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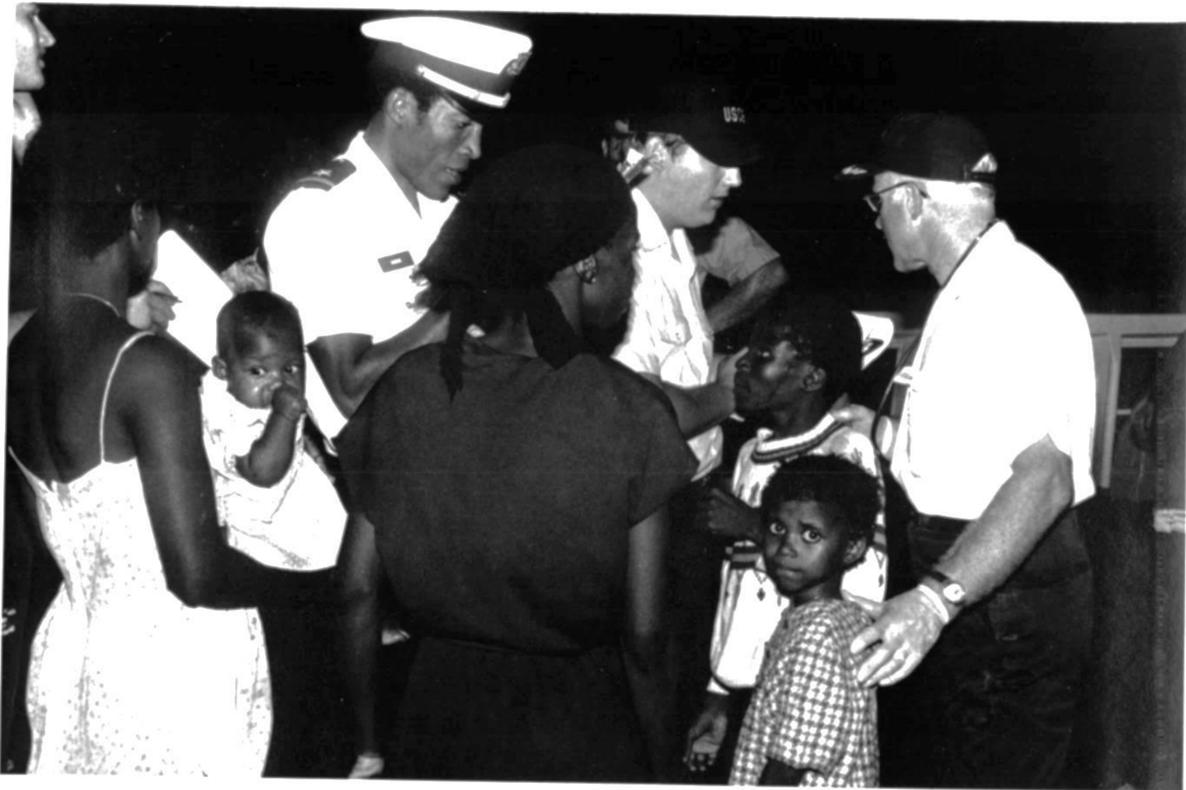

On the Cover: Interdiction of Haitians by U.S. Coast Guard, officials talk to women and children, October 1981. Source: United States Citizenship and Immigration Services History Office and Library.

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Getting Respect: Responding to Stigma and Discrimination

Michèle Lamont
Harvard University
108th President of the
American Sociological Association

Presidential talk to the District of Columbia Sociological Society, February 11, 2016.

Racism is a common occurrence for members of marginalized groups around the world. *Getting Respect*[1] is a book that illuminates experiences of racism by comparing three countries with enduring group boundaries: the United States, Brazil, and Israel. This book is the result of a multi-year collaboration between sociologists living on three different continents. We joined forces to gain a better understanding of what racial tensions look like at the ground level from the perspective of the stigmatized.

We delve into what kinds of stigmatizing or discriminatory incidents individuals encounter in each country, how they respond to these occurrences, and what they view as the best strategy—whether individually, collectively, through confrontation, or through self-improvement—for dealing with such events. We learned that "exit, voice, and loyalty"[2] take different forms across contexts (e.g. African Americans sue more), and this is what we aimed to document and account for.

This deeply collaborative and integrated comparative study draws on more than four hundred in-depth interviews with middle- and working-class men and women residing in and around multiethnic cities—New York City, Rio de Janeiro, and Tel Aviv—to compare the discriminatory experiences of African Americans, Black Brazilians, and Arab Palestinian citizens of Israel, as well as Israeli Ethiopian Jews and Mizrahi (Sephardic) Jews. Our detailed analysis reveals significant differences in group behavior: Arab Palestinians frequently remain silent due to resignation and cynicism while Black Brazilians see more stigmatization by class than by race, and African Americans confront situations with less hesitation than do Ethiopian Jews and Mizrahim, who tend to downplay their exclusion.

Societies offer different scaffoldings for gaining recognition—for instance in the form of cultural repertoires that are more or less effective in promoting diversity and enabling social resilience...

Groupness

We account for these patterns by considering the extent to which each group is actually a group, the socio-historical context of intergroup conflict, and the national ideologies and other cultural repertoires on which group members rely. For instance, we show how the American Dream, Zionism, and Brazilian racial democracy enable some responses more than others.

