



Making of the Self through Spiritual Striving and Material Quest in *the Pursuit of Happyness*

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Abstract

This Paper examines how the protagonist, Chris Gardner, an African American, in Gabriele Muccino's film *the Pursuit of Happyness* grapples with underlying identity crisis in first decade of 21st century while pursuing his happiness. The film nowhere claims that the color of skin is an operative social component that is detrimental to pursuit of dream, the American Dream. However, the amnesiac picture of racial history is undercut by the choice of protagonist, Chris Gardner, an African American makes and grapples to accomplish it. In the light of this situation, the paper tries to tests one of the important notions of critical race theory, double consciousness, a putatively collective African American socio-historical conditions as characterized and postulated by Du Bois, and explore the dilemma inherent in Chris Gardner's pursuit of happiness. More significantly, the paper analyzes the liminal space the protagonist lives, experiences, undergoes and wrestles, and tries to come out of it if possible. Pointedly, it traces the protagonist's spiritual striving to the past, and explores the material need of the present. The paper concludes that how his dream has been subject to racialized ascription, and how and what the dream means for Chris Gardner. The paper clearly demonstrates the philosophical shift—the spiritual striving to the material quest in Gardner's pursuit of the dream.

Keywords: Double Consciousness, Racial Identity, American Dream, The Veil, Making of the Self

Introduction

The expository shots in Gabriele Muccino's film, *the Pursuit of Happyness*, show the protagonist, Chris Gardner (Will Smith), in a surrounding with modern skyscrapers, he compares himself with the crowd of

people, who he thinks are happy, and acknowledges that he is not happy. He alienates himself from the crowd, and wishes to reconcile with the crowd by finding an answer to the question: why not he could become like them (happy)? Then, he determines to achieve happiness in his life. This becomes his dream. However, the happiness becomes so elusive that Chris Gardner is not provided with an easy answer. In the pursuit, he is divorced, evicted, thrown from the shelter-churches, ridiculed, stereotyped, duped and what not. However, to achieve the happiness, a facet of the American Dream, he showcases arrays of effort and tenacity to achieve his happiness in American society of the early 1980s, and assumes that the dream as an equitable source of conferring happiness. The protagonist is an African American man, but the film nowhere refers race question as an operative category of the society that pertinently impacts the dreams and opportunities for the people of color.

The salient traits of the movie, such as the complexity of the story, the innovative cinematography, the underlying social issues and depiction of socio-economic condition of San Francisco of 2000s, which make it vocal and open-ended have dragged a critical attention for myriad of theses. For example, the popular text can critically be examined for teaching new facet of economic morality and the sense of doggedness and euphoric optimism. Similarly, the text is rich for linguistic interpretation, for example, semiotic study, and the post-Marxist interpretation. However, question of race and racial identity, which the film denies its engagement is an obvious but important issue to be explored in the light that the movie treats the American Dream as an equitable source perching over its people, waiting to be plucked, accessible to everyone who works hard enough can deserve its deliverance (GC 91-2). The crucial obstacle Gardner faces, as the film tries to show, in his pursuit of dream is not “the right skin color” (Corliss 129). The film's narratological position of the film compensates this lack by finding a more agreeable character, character with black complexion. The race question in the film does not become an apparent operative category. Schmitt, therefore, concludes the protagonist racial identity is exclusively disavowed. But, the claim that movie tries to establish that anyone, irrespective of the race, can achieve the American Dream, which is necessarily based on the logic of pure meritocracy, would be destabilized if Gardner's race became a central factor in the film (Schmitt 3).

Following but building on Schmitt, this article, using deconstructive logic, re-emphasizes race as an operative category in the film though the film presents an amnesiac picture of society where the race is not an interfering factor that impacts African and Americans' lives and opportunities. Gardner assumes to have lived in a post-racial society. However, this imagining is

betrayed by what Gardner undergoes and sacrifices just to live a simple and normal life. He is perseverant, and determined. To borrow Du Bois' conceptualization, Gardner is under the "veil", but has to work for his future and aspiration (Du Bois *The Souls of the Black Folks* 5). The veil, in Du Bois' conceptualization, a typical condition that an African American, lives in and lives through in white society.

