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**Stand By Me: A Critical Analysis of Child and Young Adult
Developmental Understanding of Race and Self Within Affect
Theory using I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, Between the
World and Me, Song of the South, and The Hate U Give**

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**Stand By Me: A Critical Analysis of Child and Young Adult Developmental
Understanding of Race and Self Within Affect Theory using *I Know Why the Caged Bird
Sings, Between the World and Me, Song of the South, and The Hate U Give***

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Introduction

Introduction of Texts

A young person questioning their place in society is at the forefront of memoirs *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou and *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates, and the films *Song of the South* and *The Hate U Give*. The environment a child grows up in has a significant impact on how a child interprets race, this includes the adults. A young person's interpretation of their identity can change based on societal acceptance of their race. In *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and *Between the World and Me*, the authors discuss their upbringing and their feelings of separation from society because of their blackness. In chapter one, the emotions anger, fear, and shame are used as the foundation of understanding of how children can be affected by societal antipathic feelings towards their race.

The films *Song of the South* and *The Hate U Give* are known for the use of race in their plot and character development. In chapter two, the emotions fear and shame are the focus while analyzing how the film can affect how their young viewers see themselves. *Song of the South* and *The Hate U Give* use cinematography, character development, and music to convey a racial message, intentionally and unintentionally, for its demographics, children and teens, respectively. The films lie on the opposite ends of a spectrum. *Song of the South* takes on a fantastical approach to race where the black characters of the film are happy and accepting of life on the plantation. Although *Song of the South* is a children's film that was not written to discuss race, it does not go out of its way to avoid race and discrimination being associated with the film. The film is set in Georgia on a plantation directly after the Civil War. With the target audience being children, it invokes questionable emotions within children involving racial relations by presenting a false history to them by making a plantation the film setting. Although *The Hate U*

Give is a more realistic approach to race, similar to *Song of the South*, there are still negative aspects to the film that could cause unintended emotions about race within its audience, especially for young viewers who are of minority decent because the film presents a one-sided look at race and the controversies that surround it that involve the police. Much of the plot of *The Hate U Give* is centered around police brutality within the black population through the eyes of Starr Carter, but the film also spends a great deal of time focused on Starr's feelings of displacement within herself in society because she subconsciously changes her personality in public to meet what she perceives to be acceptable standards for someone of her race.

Separation of Body and Self

The "displacement" or separation that Angelou, Coates, and Starr feel from their blackness is carried by some children of the black community. These negative emotions manifest themselves as shame, anger, and fear in relation to a young person's identity. Race is a social construct that is a means for others to identify their heritage (census.gov). The effect this social construct has created within humanity is known as Social Identity Theory. Social Identity Theory is a theory created by Henry Tajfel and John Turner to explain the psychological reasoning for people having an innate preference to surround themselves with other individuals with characteristics similar to their own: "The basic idea is that a social category into which one falls, and to which one feels one belongs, provides a definition of who one is in terms of the defining characteristics of the category -a self-definition that is a part of the self-concept" (Hogg 259). Regarding race identification, according to this theory, as people age they tend to migrate to social groups that are predominantly their race, and thus any children these individuals have will be surrounded by others that share the same racial identity.

Affect Theory in the Context of Race

Subsequently, children in many areas across America have little to no experience with other races, and any information they do receive on other races is secondhand, distorted by their source's views: "Race remains a divisive issue in American politics, indeed in some ways more than ever. The discord and intensity of feelings over issues....And in the contemporary context one is struck by the strong racial undercurrents that characterize debates on such prominent and emotional issues as crime and welfare" (Peffley 30). The self-made social construct of race can create biased recollections of other racial groups, as Starr, Angelou, and Coates do in their stories. This created perception echoes within some of the media that children have consumed across generations that has caused an adverse effect in some children.

Introduction of Affect Theory

These emotions are a part of a larger theological concept known as Affect Theory: "Affect is the root of such words as affection, our warm-toned feelings for those people who are particularly special in our lives" (Nathanson 49). Nathanson argues that "When we have been affected by something, we have experienced an emotion because of it; when disaffected we are indifferent and have little emotional involvement" (49). Young minds can be affected by fear, shame, and anger when encountering situations involving race, especially black youths who may subsequently question their identities because of racial separation. Furthermore, this process of carrying emotions that were created by an outside source is called the Transmission of Affect. In her novel *The Transmission of Affect*, Teresa Brennan writes about the Transmission of affect being a process where a certain emotion is projected from one individual to another:

But while it is recognized freely that individualism is a historical and cultural product, the idea that affective self-containment is also a production is resisted. It is all very well to

think that the ideas or thoughts a given subject has are socially constructed, dependent on cultures, times, and social groups within them.... But if we accept with comparatively ready acquiescence that our thoughts are not entirely independent, we are, nonetheless, peculiarly resistant to the idea that our emotions are not altogether our own (Brennan 17).

For the sake of this thesis, body is synonymous with a person's identity. These emotions that an individual feels because of the Transmission of Affect can be felt by either racial party involved in the situation with the emotion being brought on by the state of their body, albeit they are protecting their body from society or themselves.

Based on the evidence provided in the stories that are the focus of this thesis, there is a correlation between how children emotionally interpret race and their environment. For Starr and Angelou, who were children of minority decent, they experienced a sense of separation from their racial identity because of the imbalance of power in society, as it relates to race. Starr and Angelou both want to publicly present themselves a certain way to be more what they deem as socially acceptable. Meanwhile, Coates does not have this issue because he grew up in a black majority environment. However, he is placed at a disadvantage when he ventures outside of his neighborhood. He has been around people who have similar backgrounds as himself a majority of his life and when he goes off to college, he is surprised by the diversity he encounters.

Unlike Johnny, the young white protagonist of *Song of the South* who also ventures into a new community and befriends people who have a different than his own, Coates is a black adult in America. Thus, Coates's positive response to his new community is because they too, to a certain extent, have felt rejected by the norms of society. Within the lives of Coates, Angelou, Starr and Johnny it is conclusive that a person's identity can be disrupted by society through those of a similar background being treated differently. Bringing Affect Theory to the table is

important when talking about their stories because it emphasizes a discussion on how an individual emotionally responds in racial situations. Affect Theory is a relatively new type of theorization, so there is little information available to explain how race fits into the theory. Many works that discuss race focus on how an individual may feel about a racial situation based on logic, instead of analyzing the situation and the individual's personality to get an answer more specific to that particular person. When an individual does not feel accepted by the societal majority group, white Americans, it can affect how those outside that social group views themselves, which is why Angelou, Coates, and Starr all have self-deprecating thoughts at some point in their lives, meanwhile, Johnny who is faced with the trauma of feeling abandoned by his father in a new environment, but never questions his own identity nor loses sight of the difference between himself and his beloved Uncle Remus.

Chapter 1

Introduction

In Maya Angelou *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and Ta-Nehisi Coates's *Between the World and Me* they recount their experiences of racial injustice from childhood to early adulthood, the time in every person's life where they are formulating their idea of identity. The memoirs share their interpretation of the black body, and their experiences with the social and economic barriers that have been placed in front of minorities because of the color of their skin. In their memoirs, the two authors contextualize their own lives within American history by placing a face to the racial divide between blacks and whites that has always plagued American society. The autobiographies deal with the authors' experiences of discovering their blackness. On the note of Affect Theory, self-induced shame disrupts the childhoods of Coates and Angelou because their race causes them to be treated differently in society. Fear, shame, and anger have had a direct and indirect connection to them through their race throughout their lives, which hinders them in their childhoods, but leads them to becoming stronger people as adults.

The Power of a Name

Angelou and Coates's feelings of displacement within society is foreshadowed within the titles of their memoirs. For Angelou, the cage in her title represents the world. Its locked door locks her away from the rest of the world by preventing her from spreading her wings and reaching opportunities that will better her life. Subsequently, the bird sings in anguish and longing for the world outside the locked door of the cage. Coates's title is a testament to the literal barrier between black Americans and society that remains due to inequality. Within both memoirs, the authors discuss how they have at some point in their lives felt separated from their

black identity. While Coates's memoir focuses more on this separation during his young adult years, Angelou's questioning of her identity begins as a small child.

A baby receiving their name is the first step in the infant determining their identity. A name gives a child a sense of who they are. At the beginning of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Angelou explains how she got her childhood nickname that would one day become synonymous her identity, "They also told me how I got the name 'My.' After Bailey learned definitely that I was his sister, he refused to call me Marguerite, but rather addressed me each time as 'Mya Sister,' and in later more articulate years, after the need of brevity had shortened the appellation to 'My,' it was elaborated into 'Maya'" (Angelou 26). Bailey, Angelou's older brother, as a young boy unintentionally renames his sister, Marguerite Angelou, to Maya after repeatedly declaring that she was *his sister*. The declaration eventually transformed from 'My' to 'Maya' as the siblings aged. Angelou was named out of love from a brother who wanted to protect her. By asserting that she was his, Bailey took on the role of a guardian for Angelou in their broken home. When the two are sent to live with their grandma, Mama, Bailey's possessiveness diminishes with age, along with an improvement in his articulation. Maya loses her name 'My' because Bailey no longer had to hold such a significant role in her life as a guardian because Mama is able to fill that role.

