

ANTH 3640 Race and Human Evolution  
Assignment #5 Summary Notes

Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Concepts of Race

**I. Du Bois and Boas on Race (Just a sampling of things that could be said. You said other things)**

A. Agreements:

1. Both seem to take the existence of race for granted; however, there's debate about whether they see race as a real biological category, or a socially/historically constructed one.
2. Both certainly recognize overlap, continuities, or "gradations" between the races—in keeping with Darwinian/Douglasian precedents.

→ Du Bois offers a nice Money Quote that may be relevant for our Genomic Age (Week 9, article by Reich): "...there are differences—subtle, delicate, and elusive though they may be—which have silently but definitely separated men into groups."

B. Disagreements:

1. Du Bois's definition includes biological, spiritual, and psychic elements; Boas was known for strictly distinguishing between biology and culture.
2. Du Bois seems more inclined than Boas to identify some characteristics of blackness that need to be overcome (VICES of immorality, crime, laziness—maybe not "inherent", but common enough for Du Bois to worry about at the time).
3. Boas is stronger on the societal and structural impediments to black success. For Du Bois, blacks need to work harder—"MUST DO FOR THEMSELVES".

**II. Boas's Impression on Du Bois**

A. Du Bois was clearly impressed by Boas's accounting of African accomplishments. He said of the speech:

*"I was too astonished to speak. All of this I had never heard and I came then and afterwards to realize how the silence and neglect of science can let truth utterly disappear."*

B. Du Bois may have reconsidered the power of structural racism and prejudice to blunt development of a race's capabilities.

**III. Other Stuff Worth Noting:**

A. Du Bois's eugenical reference to how the "best blood" of American Negro must be marshalled in order to facilitate black success.

B. Despite his celebration of black accomplishment, Boas still alludes to possibilities that African cultural development required outside help from Arabs, Portuguese, etc. (items #12 and 13). We know today that African people innovated on their own, without outside help.

**IV. How Kendi's Typology Applies**

- A. Du Bois: Assimilationist, with some separatist tendencies (the "Negro Academy").
- B. Boas: Assimilationist, with some paternalistic tendencies (Item #23).
- C. In time both would become committed anti-racists.