend himself from rape or if he is willing to negotiate a sexual relationship with another man in order to protect himself from attack by multiple rapists. In addition, the male that has been raped must rape another man in order to prove his masculinity to the prison population, if not he risks being labeled a punk.

In the “A Date with the Health Inspector” episode, the Health Inspector’s stereotypical Blackness is made apparently clear as far as his height, size, masculinity, and his hyper-sexuality, and in the way that he approached Tom to let him know that he
is about to rape him. Some Black men have the fear of being over powered and anally raped in jail. There is a category of men in jail who have sex with other men who, as opposed to labeling themselves as gay. These men acknowledge that they must have sex on a regular basis due to their hyper-sexual nature. Since there are no women around these heterosexual men justify and rationalize their homosexual actions by having sex with other men.

In referencing the historical image of the Black man, Collins (2004) stated,

Historical representations of Black men as beasts have spawned a second set of images of that center on Black male bodies, namely, Black men as inherently violent, hyper-heterosexual, and in need of discipline. The controlling image of Black men as criminals or as deviant beings encapsulates this perception of Black men as inherently violent and/or working–class African American men. Again, this representation is more often applied to poor and working class men than to their affluent counterparts, but all Black men are under suspicion of criminal activity or breaking rules of some sort. (Collins, 2004, p. 158)

The image of the Black male in the United States is that of deviance, violence, and depravity; which is a direct reflection of the phenomenological thread of visual culture. In The Boondocks, Tom’s preconceived notions and thoughts are “subject to the tug of specifically American thoughts, strivings, and ideals precisely because he judges himself on the basis of specifically American standards of evaluation (the tape by which he measures his soul.)” (Gooding-Williams, 2009, p. 81) as Du Bois (1903) stated in Souls. In this context, Tom’s thoughts are in direct correlation the phenomenological
dimension of double consciousness. Moreover, “The United States incarcerates more Black men than any other country; Whereas, Black men constitute 8 percent of the U.S. population, they comprise approximately 50 percent of the prison population” (Collins, 2004, p. 158). Whatever actions are used - rates of arrest, conviction, jail time, parole, or types of crime; the record give the impression that [Black] men are more to be expected than White American men to run into entanglements with the police and the criminal justice system. Alexander (2010) describes the ongoing conflict between Black men and the criminal justice system as,

In the era of colorblindness, it no longer socially permissible to use race, explicitly, as a justification for discrimination, exclusion, and social contempt. So we don’t. Rather than rely on race, we use our criminal justice system to label people of color ‘criminals’ and then engage in all practices we supposedly left behind. Today it is perfectly legal to discriminate against criminals in nearly all the ways that it was once legal to discriminate against African Americans. Once you’re labeled a felon, the old forms of discrimination – employment discrimination, housing discrimination, denial of the right to vote, denial of education opportunity, denial of food stamps and other public benefits, and exclusion from jury service – are suddenly legal. As a criminal, you have scarcely more rights, and arguably less respect, than a [B]lack man living in Alabama at the height of Jim Crow. We have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it. (p. 2)
Here, Alexander (2010) juxtaposes the era of Jim Crow with the current War on Drugs. She presents the parallel of the inhumane treatment of Black people post-Civil War and Slavery to the present day Criminal Justice System. Tom’s fear of going to jail is directly related to the phenomenological dimension of double conscious which refers to the perceived notions due to the cultural aspects of the Black lived experience and builds from the sociological dimension of double consciousness. The images depicted of Black men in this episode are of savagery and primitivism. The visual imagery of Tom’s face is of horror of being in jail and of being anally raped by an inmate while in the shower (figure 4.5). This episode has manifested the fear of some Black men of being sexually assaulted in prison by another man. The visual manifestations of the image of Black men and of Tom’s fear of being raped fall under the phenomenological dimension of double consciousness and visual culture thread pair in this study.

Referencing psychoanalytic theory, curriculum theorist, William Pinar (2001) offers one interpretation for why Black men rape White men in prison:

Straight [B]lack men could have figured out many kinds of revenge, could they not: physical maiming for one, murder for another. But somehow [B]lack men knew exactly what form revenge must be once they were on ‘top,’ the same form that ‘race relations’ have taken (and continues to take) in the United States. ‘Race’ has been about getting fucked, castrated, made into somebody’s ‘punk,’ politically, economically, and yes, sexually. (p. 1119)

In this context, Black men are enacting revenge on White men from the perils and persecution of niggerization, by raping White men and making them their chattel and
their slaves. In other words, this action of Black prisoners taking away the rights, freedoms, and privileges of White prisoners is referenced here as an act of revenge for the cruelty of Jim Crow, the fight for Civil Rights, the continued perseverance of the Black Power Movement, and lastly, the need to prove artistically the intelligence of Black people in order to quell disparaging stereotypes that have been in perpetual motion for centuries. Additionally, the only way that a prisoner can survive male rape culture is through succumbing to the rape, becoming a predator, or a silent witness to the sexual violence that is inflicted upon other men (Collins, 2004).

The visual imagery in this episode and the analysis offers the spectator an opportunity to envision that Tom’s deep-rooted fear goes well beyond the rape itself. “The atmosphere of fear that is essential to a rape culture as well as the mechanisms of institutionalized rape function as important tools in controlling Black men throughout the criminal justice system” (p. 234). This may possibly be one of the reasons that Tom has nightmares of going to jail and being anally raped along with the fact of how easy it is for a Black man to go to jail. In addition, Tom is afraid of losing his prominence in the community as a District Attorney and not wanting to be seen as marginalized within his own culture. This phenomenological lens pair has built on the previous lens pair in preparation for the epistemological dimension and pedagogical thread pair.
Epistemological Dimension and Pedagogical Thread

“A Huey Freeman Christmas,” 2005, Season 1, Episode 7 of *The Boondocks*

This episode is an example of the epistemological dimension and pedagogical thread pair. The epistemological dimension refers to the legitimacy of knowledge that builds from the cultural aspects and perceived notions of the Black lived experience that also deals with self-consciousness and in particular with its vagaries and limitations (Grant, 2013). Some examples entail the foundation of knowledge and its scope of validity in addition to justified beliefs of racism, hegemony, domination, segregation, ghettoization, niggerization, and isolation. Similarly, the pedagogical thread is a critical field of study that examines and interprets differing visual manifestations and experiences in culture (Tavin, 2003). The pedagogical thread includes manifestations and experiences of culture reflected as visual indicators (Mirzoeff, 1999; Freedman, 2003) as well as applications of individual or group lived experiences to linguistics or signs (Eco, 1976) in physical appearance. Among these cultural indicators include, but are not limited to, photographs, paintings, movies, imagery, habitual negative visual assaults, and the visuality of White supremacy. In other words, the epistemological dimension and the pedagogical thread are the cultural and visual markers that validate knowledge and give agency to the Black lived experience.
After spending some time teaching the class about the traditional Kwanzaa Harambee salute, Mr. Uberwitz (figure 4.8), Huey’s culturally sensitive teacher, approaches Huey in private and proposes to him the opportunity to direct the school’s Christmas play.
**Synopsis of “A Huey Freeman Christmas”**

Below is a synopsis of “A Huey Freeman Christmas.” It begins with an excerpt of dialogue between Huey and his teacher, Mr. Uberwitz. In this exchange, Mr. Uberwitz asks Huey to direct the Christmas play.

**Huey:** You want *me* to direct the Christmas play? (figure 4.9)

**Mr. Uberwitz:** Absolutely. I think you’ll do a fantastic job.

**Huey:** First of all, I don’t give a damn about Christmas.

**Mr. Uberwitz:** You don’t have to do a traditional Christmas play... no, you can do... whatever you want.

**Huey:** You’ll be fired.

**Mr. Uberwitz:** Fired? For what?

**Huey:** For bein’ an irresponsible white person.

**Mr. Uberwitz:** I would really love to see your vision.

**Huey:** Vision? What do you know about my vision? My vision would turn your world upside down, tear asunder your illusions and send the sanctuary of your own ignorance crashing down around you. Now ask yourself: are you really ready to see that vision?