Coates gave his son the name Samori after, "... Samori Touré, who struggled against French colonizers for the right to his own body. He died in captivity, but the profits of that struggle and others like it are ours, even when the object of our struggle, as is so often true, escapes our grasp" (*Between the World and Me* 80). This continued 'struggle' is how Coates sees the placement of the black community within society because of hinderances that are imposed on them to prevent their success. In the past, this prevention was more overt. For instance, it was

legally seen in housing. The Federal Housing Administration, an organization employed by congress to ensure mortgages, created rules to favor white Americans. When determining whether a neighborhood was eligible for their insurance, the organization would first determine whether any blacks or foreigners lived there. If other races were present, the neighborhood was given a rating of D and was not eligible for insurance. If it was purely a white neighborhood, the area was given an A, and was eligible because these neighborhoods were seen as less dangerous, and therefore, less of a liability (*We Were Eight Years in Power* 168-169).

Although children are no longer faced with blatant racial disparity within their community, it can be argued that it is still seen to an extent in the job market. In Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner's text *Freakonomics*, they use data from births in California from 1961- the mid 2000's. From their research, they found that since the seventies, there has been an exponential uptick in names unique to black culture. Names such as Rachel, Wyatt, and Molly are now seen as far more inherently "white," than names like Precious, Deja, and Asia. Being as such, Levitt and Dubner point out that names have become more of an identifier. Returning to Coates's memoir, Samori's name was given to him as a reminder of his heritage, but his name could also be seen by some as an amplifier of his blackness in society, and the struggle that Coates repeatedly refers to because of social perceptions.

The Wonderful World of Dreamers

Coates implies that some people live in a state of self-induced ignorance, where they choose to ignore that racism still exists, and when they themselves are being racist. He labels these people as Dreamers. Dreamers believe society treats everyone fairly because they have never had to be exposed to the true nature of the world. This behavior is passed to children,

which causes them to behave a certain way when around people that they identify as being different than they are, such is the case with all of the white people that Angelou encounters in her memoir. They can be seen as Dreamers because they may not understand that their actions are racist because they are behaving in society as they were taught. In the text, Angelou's mother encourages her to ignore said Dreamers, "'Life is going to give you just what you put in it. Put your whole heart in everything you do, and pray, then you wait.' Another time she reminded me that 'God helps those who help themselves'" (Angelou 91-92). Through her mother's words and her own perseverance, Angelou is able to get a job as a conductress of a streetcar, a job that people believed, as a black woman, she could not do.

Additionally, according to psychological science, the Dreamers that Coates sees are probably people who live in predominantly monoracial areas. Therefore, it is highly likely during their lives that they never witnessed racial tension. Witnessing a problem makes it a reality, but the unawareness of racial strife drives the ability for it to continue, particularly within the children in these monoracial communities. This racial blindness was a common occurrence decades ago because of restrictions that were placed on races by law. In *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Angelou speaks of living in ignorance along with the other children around her of what white people looked like during her early childhood:

In Stamps the segregation was so complete that most Black children didn't... know what whites looked like. Other than that they were different, to be dreaded, and in that dread was included the hostility of the powerless against the powerful, the poor against the rich...I remember never believing that whites were really real (Angelou 24-25).

Historically, this "completeness" of segregation was helped with the use of sundown towns "A sundown town is any organized jurisdiction that for decades kept African Americans or other

groups from living in it and was thus ‘all-white’ on purpose” (Loewen 4). According to James Loewen’s novel, *Sundown Towns*, these types of settlements once existed all across the US, with signs that displayed variations of the antagonistic rule that Angelou was familiar with as a child: no blacks/ Jews/ Asians after dark, “... don’t let the sun set on you here...” (Angelou 49). This ‘completeness’ of segregation that Angelou writes about early in her memoir exists even in the twenty-first century out of legacy instead of legality. Black families built their lives in certain areas for generation, so this manmade migratory divide is still apparent, especially in Midwest US, which is where Loewen suspects many of these towns once resided through census research. Even if the young children in areas like these are able to interact with a diverse group of people later in life, there is always the possibility that they will subconsciously reject a deep friendship with other races.

As a young black child in the south during the mid-twentieth century, the social stigma that Angelou feels because of her blackness is far heavier than Coates’s: "If growing up is painful for the Southern Black girl, being aware of her displacement is the rust on the razor that threatens the throat" (Angelou 1). A similar message is also delivered by Coates early in his memoir as he is recounting his childhood: “To be black in the Baltimore of my youth was to be naked before the elements of the world...” (*Between the World and Me* 17). The authors speak to the oppression they felt in their communities because of the disadvantages that they faced as children. Coates and Angelou grew up in predominantly black communities where, based on the information given in their memoirs, they feel like outsiders outside of their communities. Angelou describes herself feelings towards her blackness as a child as “rust on a razor,” and Coates describes his body as being “naked before the elements.” They are both placing their bodies in vulnerable situations to emphasize how helpless they feel in the world. Even in

adulthood, their bodies are battered and bruised daily by those who negatively judge their blackness, intentionally or unintentionally, as they continue their lives either as Dreamers or those that ensure that social barriers that effect how people feel about their blackness remain in place, continuing the struggle of fear and shame of blackness that some black individuals, like young Coates and Angelou, may feel.

Social Separation and Self-Esteem

In *Between the World and Me*, Coates talks about a crossroads that every child of his community is eventually faced with in life because of societal barriers: “The streets were not my only problem. If the streets shackle my right leg, the schools shackled my left. Fail to comprehend the streets and you gave up your body now. But fail to comprehend the schools and you gave up your body later” (Coates 23-25). Education provides opportunity to become financially stable and live a comfortable life. By choosing education, Coates believes an individual is choosing life because education leads people to achieving a form of the American Dream, despite their black body.

The environment of Coates’s childhood neighborhood gave black youths reason to fear their blackness. Coates’s was able to avoid entering the world of the streets by choosing to continue his education, but he was still able to build an understanding of the societal barriers that have caused the black teens of his community to have to choose between two drastically different worlds .From his years of watching society and encountering those who have vastly differently backgrounds, Coates has become aware that regardless of his actions, there will still be those who are unaware of how their words and actions can affect other subgroups in society. Thus, Coates bears witness to those who innocently offend, such as the news reporter during

Coates interview, to those who act upon a situation based on preconceived notions without question, such as the police officers in the Eric Garner and Prince Jones cases.

It is evident through the eyes of these authors that it is difficult to change the mindset of those who have held certain beliefs for many years. Furthermore, the ever presence of the media only further hinders the situation. The most powerful theme between the two autobiographies is the protagonist's realization of self, more specifically their embracement of their own blackness and the death of their yearning for white privilege. In *Between the World and Me*, Coates begins his letter to his son with an anecdote of an interview where the interviewer asks Coates what he felt it meant to lose his body, "...when she finished she turned to the subject of my body, although she did not mention it specifically....Specifically the host wished to know why I felt that Americans who believed that they are white, was built on looting and violence.... (*Between the World and Me* 5-6). Unknowingly the white reporter has separated Coates here from herself to have him give a generalized account on his experience of having a black body. Although it was unintentional, by doing so it causes Coates to interpret it as her separating her emotions from him, so she does not feel the need to take responsibility for what he says.

Additionally, In *I Know Why the Caged Bird*, Angelou also introduces her text by discussing the displacement she feels within her own body with an anecdote from an incident that occurred on Easter Sunday "As I watched Momma put ruffles on the hem and cute little tucks around the waist, I knew that once I put it on I'd look like a movie star....I was going to look like one of the sweet little white girls who were everybody's dream of what was right with the world" (Angelou 4). By stating having white skin is "everybody's dream of what was right with the world," little Angelou is stating that she is everything that is wrong with the world. She

further cements this inference within the reader by providing more details of the metamorphosis she hopes the dress will initiate within her body:

Wouldn't they be surprised when one day I woke out of my black ugly dream, and my real hair, which was long and blond, would take the place of the kinky mass that Momma had to straighten? My light-blue eyes were going to hypnotize them.... Then they would understand why I had never picked up a Southern accent, or spoke the common slang, and why I had to be forced to eat pigs' tails and snouts. Because I was really white and a cruel fairy stepmother, who was understandably jealous of my beauty, had turned me into a too-big Negro girl, with nappy black hair, broad feet and a space between her teeth that would hold a number-two pencil (Angelou 4-5).

Angelou's fantasy of the white body here is a direct result of her environment. Even as a young child, she knows she is treated differently than white children. Although it is important to note that Angelou's childhood took place during a time of segregation, it does not diminish the fact that she as a young child felt that her blackness was a curse that she should be ashamed of.