We also argue that while racial groupness is more central for African Americans and Arab Palestinians, Mizrahim and Black Brazilians are similarly characterized by a weaker sense of group belonging, which leads them to interpret incidents quite differently than the previous two groups. Finally, we consider similarities and differences between men and women, as

well as the middle class and the working class, to capture the extent to which racial identity overshadows the daily experiences of stigmatized groups across contexts.

The analysis highlights the centrality of stigmatization (feeling underestimated, ignored, and misunderstood) over discrimination (being deprived of resources)…

The broader challenge that motivated the study is to gain a better understanding of how the excluded gain recognition and cultural membership: the quality of societies is measured not only by questions of distribution (who gets what and how much) but also by questions of recognition, inclusion, and voice. While political philosophers Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth have alerted us to the importance of recognition,[3] sociological analyses of the process by which groups become less stigmatized remain few. [4]

Societies offer different scaffoldings for gaining recognition—for instance in the form of cultural repertoires that are more or less effective in promoting diversity and enabling social resilience for a large number of individuals.[5] While reading this book, the reader moves from a general framework about how the five groups coalesce differently to specific cases.

We highlight cross-group variations on the basis of similarity within groups (phenotype, nationality, ethnicity) as well as the varying strengths of groupness.

The United States

The reader comes to understand how this framework animates our empirical analysis of the United States, as well as how we mobilize different explanatory elements to account for the patterns we identify (for instance, the high salience of confrontation and of individualized responses in the United States). Here the reader learns to think about the challenges African Americans meet through new questions and different frames.

The analysis highlights the centrality of stigmatization (feeling underestimated, ignored, and misunderstood) over discrimination (being deprived of resources) and demonstrates why "management of the self" figures prominently in responses from the middle class and working class alike.

It also shows that collective responses to racism are subordinated to individualist responses to racism (i.e., demonstrating hard work and gaining education) as African Americans face the accusation of reverse racism.

Brazil

Brazil plays a very different role in the analysis. Here we add a layer of complexity by deploying the same analytical tools and revisiting the same set of questions, but we do so in a very different context, one where group boundaries are not as sharp despite a clear sense of racial identification among Black Brazilians and the acknowledgement of white privilege.

We argue that this different type of groupness influences how Black Brazilians identify ethnoracial exclusion (largely through the conflation of race and class) and how they respond to it (avoiding aggressive confrontation and more commonly defending colorblind strategies of redistribution).

Thus, we shed new light on a well-developed comparative topic, that of race relations and racial identity in the United States and Brazil.

Israel

We add new layers to the argument in our discussion of Israel by introducing

three groups who are stigmatized differently than African Americans and Black Brazilians.

The inclusion of Ethiopian Jews, a phenotypically black group, sheds new light on the African American and Black Brazilian cases and reveals how and why blackness functions differently as a driver of exclusion...

It is in this chapter that the fruitfulness of our comparative framework becomes fully realized, as we mobilize our analytical approach to capture and explain the configurations of groupness, experiences, and responses that are characteristic of Arab Palestinians (our primary concern), but also of Ethiopian and Mizrahi Jews.

The juxtaposition of these three cases shows how one national context shapes ethnoracial exclusion differently for each group, depending on how their stigmatized characteristics fit in national history and in the Zionist political project.

The inclusion of Ethiopian Jews, a phenotypically black group, sheds new light on the African American and Black Brazilian cases and reveals how and why blackness functions differently as a driver of exclusion across national contexts. Finally, the cases of Arab Palestinians and Mizrahim (respectively the least and one of the most socially integrated groups in Israel) add another dimension to our analysis by focusing on how the understandings of their place in the present and future of their society generates hope and powerlessness and different responses to stigmatization.

Trade-offs

Thus, through our three country chapters, the book evolves in several directions as we add elements of complexity and analysis in transversal comparisons (across chapters) as well as within each country case study.

Although each study could have been developed as a self-standing book, we believe the analytical payoff is in the somewhat unusual juxtaposition of cases. But it will be for the reader to tell.

Notes

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Source https://pixabay.com.

A Washington Life: the Sociology of Anna Julia Cooper

Patricia Lengermann
Gillian Niebrugge
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In 1887, at age 29, Anna Julia Cooper arrived in Washington D.C. She would—with only a brief hiatus—live here for the rest of her long and productive life, and the structures, rhythms, and relational patterns of the city would permeate the writing and activism that made her a local prominence in her time and a significant presence in the theoretical canon of classical sociology in our own. But in 1934, when the District of Columbia Sociological Society (DCSS) held its formative meetings, Cooper, then President of Frelinghuysen University, was a non-presence, not even conspicuous by her absence.

This situation—of a blankness or vacuum about a major social theorist who developed her ideas against the backdrop of Washington, D.C.—reveals how much DCSS itself was an unwitting product of the society its members attempted to study, a society with a long and still unresolved history of racial and gender injustice. This article, part of a series on the history of sociology in the DCSS area, introduces Anna Julia Cooper with an emphasis on the ways living in Washington, D.C. influenced her social theory and her social activism.

Biography

Cooper's remarkable life is told in some detail by nearly every scholar who touches her work, e.g. Hutchinson (1981), Lemert and Bahn (1998), Lengermann and Niebrugge (1998/2007), Baker-Fletcher (1994), and Washington (1988). She was born around 1858 into slavery, in Raleigh, North Carolina, with no possessions save the love and example of her mother and her own prodigious intelligence. At every turn of her life, she faced the challenge of being both "self-supporting" and the support for many relatives. Her intelligence, coupled with a firm discipline, let her make her way through St. Augustine Normal School and Collegiate Institution, a freedmen's school in Raleigh, to Oberlin College and on, in 1887, to a highly successful teaching career in Washington, D.C. at the prestigious "M" Street School.

