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CCT 627

**Reading Response 1**

Claude Steele and Theresa Perry’s essays in Young Gifted and Black, Promoting high achievement among African American Students explore the multiple reasons why African Americans do not academically perform as well as white students. Both acknowledge that the low achievement is due to social constrictions and negative viewpoints brought upon African Americans. Additionally, they seek to rid Africans Americans of this detrimental stereotype by boosting the value of intellectual strength and the power it has to transform an enslaved group of people.

Claude Steele’s essay, *Stereotype Threat and Student Achievement* examines the relationship between stereotypes given to a low ability group and the underperformance that follows the group. African Americans as a group achieve academically at a lower rate compared to white people and other minority groups. Steele explains one reason why is this, is because "stereotype threat." A stereotype threat is when there is a threat of being viewed through a negative stereotype. He says, "everyone experiences stereotype threat" but for African Americans it is a daily occurrence among their life, especially for African American college students (111). In his essay, Steele describes a series of research tests that confirm stereotype threats. It is not low confident or self pity that brings about low achievement, but rather Steele argues it is social stereotypes African Americans feel they will be identified with, if they do poorly. The threat of not doing well makes African Americans not do well in the first place!

In his research, Steele shows what happens to African Americans when they are given suggestions that they will live up to their socially constructed stereotype of doing poorly in school and what happens when they are told nothing regarding race. In the research tests a group of equally performing black and white sophomores of Stanford University where given a GRE English exam. With the high level of difficulty, Steele hypothesizes that this alone will provide enough anxiety and stress to both White and African American students. Yet, wanting to prove the unfair treatment of stereotype threats, Steels tells the test takers the test will measure their verbal ability. This suggestion is enough to push the African American students into the thought patterns of a negative viewpoint of their identity. Stereotype threats, Steele says is when there is a threat of being viewed through a negative stereotype. Like Theresa Perry, Steele recognizes the binding limitations American culture has placed on African American students when dictating that intellectual ability does not belong to the African American race.

Since White Americans are threaten with having smart black people around, we (my skin group) have cut off African American capabilities of high achievement. Perry talks about this when she describes that African Americans correlate being smart to being white, thus not having any ownership in their own intellectual abilities. Only adding to the African American negative stereotype with education, the White U.S. school system reaffirm white culture. In her essay, *Up from the Parched Earth: Toward a Theory of African-American Achievement* Perry explains the social construction of 'whiteness.' She takes David Roediger term of whiteness and says, "Whiteness is not a natural category, but an ideological construction. Whiteness was created in opposition to how 'Blackness" was imagined" (73). She goes on to suggest that this construction is one of several reasons why there is an achievement gap between white and black students.

**Reading Response 2**

Lawrence Levine's The Opening of the American Mind: Cannon, Culture, and History describes the ironies behind the concept of American culture being like a melting pot. The melting pot theory was used early in the twentieth century, first by French immigrant Crevercoeur and then as a play by Israel Zangwill. In the play the lead character, David Quixano sheds himself of his native Russian-Jewish cultures and becomes transforms within his new identify of being an American. The melting pot concept is troublesome for many reasons. For the most part, the real worry behind the idea lies in the fact that it did not really happen. Immigrants did not leave their old cultures behind to eagerly become American, like the early forefathers wanted all immigrants to do. But rather, immigrants learned how to live within their true self as well as a new self of American. As I was reading Levine, I see similar cultural confusion along first generation college students. i wonder if these students will have the same fate as immigrants to America.

This summer I spent half of my time at work acting as advisor, helping students register for fall courses. A week before school starts, I begin to help one student find courses. I ask her how are you going to pay for your courses and she asks, what? I ask her if she filed a FAFSA and she continues to provide me with blank states. I come to find out that the girl completed her GED a year ago and was going to be the first in her family to go to college. She said, "I was never told I need to fill out a FAFSA." I wonder if the lack of cultural knowledge of what college is like for this girl parallels the experiences of new immigrants coming to the US and understanding how things work in the US for the first time. Some first-generation college student speak that their life feels like they are in limbo. Constantly going back and forth between a new culture of higher education and an old familial culture of their family. Levine references W.E.B. Du Bois twoness" throughout the book. Du Bois says, "What, after all, am I? Am I an American or am I a Negro? Can I be both? Or is it my duty to cease to be a Negro as soon as possible and be an American?" (Levine 117). Du Bois argues his two cultural identifies pull at him. His African side wants one thing or holds him in one position, while the American side limits him in how to act and behave. I imagine the first generation students I come across would find a shared experience with Du Bois.