Though segregation was not a focus of either memoir, and in the current century has no legal place in American society, a feeling of shame does remain among some black children on the topic of the blackness. In 2005, Kiri Davis, a high school film student, recreated the infamous doll experiment that was originally conducted by Drs. Kenneth and Mamie Clark to test the racial awareness in children, but became the foundation of the integration of the public-school system because it proved that using the race of a child to determine where they belong outside of medical purposes condemns them to thinking poorly of themselves. The connection between these studies draws the question of what continues to cause these racial preferences within black children.

Returning to Angelou's anecdote of her childhood fantasy, she is forced to see the reality of her blackness when she receives the dress that she has imagined having the power to transform her body "But Easter's early morning sun had shown the dress to be a plain ugly cut-down from a white woman's throwaway" (Angelou 2). Here, the sight of the dress shatters Angelou's dream for herself. The death of Angelou's notion of whiteness in the scene is manifested mentally and physically by her letting go of her perception of her body. She is left "peeing and crying, not toward the toilet out back but to our house" (Angelou 5). By letting go of her bodily functions, she is mentally letting go of her shame and fear of being herself. She later described the texture of the dress as "sounding like crepe paper on the back of hearses" (Angelou 1), symbolizing her mourning for her white body and the acceptance of its death (Arensberg 87).

In addition, there is a level of backwardness within Angelou's memoir when her physical body is the focus. When faced with colorism behavior, colorism being the social favoring of lighter skinned people (Hannon 1), Angelou's peers favor Bailey's darker skin. Angelou's peers contradict society norms because Angelou sees herself as a contradiction. With her black heritage, she feels that she did not meet societal expectation of beauty. Returning to Angelou's vision of herself within her dress. Her impression of herself mirrors that of children who were interviewed for the Brown vs Board of Education experiment, which was conducted around the time period of this anecdote from Angelou. In the twenty-first century, race continues to be an issue, which is why Coates spends much of his youth searching for an identity, like Angelou.

Coates also has a moment during his youth where he realizes:

... I am afraid. I feel the fear most acutely whenever you leave me. But I was afraid long before you, and in this I was unoriginal. When I was your age the only people I knew were black, and all of them were powerfully, adamantly, dangerously afraid. I had seen

this fear all my young life, though I had not always recognized it as such” (*Between the World and Me* 17).

This sense of displacement is called Othering: “Othering is an action that labels an individual or group as not belonging...Othering is a concept of relationships between those who are part of the group and those who are not part of the group” (Campbell par.1). Although some people may not explicitly vocalize their want to exclude a certain group of people, their actions may show their biasness. In *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, young Maya, who was born with medium-brown skin, draws awareness in her to how there was a social preference for her dark-skinned brother “Where I was big, elbowy and grating, he was small graceful and smooth. When I was described by our playmates as being shit color, he was lauded for his velvet-black skin. His hair fell down in black curls, and my head was covered with black steel wool” (Angelou 10). In this quote, Angelou is pointing out how her peers prefer Bailey’s appearance over hers. The act of colorism continues to be a problem in black culture because it generally causes feelings of fear and shame to be invoked between those of different racial backgrounds and skin complexions because of an individual’s in-exposure of diversity.

Although race relations have reached notable milestones, there is still conflict between the two that is being passed down to newer generations in some shape or form. In the memoirs, the authors come to terms with the preconceived notions that society had over their bodies, and they are able to overcome stereotyping that is presented to them because of their blackness. Coates states early in his memoir that he believes the United States was founded and continues to be fueled by racist actions. These actions have brought America success in the form of centuries of hard labor by people who were stripped of their freedom and their home:

.... race is the child of racism, not the father.... Difference in hue and hair is old. But the belief in the preeminence of hue and hair, the notion that these factors can correctly organize a society and that they signify deeper attributes, which are indelible- this is the new idea at the heart of these new people who have been brought up hopelessly, tragically, deceitfully, to believe that they are white (Coates 7).

The tragedy within this scenario that Coates has described is that it demonstrates that it is the fatal flaw of human nature to notice differences. Humans are naturally power-seeking creatures and want to feel superior by being the best in every activity that is attempted. However, with progress comes the possibility of encountering unfamiliar territory and as an organized species, it is believed everything needs a name/label. As humans are animals with the concept of reason, humans respond to these situations in similar fight or flight fashion. Within the realm of Affect Theory, this situation is conceptualized as anger, fear, and shame. Entman and Rojecki write, “High sensitivity to racial classifications often yields negative emotions, especially anger or resentment toward Blacks as a group, and fear or anxiety about being close to Black individuals. Whites exhibiting animosity feel threatened by Blacks as a group and as individuals” (20). Returning to Coates’s quote regarding race, the lack of exposure to diversity Americans receive invokes these emotions within Caucasians about African Americans because of the foreignness that is felt when interacting with the race. Within both texts, the emotions fear and anger are explored as the authors relay their path in search of acceptance throughout their childhoods.

Moreover, power-seeking and sensitivity to race can come from low exposure to diversity. Coates experiences when he enters college:

‘Faggot’ was a word I had employed all my life. And now here they were, The Outsiders, The Fa-, The Dy-, dressed in all their human clothes. I am black and have been

plundered and have lost my body. But perhaps I too had the capacity for plunder, maybe I would take another human's body to confirm myself in a community. Perhaps I already had. Hate gives identity. The n-, the f-, the bitch illuminate the border, the illuminate what we ostensibly are not, illuminate the Dream of being white, of being a Man. We name the hated strangers and are thus confirmed in the tribe" (*Between the World and Me* 58-59)

Returning to the idea of Dreamers, Coates is no longer speaking solely of the white community. Generally, social stigmas are placed on subgroups in society because individuals of the main societal group, for instance white people being the majority when compared to the population of the black race in the US, feel validation by ostracizing the minority groups. This is the case when an individual has no experience interacting with individuals from a subgroup. For instance, in the quote, Coates is referring to people he meets during his young adult years. With this admission, Coates is acknowledging that someone who is born into a subgroup can harbor prejudices, and to an extent animosity, against another subgroup. This is not due to a negative experience, but having no experience around these types of people, and thus he is able to separate himself from their position in the world.

In Sarah Ahmed's text *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, she initiates a conversation about the connection between the black body, white body, and fear by utilizing an example from Fanon Frantz's *Black Skin White Mask*. The example finds a white child seeking console from his mother after being frightened by the sight of a black man. The child is afraid because of the potential of the man's black body causing harm to his white body. His fear stems from his environment in the United States that through stereotypes and images of black people enacting violence has created a hierarchal racial divide between the white race and black race:

fear signified through language and by the white body does not simply begin and end there: rather the fear works through and on the bodies of those who are transformed into its subjects, as well as its objects. The black body is drawn tighter; it is not just the smile that becomes tighter, and is eventually impossible, but the black body itself becomes enclosed by the fear, and comes to feel that fear as its own, such that it is felt as an impossible or inhabitable body (Ahmed 62).

In the scenario, the black man shivers because he is cold, but the boy perceives the man be shaking with anger that is aimed at him. The difference between perception and reality can be powerful. In this situation, the boy sees the black man as a threat. If the boy were older this misunderstanding could have resulted in an aggressive interaction between him and the black man because the black man would be seen as the initial aggressor.

Furthermore, in both situations, the white party is stereotyping the black man. Stereotypes can be defined as “Cognitive structures that contain the perceiver’s knowledge, beliefs, and expectations about human groups” (Hamilton and Troilier 133). In reference to African Americans, white people who assume stereotypes to be true will see black people as lazy and violent who need to be supported by the government through welfare (Peffley 31). Consequently, there are white people who fear the worse when seeing black people, and black people who must therefore fear for the safety of their bodies when encountering these whites. In *Between the World and Me*, Coates provides an entry where he is the black man who must fear for his body: You were moving at the dawdling speed of a small child. A white woman pushed you and said, ‘Come on!’ Many things now happened at once. There was a reaction of any parent when a stranger lays a hand on the body of his or her child. And there was my own insecurity in my ability to protect my black body” (*Between the World and Me* 93). Though it is

an innate want for Coates to want to protect his child and to immediately lash out when someone presents a threat to the body of young Samori, but because of Coates's place in society, in order to save Samori from developing a sense of fear or anger towards people of the white race at the extremely impressionable age of five, Coates decides to deescalate the situation.

The Fault of the American Dream

Coates writes that America perceives itself to be the ideal country, "America understands itself as God's handiwork, but the black body is the clearest evidence that America is the work of men" (*Between the World and Me* 12). In Coates's opinion, the American Dream was built upon the backs of slaves. Every success that has been gained came from a loss some black person had to endure at some point in time to help forge an idyllic dream for a group of people who can never fully accept him as one of their own. Regardless of the time period, blacks have always been owned literally or figuratively by Caucasian Americans, literally as slaves or figuratively by their oppression. Even after the abolishment of slavery, whites have continued to hold blacks back with chains of rejection because of their fear of what will happen if they are not superior and anger of feeling inferior. This need to feel superior manifests in black people being harassed for participating in common everyday activities and the use of excessive force within a conflict. Returning to the incident between Coates and the white woman, this moment of excessive force comes in his memoir when a white woman pushes his toddler son off an escalator because he is moving too slow and a white man threatens to have him arrested, signaling that the white woman was more important than the black child she could have injured (*Between the World and Me* 94-95). The dispute could easily have been mended with a simple apology from the woman, but at the sight of Coates's anger the woman recoiled with fear and the white man became angry and

asserted himself in the dispute to protect a body, that being of a white individual, that he recognized as opposed to someone who belong to different societal group. To take control of Coates's body, the white man threatens to take it away from him by sending him to jail, separating him from his son.