During her early years teaching in Washington, D.C. Cooper wrote what remains her major achievement in social theory, *A Voice from the South*, published in 1892, one year before Durkheim's *The Division of Labor in Society*.

During the early Washington, D.C. years, she established a formidable reputation within the African American community and beyond as a scholar, orator and community activist.

Her teaching career in Washington, D.C. was interrupted by a controversy over the course of African American education that forced her to leave the District for four years. Returning to teaching in the District in 1910, she won a kind of vindication by earning her Ph.D. from the Sorbonne in 1925 when she was 67 years old. In the 1930s, she served as President of Frelinghuysen University, a school founded on the principle of providing education and job training for what its founders termed "the unreached."

Anna Julia Cooper's home at 201 "T" Street N.W. Source:http://househistoryman.blogspot.com/2012/02/anna-julia-cooper-frelinghuysen.html.

She lived to see *Brown v. Board of Education* and the March on Washington. She died in 1964 in the stately home on "T" Street, N.W. that she had bought for herself out of a teacher's salary in order to properly execute one of the many duties of service she assumed in her life, the raising of her deceased brother's five orphaned grandchildren.

Social Theory

During her early years teaching in Washington, D.C. Cooper wrote what remains her major achievement in social theory, *A Voice from the South*, published in 1892, one year before Durkheim's *The Division of Labor in Society*. *Voice* was critically well-received in its own day and then, as the DCSS episode shows, forgotten; it has taken the historic intersection of the Modern African American Civil Rights Movement and the Second Wave of the Women's Movement to bring this significant work of theory once more into the academic discourse across multiple disciplines, Black Studies, Women's Studies, philosophy, theology. In sociology the recovery, beginning with Lemert's pioneering recognition (1995) has been slower and remains part of the "still unfinished feminist revolution."

There are two kinds of peace in this world. The one produced by suppression, which is the passivity of death; the other brought about by a proper adjustment of living, acting forces…

Four points in *Voice* may be of special interest in an introduction to sociologists: Cooper's development of the concepts of *standpoint* and *intersectionality,* her outline of an American theory of conflict and power, and her case for justice as the project of social science. Titling her introduction, "Our Raison D'Être," Cooper first argues that she writes because all standpoints need to be heard in adjudicating conflicts in social life and the debate about race relations and the nature and fate of the Negro cannot yet be concluded:

> Attorneys for the plaintiff and attorneys for the defendant, with bungling gaucherie have analyzed and dissected, theorized and synthesized with sublime ignorance or pathetic misapprehension of counsel from the black client. One important witness has not yet been heard from. The summing up of the evidence deposed, and the charge to the jury have been made--but no word from the Black Woman. . . . (i-ii).

> Cooper offers the pre-eminent evocation of… "intersectionality"; a society patterned by interactions among multiple and unequally empowered groups produces a constant experience in the individual life of vectors of oppression and privilege…

Second, as her language above indicates, Cooper's social theory is based in a quest for justice for the silent and unconsulted "defendant," here the "black client," in the ongoing national trial over race relations.

She purposely distinguishes her position from the value neutrality—or "scepticism" —advocated in the positivism of Comte and Spencer, describing her own stance in the "eternal verities . . . The great, the fundamental need of any nation, any race, is for heroism, devotion, sacrifice; and there cannot be heroism, devotion, or sacrifice in a primarily skeptical spirit" (297).

Third, Cooper joins other African American thinkers in laying the groundwork for an American conflict theory that sees the essential dynamic in society as interaction among groups seeking to achieve their own place in the world.

Within this interaction, there will be differences and conflict—what matters are the ways this conflict is carried out and resolved: "There are two kinds of peace in this world. The one produced by suppression, which is the passivity of death; the other brought about by a proper adjustment of living, acting forces. A nation or an individual may be at peace because all opponents have been killed or crushed; or, nation as well as individual may have found the secret of true harmony in the determination to live and let live" (149). Cooper argues that in suppression, one group has sufficient power to always get its way while in equilibrium groups are balanced enough in power resources that they must interact through compromise.

Cooper describes four major power resources, some standard in sociology, but others, a reconfiguration: material production, ideas, manners, and passion. She is particularly interested in the control of ideas, especially the use and misuse of history and the methodological strategies the oppressed must use to argue their standpoint; the ways manners, especially the manners of segregation, are used to replicate the experience of domination in daily life; and the presence among Anglo Saxons, in particular, of a passion for domination.

Fourth, Cooper offers the pre-eminent evocation of what Collins (1998) will name "intersectionality"; a society patterned by interactions among multiple and unequally empowered groups produces a constant experience in the individual life of vectors of oppression and privilege which Cooper most famously captures in her account of a moment on a railway trip in the South: "And when . . . our train stops at a dilapidated station, . . . ; and when, looking a little more closely, I see two dingy little rooms with, "FOR LADIES" swinging over one and "FOR COLORED PEOPLE" over the other; while wondering under which head I come. . ."(96).

The Washington Context

The experience of living in a segregated society, a society organized by domination, Cooper could have had to some degree anywhere in the United States but Washington, D.C. presented a very

particular case, the parameters of which are well summarized by Hutchinson (1881:94):

While the District's Territorial Government (1871-1874) had passed anti-discrimination laws (not enforced until the 1950s) that outlawed segregation in places of public accommodation, Washington was still a Southern town and displayed attitudes that demanded the separation of the two races. While some wish to believe that women like Anna Cooper, because of culture, educational attainment, or positions in the community, were accorded better treatment than the masses of blacks, such was not the case.