**Mr. Uberwitz:** We’ll give you complete creative control.

**Huey:** *(considers for a moment)* I want it in writing.
Huey has a meeting with his school’s principal concerning some of the content of his play. The principal insists that Jesus not be depicted as Black, despite the name of Huey’s play, “The Adventures of Black Jesus” (figure 4.10). Dissatisfied and discouraged, Huey walks out on the project the night before the play opens. Mr. Uberwitz, going against the wishes of the principal, chooses to leave the play original to Huey’s vision and this decision costs Mr. Uberwitz his job. After find out the Mr. Uberwitz lost his job, Huey calls him an irresponsible White person. This statement may possibly be directly criticizing Mr. Uberwitz himself, or it might be critical of a White society that would view such actions as irresponsible for a White person. In this context, I am referring to Mr. Uberwitz asking Huey, a Black youth, to direct the Christmas play.
In this episode, Huey is asked to change his play to depict Jesus as a White man. In so doing, he realizes that the dominant culture in the United States is not ready for the idea of/ or concept of/ Jesus being Black. Huey, building on his knowledge from Black history, provides the support that justifies him depicting Jesus as a Black man. “His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; his feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace” (Revelations 1: 14-15 as cited in The Holy Bible, 1992, p. 1655). Huey argued Jesus is from the Middle East and in addition to the Arab population; the Middle East includes people of African Descent—people of a dark skin tone that the dominant Eurocentric White Culture would classify them as Black (The Boondocks, S1, E7).

This episode implies Huey is named after Huey P. Newton, the co-founder of the Black Panther party. This implication also suggests Huey is similar to Albert Cleage in that they both “[envision] Jesus as a proud and radical [B]lack prophet who raged against
political and economic oppression” (Joseph, 2006, p. 56). Cleage, “who would become the principal leader behind the Black Theology movement during the 1960s, served as the New Guard’s spokesman” (p. 54), and an extension of the Black Power Movement. In this capacity he, “[renamed] his Central Congregational Church the Shrine of the Black Madonna, Cleage conducted services underneath the watchful eye of an ebony Mary and a caramel-colored baby Jesus who gazed down upon from a towering mural” (Van Deburg, 1992, p. 273). In this context, Cleage was immersed in the teachings of a Black Jesus and believed that Black theology was a way to defeat the White power system.

Cleage’s sermons were masterful exhortations to organize and protest that deployed images of both the sacred and the profane…and he believed that [B]lack oppression was both political and psychological. For him, there was no better example of the enduring myth of [B]lack inferiority than biblical images. White supremacy was so powerful that even the religious figures [B]lacks looked to for external salvation were [W]hite. The antidote would be a Black Christian Nationalist reinterpretation of the Bible – one that soothed wounded [B]lack souls while it inspired them to grab more earthly power than they had ever imagined. (Joseph, 2006, p. 55)

Cleage believed that lack of power stood in the way of freedom for Black people and morality was a mere drop in the bucket. However, he felt Black people had to believe in themselves in order to experience this religious freedom. From my lived experiences, Cleage’s statement shows a relationship with double consciousness in that Black people are dealing with a world that yields them no true self-consciousness and are only looking
at themselves through the revelation of the White world (Du Bois, 1903). Additionally, “Black theology would take its point of departure from [B]lack life and experience, which constitutes the exceptional social location for a theology of [B]lack power” (Anderson, 2003, p. 893). In this context, Black theology is grounded in Black history, Black faith, Black cultural activities, and Black Power which brought about the construction of a “new [B]lack being,” as the end result (Anderson, 2003). This new Black being echoed from the Black Power Movement, inspired the institution of the Black theology project. “The essential meaning was faith in a Black God that was revealed in a Black Jesus from the perspective of the Black lived experience (Anderson, 2003). Black Theology encompassed Black “art, music, literature, and theology as the expressive vehicle of [B]lack liberation by the [B]lack messiah” (p. 896). “Black theology will only accept a love of God which participates in the destruction of the [W]hite enemy” (Cone as cited Jones, 2003, p. 856). One problem with this project was, some Black people in the Black church found it too radical in opposition to White racism and feared retaliation from White supremacists groups. “The priestly [B]lack church tended to be a highly niggerized [B]lack church were the [B]lack pastor, although often eloquent, was so scared and intimidated by [W]hite supremacist power structure that he was subordinate to it” (West, 2008, p. 74). Black Nationalists saw this project as providing a foundation for the rebuilding of Black culture and spiritual values (Dawson, 2001). However, many Black people still suffer from the negative images that are prevalent in society and weighed heavily on the oppression and suffering of a people to unify the Black theology project. The epistemological dimension builds on the
sociological and the phenomenological dimensions of double consciousness which is the legitimacy of knowledge that builds from the cultural aspects and perceived notions of the Black lived experience (Grant, 2013). Some examples entail the foundation of knowledge and its scope of validity in addition to justified beliefs of racism, hegemony, domination, segregation, ghettoization, niggerization, and isolation. In this context, Black Nationalists were making moves to merge the Black image of double selves into a better truer self.

In regards to the Black image, the pedagogical element of the visual culture thread is evidenced by Harris (2003) who stated,

“Images of [B]lacks in artworks most often iterate limited or derogatory perceptions held mostly by [W]hites and helped create a visual iconography for [B]lack representation…with [B]lack subjects on the periphery doing menial tasks or exhibiting stereotypical behavior so as to emphasize their social and political inferiority” (p. 40).

This passage makes reference to how the dominant culture created the history that they wanted Black people to have and the role they wanted Black people to take in society. In addition, Pieterse (1992) stated,

Europeans constructed images of Africa and [B]lacks on the basis of selective perception, expedience, and second-hand information, mingled with reconstructed biblical notions and medieval folklore, along with popular or ‘scientific’ ideas that were current at the time…From time immemorial, as religious art testifies, images have played a key role in communication,
instruction and the general transmission of culture. In an age of communications media the role of images has become all the more potent. (p. 10-11)

Juxtaposed with this passage, the paired epistemological-pedagogical lens reifies the visual manifestation of Jesus in the dominant Eurocentric White American culture as White. Depicting Jesus in this manner acknowledges that visual culture allows for the examination of difference in imagery, in this case through religious imagery. In this context, hegemony is at work. Hegemony is when the dominating class in a diverse society imposes their beliefs, culture, perceptions, and values on the marginalized group through the belief that the dominating class knows what is best for the betterment of the entire group.

Huey’s desire to depict Jesus as Black challenges the dominant culture and provides an example of Black lived experience in culture thus linking itself to the epistemological dimension and the pedagogical thread pair. From my experiences, depicting Jesus as White suggests that White people are Jesus and by saying so, Black people by default are not Jesus. In short, Black people are evil, the Anti-Christ, not righteous, and Satan, as well as the embodiment of sin, in need of saving and flawed.

In addition, the refusal of White American society to depict Jesus as Black merges with Du Bois’s (1903) quote in Chapter Two that begins with “The history of the American Negro is a history of strife” (Du Bois, 1903, p.3). Huey does not want to Africanize his school; he just wants to show what Black people have to offer the world. By modifying cultural iconography to make it White and modifying it to make it Black the respective audiences can identify with the cultural icon “The image of a White Jesus
is one of the clearest examples of the power of propaganda. Worshipping a blue-eyed, blond-haired Jesus reinforced the concept of [B]lack inferiority” (Burrell, 2010, p.128). The previous depiction of a White Jesus is why when confronted with Huey’s challenge to White supremacy the principal, a White man, vetoed Huey’s play unless he changed Jesus from being depicted as Black to being depicted as White. As a result, Huey quits as being the director of the play. Mr. Uberwitz directed the play and followed Huey’s vision of depicting Jesus as Black and was fired for not following the direct orders of the principal. In this context, the pedagogical thread is employed through the use of visual manifestations in the curriculum of educating the students in the school. “Most [W]hite Americans throughout most of American history simply considered colored Americans inferior and unassimilable” (Schlesinger, 1998, p. 63). The curricular and educational ramifications of what should be learned in school and who should learn in school go back to the times of slavery and are still present in current day (see Watkins, 2001).

In the early part of the twentieth century, it was Du Bois (1986) who discussed the education of the Black race and provided instruction on how Black men could attain knowledge of the world around them and not just be taught the history of Eurocentric White American culture. Du Bois (1986) speaks of the Talented Tenth and it goes as follows,

The Negro Race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men. The problem of education, then, among Negroes must first of all deal with the Talented Tenth; it is the problem of developing the Best of this race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst, in their
own and other races. Now the training of men is a difficult and intricate task. Its technique is a matter for educational experts, but its object is for the vision of seers. If we make money the object of man-training, we shall develop money-makers but not necessarily men; if we make technical skill the object of education, we may possess artisans but not, in nature, men. Men we shall have only as we make manhood the object of the work of schools-intelligence, broad sympathy, knowledge of the world that was and is, and of the relation of men to it; this is the curriculum of that Higher Education which must underlie true life. On this foundation we may build bread winning, skill of hand and quickness of brain, with never a fear lest the child and man mistake the means of living for the object of life. (p. 842)

In this passage, Du Bois (1986) directs his attention to the education of Black men. He sheds light on the fact that through education Black men will be in a position to uplift the race and extinguish the flames of racism in the United States. Du Bois (1986) also makes reference to Black people being seen as less than what they are; this is related to his “veil” concept as stated in Chapter Two. The veil concept thrives on the following perceptions, (a) Black people have darker skin (b) White people see Black people as inferior, subservient, and less than significant. Some White people refuse to view Black people as “Americans” or as their equal. In addition, in the early 1900s when Du Bois wrote and spoke of these issues, he foreshadowed the devastation within the Black race if education was not a priority, if the curriculum did not include “all” peoples history. From
DuBois’ (1986) premonition, one can speculate of the continuous harassment of Black men from the criminal justice system and police.