In *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Angelou talks about a group of poor white families that come into her grandmother's store. The children of these families have no respect for black people, even though other white people also reject them because of their low social class. The white children have to live on Angelou's grandmother's land, yet the kids address Angelou's grandmother by her first name and mock her. On one occasion, for no reason, several of the girls from these families decide to come to the grandmother's porch and taunt her. In response, Angelou's grandmother crosses her arms and stands her ground, only vocalizing her agitation through the humming of spiritual tunes. When the girls are done, Angelou's grandmother decides to deter the girls from coming back through kindness. She addresses each girl by 'miss' and bids them farewell (Angelou 31-32).

In addition, though Angelou's grandmother differently than Coates, within Affect Theory, both situations summons a level of shame for Angelou and Coates. They feel ashamed because someone they barely know is able to strip them of their identity for their own personal gain and there is no punishment. The white people in the encounters did not care about what could happen to the black person. This is evident in how they behaved, the woman shoving Coates's son and the white girl, Helen, baring her naked body in front of Angelou's grandmother, daring her to reprimand her. The white individuals involved only saw a black body that needed to be put in its place. They were trying to invoke a reaction and if the black person

involved had attempted to seek justice for the attack on their dignity, they would have been swiftly punished.

Shortly, before Coates's son is born, he is pulled over by the police. Although it was only a traffic stop, within that moment Coates feared he would lose his body and never have a chance to meet his son. This fear stems from the normalization of the police having a poor relationship with minority communities, particularly black people because of the uptick in the number of police encounters that have gone poorly in recent decades. For instance, Coates mentions Tamir Rice, a young boy who was killed by a white officer for playing with a bb gun in a park. Tamir was only 12, but he still found himself on the other side of the officer's weapon. The death of Tamir demonstrates a dangerous precedent that Coates acknowledges within this scene, that being the danger of a police officer being fearful with little reason when encountering a black individual. Stereotyping within the policing is known as racial profiling. This practice is the assumption that a minority is always committing a crime or about to do so when they are faced by the police. Although having an opinion about a group of people is not inherently illegal, a person developing a biasedness towards a racial group and act upon that biasedness when they are sworn to protect all people equally is.

The practice of racial profiling was even more prevalent during Angelou's childhood in the 1950's. At the beginning of the memoir, Angelou's grandmother is told to tell her son to refrain from being outside for a while "A crazy n- messed with a white lady today. Some of the boys'll be coming over here later'" (Angelou 8). Although the family friend calls them 'the boys,' which gives them a nonthreatening air about the conversation, they are referring to the Ku Klux Klan, who by calling them boys devalues them and their racist intentions. This devaluing gives the black community power within the conversation, which is a rare occurrence within the

memoir. When faced with inequality, in the story, Angelou is normally at a disadvantage because of her age. She is seldom permitted to interact with the white race because Mama fears her being humiliated by her disadvantage in society. For instance, when the poor white girls come to harass the family, similar to how Angelou's great uncle must hide to protect his body, Angelou is sent to hide upstairs to protect her self-esteem.

Although Angelou's great uncle has nothing to do with the crime, it is inferred that white people will use the opportunity to either find a crime to pin on him or blame the man for the rape. Racial profiling disregards a public official's legal obligation to deem a person innocent until proven guilty. In the present century, the distrust that has been built by the number of incidences like Tamir's and Coates is furthered by the police force not reflecting the population that they are protecting. In neither memoir is there ever specific mention of a black police officer. Although this is expected during Maya Angelou's childhood considering she was living in the south during the 1950s, Coates never mentions a specific encounter with a black police officer. This is not to say that they do not exist, nor that Coates has never seen a black officer, but it is important to note because of the many instances that Coates highlights where a black individual is killed at the hands of a white police officer. Coates never mentions the names of the officers, but he does with the victims. This simple decision, in a way dehumanizes the police officers. It is not done in malicious manner, but as a way to say their lives, which they kept, are not as important as those that they took.

Racial Dissociation in the Age of the Media

The shame that Coates and Angelou felt within the moments in the memoirs where they are reminded of how the color of their skin marks them as different in society is not an outlier

within the black community, particularly with black children and young adults. Younger generations are enamored by technology, so they are constantly surrounded by the media. News networks further hinder the potential for a more cohesive relationship to form between races by being more likely to broadcast crimes that occur between black people and white people as opposed to violence within the races (Entman, Rojecki 83). In *Between the World and Me*, Samori witnesses inequality in the US through the Eric Garner case and Coates writes to give his son understanding of the events “But the price of error is higher for you than it is for your countrymen, and so that America might justify itself, the story of a black body’s destruction must always begin with his or her error, real or imagined- with Eric Garner’s anger....” (*Between the World and Me* 95-96). Coates establishes to his son that this type of violence is not unusual for America’s past nor present to prepare him for its possible recurrence in the future.

America can be perceived as a violent country, not always out of intention, but tradition. Statistics have shown that traditionally the media’s portrayal of black violence is inaccurate. Black on black crime is far more likely to occur, but stories about black on white/ white on black crime are seen as more newsworthy because it provides controversy for the story, especially because it will not end in everyone’s favor. Furthermore, the display of disparity is worsened by the image the newscasters create of black people “Blacks in the news tend to look different from and more dangerous than Whites even when they commit similar crimes” (Entman, Rojecki 84). Research has shown that normally when blacks who have committed a crime are seen on the news they are seen in handcuff and prison garb “The killing fields of Chicago, of Baltimore, of Detroit, were created by the policy of Dreamers, but their weight, their shame, rests solely upon those who are dying in them. There is a great deception in this. To yell ‘black-on-black crime’ is to shoot a man and then shame him for bleeding” (*Between the World and Me* 125). Coates is not

attempting to proclaim to his son that black crime does not exist, only that it is not as readily highlighted as crimes by people of different races. Additionally, particularly in the Chicago area where Entman and Rojecki's study was conducted, black people are more likely to be stripped of their names during the broadcast of their crimes. By failing to name the individual, newscasters are generalizing the black race, which could give the viewers the impression that all black people behave in this manner. They are no longer being seen as a person, but as something causing a problem.

In contrast, white people who have committed a crime are normally seen wearing nicer clothing, are usually named, and when the assailant is profiled, there is usually information included to help the viewer empathize with them, such as the assailant being a family man. Although Entman and Rojecki do not endorse these practices, they interpret them to stem from class differences. White people who commit crimes that make the news are statistically usually at least middle class. However, statistically some blacks are in fact enforcing the welfare stereotype. With the ownership of one stereotype, this leads to even further misrepresentation that transforms outsiders' views of the race. Perception generates a distortion of reality. By seeing a race demonstrate one stereotype, some could perceive that other stereotypes about a particular race are also true. This is the innocence of America, a clear black and white perception of the world. One could believe that if one label that has been placed on a racial minority were true, there is some truth to other stereotypes, but life is not this simple. There is no black and white in the world, only grey. For Angelou in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, she becomes a living example of this figurative grey area. She is able to rise from the ashes of her traumatic childhood, and is able to become successful, despite the racism and the shame others forced her to feel about herself as a young child.

Moreover, Newscasts can unknowingly take advantage of this black and white perception of society and invoke anger and fear within their audience base “Without context, the information conjured by the differential racial images implicitly endorses mistaken assumptions about the relative behavioral tendencies and values of the two racial groups. Lacking context, the messages provide grist for unreasoned stereotyping and negative emotions toward Blacks” (Entman and Rojecki 84). By dedicating a disproportionate amount of airtime to blacks behaving badly, news networks are increasing the likelihood that other races will feel intimidated when encountering black people and feel the need to have an adverse response, continuing the pattern of violence that has existed almost as long as the US itself.

On the other side of this issue, this practice also causes people, particularly those outside the black race, to begin to ignore news reports involving black people:

.....the media...[turns]...each tragedy into fodder for the American public by repeatedly and casually showing them on television. That action has potentially further devalued their deaths and the deaths of the countless other Black men and women who have been murdered before and after them. Repeatedly hearing and watching each murder, has likely created a numbness and desensitization, like what is experienced when repeatedly watching any other image of violence (Mrug et al., 2015; Stafford, 2015).