Further Cooper seems to have stood firmly on the principle of not accepting "special favoritism, whether of *sex, race, country,* or *condition*." Thus, one reading of Cooper's life is that, although lived in Washington, D.C. it did not escape the fate the unnamed narrator's Southern grandfather assigns to all African Americans in *Invisible Man* (Ellison 1952) "our life is a war."

Wealth must pave the way for learning…Work must first create wealth, and wealth leisure . . . but it is leisure . . .,which must furnish room, opportunity, possibility…

At the same time, and partly as a result of reaction against a hostile white-dominated world, Cooper became part of a close-knit and actively engaged Black community in Washington, D.C.

At a micro level, her own memoirs joyously recall evenings with Francis and Charlotte Forten Grimké and other friends: "I wish I could find in the English language a word to express the rest, the stimulating, eager sense of pleasurable growth of those days—eight to ten P.M. Fridays regularly at Corcoran Street [the Grimkés] Sundays at "1706" [17th Street, Cooper's] the same hours" (Cooper [1951]/1998: 310-311).

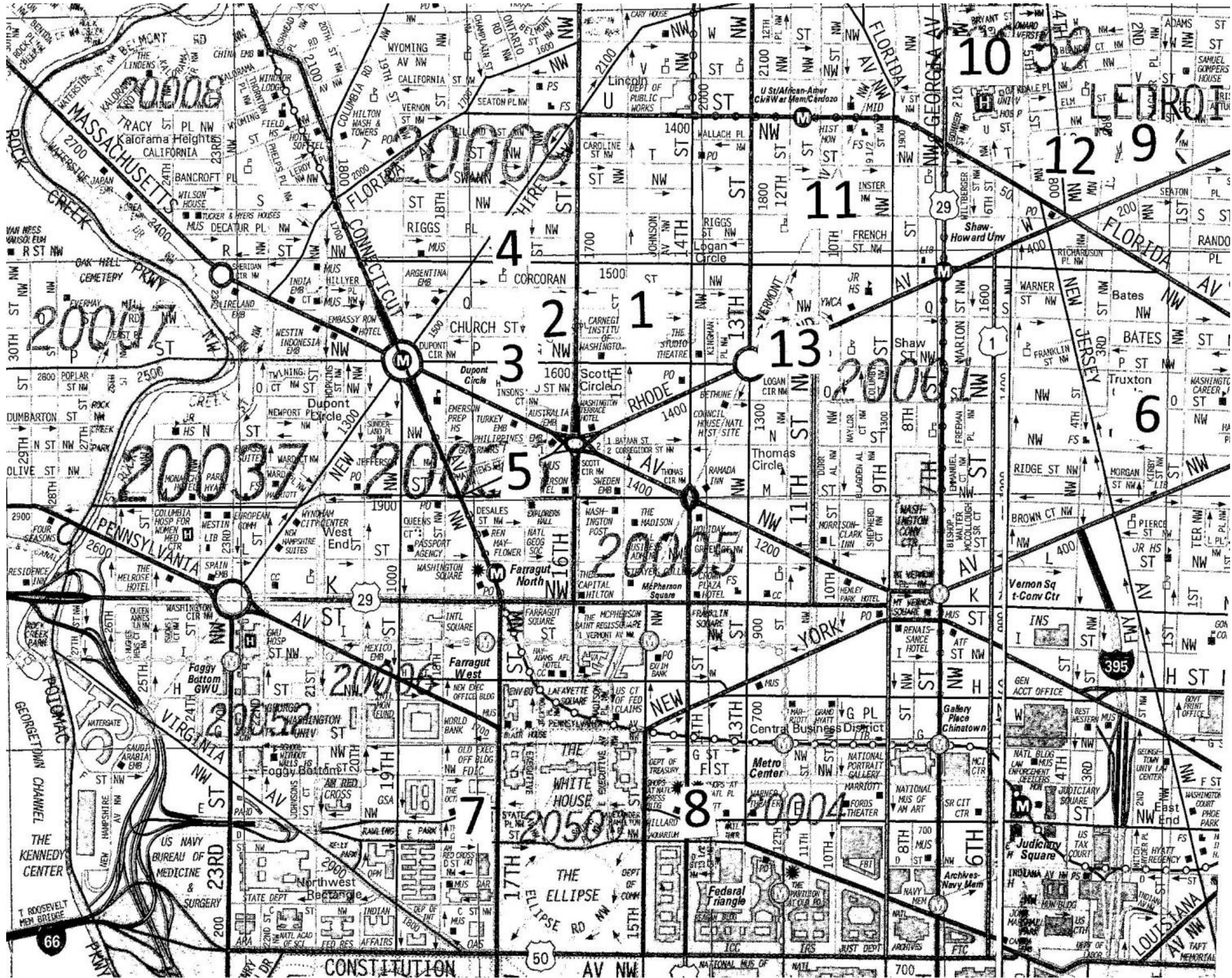
It was in group life like this that Cooper must have validated her sense of the significance of the group as a place of renewal and confirmation of identity, founded in part in a communal vantage point constituted out of shared experiences of a segregated world.

Her legacy continues in the District and beyond as an educator, a feminist, and a Black Studies scholar, with a feast day (February 28) in the Episcopal Church, and a passage, the only one by a woman, in the U.S. Passport…

Washington, D.C. provided Cooper with both concrete examples of injustice in individual lives and access to the national political dialogue around the social practice of injustice. The *Voice* chapter "Woman versus Indian" is very much a Washington story, despite its wide-ranging subject matter.