Currently, “White domination of American schools and colleges, [B]lack academics say, results in Eurocentric, racist, elitist, imperialist indoctrination and in systematic denigration of [B]lack values and achievements” (Schlesinger, 1998, p. 67). Ironically, these are the same issues Du Bois (1986) spoke of in the early 1900s that now in the year 2013 are still concerns. Du Bois (1986) further stated,

You misjudge us because you do not know us. From the very first it has been the educated and intelligent of the Negro people that have led and elevated the mass and the sole obstacles that nullified and retarded their efforts were slavery and race prejudice; for what is slavery but the legalized survival of the unfit and the nullification of the work of natural internal leadership? Negro leadership, therefore, sought from the first to rid the race of this awful incubus that it might make way for natural selection and the survival of the fittest. (p. 842)

Here, Du Bois (1986) speaks of the strivings against racial injustice, discrimination, and subjugation of Black people and the intellectual talents that Black people have to offer to White America. Similarly, Woodson (1933) stated,

If the Negro is to be elevated he must be educated in the sense of being developed from what he is, and the public must be so enlightened as to think of the Negro as a Man and no one can be thoroughly educated until he learns as much about the Negro as he knows about other people” (p. 93).
Similarly to a major premise of this thesis Woodson (1933) echoes that there has to be an awareness of the Black lived experience in order to see the implicit connotations of Black life within Black visual culture. Additionally, The Woodson (1933) believed that White America has to learn as much about Black America in order for racial harmony to exist. Furthermore, hooks (2004) makes reference to the fact that “more than any other group in society [B]lack males are perceived as lacking in intellectual skills. Stereotyped via racism and sexism as being more body than mind” (p. 33). With this mind set, poor Black youth are brought up to believe, brainwashed if you will, that stamina and physical strength are all that matters in today’s society (hooks, 2004).

Similarly, Schlesinger (1998) argues that within the educational system in the United States, “the orientation is so Eurocentric that [W]hite students take their identity for granted, [Black] American students are totally deculturalized” (p. 67) and that “deculturalization being the process by which the individual is deprived of his or her culture and then conditioned to the other culture” (p. 67). In other words, White Americans want Black Americans to think and act in European ways (Shujja, 1994). According to Woodson (1933) this is also called “the Mis-education of the Negro.” Under White control education was a disastrous experience for Black people in public school and colleges (see Watkins, 2001). Within, “the midst of the tragedy, the mis-educated elite are unable to propose remedies while the dis-educated masses continue to experience pervasive, persistent, and disproportionate underachievement in comparison with their White counterparts” (Lomotey, 1990). In this context, White control over
education produced misinformed Black elites and under informed Black masses. Woodson (1933) goes on to discuss,

With ‘mis-educated Negroes’ in control…it is doubtful that the system would be very much different from what it is or that it would rapidly undergo change. The Negroes thus placed in charge would be the products of the same system and would show no more conception of the task at hand than do the Whites who have educated them and shaped their mind as they would have them function. (p. 23).

The educated Black elite served as the gatekeepers to social status for the Black masses in the United States. The Black youth that were categorized as problem children with discipline issues were kicked out of school. Without an education, these “problem children” were forced to have menial jobs and some started to rebel. The Black students who followed the rules and did as they were told were allowed to complete their education in order to become educators themselves and repeat the heinous cycle of the mis-education of the Negro. This type of obedience from Black educators is in direct relationship to the epistemological dimension and pedagogical thread pair lenses.

Additionally, Kelley (2001) discusses the discourse surrounding the downfall of a determined Black people by the White architects of Black education. “The architects of the late nineteenth century sought to turn a mass of determined, independent [B]lack people into cheap wage labor” (p. xii). Samuel Chapman Armstrong, one the architects of Black education and the founder of the Hampton Institute, “believed in the inferiority of the Negro. However, he did not deny that the Negro would occupy a permanent place in
the socioeconomic life of the nation” (Watkins, 2001, p. 47). Armstrong wanted to train and civilize the primitive exslave. He felt, “f Freedmen as a class are destitute of ambition: their complacency in poverty and filth is a curse” (Armstrong as cited in Talbot, 1904, p. 148). In this view, Black people were depicted as immoral and needing to be saved from them-selves. White education was presented as the only way for this to happen (see Watkins, 2001).

Furthermore, “[B]lack males are far more likely to be affirmed in imperialist [W]hite-supremacist capitalist patriarchy for appearing to be dumb or…appearing to be slow (meaning not quite bright)” (hooks, 2004, p. 33). From my lived experiences I remember as a child that the educated and/or intellectual Black man was a threat to White patriarchal society. Black youth are “groomed to remain permanent members of an underclass [and] have always been targeted for miseducation” (hooks, 2004, p. 34). In this context, many Black youth are taught that thinking is invaluable. As a result, these Black youth grow up to be Black men who are content with being permanent members of an underprivileged and marginalized group.

In this episode of The Boondocks, however, the opposite happens. There is a culturally sensitive White teacher, Mr. Uberwitz, who approaches a highly intelligent Black youth, Huey, and asks him to portray his vision of the meaning of Christmas. Huey, decides to depict Jesus as Black and does so by being the director of the school’s Christmas program. However, the dominant White power structure, the White school principal, ultimately vetoes liberation of the Black presence in religious history.
Summary

In this chapter, three episodes of The Boondocks served as examples of Black visual culture and were the focus of analysis through paired lenses of double consciousness dimensions and visual culture threads. The analysis of these episodes reveals themes which include a fear of homosexuality and homosexual identity within the Black community (Pause, 2010); underlying fear of incarceration due to being a Black male and what happens to Black males while in prison (A Date with the Health Inspector, 2005); and need for more accurate depictions of cultural iconography and the teaching/educating Black men and youth in the United States (A Huey Freeman Christmas, 2005). While not the only themes or meanings conveyed in the series, these themes serve as examples of the important social and cultural issues central to the storylines within The Boondocks.

Harris (2003) stated, “[The] images of [B]lacks by [W]hites affected [B]lack self-perceptions and must have contributed to the development of W.E.B. Du Bois’s theory of double consciousness at the beginning of the twentieth century” (p. 40). The analysis in this chapter also allowed me to look in depth at several specific instances of my own life and my own personal and cultural history as they related to key moments in each of the three episodes of The Boondocks. More importantly, as a result of this analysis, I am now better able to engage in and contribute to conversations about Black visual culture by employing the paired lenses of double consciousness and visual culture. The paired lenses also enabled me to reveal some of the effects that oppression, disenfranchisement,
racial segregation, and the political climate have inflicted upon Black people in the United States (see Taylor, 2004), myself included.

The analysis of the three episodes of *The Boondocks* in this chapter is symptomatic of the adverse history of Black people in the United States. “For [B]lacks the American dream has been pretty much of a nightmare, and, far more than [W]hite ethnics, they are driven by a desperate need to vindicate their own identity” (Schlesinger, 1998, p. 65). This analysis provides a condition to enable a response to the misrepresentation of Black visual culture that is in juxtaposition with racial prejudice in the United States. “Prejudices are often said to be emotionally based, and therefore education and information are credited with having relatively little impact” (Pieterse, 1992, p. 166). I argue that the analysis of these episodes will shed light on Black visual culture and will encourage increased and more adequate and meaningful interpretations of Black visual culture in the United States in the future.

On the surface *The Boondocks* is seen as an uncivilized and vulgar animated series that does not explicitly address deep rooted societal issues within the United States. However, *The Boondocks* implicitly addresses historical and contemporary issues of race, class, gender, and social concerns within the United States through its characters portrayed in the series. For example, *The Boondocks* focuses on some pertinent issues within the dimensions of double consciousness such as music, secret language, Black English vernacular, cultural traditions, the Black lived experience. As well as what is evident and what is unambiguous in the treatment of Black people from White American society. In addition to some concerns within the threads of visual culture such as, dreams,
lookism, expressions in words and actions, the relevance of objects. And what appears to be true, the indication of visual reality, and the revealing or presence of visual cognizance.