Between the World and Me opens with a news report and throughout the memoir, Coates recounts cases involving a black victim and a white police officer that have moved him throughout his life. The memoir itself was Coates’s means of consoling his son after he witnessed the fallout from yet another case involving a black person and a white officer with the death of Michael Brown. Samori is disappointed by the conclusion of the court case. Coates, although not immune to the disappointment, benefits from experiencing it before, because the

case sounds like an experience of déjà vu for the people of America who pay attention to the news. Coates does not want Samori to feel this level of disappointment again, but he wants his son to be aware of the pain of being black in America without fearing or being ashamed of his blackness. So, Coates does what many parents would do by acting as Samori's guide through the experience. To do so, Coates makes Samori aware that this is not the first time he has had this experience, nor the last. So, Coates's tells Samori as he looks at the images on the news that he suspects Samori will 'struggle' with his blackness because it is the fate of every black person born in America. He should not think of his race as a life sentence of living in fear and shame, but an opportunity to be proud of his black ancestors, like Maya Angelou, that lived with the struggle of their blackness and were still able to overcome the separation they felt with their own identity because of society's reaction to their black body.

Final Thoughts

Although decades and reform separate them, the outlook of racial relations in the United States during Angelou's childhood demonstrates little difference from Coates's childhood. Names and organizational groups involved, for the most part, are different, but racial issues persist. This persistence remains out of tradition that has been engrained within American culture since the beginning of the country's existence. In turn, some black children in the US are affected as Angelou and Coates were by feeling a sense of separation from their identity. Not all black youths struggle with their blackness, but for those that do, it is a direct result of their environment. For these children and teens, feeling shamed for being black and becoming fearful of having to go through the trauma of being shamed by society for their black identity again could cause them to knowingly or unknowingly distance themselves from their body, as Angelou

did during her childhood when thinking of herself in her dress. Both Angelou and Coates had their childhoods scarred by racism, which caused them to question their identity, but as adults, their stories stand as reminders of black resilience that persists despite social inequality and barriers attempting to psychologically separate black individuals from themselves.

Chapter 2

Introduction

Song of the South and *The Hate U Give* both exist at the opposite ends of the racial representation spectrum in film, both having a negative effect on how their young audiences, which are children and teens, respectively, interpret racial relations and their emotional investment within them. Within Affect Theory, fear and shame are the leading emotions that these films can cause within its viewers. Most of these emotions stems from the use of archetypes and symbolism within the films. In *Song of the South* the magical negro and the Mammy archetypes are within themselves problematic, but even more so in the idyllic plantation life of black people where only the white family that owns the land has problems that is painted by the film. For *The Hate U Give*, in the wake of her friend, Khalil, being killed by a white police officer, Starr struggles to find her true identity within the two worlds she has created between her black community and white school. Throughout the film, Starr finds her worlds disrupted by the murder case. Her father, Malcolm and her Uncle Carlos, further disrupted Starr's reality with their embodiments of black resilience and assimilation, respectively. Starr's story is not an isolated incident, nor is it within the realm of fantasy, as Johnny's is. However, their films' stories, music, and characters are both equally important because of the effect of the emotions of fear and shame within Affect Theory, that are caused by the films, which may have an impact on young viewers' outlook of the world around them.

A Song to Forget

The Song of the South, released on November 12, 1946, is a story set around the Reconstruction Era in Georgia. Though Disney is famous for its rerelease of old titles to garner

new young fans, it has refrained from releasing *Song of the South* since the 1980s. The most obvious of factors is the evolution of cultural representation and political correctness. However, *Song of the South* has always been controversial with some hesitant on it seeing the light of day:

Even in the 1940s, when *Song of the South* was in production, there were black and white Americans who were concerned that Walt Disney was not the right person to make a film about plantation life in Reconstruction era GA. When the movie was released in 1946, many white film critics commented on the film's retrograde and racist depictions of its black protagonists and their relationship to the land they lived on and the white people they worked for ("Six Degrees of Song of the South, Episode 1" 10:00-10:33).

Moreover, the closing sequence could provide supporters of the film with evidence of support to cross relation friendships. The ending finds Uncle Remus, the old black man who tells the young white children stories of Brer Rabbit throughout the film, holding hands with the children as they all skip down the road. This could be perceived as a positive reinforcement for race relations.

However, the scene shows complacency instead, which in turn could cause an adverse level of the emotions of shame and fear that could be brought on by the cheery, yet almost eerie positive atmosphere. The film takes place on the plantation of the grandmother of Johnny, the young white protagonist. Throughout the film, whenever black characters are shown, they are always grinning or at least in a good mood. "Let the Rain Pour Down" is sung during two scenes in the film where a large group of black workers is shown walking down a dirt road with farm animals and equipment needed for field work. It is highly likely that the workers were headed to a cotton field to work, which is made more apparent by the mention of cotton in the lyrics "Havin' trouble with the weevil,/never did like that, look up/Got the cotton full of evil/ like a hypocrite's hat/ When the weevil eats the cotton/ everybody feels low, look out/ There'll be nothin' on the table/

when the dinner horn blow (*Song of the South* 0:41:59- 0:42:21). This joyful imagery paints a false picture for young audience members.

Song of the South is meant to take place immediately after the Civil War, a world where the absence of slavery was still new (Ruppersburg Par. 6). Creating a false history of the Reconstruction Era was a considerable worry for the film's initial release. So much so that the theatres where *Song of the South* was set to be shown for its initial release garnered protests by racially diverse groups that carried signs with slogans such as "We want films on Democracy not Slavery" and "Don't prejudice children's minds with films like this" (Korkis 69). Some of these protests took place in cities that were not known for racial harmony, but the Disneyfication of such a dark topic caused adults to unify.

The "prejudice" that the picketers were most likely worried about was the promotion of escapism that *Song of the South* could invoke. Though the film takes place during the Reconstruction Era, it ignores many of the hardships African Americans endured during the time period. Although slavery was abolished during the Reconstruction Era, the lives of black Americans was still imposed on by those of the white race through black codes. Some of these codes resembled slavery "the black codes merely granted African Americans an apprentice-like status that in no way conferred genuine freedom. They also attempted to tie black employment to a socioeconomic system that closely resembled slavery...." (Harper Par. 2). To incentivize blacks to find employment, those without jobs would be charged with vagrancy or mischief. In the south, since plantation owners were in most need of labor, a life similar to slavery continued for blacks there. The topic of codes also makes its way into *The Hate U Give*, but in the film, codes are seen as a symbol of empowerment. In the opening scene, Starr, at age eleven, sits with her siblings and Malcolm, being taught the codes of the Black Panther Movement, the Ten Point

Plan. Malcolm frames the codes as a sort of ‘black Bill of Rights’ implying the list of codes have the reverse effect on the lives of black Americans as its legal counterparts, black codes and Jim Crow Laws, which were created to counteract black progress.

During the Reconstruction Era, there may have been blacks that were happy with plantation work life, but for a vast majority, they did not grin ear-to-ear as they completed difficult tasks for jobs, usually sharecropping. Since Disney has stated that *Song of the South* takes place after the Civil War, the black people seen during the “Let the Rain Pour Down” scenes are most likely sharecroppers. The NAACP condemned the film for this and for how black people are generally presented in the film: “... however, that in an effort neither to offend audiences in the North or South, the production helps to perpetuate a dangerously glorified picture of slavery ... [the film] unfortunately gives the impression of an idyllic master-slave relationship, which is a distortion of the facts” (West 68). This distortion of reality carries throughout the film, within how the characters are presented and their relationships in their ideal world.

The Symbolism of Separation

The reoccurring theme of living in separate worlds provides a motif for *The Hate U Give*. In the film, there is a noticeable change between Starr in her Garden Heights community and her high school, which is across town and contains predominantly white students. Starr changes her clothing, mannerisms, and speech to make herself seem more what she calls “approachable:”

Garden Heights is one world. Williamson is another. And I gotta keep it separate. So, when I’m here, I’m Starr Version Two.... That means flipping a switch in my brain. Williamson Starr doesn’t use slang. If a rapper would use it, she wouldn’t, even if her

white friends do... Slang makes them cool. Slang makes me 'hood.'... Williamson Starr is approachable. No stank eyes or yelling because Williamson Starr is nonconfrontational. Williamson Starr doesn't give anyone a reason to call her ghetto, and I hate myself for doing it (*The Hate U Give* 00:06:50- 00:07:54)

Not only this, but the cinematography of the film also changes between Starr's 'worlds.' When Starr is at school, the framework is often more focused on small, enclosed areas. The frames all also contain a blue hue that, paired with the light-colored school uniforms, causes the scenes to appear grey and depressing. In contrast, during Starr's scenes in Garden Heights are often outside or bigger rooms, and all have normal coloring. The choice of giving the scenes in Starr's school a blue undertone could stem from the widely recognized relation between the color blue and negative emotion "Since the late fourteenth century, blue has been the color of dejection or despair..." (Kastan and Farthing 102). Starr's fears being perceived as "ghetto" by her white peers and she feels shame for feeling the need to do so. Fear and shame are both associated with negative emotions, like sadness, which is further indicates that Starr is unhappy with her own actions. This drastic shift continues throughout the film until Starr comes to terms with herself. After which, Starr's scenes at her school and at home appear normal and the shots of her, being noticeably happier, have a wider frame.