At the end of the day is American a melting pot? No. Levine and the men and women he cites would believe that America has not achieved being a melting pot. Levine states, "The various immigrant groups were not melted into something that already existed, were not converted to someone else's identify, were not blended 'into a standard, uniform national type', but were *transformed* by influences in their new environment and *recreated* as a complex of the old and the new" (Levine 138). American does not need to be a melting pot of one identity. Its strength lies in its diversity. America is a salad bowl composed of a variety of parts that work together.

**Reading Response 3**

Joseph Carens’ argues that citizenship and amnesty for migrants should be based on the number of years lived in the United States in his article “The Case for Amnesty”. Carens suggests when a migrant lives 5-10 years in a country he or she becomes socially attached. They contribute to society through working and pay taxing, additionally they participate socially; especially if they are in relationships or have children. Carens believes the number of years in a country should overrule any reasons for deportation. He says, "Human beings who have been raised in a society become members of that society: not recognizing their social membership is cruel and unjust” (Carens 2). But is it that easy? What if a person living in the U.S. for the appropriate period of time, does nothing to contribute to society, just sits around after working at a job he/she gets paid under the table? Could immigration policy be fixed by associating Carens’ theory of 'number of years lived' when reviewing citizenship status of migrants?

The responses to Carens’ article question whether the number of years lived are the right way to look at immigration policy. Linda Bosniak worries about the migrants who not lived long enough under Carens' theory. However, Bosniak's strongest argument comes when she states the phrase "all persons." The phrase "all persons" refers back to the original intent of the Constitution. She says "the most fundamental of liberal constitutional norms holds that all persons within the state's jurisdiction are to be accorded basic rights, security and recognition. Since the writers of the Constitutions did not use the word "citizen" (Bosniak 2). Bosniak believes the Constitution provides a more compelling claim for protecting migrants from deportation. Immigration policy thus, needs to be reexamined within the context of the framing of United States.

One of the other responses to Carens' article, Douglas S. Massey sheds light on the economic relationship between North America and Mexico. Massey believes the U.S. needs to increase the number of permanent-residence and temporary labor visas for Mexicans who provide labor for the agriculture industries in the United States, which many Americans find undesirable work. The U.S. fails to see the impact of Mexico on its economic and social society. Massey says, "Mexico is a friendly nation with which we are increasingly integrated socially and economically. Yet in terms of immigration policy, we treat Mexico like any other nation, allocating to it the same number of visas as to Botswana or Nepal" (Massesy 2). In some ways Massey wants a separate immigration policy for Mexico alone, since the U.S. relies on Mexican labors. In all, both critics challenge Carens naive attempt to simplify the answer of immigration policy to the number of years.

It's difficult to for me think about immigration, as I feel removed from it as a natural citizen. I have heard stories from students who have gone through huge obstacles in becoming citizens. At the end of their stories they have this all- consuming joy and excitement in being U.S. citizens. I have never felt this same excitement for my country.

**Reading Response 4**

The two different readings regarding Muslim woman broke down some of my stereotypes of Islam. Both articles shed light on traditional Muslim practices, as well as the progressive practices. Additionally, both articles provided human faces and personal stories of Muslim woman, there was no hiding behind a vail. Hearing the perspectives of these women, makes it easier to find common ground amongst our (mine and the women in the articles) obvious differences.

Esposito's article recalls the recently converted journey of Muslim women. These women come to Islam under a variety of reasons; from visiting Muslim countries, to being introduced to it through friends. Surprisingly the thought that most women convert to Islam because of a man was turned upside down with this group of women who responded to Esposito's survey. Esposito's survey findings indicate that, "20 out of the 53 converted while still single. It was difficult reading through the plights some of the women face from their families. One woman said, "They do not even allow me at their house now I am Muslim" (Esposito 148). Yet, through all their challenges of not having a home, some of these women are charting new roads as feminist, a term I would have never thought to you use with Muslim women. Espositio's refers to Zahra Buttar's work where she places American Muslim women into two groups, one of orthodox and two of feminists. All of the women in Esposito's survey described themselves as feminists. They saw their relationship with their husbands as collaborative with shared responsibilities. I wonder if Jihana, a Muslim high school student profiled in Stan Kapr's article, would find comfort in this aspect of marriage.

Karp's article was fun to read. I become quickly engrossed in his toils as a progressive teacher and feel quickly in love with Jihana. Karp's article illustrated how a Muslim girl can be empowered to speak out about her religion and way of life in a commentary society made up of stereotypes. Jihana's courage enabled her to appease her family with college instead of an arranged marriage, common for most 17 Bengalis Muslim girls.