The sociological dimension and substantial thread pair lens has presented a relationship between cultural aspects of the Black lived experience and cultural conditions. In which human experience is profoundly affected by images, hence, the image of masculinity within the Black male that is discussed in the “Pause” analysis, as well as the distaste for homosexuality that thrives within some facets of the Black community.

The phenomenological dimension and phenomenological thread pair has exposed the ease with which Black men are incarcerated, how the prison industrial system benefits from the imprisonment of Black men, and how the social conditions from prison permeate back into the Black community. In addition, this paired lens examines and interprets differing visual manifestations and experiences in culture. For example, depicting Black men dressed in women’s clothing and portraying Black men as savage, and primitive.

The epistemological dimension and the pedagogical thread pair seeks the legitimacy of knowledge that builds from the cultural aspects and perceived notions of the Black lived experience that also deals with self-consciousness and in particular with its vagaries and limitations that examines and interprets differing visual manifestations and experiences in culture. In a nut shell, the epistemological dimension and the pedagogical thread are the cultural and visual markers that validate knowledge and give
agency to the Black lived experience. An example would be a need for more accurate depictions of cultural iconography and the teaching/educating Black men and youth in the United States.

Steinberg (2007) argues that critical pedagogy is what is isn’t.

Critical pedagogy is not guided by do-gooders, not guided by liberal groupies, or rayon-clad teachers who want to save needing students from pedagogies of prescription, administration, state standards, or even the latest flashdance pedagogical method. Critical pedagogy can be theoretically-based scholarship, grounded in understanding of the origins and underpinnings of power within society and in the fabric of schooling. Critical pedagogy has the right to be angry, and to express anger, anger at the uses of power and at injustices through violations of human rights. Critical pedagogy isn’t talk–liberals talk. Critical pedagogy takes language from the radical–radicals must talk. (p. x)

In this context, Steinberg argued, everyone who is engaged in the concept of critical pedagogy does not need to agree with each other. “Critical pedagogy opens up a space where students should be able to come to terms with their own power as critical agents” and “it provides a sphere where the unconditional freedom to question and assert is central to the purpose of the university, if not democracy itself” (Giroux, 2007, p.1). Critical pedagogy is where the transcendence of the impassioned complicated conversations of difference takes place. “Allowing students to realize that critique is the weft of the weave within democracy, those who espouse a critical pedagogy must constantly be alert and attuned to the context in which politics, power, and pedagogy
intersect” (p. x). The three dimension-thread pair lenses chosen for this study are the result of the visual culture threads weaving in and out of the dimensions of double consciousness. This act of weaving stitches a pattern, a visual image if you will, of the Black lived experience in the United States.

I have now augmented my awareness of double consciousness. My awareness of double consciousness is still a multi-dimensional incessant awareness of the lived experience of some Black people, and a process of comparing and trying to reconcile one’s sense of self in relationship to the perceptions of others. In this sense, my awareness of this concept is allied to art educator Kerry Freedman (2003) who stated visual culture is, “…inherently interdisciplinary and increasingly multimodal” (p. 2). The juxtaposition of double consciousness and the visual culture threads guided me through this study.

Additionally, this analysis put forward The Boondocks as a way of representing the intricacies and the complexities of the Black lived experience. “And indeed the cruelty with which [W]hite Americans have dealt with [B]lack Americans has been compounded by the callousness with which [W]hite historians have dealt with [B]lack history” (Schlesinger, 1998, p. 63). The Boondocks is also a reflection of the reality of Black artists and their individual lived experiences. “Salvation lies in breaking the [W]hite, Eurocentric, racist grip on the curriculum and providing education that responds to colored races, colored histories, colored ways of learning and behaving” (Schlesinger, 1998, p. 70). In this context, Schlesinger echoes Du Bois (1986); Watkins (2001); and Woodson (1933). Additionally, I argue that the closer Black visual culture comes to
capturing the realities of the Black lived experiences the more complicated and blurred it
becomes for someone who has not had the same or similar lived experiences. That said,
one might speculate on how the information in this thesis might transfer to other
examples of Black visual culture beyond *The Boondocks*.

In this study, I took the reader on a brief tour through some moments in United
States history and disclosed some of my own lived experiences. I have revealed my
perspective on perceptions and stereotypes thereby setting the background for the reader
to know better my awareness of the lived experience as a man who is Black in the United
States. I revealed how *The Souls of Black Folk* by Du Bois’s (1903) helped to inform my
awareness of the Black lived experience, my perceptions of self, my perceptions of life,
and my perceptions of others. I introduced a new concept, paired lenses that weave
together the three dimensions of double consciousness (Grant, 2013; Taylor, 2010) and
the three threads of thought from the literature in art education (Tavin, 2003) as an
example of how to interpret deeper meaning from Black visual culture. These paired
lenses represent a juxtaposition of Art Education and African American Studies that is
grounded in critical pedagogy. Albeit, my goal was to expose a different viewpoint; it is
the responsibility of the reader to take this viewpoint and add her/his own experiences to
it and construct their own distinctive interpretation on the Black lived experience in the
United States through the use of the paired lenses of double consciousness and visual
culture.
Chapter 5

Summary and Implications of This Study and Recommendations for Future Research

Summary

In this chapter, I first provide a summary of the study. Next, I discuss how the interpretations in Chapter 4 respond to the two research questions that guided this study with an emphasis on how these interpretations relate to previous knowledge and methodologies discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. This chapter concludes with a discussion of implications of the study and recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Study

The initial purpose of this study was to examine the discourse surrounding the disarticulation of Black visual culture and to build a conversation on the interpretation of Black visual culture. For the purposes of this research a qualitative methodology was chosen as the best approach to observe and interpret the visual representations, behaviors, and language of the characters in *The Boondocks* to determine the ways in which they possessed double consciousness characteristics. I examined scholarly texts, images, photographs, novels, short stories, comic books, websites, journals, and videos in order to
understand how others had analyzed double consciousness and Black visual culture and how the distinct history of the Black lived experience has been documented through literature and visual culture.

Chapter 1 sets the background for the study and is inspired by the climate surrounding the misrepresentation of Black visual culture. Guided by two research questions, Chapter 1 provided a history of Black people in the United States through descriptions of Jim Crow Laws, the Civil Rights Movement, Black Power Movement, and the Black Arts Movement and their efforts for equality, equity, and to reclaim a positive image of Black people in the United States. For example, Jim Crow Laws (Jim Crow) were fashioned in the 1880s by southern White legislators who were acrimonious about their loss to the North and the end of Slavery. The voracious appetite of Jim Crow separated the races in every aspect of life. For instance, a case was brought before the court when “a [W]hite man beat a [B]lack woman with an axe handle. She took him to court only to have the justice of the peace rule that he knew of ‘no law to punish a [W]hite man for beating a [N]egro woman’” (Hine, Hine, & Harold, 2004/2006, p. 291). Jim Crow created a caste system that gave preferential treatment to White people and was malicious to Black people. Jim Crow is synonymous with Du Bois’ (1903) concept of double conscious; the severity and indignant treatment of Black people and perceptions that came with these laws kept Black people living in a state of confusion, uncertainty, and turmoil. Similarly, as stated in Chapter 1, West (2008) called this the niggerization of Black people. The niggerization of Black people is when Black people are made to feel insecure, defenseless, subject to random violence, and despised for who they are. Black
people become so scared that they defer to the prevailing group in society so much that they are willing to give in to their own domination (West, 2008). This chapter also discussed the discourse of the distortion of Black people as central to the significance of the misinterpretation of Black visual culture in this study.

Chapter 2 revealed the literature that contributed to a foundation for the study and more specifically explored the significance of the concept/theory of double consciousness—a state of becoming, with sociological, phenomenological, and epistemological dimensions. This chapter also provided the means for building a relationship between double consciousness and visual culture within the context of art education through Tavin’s (2003) three threads of visual culture: substantial, phenomenological, and epistemological (see table 3.1). The chapter describes the animated television series The Boondocks and provides examples of implicit meanings of the Black lived experience within the series. For instance, as previously stated in Chapter 2, the theme song of The Boondocks is in direct correlation with Du Bois’s (1903) concept of double consciousness in The Souls of Black Folk. The song explains the inner workings of Black people, their hopes, their dreams and their desires. It describes the attitude of some Black people willing to prove themselves intelligent, self-sufficient, and equal, if not superior to their counterparts who continuously oppress them. For example, “I am the stone that the builder refused.” In this line, the stone refers to Black people and the builder refers to the dominant Eurocentric White American society refusing Black people entrance in the mainstream society. This chapter also discussed the discourse surrounding the complicated conversation of curriculum theory (Pinar, 2004).
Chapter 3 discussed the research methodology and design. This chapter also revealed the rationale behind the data collection and samples chosen for examination in this study. Methodologies such as semiotics Eco, (1976) and ethnographic content analysis Altheide, (1996) are vital to the methodology. Additionally, this chapter revealed the relationship between the three dimensions of double consciousness (Grant, 2013) and Tavin’s (2003) three threads of visual culture. The use of these paired lenses was central to the interpretation of three episodes of *The Boondocks* in this study.