The Hate U Give is extremely vocal within the film about the message of racial disparity in America. As stated before, *Song of the South* hides from racial issues, even going as far as creating a false history for its viewers. However, *The Hate U Give* embraces racial issues so closely that it seems in a way to be solidifying separation. Returning to the use of cinematography in the film, during protest and riot scenes, there is always a clear divide onscreen. On one side is a group of predominantly black protestors and on the other, there is a

group of primarily white police officers. The only time the film does show a large group of white protesters is when the students at Starr's school use protesting as an excuse to get out of class. The only time the slogan Black Lives Matter appears in full view in the film is at this 'protest.' The slogan is not on a poster in the hands of someone who is wholeheartedly protesting for change, but instead the words are carefully written in bold print on a sign tucked beneath the arm of one of Starr's white schoolmates who seemingly wants to appear to be invested into the BLM movement, but in reality, is using the protest as a means to leave school and socialize as Starr's friend, Haley, suggests for her to do as well.

Song of the South as a whole represents a misunderstanding of black culture through the eyes of Uncle Remus, a black man who chooses to continue to live on the post antebellum plantation with his former masters. As such, it is an ode to sugar coat the past and provides a façade for the black experience that could be interpreted as a reminder for the audience of minstrel shows. Minstrel shows were performances where white actors would conduct shows in 'black-face' and provide comedy for the show "The choice of the term "minstrel" was meant to indicate that the show was respectable family entertainment, with an emphasis on the musical quality of the performance" (Podolsky Par. 1). The word minstrel was specifically chosen to cater to families and to encourage parents to bring their children. One of the performers during these shows, Thomas Dartmouth Rice, created the character Jim Crow. Allegedly, Jim Crow was originally created after Rice witnessed a disabled black man dancing in a town he visited. Rice copied the man's awkward movements to create a caricature that symbolized blacks and poor white Americans. Arguably, in *Song of the South*, Uncle Remus represents Jim Crow. He provides a bridge for young Johnny to cross from one world to the other by telling him African

American folk tales to guide him in his white world and to help him become more tolerant towards minorities.

Inequality, the theme that is optimized in *The Hate U Give*, is also mentioned in passing in *Song of the South* in the form of Uncle Remus's "Tar Baby" story. The story recalls Brer Rabbit encountering Brer Fox's tar figure. The rabbit believes the figure to be alive and is insulted when it ignores his greeting. He attempts to hit it in response, only to realize that the tar is so sticky that he becomes trapped. He begs Brer Fox to kill him however he wants, except by throwing him in the briar patch. Brer Fox maliciously throws Brer Rabbit into the briar patch, only to realize Brer Rabbit, who had grown up in the briar patch, was comfortable there and the rabbit escapes with its life (Martyris Par. 7). According to NPR, like the stickiness of the tar, the tar baby's presence symbolizes a bad situation that easily becomes worse the more one interacts with it. Brer Rabbit represents the weak and vulnerable in society. The rabbit becomes stuck and can only be untangled by Brer Fox, who represents the powerful in society. Brer Fox then decides the rabbit's fate, who is lucky that the decision is in his favor. The situation symbolizes the slave-master relationship because of a higher power having control of another life, but within this context, it also represents inequality in society in general (Martyris Par.8-9).

In American culture, the lives of the majority are often controlled by the minority, as is seen in both films. In *Song of the South*, though there is a large number of black people on the plantation, it is Johnny's family who control the land. A majority of those who are not among the upper class in the twenty-first century are from those who are of minority decent "In the United States, 39 percent of African-American children and adolescents and 33 percent of Latino children and adolescents are living in poverty, which is more than double the 14 percent poverty rate for non-Latino, White, and Asian children and adolescents" (Kids Count Data Center,

Children in Poverty 2014). According to the American Psychological Association, the higher likelihood of minorities living in some level of economic distress can be attributed to marginalization and economic disparity caused by race. Minorities, specifically black people, are more likely to have their socioeconomic status effected by marginalization and discrimination. In decades past, the causation of this variation between the living status of different races was due to black codes that legalized discrimination, but in more recent time, racial disparity has been caused by to racial profiling and stereotyping, which is why in *The Hate U Give*, Garden Heights is referred to as the 'black neighborhood.'

As Starr narrates her introductory scene, there is a noticeable contrast between what she is saying and what is being shown to the viewer. She uses the first minutes of the film to describe her community and school. Garden Heights is shown as idealistic neighborhood where everyone is on friendly terms with everyone, with the only black sheep being members of the King Lords, the local gang. The first shot of the town is of a street corner with the locals greeting each other. All of the shots in this sequence of scenes that Starr narrates are shown in the morning hours. This is evident by the position of the sun in these shots. The sun rising in the sky signifies a new day, a new chance at completing goals, and overall, a symbol of hope because the start of a new day can be seen as the rebirth of time. However, these near paradise-like descriptions are shadowed by a more cynical undertone, which is reminiscent of the scenes shown in *Song of the South* where groups of black people are shown in a good mood. As the morning sun angelically presents itself to the Garden Heights people and Starr relays positives about the community, the viewer is shown that Malcolm's friendly corner store has bars along each window, and many of the buildings behind the people look decrepit or rundown. Despite this, the colorful camera work continues until the school system is discussed.

Characterization vs. Reality

In *Song of the South*, Uncle Remus is kind to Johnny by taking him and his puppy in. After Johnny's father returns to Atlanta, Uncle Remus is the only male role model in Johnny's life and the only adult who pays attention to Johnny's emotional wellbeing. Losing his normal life, causes Johnny to feel a sense of fear because he feels he has no control over his life. With Johnny in this regard, *Song of the South* is again approaching race and Affect Theory ironically where it is the white children of the film who are all faced with scenes that focus on the negatives of life.

Children need stability, which is why Starr's mom sends her and her siblings to a predominantly white school, and why Johnny's father sends the boy and his mother to live with Johnny's grandmother in rural Georgia. The school and the plantation promised consistency and security for the children's futures. Johnny avoids being in the public fallout from his journalist father's article, and Starr and her siblings do not become victims of the poor environment of Garden Heights.

Branching away from Johnny, Toby, the only black child given a name, is always seen with the carefree attitude that all the other black people in the film carry. In addition, out of all the children, Toby has the least amount of lines. A majority of the time he is speaking onscreen is when he is singing. Starr finds herself in a similar situation in *The Hate U Give*. Like Williamson Starr, Toby does not speak freely with others. Although, they are interacting with people that they have some form of relationship with, they feel the need to hide their true selves in favor of Respectability Politics “This political debate has centered around the idea that Blacks can minimize or evade the injustices associated with discriminatory attitudes by behaving in a so-called respectable manner, i.e., dressing, acting, speaking, and even protesting in certain

acceptable ways” (Obasogie 541). Throughout the course of the film, Starr engages in all of these activities by first upholding the Respectable standard, and then later contradicting her actions as she develops her own sense of self.

Respectability Politics entails that minorities must portray themselves as someone they are not in order to make those outside their race feel comfortable. The irony of this situation is that it is a relationship that the minority person sometimes automatically begins upon meeting someone for the first time, instead of conforming to the belief when they are aware that the other party feels discomfort by their presence and/or behavior. Respectability Politics calls for the minority person to feel the fear of not being accepted and the shame of being uncomfortable with being themselves in front of others. For a child or teen viewing this film there is the possibility that the viewer would either find understanding here, or this part of the film could cause them to feel more self-conscious about themselves when in public.

However, Toby and Starr's fear does not just materialize. They are products of their environment. Toby witnesses the behaviors of the black people around him. None of them speak to any of the white characters, with the exception of Uncle Remus and Aunt Tempy, nor do any of them have names. Names are an important part of a person's identity. It is what separates one person from others. Since most of the black characters remain nameless in *Song of the South*, there is the threat of the feeling of shame emerging among the young audience here because it could diminish their sense of self-importance, particularly if they themselves identify as black. Although these children who are the target demographic for *Song of the South* have names, because of their age, it is more likely that they will be emphasized with these characters. Thus, with this in mind, the behaviors of those around them and within the media they consume could invoke stronger emotions than those of older audience members.

Being a voiceless body onscreen, is also the fate of every other black person seen onscreen in *Song of the South*, except Uncle Remus and Aunt Tempy. These two never have a negative word to say about anyone, giving the illusion that they were placed in the story to act as black archetypes. Returning to Johnny's relationship with Uncle Remus, the so-called Magical Negro is a concept that surfaced in stories in the 1800s, but the term was coined by Spike Lee in the early 2000s (Glenn and Cunningham 138). The Magical Negro has become a common character to find in cinema "[The Magical Negro] is a stock character that often appears as a lower class, uneducated black person who possesses supernatural or magical powers. These powers are used to save and transform...lost, or broken whites.... into competent, successful...people...." (Hughey 544). Uncle Remus is the only positive part of Johnny's life in the film and is what leads to Johnny calling out the old man's name when he lies severely injured in bed instead of his father's. Without him, Johnny would have attempted to run away to Atlanta at the beginning of the film to find his father. As the "Magical Negro" of the film, Uncle Remus acts as a guide for Johnny in a world that is new to him. Uncle Remus uses his power of imagination to bring his stories about Brer Rabbit to life to bring happiness to Johnny's life.