Inspired by an 1891 Washington speech by suffragist Anna Howard Shaw that Cooper could either have attended or read of in *The Evening Star*, it is illustrated in part with stories of discrimination in Washington landmark settings like the Corcoran and its satire of Southern use of "the bloody flag" mirrors the tone and language of the daily press.

Cooper's Washington



1. St. Luke's Episcopal, 15th and Church Street. Church of Andrew Crummel with whose family Cooper stayed on first arrival in Washington, D.C. 1887.
2. 1706 17th Street NW. Cooper's first home in the District, scene of her Sunday evening events with the Grimkés and others.
3. First location of the Colored High School, later the "M" Street School, where Cooper first taught in the District, was located in the Miner Building, named in honor of Myrtilla Miner, abolitionist who worked on behalf of African Americans.
4. The Grimké home 1608 "R"—Cooper refers to it as on "Corcoran."
5. The "M" Street School, 17th and "M" Street.
6. Dunbar High School today. 101 "N" Street NW.
7. Corcoran Museum, mentioned in "Woman versus Indian" for refusing to admit a black woman who wished to take drawing classes there. 500 17th Street.
8. Albaugh's Opera House, Pershing Park, site of meetings of National Council of Women and National American Woman Suffrage Association in 1891; unclear if Cooper attended any of these meetings or read reports in local papers.
9. 201 "T" Street—site of Cooper's final home.
10. Howard University—Rankin Chapel was site of the conferring of Cooper's doctorate from the Sorbonne, 1925.
11. Frelinghuysen University main administrative building 1800 Vermont NW.
12. Anna Julia Cooper Circle—2nd and "T" Street NW.
13. Admiral Inn—1640 Rhode Island Avenue— site of organizing meetings for DCSS 1934.

It concludes with Cooper's answer to Shaw on the role of women in the race problem:

> Why should woman become plaintiff in a suit versus the Indian, or the Negro or any other race or class who have been crushed under the iron heel of Anglo-Saxon power and selfishness? . . . If woman's own happiness has been ignored or misunderstood in our country's legislating . . . let her rest her plea, not on Indian inferiority, nor on Negro depravity, but on the obligation of legislators to do for her as they would have others do for them were relations reversed. Let her try to teach her country that every interest in this world is entitled at least to a respectful hearing, that every sentiency is worthy of its own gratification, that a helpless cause should not be trampled down, nor a bruised reed broken . . .(123-124)

But still missing is a memorial to her as a social theorist—DCSS has the opportunity to correct this oversight by working for a plaque in Anna Julia Cooper Circle...

Her position at the "M" Street School, as a teacher (1887-1901) and then as principal (1902-1906) put her in the center of the battle between the visions of African American education represented by W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington.

As early as 1892, Cooper wrestled with the problems suggested by this debate. In the *Voice* chapter "What Are We Worth?" she argues that a solid material base is necessary for any group's empowerment, the precondition for its collective intellectual achievements: "Wealth must pave the way for learning. Intellect, whether of races or individuals, cannot soar . . . while . . . burdened with 'what shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed.' Work must first create wealth, and wealth leisure . . . but it is leisure . . ., which must furnish room, opportunity, possibility…"(261).

But despite adhering to this theoretical position, she was not rehired in 1906, a casualty of the bitterness between partisans of W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington and of enmity from her white supervisor, a result of racial tension and bureaucratic in-fighting.

On her return to Washington, D.C. as a teacher, Cooper would help the M Street School's transition to "Paul Lawrence Dunbar High School" which many credit her with naming and would write the lyrics for what remains to this moment the school's alma mater.

With no position of real authority after her principalship, with no support save her own earnings as a school teacher, and with foster and adopted children to care for, Cooper nevertheless maintained a life of active community service in Washington, D.C. helping to found and/or maintain the Colored Women's League, the Colored Social Settlement, the Colored YWCA, the Washington Negro Folklore Society, and the Bethel Literary and Historical Society, Frelinghuysen University, and the Hannah Stanley Opportunity School, in memory of her mother.

Her legacy continues in the District and beyond as an educator, a feminist, and a Black Studies scholar, with a feast day (February 28) in the Episcopal Church, and a passage, the only one by a woman, in the U.S. Passport, a circle in LeDroit Park named after her, a marker on her "T" Street home, and a 1981 Smithsonian Exhibit at the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum.

But still missing is a memorial to her as a social theorist—DCSS has the opportunity to correct this oversight by working for a plaque in Anna Julia Cooper Circle inscribed with passages from her work.

Anna Julia Cooper c. 1923.
Source http://www.npr.org.

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2016 DCSS Awardees

The Stuart A. Rice Merit Award for Career Achievements

Dr. Joyce Ladner
Professor Emerita and former Interim President of Howard University

The Morris Rosenberg Award

Dr. Daniel Martinez
Assistant Professor of Sociology, George Washington University; Cisneros Hispanic Leadership Institute, Interim Director

Irene B. Taeuber Graduate Student Paper Awards

MA Student: Daniel Toulson
Catholic University of America

PhD Student: Crosby Hipes
University of Maryland

Truth about the Past, Justice in the Present

An interview with James W. Loewen

On February 4, 2016, The Sociologist (TS) interviewed Professor James W. Loewen about his scholarship on American history and race relations. Professor James W. Loewen is the bestselling author of Lies My Teacher Told Me, Lies Across America, and Sundown Towns. He is professor emeritus of sociology at the University of Vermont. He is visiting professor at Catholic University of America. Below are excerpts from the interview.