The article deploys the critical race theory, but specifically draws on Du Bois's double consciousness to examine the liminal space that Chris Gardner tries undergoes in order to accomplish his dream. According to Du Bois, double consciousness,

is a peculiar sensation . . . this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (*The Souls* 5)

Du Bois deploys the concepts "the veil" and "double-consciousness" to illustrate and elucidate a typical condition that the African Americans find themselves in the American soil and surrounding. Fundamentally, double consciousness means African Americans are concealed from the view of most white folk, but those who live behind it also move in the 'white' world. In other words, the veil is physically seen in the color of African-American skin, which indicates difference from whiteness and therefore impairs not only white people's ability to see African Americans as true Americans, but also African Americans' ability to see themselves outside of what has been prescribed to them (Kirkland 137). As such, African American have knowledge about their own lives, about the functioning of the veil, and about the activities of those who live on the other side of the veil as well. In short, by double consciousness Du Bois referred most importantly to an internal conflict in the African American individual between what was "African" and what was "American." (Bruce 301).

Apart from the situation of twoness, Du Bois views, double consciousness provides a basis for deeper insights into the social realm and the possibility for more effective actions against the systems of domination in place. However, as noted by many critics, Du Bois's essence of a distinctive African consciousness was its spirituality, a spirituality based in Africa but revealed among African Americans in their folklore, their history of patient suffering, and their faith (Bruce 301). In other words, "the strange meaning of being black", with describing the "spiritual world" and the "spiritual strivings" of "the American Negro meant the past, the history, and almost everything that

come along with being African American in American soil (Du Bois, *The Souls* 7). This spirituality is the doggedness, the strength, that does not thwart the determination to carve out the future. However, in the journey of the success and towards the future, "the veil" erupts. The veil in Du Bois's notion signifies a pervasive impediment, on racially segregated grounds, to the fulfillment of African American ideals and objectives. But, it also signifies the concealment from white people's comprehension the legacy and currency of African-American practices and forms of life as shaped by this racial hindrance – practices and forms of life reflective of material poverty, stifled ambitions, and diminished expectations on one side yet uncommon moral courage, melodious eloquence and expression, and irrepressible religious faith on the other (Kirkland 137).

Du Bois's double consciousness precisely refers to at least three different issues: the power of white stereotypes in black life and thought, the sense of dividedness encouraged by the practical racism, excluding black Americans from the mainstream of the society, (in)ability to see and be seen in American soil (Reed 92; Olsen 120; Lemert 162). In this article, the first strand of the notion forms the foundation of analysis— what it means to pursue a dream by black in white sense? I will analyze second aspect in tandem with how the past intrudes and brings a complexity in the path of his dream. In that, the article analyzes how the past the dominant, intrusive in effectuating this amnesiac picture of history, utilizing the black body and the American Dream trope to bestow feelings of confidence in viewers to let go of the past and halt any possible, political action against social injustice. The final aspect— (in)ability to see and to be seen— is analyzed to explore more about creation of self-concept, self-recognition and formation of identity. The final situation is a kind of "paradox which stems from being intimately part of a polity" while excluded from its public culture, or, as Du Bois puts it, "being an outcast and stranger in [his/her] own house" (Meer 51; Du Bois, *The Souls* 4). This (dis)connection between the pursuit of dream and the material forces shapes Gardner's journey.

Palimpsest of the Past

From the outset of the film, it is seen that Gardner believes financial security is a quick salvation from the dreary way of life. He embraces a get-rich-quick philosophy of the American Dream as he understands his freedom to fulfill his personal dream is only finance. His imagines that his quest of the dream is feasible in *post-racial* society. Apparent and overall composition of the film also shows that his pursuit of happiness is not hindered by any sort of inequalities or social forces; the positive spirit to acquire the dream is the only linchpin to lay a foundation of his dream, irrespective of past, race, ethnicity,

class or religion. In other words, instead of fulfilling audience's desires to behold an essentialized blackness, *The Pursuit of Happiness* fulfills a contemporary desire for Chris Gardner to be pictured transcending his blackness and not succumbing to his innate emotionality. Put another way, Gardener's character has been constructed in such a way that he is able to assimilate into whiteness as he initially ignores that his blackness would hinder such assimilation.

However, eroding race as an operative category and offering an amnesiac picture of the history of racial oppression toward African Americans is hindered by the intrusion of the past that remains as palimpsest in the film. In other words, though film ignores the salient questions of transcending race and assumes the attainment of a post-racial society, Gardner is on many occasions turns inward to the history, contemplates on it as his affiliation to history tumbles his quest down on many occasions. That past, the fact that Gardner is an African American, hovers on his quest of happiness. The social and political surrounding—the world of the colored group with which the Negro individual is in direct contact or tries to assimilate—often disillusion him and compels him to embark on inward journey of history, or what could be termed in Du Bois's term, as "spiritual striving". The enviroing conditions are constituted only by the whites but also by the African Americans. Du Boi characterizes the such situation as

The Negro American has for his environment not only the white surrounding world, but also, and touching him usually much more nearly and compellingly, is the environment furnished by his own colored group. There are exceptions, of course, but this is the rule. The American Negro, therefore, is surrounded and conditioned by the concept which he has of white people and he is treated in accordance with the concept they have of him (Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn* 173).