Auntie Tempy stands as the Mammy in *Song of the South*. She acts as a housekeeper for Johnny's family and as the right-hand within the Johnny's family: "'Mammies,' as they have been described and remembered by whites, like all faithful slaves, bear little resemblance to actual enslaved women of the antebellum period. Black women did work in white homes, cooked innumerable meals, cared for white children, and surely formed emotional ties to white family members at times..." (McElya 4). Auntie Tempy is sent away with Johnny and his mother to the plantation because she is an important part of the household. Although she disappears throughout

the film, when she is seen, she is fulfilling her archetypal role by cooking, cleaning, or acting as a kind assistant for members of the family.

Additionally, the ironic use of Affect Theory is furthered by Johnny using the tales that Uncle Remus tells him as a method to resolve his own issues. All of the folk stories told in the film come from African American folk lore. The animals in the stories are supposed to symbolize the African Americans that originally told the oral tales, which is evident in the name Brer preceding each animal's name, which means brother. Traditionally in black culture, familial terms would be placed in front of an individual's name as a sign of respect to an individual. These relationships are known as fictive kinship "Fictive kin are defined as individuals who are unrelated by either blood or marriage but regard one another in kinship terms" (Taylor 611). This is even seen in *The Hate U Give*, at Khalil's funeral, where he is referred to as Brother Khalil by the Pastor.

Moreover, in *Song of the South* the lovable, motherly black woman that cares for Johnny is known as Auntie Tempy. Like Uncle Remus, she is given the familial name of Auntie because of her closeness with family of plantation owners. However, much like many other elements of *Song of the South*, this is done erroneously by giving the familial term to someone of another race. Although fictive kinship can be established between different races as a positive relationship, *Song of the South* is supposed to take place a short time after the abolishment of slavery, and with this in mind, this sort of kinship honors a narrative that was created to make the history of slavery sound more pleasant "Responding to the persistent abolitionist focus on the evils of the trade and its massive dislocations of black people and families, slave owners and their allies told tender tales of grand plantations populated by elderly "aunties" and "uncles" and old mammies who could no longer work..." (McElya 7). As suggested in the quote, a false

history was created by people to pacify those who were persistent in exposing and documenting the horrors of the slave trade. The tales that were created were retold and passed down countless times becoming larger than the truth because it is easier to tell a heartwarming story of the past.

In lieu of the misconceptions that some people can have about black culture and its history, this directly affects how the children of the community perceive themselves. Starr's father fell into this category in his younger years. Born to a father in a Garden Heights gang, Malcolm followed in his father's footsteps until he is separated from his family by the legal system. He leaves jail as a reformed man. He becomes an attentive father and husband, and a businessman. Malcolm represents the resilience of black society despite barriers. He is placed in an environment that causes outsiders to expect him to live a life of crime, but Malcolm goes against these expectations and betters his life. This is not a fantasy written to provide hope to young viewers, but a look at a realistic take on real decisions people make with their life.

Starr's Uncle Carlos works as a police officer, and acts as a father figure for Starr. He lives in a suburban neighborhood outside Garden Heights. Interestingly, Carlos is largely absent in scenes that directly involve the emotions towards Khalil's murder trial. Carlos lives outside of Garden Heights, so the civil unrest never affects his homelife. Even in a shot where the protests are shown on television, he remains in the next room. He then completely disappears during the protests and riots that followed the not guilty verdict for the officer that shot Khalil. This effectively separates Carlos from the theme of social justice in the film.

Returning to the idea of archetypes, Carlos represents cultural assimilation. Cultural assimilation is a theory where minorities and immigrants will align their values to the majority (Wang par. 1). Though Malcolm is also an archetype, Carlos is portrayed more along the lines of Uncle Remus and Auntie Tempy because their role as archetypes causes their characters to stand

out in the film in an unrealistic manner. In the scene where Carlos is explaining to Starr why people, like Haley, may side with the officer that shot Khalil, Carlos's apathetic expression and almost-monotone voice, makes the conversation sound robotic, as if he is repeating a script that he has been trained to say in the event that one of the members of his department is involved in a controversial shooting. Starr is visibly conflicted in the scene, wanting to side with her surrogate father. Until this point, it can be reasoned that Carlos's opinion is aligned with his job. He explains that in certain circumstances if a cop stops someone and believes they have been placed in a potentially dangerous situation for themselves or someone else, they may be inclined to draw the weapon. For the teens and young adults watching this film, this is the answer they were most likely wanting and expecting because Carlos is a police officer himself. He is sworn to protect the public and defending himself against a dangerous assailant is reasonable. However, Star then tests him "What if you were in a white neighborhood, and it was a white man wearing a suit driving a Mercedes? He could be a drug dealer, right...So if you saw him reach into the window and you thought that you saw a gun, would you shoot him, or would you say 'put your hands up'?" (*The Hate U Give* 01:35:42- 01:36:14). He responds he would still shoot, which is not the answer that Starr wanted to hear from her uncle. During this conversation, Carlos has admitted to racial profiling "The practice of using race as a part of a profile when attempting to identify or curb criminal activity...." (Suh par. 1). This is a hot button issue because many people in the America have related this practice to tragic situations identical to Khalil's in the film. Here, perceptions people have are again affecting reality and the decisions that people make.

T.H.U.G Life?

Both films rely heavily on music to carry their message. Although, *The Hate U Give* is not a musical, like *Song of the South*, the first inclination of its ties to the music industry comes from the film's title. The origin of the title of the film stems from the concept of THUG Life, which was created by Tupac Shakur "THUG Life for Pac, he said it stood for 'The Hate U Give Little Infants Fs Everyone. Tupac meant if you don't feed your youth with love, positivity, and a chance at making it, they become angry....'" ("How Tupac's T.H.U.G. L.I.F.E. Directly Connects To Black Panther Party" 0:01:30-0:01:43). The film's homage to Tupac is mentioned several times throughout the film, but the acknowledgments become visual near the film's end when Starr's young brother, Sekani, attempts to protect their father himself from the King Lords. Likely responding to the fire that the gang had started in Malcolm's store, police officers enter the scene and draw on Sekani. The shot, although focused on Sekani, is zoomed out and angled so Sekani appears significantly smaller than the other people in the scene. Around him, a majority of his family stand behind him, but Malcolm stands in front of him near the police and the leader of the King Lords, all of whom have had their lives touched by the justice system. They are placed in front of Sekani because it symbolizes how easy Sekani could step into their world with one bad decision.

Furthermore, Starr chooses this moment to break the fourth wall by directly addressing the audience "It's not the hate you give, it's the hate *we* give" (*The Hate U Give* 02:00:00-02:00:08). Within this quote, Starr is stating that even the viewers are a part of the issues seen in the film and need to be part of the solution. Though the film *The Hate U Give* as a whole is a noble means of addressing police brutality against black people, this scene sends the wrong message to the audience. Instead of being a bystander to the story in front of them, the film

makes teens and young adults active participants in a story about a police shooting as officers draw their weapons near a small child and Starr has to stand between them as a voice of reason, “How many of us have to die before y’all get it?” (*The Hate U Give* 02:00:28- 02:00:42). Starr’s words to the officers could cause viewers to sympathize with Starr, not race relations in America. Though the fourth wall is broken, the other walls of racial separation that the story has built throughout the film remain intact in various degrees. The film uses the epilogue in order to attempt to eradicate these discrepancies by normalizing the coloring in shots at Starr’s school and unifying Garden Heights and the police against the King Lords. Within approximately five minutes, everything wrong with Starr’s life is righted and the worlds she has created are unified. For most of this time Starr is again narrating, and the montage that plays as she speaks consists of slow-motion shots where everyone that Starr cares about is smiling, and everyone who has ever caused her pain has disappeared from her life. This perfect ending takes away from the realism that the entire film has been portraying. Though minutes before Starr delivered a call to action to viewer and declared that her world is the same as theirs, the film concludes for the audience in a delusional world almost as magical as the ‘wonderful’ world of the Georgia plantation in *Song of the South*.

The ending credits song for *The Hate U Give*, “We Won’t Move” by Arlissa, is a demand for freedom from social bondage created through prejudice. The words we won’t move sound like a battle cry for rebellion, but by the end of the first verse in Arlissa’s song it becomes an anthem to encourage positive societal change. The first verse opens introducing the problem: “Sweep it all beneath the rug/ Doesn’t mean the dirt won’t come up” (“We Won’t Move” 1-2) The first two lines are undoubtedly in reference to a phrase from George Santayana’s novel, *The Life of Reason* that has almost become common knowledge “Those who cannot remember the

past are condemned to repeat it” (Santayana 312). *Song of the South* was a clear attempt “Sweep it all beneath the rug” by painting a picture of America’s history that is inaccurate, but the protests over the film was “the dirt” coming up, as it also does in *The Hate U Give* in the form of protests for justice.