TS: Why did slavery become associated with race?

James Loewen: There were two key developments in European history that caused slavery to gradually become racial slavery. The first was the Portuguese put together inventions: gunpowder, , cannons, ships with lateen sails, and military force—soldiers on board— and proceeded to make their way down the western coast of Africa.

The Portuguese used that force, and they also made deals with the coastal African peoples, gave them guns, liquor, and other Western products in return for *people*, in particular slaves from the tribes inland. The result was, pretty soon, most of the people who are enslaved in Europe are black and most of the people who are black in Europe are enslaved. And so there becomes an identity between those two groups.

The combination of the ability to enslave masses of people in western African and the economic situation that you could make a fortune of the unrequited labor in the Western Hemisphere led to the expansion of racially based slavery. It is important to teach this to K-12 students. Otherwise people wind up believing that racism is “natural” or that “whites are always racist.”

TS: The Africans were not obliged to sell slaves to the Portuguese, white racism doesn’t exist in a vacuum, what created this culture of racism?

James Loewen: There is plenty of guilt to go around in terms of the original Africa to America slave trade. The coastal tribes are definitely involved and in fact, when I was at two of the embarkation points in Ghana in 2003, I found that Ghana did a pretty good job of not letting themselves off the hook. A better job really than, at that time, the Unites States did in discussing the slave trade. However, just in the last five years or so, there are some places in the United States that are facing up to our participation in the slave trade more honestly. The immorality of slavery, racial slavery is apparent. So, how then is the dominant group, in this case, of course, the white group, to assert to itself that they are good people?

…between 1890 and 1940, we grow more racist in our thinking than at any other point.

Everyone wants to think of himself/herself as a good person. Well, the answer has to be racism. These people are different from us, they are inferior to us. I quote a famous French philosopher who says, ironically, “they must be inferior else we cannot be Christian.” So, that rationale grows during the 1700s and continued growing pretty much until 1860.

TS: What is the role of the African slave trader in contributing to the superstructure of racism?

…the present era is a very exciting time for racial relations…we are moving to a place where we eventually will be post-racial…

James Loewen: Well, I am sure they did not think they were contributing to the superstructure of racism. Because, after all, they are black and they are dealing with Europeans on a level of equality. Now, of course, the Europeans are perhaps feigning this. But in a given situation, people make choices and they are choices that may be in their short-term interest and not in their long-term interest. The coastal peoples who made these deals with the Portuguese and later the British and other slave traders did ok economically. So, this trading by the African coastal peoples was in their short-term interest but not in their long-term interest.

In the United States, the ideology of slavery—that is racial inferiority—was stronger in 1860 than at any previous point. And it just doesn't disappear in 1865. It of course does weaken during the Civil War and Reconstruction in the North as well as in the South, but it then comes back full force in 1890, because between 1890 and 1940, we grow more racist in our thinking than at any other point. And by "we" I mean white Americans. In 1859/1860, no white supremacist, no matter how racist, could say that slavery was an equal opportunity employer—that it is possible for black folks to get out of slavery and they had failed because they were inferior. But by 1910 or 1920, you could tell yourself that America is an equal opportunity country, and we are still telling ourselves that. And so, it is their own fault that they are so poor. So this is the era of 1890-1940, when Sundown Towns spring up all across the United States, and if these people are so inferior, why then would we allow them in our towns?

TS: Who are the Neo-Confederates?

James Loewen: They want to think well of their ancestors. Surely all of us want to think well of our ancestors. It is hard to think that your ancestors sacrificed their life in a war to justify slavery or racial inferiority. The other answer is white supremacy. Every time that the Confederate flag is waved among large groups of people, white supremacy is usually lurking in the back there. There is a sort of identification that cannot be gainsaid.

TS: Where do you think this is going?

James Loewen: I think the present era is a very exciting time for racial relations. I don't mean to be a Pollyanna optimist. One example is the reaction to the horrific murders committed by Dylann Roof in Charleston which led to the take-down of the flag in South Carolina, which led to questioning of all Confederate monuments in the United States—that movement is ongoing.

We haven't seen the last of it. Also, BLM, Black Lives Matter, is another reason. I think we are moving to a place where we eventually will be post-racial. I think in the next, maybe 50 years, we will be much closer to that than we were during Reconstruction. Reconstruction was a very interesting time to be alive in America, and so it is today.

Source https://pixabay.com.

Immigrant Testimonies on Transitional Space: the Albanian Experience

Silva Cami

The end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century marked a new long-distance Albanian emigration pattern that was primarily necessitated by the need for relief from the ubiquitous economic difficulty and regional turmoil afflicting the nation (Çiraku & Vyshka 2014). What began as an economic, male-dominated emigration flow of Albanian citizens into the United States transformed into a family-oriented immigration pattern (Naggi 1988; Vullnetari 2007), only to be interrupted by the formation of Albania's socialist state and limitations on travel across the nation's borders.

Savoring the opportunity to recount the personal history and migratory experiences of an underrepresented people, fifteen (pre-communist) Albanian immigrant oral histories collected by the Ellis Island Oral History Project were analyzed.