Chapter 4 analyzed three episodes of *The Boondocks*, (a) “Pause,” (b) “A Date with The Health Inspector,” and (c) “A Huey Freeman Christmas.” On the surface *The Boondocks* may be seen as lewd, uncivilized, and a vulgar animated series, that does not explicitly address deep-rooted societal issues within the United States. However, *The Boondocks* implicitly addresses historical and contemporary issues of race, class, gender, and social concerns within the United States through its characters portrayed in the series. For example, the series has focused on topics such as music, secret language, Black English vernacular, cultural traditions, the Black lived experience, and what is evident and what is unambiguous in the treatment of Black people from White American society. For example, in this context I refer to dreams, lookism, expressions in words and actions, the relevance of objects, and what appears to be true, the indication of visual reality, and the revealing or presence of visual cognizance.
Responses to the Research Questions

The two research questions that guided this study are

(1) In what ways does The Boondocks exhibit the dimensions of the discourse of double consciousness and visual culture?

(2) How might the dimensions of the discourse of double consciousness and visual culture exhibited in The Boondocks provide a fertile space for theorizing curriculum in Art Education?

As stated in Chapter 4, interpretations of three episodes of The Boondocks revealed a fear of homosexuality and homosexual identity within the Black community and the Black church (Pause, 2010); underlying fear of incarceration due to being a Black male, what happens to Black males while in prison, how the dominant Eurocentric White culture benefits from the incarceration of Black men through the prison industrial system, and the disposability of Black youth in the United States (A Date with the Health Inspector, 2005); and a need for more accurate depictions of cultural iconography and the teaching/educating Black men and youth in the United States (A Huey Freeman Christmas, 2005). These findings confirm what Darts (2007) discusses pertaining to the nature of media messages “intended and perceived meanings are forever dependent upon historical, cultural, political and personal contexts and conditions and are perpetually contested in flux” (Darts, 2007, p. 82). The dependence on historical and cultural facts is in direct relation to (Harris, 2003; Pieterse, 1992; Collins, 2004; Collins & Crawford,
2008) as stipulated in Chapters 1, 2, & 4. The interpretations of *The Boondocks* in Chapter 4 offered increased and more adequate and meaningful interpretations of Black visual culture in the United States. For example, after giving the synopsis of Riley and Santa Clause in Chapter 3, I realized that I was forming my synopsis like Deleuze (1987) would say, as a “tap root.” In other words, I had tunnel vision and was solely focused on Du Bois’s (1903) concept of double consciousness and refused to branch out at all. In order for me to cross into the interdisciplinary academic field more was needed. As a result, I went back through my visual culture literature review in Chapter 2 and Tavin’s (2003) three threads of thought from the literature in art education kept appearing. Then I realized, pairing the lenses of the dimensions of double consciousness and the three threads of thought would give me stable footing to conduct the research for this study.

The rhizomatic experience of branching out and allowing the lenses used in this study to cross over and intertwine with one another have made the reader aware that the meshing of the dimensions of double consciousness and the threads of visual culture have revealed the relationship between Art Education and African American studies. Additionally, the relationship of these two disciplines has assisted me with responding to the research questions in this thesis.
(1) In what ways does *The Boondocks* exhibit the dimensions of the discourse of double consciousness and the threads of visual culture?

*The Boondocks* was analyzed using visual representation, language, and the discourse that surrounds the three dimensions of double consciousness (Grant, 2013; Taylor, 2010) and the three threads of thought from visual culture (Tavin, 2003). Harris (2003) stated, “’With the image,’ you only have a one-step process of where the image impacts on your psychology directly, and that, then, becomes what you internalize. When it comes to visual representation, clearly a lot is at stake” (Harris, 2003, p. 15). Visual representation and images unequivocally support ideological constructions of race and identity to take form. “Despite the real-world impact of the construction of [Bl]ack racial identity and its derogatory imagery, it is important to recognize it as what it is: a construction, an invention. All identities are constructed” (Harris, 2003, p. 15). The sociological dimension of double consciousness refers to cultural aspects of the Black lived experience (Grant, 2013) and this lens represents constructed identities. For example, the opening song of this animated series, performed by Asheru, discusses the discourse of dominant Eurocentric White American cultural ideology, that was discussed in Chapters 1, 2, 3, & 4. As explained in Chapter 2, the theme song is in direct link with Du Bois’s (1903) concept of double consciousness. The song explains the inner workings of Black people, their feelings and their realities. For instance, in the opening line of the song “I am the stone that the builder refused”—the stone refers to Black people and the builder refers to the dominant Eurocentric White American society refusing Black people
entrance in the mainstream society due to the constructed notions of Black people as inferior to White people. The substantial thread refers to a cultural condition in which human experience is profoundly affected by images and this lens represents visual representation of constructed identities.

*The Boondocks* discussed racial discourses and provided visual images for the depiction of the genuineness in the paired dimension-thread lenses. “Racial discourses, though they are discourses of power; ultimately rely on the visual in the sense that the visible body must be used by those in power to represent nonvisual realities that differentiate insiders from outsiders” (Harris, 2003, p. 2). In this context, Harris (2003) is referring to race as complex, unsolidified, and an unpredictable subject whose meanings somewhat shift over time. Nicholas Mirzoeff (1995) argued,

The definition of the Other as wholly different from the Self was, of course, haunted by anxiety that difference more apparent than real. It was therefore crucial that difference should not only be known but visible…The pseudo-science of ‘race’ dominated such efforts to visualize difference.” (p. 17)

In this context, I refer back to the analysis of “Pause” when I reference a Black mother saying, “at least my son is not gay.” For example, the “Pause,” episode revealed a fear of being labeled a homosexual and the image of homosexual identity within the Black community and the Black church. Additionally it addressed the way in which some facets of Black culture requires an instant distancing from homosexuality by saying, “pause” at the end of a statement that could be misconstrued as such. The fears that were
revealed in this analysis are in direct correlation with the paired dimension-thread lenses, the sociological and substantial.

In using the paired dimension thread lenses for the analysis of “Pause,” I conclude that racism is derived from preconceived notions that are explicated through visual imagery (see Collins, 2004; Du Bois, 1903; Gates, 1988; Gates & West, 1996; Grant, 2013; Harris, 2003; hooks, 1992, 1995, and 2004, Pieterse, 1992; Powell, 2008; Riggs, 1999; Rolling, 2010; Taylor, 2004; West, 2008). For instance, as stated in Chapter 4, through the analysis of contemporary mainstream media, Marlon Riggs (1999) discusses Black gay men.

I am a Negro faggot, if I believe what movies, TV, and rap music say of me. Because of my sexuality I remain a sissy, punk, faggot. I cannot be a [B]lack gay man because, by the tenets of [B]lack macho, [B]lack gay man is a triple negation. And, as such, I am game for play, to be used, joked about, put down, beaten, slapped, and bashed, not just by illiterate homophobic thugs in the night but by [B]lack American culture’s best and brightest. (p. 307)

In this passage, Riggs (1999) echoes on the truism of what some believe it is to be a Black gay man in American society. The paired lenses of the sociological dimension and the substantial thread enable the spectator to envision homosexuality as effeminate and to be considered as emasculating the Black male image. Hence, the phrase “pause or “no homo,” which relates back to the episode “Pause,” that focused on cultural aspects of the Black lived experience and a cultural condition in which human experience is profoundly affected by images and this lens represents visual representation of
constructed identities. In short, this episode represented the paired sociological dimension-substantial thread lenses.

The episode of “A Date with the Health Inspector,” is an example of the phenomenological dimension and the phenomenological thread pair lenses. This pair builds on the previous pair in that the phenomenological dimension of double consciousness refers to the perceived notions due to the cultural aspects of Black life (Grant, 2013). Phenomenological thread refers to a critical field of study that examines and interprets differing visual manifestations and experiences in culture (Tavin, 2003). In short, the phenomenological dimension and phenomenological thread are grounded in what appear to be justifiable, the depiction of reality, and the revealing or presence of cognizance along with the positioning of visuality.