Within the next lines of “We Won’t Move,” Alissa declares that the only way to solve the problem is to face it with a systematic plan as a unified society. The “We” in the words “We Won’t Move” are the people with the loudest voices, who stand supporting the movement for equality in society. Based on the context of the film, it can be interpreted that these people can be as notable as musicians, or everyday people, like Starr. To garner change comes with first acknowledging that there is a problem, which is not done in *Song of the South*. Then, based on the history of the improvement of societal issues in the US, a continuous effort is needed to bring awareness to the issue and to allow a gradual shift in societal opinion of the prevalence of the problem, which is not done in *The Hate U Give*. Although it would be ideal that after an unarmed black teen is murdered by a white police officer that another young black individual could choose how much race directly effects their life, it is not realistic. At the end of Starr’s story, her friendship with Haley is decimated by Haley’s inability to see the world outside her own point of view. Her perception of the situation between Khalil and the officer clouds her ability to realize that since Starr comes from the neighborhood where the shooting occurs and Khalil and Starr have the same racial background, whether Starr knew Khalil or not, his death would deeply affect her life. Haley is oblivious of the shift in how Starr’s views her identity and largely writes off Starr’s behavioral changes until Starr attempts to force Haley to see herself in Khalil’s position on the night of his death.

Additionally, Haley cries when Starr tries to force her to see the world from Khalil's perspective on the night of his death, but her tears are most likely caused by her seeing Starr aggressively wielding a hairbrush in her face. Starr's attempt in forcing Haley to see how she is wrong causes Haley to fear her, and for her to further separate herself from the social inequality faced by black people. She will likely not feel any negative emotion towards her decision because, though insignificantly, Haley has now been directly affected by the violence caused by the movement, and thus will want to protect herself by staying further away from racial issues. This type of ineffectiveness is the biggest issue of this scene and for the film overall. Since in reality Khalil's situation is not an isolated incident, the young audience members understand what is occurring onscreen. Throughout the film, Starr's voice becomes increasingly one-sided over the events of Khalil until the climactic scene where Sekani brandishes a gun in front of two police officers. Although this is the film's way of symbolically stating that Starr is progressively discovering more about herself, it also effects how the tone of the film can be interpreted. Everything said by Starr during the tense situation with Sekani and the gun, in narration and presently in scene, is an agonizingly biased, preachy explanation of the need for social change.

Most importantly, Starr places blame squarely on all police officers. This decision could have an unintended effect on the teens in the film's audience. Starr's question to the police here changes the use of affect theory in the film "How many of us have to die before y'all get it?" (*The Hate U Give* 02:00:28- 02:00:42). In this quote, it has been acknowledged that all police officers have been placed as the antagonists of the film. Prior to this scene, only Khalil's shooter, the cops during the protests and riots, and the officers that attempted to wrongly arrest Malcolm, were villainize. After Starr's question, it changes the viewers perception of all policemen.

Regarding Affect Theory, Sekani's scene can build fear of the police within the audience, in addition to a sense of shame for their previous positive beliefs about the police. For instance, an individual, who previously had no problems with the police, could suddenly grow fearful or hostile when encountering an officer. This provides further evidence for people who perceive the world in the same fashion as Haley to further separate themselves from Black Lives Matter, and causes those with these misconceptions to shout, "Blue Lives Matter" or "All Lives Matter." The vicious cycle continues because enough people in society behave like Starr and Haley where they are unable to fully see the world through the other's eyes, so they attempt to force an opinion onto another. In "We Won't Move" Arlissa is encouraging society to build a relationship with people across different backgrounds. By taking change one step at a time, like Arlissa's song says, it avoids counterproductivity that would stem from those that, like Haley, would find reason to separate themselves from the majority.

Final Thoughts

Though they were created nearly a lifetime apart, the films the *Song of the South* and *The Hate U Give* both serve as representations of the perceived disparity between the white and black race. Although the target age groups for these films are different, the process of the Transmission of Affect is seen within viewers in the form of the emotions of shame and fear. These emotions are linked to how the young viewers can relate their world to what they are seeing in the films. *The Hate U Give* is targeted towards teens and, for the most part, provides a realistic view of the racial issues in the United States. However, on an erroneous note, *Song of the South*, which was created as a family film for children, who are more impressionable than teens, is littered with inaccuracies that provide a falsehood of emotions towards race. *Song of the South*, which was

created by Disney, chooses to make race more palatable for their brand of creating family friendly content. Consequently, the emotions fear and shame in Affect Theory have more of an opposite effect on the film where relations between blacks and whites are presented more on a harmonious tone. *Song of the South* chooses to ignore history in favor of creating a whimsical story in a seemingly alternate universe. The musical utilized the racial archetypes of the Mammy and Magical Negro as characters to improve the lives of the white characters in the film. The familial term 'Auntie' is attached to Auntie Tempy's name to demonstrate the family's attachment to her, but in reality, this form of fictive kinship is a mark from the pseudohistory that was created by people, like Johnny's family, who used black people to care for their land. *The Hate U Give* takes a realistic approach. The film does an exceptional job at tackling this issue with camera work and the characters. With younger audiences as the target demographic for both films, the content of these films can have a significant effect on the psychological development of the young viewers and their interpretation of their own identity in relation to the world. Though one takes place during the Reconstruction Era and the other during present day, both films are the stories of a young protagonist interacting with the opposite race, seeking a positive relationship and raises questions about race within their audiences by placing focus on the emotions of fear and shame through representation and storytelling.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research and analysis of the protagonist(s) of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, *Between the World and Me*, *Song of the South*, and *The Hate U Give* is to focus on how the environment of children and teens could cause them to negatively interpret race using Affect theory as the foundation of understanding their emotions. In chapter one, Coates and Angelou stood as real-world examples of how some black children could feel separated from their blackness at a young age by their witnessing of people of their race being treated differently from others in society. The aversion and disregard that they see impacts their sense of self-worth because a person's understanding of race begins during childhood.

Historically, it has been proven that there is a direct connection between a young child's racial awareness and their self-esteem. In the 1950s, Drs. Kenneth and Mamie Clark conducted the infamous doll experiment in response to racial segregation in schools. In the study, children were given a black doll and a white doll and asked a series of questions related to their feelings about the dolls. When asked more personal questions, such as "which doll would you rather play with," the black child almost always pointed to the white doll (Powell-Hopson and Hopson 58). In 2005, high school student, Kiri Davis, repeated this experiment for her short film entitled "A Girl Like Me." Davis used children from local daycares in her area in New York that were around the same age as the children used in the Clark study and Maya Angelou during the first chapter of Angelou's memoir. Though the original study occurred around the time of young Angelou's era, Davis had the same results. Most of the black children again preferred to have the white doll as a playmate with negative connotations towards the black doll ("Girl Like Me" 0:03:40-0:4:57).

Furthermore, self-worth is discussed in greater detail in chapter two with Toby and Starr, who remain a child and teen, respectively, throughout their stories. In *The Hate U Give*, the separation that Starr feels from the rest of society because of her blackness is marked through the use of cinematography. Scenes where Starr is using a false persona because she fears she will be rejected by her white peers if she displays her blackness are marked by a blue hue on the coloring of the scene. As these scenes are within Starr's private school, the clothing that the characters wear in the scenes are bland white and grey colors. In contrast, in scenes where Starr is able to be herself, people are wearing vibrant, colorful clothing and the scene is shot without the blue hue filter. Unlike Starr, Angelou, and Coates, Toby is never truly able to find his identity because he is never able to escape the false world that he has created for himself by speaking. The film is more focused on black caricatures, Auntie Tempy and Uncle Remus, guiding Johnny and his family in the right direction. Toby remains a bystander throughout a majority of the film, like the other black characters who remain nameless and without caricaturizing.

Nonetheless, Toby's story is important because it shows what Coates and Angelou as children feared, being seen as less important than others. Society is forever changing, but how racial disparity negatively impacts children remains stagnant in America, as evident by the Kiri Davis experiment, and Starr and Angelou having similar feelings of displacements with their racial identities as young black women. However, there is still further intensive research needed to be done on the prolonged emotional effects of racial relations in society and media on a child's development to prevent further contribution to debatable evidence readily available in some psychological studies.

Young minds are extremely impressionable, so what is physically around them and said to them will undoubtedly impact their identity. Being raised in Arkansas, Angelou describes her blackness as “the rust on the razor that threatens the throat,” which is a far cry from Johnny’s childhood, whose whiteness allows him to live a semi-comfortable life two states over from Angelou in Georgia. Although they both are from the deep south, Johnny is never faced with the issue of feeling inferior in society because of his race, which is why he never shows any signs of acknowledging racial differences in his world. Starr, on the other hand, hates herself for the persona she plays when around people who are white. She struggles with ignoring her discomfort, which disrupts her personal growth. However, by the end of her story similar to Maya Angelou, she and Coates have found some peace with who they are. Starr follows in Coates’s footsteps by acknowledging the struggle that all black people feel in a society that was built at the expense of them, the struggle to feel free in one’s own body, and therefore, be able to openly and freely recognize their black identity.

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