This paper uses Donald Winnicott's (1971) concepts of *transitional symbols* (i.e., phenomena and objects), *play*, and *potential space* as elements of immigration and cultural assimilation. Parallels are drawn between Winnicott's work and the Albanian immigrant's experience of a new location within a comfort zone that approximates representations of unity with and palpable separation from an old location. Ethnic unity and ethnic separation were considered simultaneously occurring elements of successful immigration, defined as "one where the person [immigrant], after a long period of struggle, is able to amalgamate both past and present [cultural] experiences" (Sengun 2001:66).

Winnicott (1971) discussed the notion of a hypothetical area that exists between an individual and an attachment object during a stage of perceived separation; this area is the *potential space* between one's personal reality and external reality.

This psychological position is where unity with, and separation from, an attachment is simultaneously and constructively experienced through "transitional phenomena," and the utilization of "transitional objects" as relational tools, to transcend difficulties (e.g., separation anxiety) associated with loss of the attachment (Sengun 2001; Winnicott 1951; 1971). *Transitional objects* are symbolic representations of one's unity with and deprivation of an attachment: the object is not necessarily used as it is collectively perceived, but rather related to and assigned meaning by an individual as an isolate.

Identifying the family as a transitional symbol offers a look into the Albanian immigrant's ability to identify with their homeland, yet simultaneously consider their adopted country as their own space.

The illusory importance that is ascribed to the object serves as provisional relief or defense against anxiety caused by separation from an attachment (Winnicott 1951).

Winnicott's concept of *transitional phenomena* (mannerisms, patterns, or fixations) are observable and are crucial in the production of a human cultural experience (Lee 2005:102).

Transition in Family

"They [family] were always helping each other, and they also would help each other, if they made some money, to pay the passage for someone else to come over here [to America] within their family. If they're the cousin or another brother or whoever, that is how they brought them, they bring each other. But they would pay their way, the one who had made the money in the United States."[1]

One woman was asked if she felt any different shortly after her arrival to the United States. Her response: "No, because I came in a house with my sister-law, and all the relatives, they come greet me. I had uncle over here, a lot of cousins. I feel like home…"

Presented as a component of the settlement process in the data, the family is a source of comfort during times of despair or angst. Identifying the family as a transitional symbol offers a look into the Albanian immigrant's ability to identify with their homeland, yet simultaneously consider their adopted country as their own space. One woman spoke of her father, who had come to America fifteen years prior, and his apprehension to attend night school and learn the English language.

"I went to night school in Boston. And my father said, "Oh, how nice, I wanted to go to night school, but I didn't feel like going alone, you know. Now that I have you, that you're going to go, why should I leave you to go at night by yourself and to come home by yourself? We'll go together, and it's good for me. Because I'll learn some English there."

One may recognize the father's need for a transitional object, that being his teenage daughter, to offer him a source of relief from the anxiety of detaching from an element of his native land. Not only did a sense of belonging manifest as transitional phenomena in the family, it created a transitional space that embodied Albania as well: "When we walked out the door, we were in the United States of America. And we lived outside just like any other American, but when we came in we spoke Albanian, we lived Albanian inside the home, and we kept our traditions."[2]

One woman was asked if she felt any different shortly after her arrival to the United States. Her response: "No, because I came in a house with my sister-law, and all the relatives, they come greet me. I had uncle over here, a lot of cousins. I feel like home. That's it."[3] Another person spoke of his arrival to the United States as a child; upon reuniting with his only contact here, his older brother, he said, "grabbed me and loved me and kissed me. And he said, "You are with me; he tried to make me feel at home."[4]

The family home, as a root, allows an immigrant to consider the dwelling itself as a tangible potential transitional space. Winnicott addressed this potential space as a psychological territory, and these transitional phenomena create an objectively recognizable place that is infused with subjective reality.

Transition in Community

"I always go to…relatives, friends, parties, over here, over there. In the church we meet all my, our people. Nothing wrong."[5] Traditions from Albania informed the construction of bonds that were shared amongst Albanian immigrants, resulting in the formation of communities. A uniting force of the Albanian community was the church. The Albanian Orthodox Church became a centrality for Albanian

immigration settlement.[6,7] This was largely due to the importance of traditional festivities: Christmas, New Year, and Easter were frequently mentioned in the data as communal celebrations.

The potential space serves as a comfort zone for constructive management of anxiety associated with an immigrant's separation from ethnic attachment.

Upon inquiry, one respondent stated "when you leave home, that you leave a very rich life, you consider yourself punished, in great discomfort to live the way you do."[8] Another immigrant offered a supposition on the importance of the community:

"Rockland was a disappointment to my mother. In ways the climate, for one thing, was much harsher than the Mediterranean climate…She had no one here. Also there were the language difficulty, the food was difficult. …she couldn't get olive oil at that time, the basic needs. …other people suffered and came here, yes, we all suffered. But we all suffered in an ethnic way. Because everybody grouped themselves with each other, and there was support to one another. The difficulty with my mother was that in Rockland there weren't that many Albanians."[9]

The Albanian communities regaled newly arrived young immigrants with the stories of past Albania. One immigrant said, "at four or five years old you're not knowledgeable about the land you left. But I know with my people, the stories they tell me, what they left. And I drew from them."[10]

These transitional elements of community further cement the connection between the old country and new country, as relation to Albania was nurtured in future generations, but not so much as to limit cultural adaptation: "What they left…I was thankful that I was here."[11] These community spaces are not strictly created by Albanians themselves, but can be externally sourced and adapted to meet the needs associated with attachment loss and willful detachment.