From my lived experiences the analysis of this episode echoes what I witnessed firsthand living in NYC. For example, some Black men struggle with cultural, societal, and socioeconomic conditions which plagued Black men since before 1903, when Du Bois wrote The Souls of Black Folk. A substantial amount of Black visual culture of at least the last century has focused on Black men and the struggles with societal maltreatment, impoverished socioeconomic conditions, employment limitations, and incarceration which cause Black men to rebel that results in social, financial, and spiritual death through media coverage (see Collins, 2004; hooks, 2004; Powell, 2008; West, 2008). However, most of the images of these Black men are that of racial stereotypes and degradation. For instance, some Black men are taught at a very young age that strength and stamina are what is important. They are groomed from a young age by the dominant
White ideology that since they are from an underprivileged environment and they will remain in that environment (hooks, 2004). “Black males without class privilege have always been targeted for miseducation” (hooks, 2004, p. 34). Tragically many Black males from underprivileged environments end up uneducated and unemployable. They have low self-esteem and believe that due to the deplorable conditions that White society has forced upon them they have no other choice but to turn to the streets and start hustling, selling drugs or running numbers, in order to survive. The lifestyle of hustling eventually leads to incarceration of the Black man. This example of the down trodden Black male is parallel to the paired lenses of phenomenological dimension of double consciousness and the phenomenological thread of visual culture. *The Boondocks,* captures the multiple dimensions of the Black lived experience through the use of its characters in the series.

In using the phenomenological paired dimension-thread lenses for the analysis of “A Date With The Health Inspector,” I determine that through the use of the prison industrial system White cultural ideologies have found a new way to enslave the Black male. I say this because through institutionalizing or colonizing the Black male to become indoctrinated to prison. White society keeps the Black man primitive and provincial. In addition, the prison industrial system which is owned by members of White society makes a financial profit from selling the state everything that it needs to run a prison; things such as, food, beds, clothing, and materials to build prisons.

The instances given above are only some examples of the phenomenological dimension which relates to socio-economic status, the prison industrial system, and
incarceration. Phenomenological thread refers visual manifestations and experiences in culture such as, dreams, nightmares, and mass media. In which the visual manifestation is that some Black men view themselves as less than the underprivileged environments that they come from.

The episode “A Huey Freeman Christmas,” is an example of the epistemological dimension and pedagogical thread pair. Some examples entail the foundation of knowledge and its scope of validity in addition to justified beliefs of racism, hegemony, domination, segregation, ghettoization, niggerization, and isolation. The pedagogical thread includes photographs, paintings, movies, imagery, habitual negative visual assaults, and the visuality of White supremacy. This episode also refers back to the fact that Huey is named after Huey P. Newton, the co-founder of the Black Panther party.

Here, as also stated in the synopsis and analysis of this episode in Chapter 4; however, I give a brief synopsis of the episode. Huey’s culturally sensitive teacher approaches him in private and proposes to him the opportunity to direct the school’s Christmas play. Huey has a meeting with his school’s principal concerning some of the content of his play. The principal insists that Jesus not be depicted as Black, despite the name of Huey’s play, “The Adventures of Black Jesus.” In this brief synopsis I gave an example of the epistemological lens as Huey justifiably believes that this is done out of racist mindset that Jesus cannot be Black. This racialized mindset flows directly into the pedagogical lens due the imagery and visuality of White supremacy. Hence providing further evidence of how the paired epistemological dimension and pedagogical thread lenses are explicitly situated within this episode of The Boondocks. Some of the implicit
connotations that I reveal in this episode are, a need for more accurate depictions of cultural iconography and the teaching/educating Black men and youth in the United States. In this context, I refer back to the analysis in Chapter 4. Black American culture experienced a radical moment in 1969, James H. Cone wrote “What is needed is not integration but a sense of worth in being [B]lack, and only [B]lack people can teach that. Black consciousness is the key to the Black man’s emancipation from his distorted self-image” (Cone, 1989, p. 19). Black revolutionary consciousness, seen as liberation and stems from the Black Power Movement, was juxtaposed with hope in order for the development of the Black theology project to take form. The Black theology projects initial purpose was to create a space where the negative images of Black people could be relinquished and to replace these images with a shared location for a divinity of Black Power within the Black community.

“If [W]hite theology was viewed as an ideology of oppression, then [B]lack theology would become the ideology of liberation” (p. 127). Black Theology encompassed Black “art, music, literature, and theology as the expressive vehicle of [B]lack liberation by the [B]lack messiah” (Anderson, 2003, p. 896). Huey’s desire to depict Jesus as Black challenges the dominant culture and provides an example of Black lived experience in culture thus linking itself to the epistemological dimension and the pedagogical thread pair. From my experiences, depicting Jesus as White suggests that White people are Jesus and by saying so, Black people by default are not Jesus. In short, Black people are evil, the Anti-Christ, not righteous, and Satan, as well as the embodiment of sin, in need of saving and flawed.
The epistemological dimension refers to the legitimacy of knowledge that builds from the cultural aspects and perceived notions of the Black lived experience (Grant, 2013). Similarly, the pedagogical thread is a critical field of study that examines and interprets differing visual manifestations and experiences in culture (Tavin, 2003). The pedagogical thread includes manifestations and experiences of culture reflected as visual indicators (Mirzoeff, 1999; Freedman, 2003) as well as applications of individual or group lived experiences to linguistics or signs (Eco, 1976) in physical appearance. In short, the epistemological dimension and the pedagogical thread are the cultural and visual markers that validate knowledge and give agency to the Black lived experience.

Throughout this thesis I have provided working definitions for the dimensions of double consciousness (Grant, 2013) and the threads of visual culture (Tavin, 2003). Examples from literary scholarship on the Black lived experience, visual culture, and my lived experiences have been given in order to validate this study. “These images of [B]lacks by [W]hites affected [B]lack self-perception and must have contributed to the development of W.E.B. Du Bois’s theory of double consciousness at the beginning of the twentieth century” (Harris, 2003, p. 40) as a result, of this study I unequivocally render all of the paired dimension-thread lenses germane for revealing how The Boondocks exhibit the discourse of the dimensions of double consciousness and the threads of visual culture.
(2) How might the discourse of the dimensions of double consciousness and the threads of visual culture exhibited in The Boondocks provide a fertile space for theorizing curriculum in Art Education?

Due to the implicit meanings within The Boondocks, the three episodes in this study represent in many ways what Giroux (2012) discussed concerning the cruelty of the White dominant culture and racism in the United States,

The culture of cruelty is important for thinking through how entertainment and politics now converge in ways that fundamentally transform how we understand and imagine politics in the current historical moment – a moment when the central issue of getting by is no longer about working to get ahead but struggling simply to survive. And many groups who are considered marginal because they are poor, unemployed, people of color, elderly, or young have not just been excluded from ‘the American dream,’ but have become utterly redundant and disposable, waste products of a society that no longer considers them of any value. (p.35)

Here, Giroux provides the necessary tools to cultivate and nourish this question in my thesis. His focus on social and political issues in the United States fertilizes the foundation to examine and interrogate how the dominant Eurocentric White cultural ideology has negatively saturated the mind, the mood, and the societal conditions of some Black people in the United States. For instance, through the use of Black English Vernacular, The Boondocks revealed a fear of homosexuality and homosexual identity
within the Black community and the Black church (Pause, 2010). Through the use of societal conditions in the United States *The Boondocks* has addressed the underlying fear of incarceration due to being a Black male, what happens to Black males while in prison, how the dominant Eurocentric White culture benefits from the incarceration of Black men through the prison industrial system, and how the disposability of Black youth due to a racialized culture from the cruel treatment of some White Americans (A Date with the Health Inspector, 2005).

In the third analysis, “A Huey Freeman Christmas” *The Boondocks* addresses multiple issues that intertwine yet remain separate discourses. For example, in this episode the implicit discussion focuses on a need for more accurate depictions of cultural iconography and the teaching/educating Black men and youth in the United States. All three of the episodes examined in the study embody the dimensions of double consciousness as a multi-dimensional incessant awareness of the lived experience of some Black Americans. The implicit engagement with Black identity disrupts a coherent, unwavering or disjointed view of the Black lived experience and allows *The Boondocks* to provide a fertile space for theorizing curriculum in Art Education using the paired dimension-thread lenses. As a result, the philosophical interpretations in this thesis, I have revealed only a few of the implicit connotations that are within *The Boondocks* as it pertains to the Black lived experience and interpreting black visual culture. I know that with further research many more meanings will develop. In addition, this study has shown that the field of art education is academic discipline where an in-depth analysis of Black visual culture can take place.
Freedman (2003) stated, “the ideal purpose of including culturally diverse art in curriculum is to promote an understanding of the richness of visual culture [and] increase acceptance of disenfranchised groups…” (p. 125). Additionally, Freedman (2003) discusses the discourse of the complexities in teaching about diversity or other social issues connected to visual culture, revealing that these complexities require a deeper understanding in multicultural and cross cultural settings. Freedman’s (2003) statements embody the premise of this thesis which is in order to reveal the intricacies and the complexities in Black visual culture one must have an awareness of the Black lived experience in the United States. Using examples of Black visual culture such at *The Boondocks* has the potential to provide such awareness and thereby inform curriculum theory in art education.