Play

"They just lived, you know, with each other and gave each other great comfort in times when, you know, they didn't know where to shop, or how to shop, or how to buy,…they had each other."[12] Winnicott regarded this potential space as the position where one may engage in creative play and cultural heritage. The potential space serves as a comfort zone for constructive management of anxiety associated with an immigrant's separation from ethnic attachment (Sengun 2001; Winnicott 1951; 1971).

Albanian immigrant at Ellis Island c. 1905.
Source: http://www.geh.org.

Playing facilitates the experience of the unfamiliar reality. Only in the psychological refuge of the space may play be achieved. As an individual begins to reality test, his or her illusions interchangeably become apperception and perception. (Winnicott, 1971:3).

Cultural Experience

"I like my country… I am Albania, but I like America, too. ... I mix with the people. We, we all belong to, you know, Y.W.C.A…We got mixed [i.e., assimilated]."[13] There is a direct development of transitional phenomena, from play to collective play, and from this to cultural experience. According to Winnicott, this cultural experience is developed through creative living that first manifests itself as an extension of play. Creative living refers to the attribution of subjective meaning to external reality, consequentially creating the sense of a life worth living, as opposed to futile compliance with reality.

All that an individual does in life and in relation to a community is creative living: "It is only in playing [i.e., experimentation] that the individual…is able to be creative,…as one experiences a relation to an object and forms a cultural experience" (Winnicott 1971:54, 98).

As individuals are brought into cultural circumstance and inherit social elements that are internalized, espoused, and expressed as codes of manners and morals, personal realities become reoriented and initiate an individual sense of belonging with the collective whole.

The area of potential space permits an individual to constructively initiate a relationship with a new world, utilizing transitional objects/phenomena to begin individual and collective play that translates into the development of a cultural experience.

As community and family nurtured the Albanian immigrant in their relocation, a new cultural experience formed that was rooted in tradition shared amongst the Albanian group in the United States. "The things we do I think is to keep our Albanian heritage alive. … I don't feel that we should ever lose our background. I think that they should always be Albanian. I think that there should always be an Albania."[14]

If this separation from a mother culture is too fast or interminable, such as in the case of exile and political refuge, a trauma may occur in which the potential space is compromised…

Unsuccessful Immigration

"You see, when you leave home when you are 14 years old, in different country, you kind of get used to it. And the voyage don't punish you. The lonesomeness from this is gone. You get homesick when you leave home. You never forget."[15]

Finally, the tendency for potential space to facilitate play and develop a cultural relationship is dependent on the living experience of separation: a healthy separation allows for a gradual and confident detachment from a culture.

If this separation from a mother culture is too fast or interminable, such as in the case of exile and political refuge, a trauma may occur in which the potential space is compromised; the memory of the internal representation of one's homeland fades and transitional objects/phenomenon lose meaning, thus inhibiting play and creative experience of a new culture (Winnicott, 1971:15).

On the other side of the spectrum, there may be a case when an attachment is

not gradually disillusioned and an immigrant may create a transitional object that symbolizes the attachment to a homeland in its subjective entirety: “The migrant remains dependent on the old frame, keeping the incorporated object in his internal graveyard and projecting it into the new frame instead of being able to use it to grow” (Le Roy 1994:190).

In the event of trauma, there is little trust and reliability in the migrant’s unity with their homeland. The newly settled immigrant experiences an aggressive end to a relationship that would otherwise inform potential spaces and corresponding transitional symbols; this necessitates the formation of new attachment symbols.

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Notes

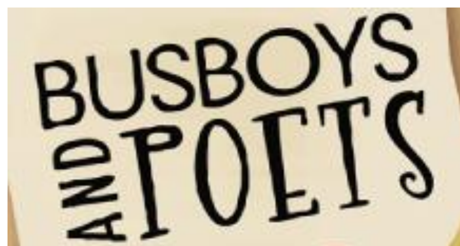
1. Janet Levine, (Interviewer). *Pauline Stevens Curtis.* Brockton, MA, 1992.
2. Janet Levine, (Interviewer). *Pauline Stevens Curtis.* Brockton, MA, 1992.
3. Janet Levine, (Interviewer). *Aphroditi Terova Mullo.* Worcester, MA, 1993.
4. Debby Dane, (Interviewer). *Stephen Peters*. Alexandria, VA, 1986.
5. Janet Levine, (Interviewer). *Aphroditi Terova Mullo.* Worcester, MA, 1993.
6. Janet Levine, (Interviewer). *William Johns*. Holdon, MA, 1993.
7. Janet Levine, (Interviewer). *Norman C. Simo*. Shrewsbury, MA, 1993.
8. Edward Applebome, (Interviewer). *Steven Congress*. Alexandria, VA, 1986.
9. Janet Levine, (Interviewer). *Georgia Stevens Tasho.* Brockton, MA, 1992.
10. Janet Levine, (Interviewer). *Anthony Athanas*. Boston, MA, 1994.
11. Janet Levine, (1994). *Anthony Athanas*. Boston, MA, 1994.
12. Janet Levine, (Interviewer). *Georgia Stevens Tasho.* Brockton, MA, 1992.
13. Janet Levine, (Interviewer). *Aphroditi Terova Mullo.* Worcester, MA, 1993.
14. Janet Levine, (Interviewer). *William Johns*. Holdon, MA, 1993.
15. Edward Applebome, (Interviewer). *Steven Congress*. Alexandria, VA, 1986.

Annual Banquet
&
Award Ceremony

A Conversation with

Dr. Sally Hillsman
Executive Officer of the American Sociological Association

Thursday, May 19, 2016



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