Carpenter (2005) writes of “teachers who bridge the content of two or more subject areas as a way to cross between disciplines. When some teachers and curriculum designers see a wall, others imagine a window, door, or bridge in its place” (Carpenter, 2005, p. 4). Nevertheless, curriculum theory has allegiance to the discipline and experience of education because of its origins in this area. The “complicated conversation” (Pinar, 2004) of curriculum theory is in direct correlation to the Black lived experience with which Du Bois (1903) speaks in connection to three dimensions of double consciousness and Tavin’s (2003) three threads of thought about visual culture in art education. The juxtaposition of the paired dimension-thread lenses with curriculum theory is an excellent start to use the information in this study as curriculum in the field of art education.
(Carpenter & Sourdot, 2010). “The field of art education has for more than two decades, opened the discourse of its own practices to consider the roles, values, and influences of visual culture” (p. 444). Similar to my interpretation of the three visual culture threads, Carpenter and Sourdot (2010) describe Tavin’s (2003) substantial thread as a verb—“the engaged act of inquiry based on and informed visual culture” and as a noun—“[sociological, phenomenological.] and “pedagogical example of visual culture that educates” (Carpenter & Sourdot, 2010, p. 446). In this sense, visual culture as public pedagogy is juxtaposed with the complicated conversation (Pinar, 2004) of curriculum theory (Carpenter & Sourdot, 2010). Within this context one might find movies, animated television shows, and other cultural productions.

Implications for Art Education

For a further look into the research questions, my study considers pertinent societal issues of dominant Eurocentric White American cultural ideologies and their effects on the misrepresentation of Black visual culture that should be of concern to the field of art education. For example, Olivia Gude (2009) stated,

The curriculum of quality art education is thus centered—not merely on the teaching and learning of art vocabulary, media, and methods—but rather on learning about and utilizing strategies to produce individual and cultural meaning, meaningful culture. The oppositions and tensions, harmonies and contradictions, points and counterpoints—the clash of codes and styles of art and ideas in
contemporary times—these are the elements and principles of democratic life. . . .
The vividness of art experiences blurs the boundaries between self-experience and the experiences of another. Through artworks, students absorb the perceptions of others—situated in other times and places, embodied in other races, genders, ages, classes, and abilities. Through art, the self becomes vitally interested in other selves, sensing the possibilities and problems of those selves within oneself. A democracy cannot long function as the tyranny of uncaring majorities over various minorities of interest, nor can it long function when powerful minorities disregard the interests and needs of the majority. Democracy requires that difference be perceived not as an assault on selfhood, but as an invitation to be a fuller, more open self who incorporates the sensations and experiences of others into one’s own perceptions of the world and into one’s contributions to collective decision making. (Gude, 2009)

Here, Gude (2009) implies the reasons why art education is the landscape where the misrepresentation of Black visual culture can be addressed. “Through quality art education, youth develop the capacity to attend to nuances of meaning. Most significantly, engagement with the arts teaches youth to perceive complexity as pleasure and possibility, not as irritating uncertainty” (Gude, 2009). In short, through art education, students cultivate heightened skills for understanding the meaning making of others in the classroom. Heightened self-awareness is extended to heightened double consciousness of others and groups that are marginalized (Gude, 2009). Some other scholars in the field of Art Education base their work heavily in critical pedagogy as well
Critical pedagogy is a form of education in which students are encouraged to question dominant or common notions of meaning and form their own understanding of what they learn. For example, Garoian (1999) argues for challenging and disrupting formal Western epistemic education. He argues for the creation of liminal spaces in the classroom where critical thinking can be injected into the education process.

Critical thinking…enables students to cross historically and institutionally determined disciplinary and cultural boundaries in order to gain multiple perspectives and to participate in the discourse on educational content. Under such circumstances, classrooms are transformed into liminal spaces, sites of contestation where the struggle to learn takes place as the politics of learning is challenged with the interpersonal, inter disciplinary, and intercultural perspectives that students bring to the school. (p. 49)

Within the context of the creation of liminal spaces, I argue that within the Art Education classroom environment, I can provide my personal experiences as a Black male interpreting and researching Black visual culture grounded in critical pedagogy. By bringing my personal perspectives into classroom lectures through a critical pedagogical positionality, I provide my own experiences as examples to illustrate concepts, artworks, and theoretical examples within course lessons, assignments, and readings. Additionally, Pinar (2004) stated, “Curriculum theory is the interdisciplinary study of the educational experience.” Taken one step further, by considering study as a form of interpretation, I
can now posit that theorizing curriculum in art education is the interdisciplinary interpretation of art educational experience. Lastly, double consciousness enables me to see culture in complex, complicated, contradictory, and multifaceted ways. By seeing double consciousness in these ways one can cultivate humility of impulse to explore the marginalized side that has been heretofore veiled.

Furthermore, the pairing of the lenses of the dimensions of double consciousness and the threads of visual culture reveals content and informative prospects of television shows. For instance, shows such as Good Times, The Jefferson's, Sanford and Son, the Cosby Show and The Dave Chappelle Show, could be examined through the paired dimension thread lens to reveal racialized conflicts, socio-economic status, caste system, and other by-products of White American hegemonic culture and historical antecedents such as found in Jim Crow, Black Power Movement, and Civil Rights Movement. Some television shows have already been explored by educators and scholars in the past (Carpenter & Sourdot, 2010; Jhally and Lewis, 1992). However, more work is needed on a broader scale in order to add and to augment the prospects, challenges, probable uses and effects of employing the paired lenses of the dimensions of double consciousness and the threads of visual culture for the use of interpretation of Black visual culture in the field of art education.

Moreover, my experiences as the only male student who is also Black in an art education graduate program has revealed that my research, using the dimensions of double consciousness and the threads of visual culture as paired lenses to interpret Black visual culture is problematic. I feel this way because I address critical issues that make
the dominant group uncomfortable in their own environment. I feel like a couple of people in my current environment are trying to dissuade me from delving into the critical intervention of my reality. “The oppressor knows full well that this invention would not be in his interest. What is to his interest is for people to continue in a state of submersion, impotent in the face of oppressive reality” (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 52). I am made to feel like I am a problem and that my research does not have validity because it is grounded in anger and not in critical pedagogy. Albeit, from my lived experiences maneuvering within the dimensions of double consciousness, as a male who is also Black, being born “behind the veil,” as Du Bois (1903) puts it, I have become increasingly aware of my distinctive societal position. From my position I ask myself,

What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?

Or fester like a sore—And then run? Does it stink like rotten meat? Or crust and sugar over— like a syrupy sweet? Maybe it just sags like a heavy load. Or does it explode? (Langston Hughes, 1994)

Just like in this poem I have to decide how I will let the perceptions of others influence how I see myself. Will I allow myself to flourish and grow or will I dry up in the sun like a raisin? Will I permit myself to be looked upon and see myself as a spectacle in the eyes of others, those who see me with “amused contempt and pity?” No, I will take refuge in my Blackness and remain clairvoyant as I live behind the veil and continue to engage the phantasms of race, class, gender, identity, and social issues that encompass the Black lived experience. As a result, the negative actions from the couple of people in my environment validate the pertinence of this study for the field of art education along
with the rationalizations stated in Chapter 2. For example, Du Bois (1903) stated being a problem as,

They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, How does it feel to be a problem? they say, I know an excellent colored man in my town;… At these I smile,... or reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may require. To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word. And yet, being a problem is a strange experience, - peculiar even for one who has never been anything else… (Du Bois, 1903, p. 1-2)

How does it feel to be a problem? Du Bois does not give an absolute answer to this question. He complicates this question by providing the “gentle reader” with insight on what it is to be Black and an American in the United States in the beginning of the twentieth century. Du Bois provides his individual knowledge of the Black lived experience from what he has learned as a Black man living in the United States during the era of Jim Crow, as I can provide insight from my lived experiences as a Black man living in the United States in the year 2013.
Implications for Future Research

As a result of conducting this study, I have learned that anytime the philosophical question, “What if?” is asked, I start to enter into another space, a space that starts to create change. As soon as the change starts to become understandable, someone else comes in and tells me that there is another way of thinking about change. Sometimes the underlying assumption of change itself is inadequate to support the research process but that is a part of research itself. As I progress and grow with knowledge on how to conduct research I continue to figure out various ways to approach the research process.

*The Boondocks* is one of a few animated television series that has a Black family as the focus dealing with identity, racism, class, and gender that is currently on television in the United States. Employing the same methodology that was used in this study a future study could involve using *The Boondocks* to investigate representations of racism, gender issues, or division within Black culture, in the series looking through the paired lenses of double consciousness and the threads of visual culture. For example, the hypothetical study would focus on the effects that Eurocentric colonization and domination have had on the psyche of Black people the division within the Black community or a barrel of crabs’ mentality that some Black people have for one another. The barrel of crabs’ mentality is often pragmatic to individuals in an underprivileged society where one person is beginning to get ahead in life (educated, socioeconomic status, and having a positive sense of self). The cooperative becomes envious or filled with a sense of self-loathing, so they find a way to pull the person, which is trying to get
ahead in life, back down to the community’s level. In short, if I cannot have it, neither can you.

In addition, one study could observe how students use the paired dimension—thread lens methodology to interpret works of Black visual culture. Another could be an in-depth analysis of the entire series would be interesting to explore the “stuttering aesthetic” Deleuze (1994) within the series. A stuttering aesthetic is “based on the premise that the stuttering of collage enables a radical cultural critique, a narrative process that has long been misunderstood and misrepresented in art education” (Garoian & Gaudeluis, 2008, p. 100). Building on the premise that collage uses site-specific materials, it can be concluded that the end result of collage will result in a narrative, a disruption a continuously shifting movement. Additionally, “a stuttering aesthetic, a pedagogy of disjunctive socially and historically constructed assumptions, is a stuttering not of speech, but of language and knowledge fragments whose gaps offer the possibility for creative and intellectual interventions” (Garoian & Gaudeluis, 2008, p. 100). Here, I juxtapose myself with the stuttering aesthetic, for as stated in Chapter 1, I have a stutter. I like to think that my stutter is a positive attribute that sets me aside from everyone else and that my stutter provides a “two-ness,” or reconciliation within. On one hand I feel like I have to persevere harder to achieve success or recognition and in the other hand I have an inner awareness of my distinct life with which I am most comfortable. This two-ness allows me to see through different lenses and at times pair up lenses in order to interpret my life and for the interpretation of Black visual culture. Another example would be to look at The Boondocks entire series through the paired lenses to study the
stuttering aesthetic. Additionally, a study that I can do is to work with students who stutter as a means of self-empowerment and connecting with them to enhance academic success.

In other words, the stuttering aesthetic creates a rhizomatic construct that resists becoming monolithic. For example, as previously stated in Chapter 1, in a discussion of *The Boondocks*, Gournelos (2009) noted, “The first point to make is that *The Boondocks* is clearly what Herman Gray (1994) describes as a ‘multiculturalist’ production” (p. 237) and this is a production of a socially and critically aware cast in a series.

Television programs operating within [the] discursive space [of multiculturalism] position viewers, regardless of race, class, or gender locations, to participate in [B]lack experiences from multiple subject positions. In these shows viewers encounter complex, even contradictory, perspectives and representations of [B]lack life in America. The guiding sensibility is neither integrationist nor pluralist, though elements of both may turn up. (Gray as cited in Gournelos, 2009, p. 237)

The implications of this educational engagement with Black identity actively disrupt any rational, unwavering, or even disjointed view of Black identity (Gournelos, 2009). *The Boondocks* echoes the understanding of Du Bois’s (1903) theory of double consciousness in the physical bodies of many of its characters, as well as the radical “otherness” of its narratives. In this context, I can parallel *The Boondocks* to my own stutter, referring back to Deleuze’s (1994) stuttering aesthetic, as they both disrupt and dislodge preconceived notions of the Black male and the Black lived experience. This
type of stuttering is achieved when the viewer or spectator is placed in a position where they have to interact directly with my stutter. Similarly, the stuttering that is *The Boondocks* manifests itself as instances of the Black lived experience within an otherwise White dominated hegemonic society. As is the case with my stutter, *The Boondocks* stutters otherwise uninterrupted language, in this case mainstream White society, and requires the viewer/listener to look/listen more carefully to what is being said and conveyed about the Black lived experience. Either pity or contempt results in the viewer/listener who is unaccustomed to such uninterrupted and uncontested language. *The Boondocks* stutters the language of being American (White). Additionally, in the television listings, this series stutters the otherwise uninterrupted disarticulated programming of White American hegemonic control, limited choice, and idealized images of America and Americans. The idea of *The Boondocks* stuttering the dominant White cultural language in the United States is fodder for deeper consideration and further study.

In addition, through the use of the characters in *The Boondocks* a visual representation emerges that allows for strengthening of racial, cultural, and niggerized ideologies through the eyes of the spectator. Furthermore, *The Boondocks* adds an additional element of disruption in which the incoherence and absurdity of U.S. domestic and foreign policy that does not only manifest in a critique of discourse; instead, we see the tangled roots and repercussions of U.S. policy in a way that connects them, rendering them into an comprehensible picture of the construction of power, abuse, and fear (Gournelos, 2009, p. 244)
Similarly, Carol Becker (2002) notes one aspect that should be expected from artists is work that “will impact society, to challenge existing forms, to raise significant questions, to bring ideas into society that might not yet be visible, and to do so in a way that can be accessed, and to some degree understood” (p. 19). I argue that the radical animated series *The Boondocks* is a contribution to American society as it provides content about implicit stereotypes in relation to Black people in the United States. For example, in the second season of *The Boondocks* two episodes were banned from being shown on television, “The Hunger Strike” which is episode 6 and “The Uncle Rukus Reality Show” which is episode 11. These episodes can only be seen when one purchases the DVD series. In “The Hunger Strike” “Huey takes a stand against cable network B.E.T. [Black Entertainment Television] and goes on a hunger strike to advance his opinion that B.E.T. promotes the destruction of Black people” (The Boondocks, 2007, S2, E6) and in “The Uncle Rukus Reality Show” “B.E.T. introduces a new reality series that follows the daily life of Uncle Rukus, who is devastated when a DNA test proves that he is, in fact, Black” (The Boondocks, 2007, S2, E11). Colonization and the effects of domination, slavery, disfranchisement, and self-destruction of the Black community could be the focus of these two episodes. It is my intension that people in the United States will be able to gain an awareness of the ways in which different individuals or groups interpret, analyze and comprehend an animated television series that has a predominately Black cast of characters with the focus centered on race, class, socioeconomic status, identity, and gender issues. A study or investigation of these two episodes might focus on why they were banned from network television from the
beginning and what type of hegemonic control was at play. Asking questions centered in
the realm of censorship and constitutional rights.

As a result of this analysis, I am now better able to engage in and contribute to
conversations about Black visual culture by employing the paired lenses of double
consciousness and visual culture. That is because I better able to engage in and contribute
to these conversations, other educators and students should also be able to learn and
employ my methodology and then better interpret Black visual culture. I feel this is an
important outcome/finding/implication of my study. That said, one might speculate on
how the information in this thesis on the discourse surrounding the misrepresentation of
Black visual culture looking through the paired lenses of double consciousness and visual
culture might transfer to other examples of Black visual culture besides *The Boondocks*.

**Closing Statement**

This study has allowed me to confirm my assumption that, while information
exists on double consciousness and Black visual culture, there is limited information or
data that analyzes Black visual culture through the paired lenses of the dimensions of
double consciousness and visual culture threads. Moreover, I have also provided three
examples of meaningful interpretation of a specific example of Black visual culture,
examples which have not been available previously in art education for sure, and perhaps
available but not used in other areas of art, visual culture, history, or art criticism.
Creswell (2007) stated, “The final written report involves or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and it extends the literature, or signals a call for action” (p. 37). As a result, I am calling for further radical examinations of *The Boondocks* and other examples of Black visual culture. Using the three paired lenses of the dimensions of double consciousness and the threads of visual culture for the interpretation for Black visual culture, based on the complexities of the discourse of double consciousness, Black visual culture, Art Education and the complicated conversation of Curriculum Theory, is a means for this call. Similarly, hooks (1995) stated, “to transgress I must move past boundaries, I must push against and go forward” (p.133). In this context, I will be one of the scholars who will take up this call and continue to engage the means to respond to the misrepresentation of Black visual culture in the United States. In order to help individuals/ people interpret, examine, understand, and construct meaning of the world they live in.
Bibliography