The moment Gardner strives to tread on the path of his dream, the enviroing conditions allows the intrusion of the past, and it consumes his present. Garder takes an inward journey to the past: he often meditates on how history has betrayed him. While dropping his son at school where on the walls is inscribed with "happyness", he travels on memory lane. Gardner says that he was an 'A' student in the history class but he could never be 'among them'. In his words: "it was just when I was young I get an 'A' in that history test. Whatever, I get this good feeling about all the things that I could be, then, I never became any of them" (*The Pursuit of Happiness* 1.48.53-1.49.09). The ideal feelings about being equal to other whites in the class would be just a thought as it never became a reality. Despite being an 'A' student, he was not among them because in the class the history about African Americans was not

taught. This mediation can be characterized as what Du Bois identifies as "inner contradiction and frustration which [segregation and white racist intransigence] involves" (Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn* 187).

Moreover, the paradox was that Gardner was in the history class but he was not part of history. This exclusion evokes Du Bois's one of the important tenets of historical criticism: "I have been in the world, but not of it" (Du Bois, *Darkwater* vii). Not only this, perhaps there was no history to talk about African American people in American classrooms. However, regarding the historical contribution of African American to and sharing, DuBois observes: "But one thing is sure and that is the fact that since the fifteenth century these ancestors of mine and their other descendants have had a common history; have suffered a common disaster and have one long memory" (Du Bois, *Dusk of the Down* 137). However, this commonality is not seen in practical operative realms of society, such in companies, schools, and other seminal public venues. The theme of historical exclusion is also accentuated with the help of cinematic effect. When he utters these words, the camera uses *shallow focus* and isolates the protagonist from the other people to emphasize the alienation of African American from the mainstream culture. That is, the African Americans are not the part of the history. With the use of *medium shots* and *shallow focus*, the camera foregrounds the protagonist to stress upon his saying. The *medium shots* taken with the *deep focus photography* emphasize the depth of his feelings and the *shallow focus* accentuates shallow presence and representation of the African and Americans in social history through Gardner.

Gardner refers to very significant passages from Thomas Jefferson and his writing, "The Declaration of Independence". Gardner wonders about the prospects of happiness, the mystical word Jefferson once used, in his life. He ponders how Jefferson knew that he had to use word 'pursuit' in "The Declaration of Independence", and finally Gardner assumes that it is because people can hardly achieve happiness, no matter what they do. Maybe, it is something people can only pursue; people can actually never have it. It is elusive. On the top of that, he remembers that Jefferson called the English, the disturber of the harmony; he wonders who disturbs his harmony. The following *voiceover* acute for the spiritual dimension of the protagonist's dream:

Thomas Jefferson mentions Happiness a couple of times in *The Declaration of Independence*. They seem to be like a strange word . . . He was sort of. He was an artist. He called the English a disturber of our harmony. I remember standing out there a day thinking about the disturber of mine. Questions I had ahead whether all this is good or I

have to make it. Walter Ribbon in his specific bell pension money which was millions, he was on his way to another place (At football match). (*The Pursuit of Happiness* 1.14.10-1.14.47)

These passage cited above are a broad meditation on the themes of liberty and justice articulated in "The Declaration of Independence". In an ironic twist on Jefferson's conception of the role of government, Gardner quotes the language of the first draft of the Declaration (which ultimately was not adopted), that speaks about the "disturbers of our harmony." The greatest disturber of Gardner's harmony and the largest obstacle in his pursuit of happiness turns out to be the government itself, when it seizes \$600 from Gardner's bank account for overdue taxes, leaving him with less than \$25. And at this point, in the story Gardner and son are finally evicted from their last hotel room and must seek refuge in the beds of the Christian mission's homeless shelter.

Similarly, the disadvantage for people of color in professional setting can be seen as a result of historical exclusion of the African people. The interview committee, consisting four members, at Dean Witter entails no single black. The whites, higher in the professional hierarchy, interview a black. The four members of the interview committee just disapprovingly nod down while the protagonist tries to greet them in his ruffled appearance. His clothes are tarnished with the paints and colors as he promised his landlord to paint his own apartment to avoid the eviction. Similarly, they giggle at Gardner's mention that he was arrested for the failure to pay parking tickets. Particularly, Mr. Frohm (James Karen) seems unresponsive while Gardner tries to shake hand with him. A *close-up shot* casts him nodding down and being indifferent towards Gardner's explanation of why what had to appear so. Moreover, while he walks in for the interview, the *medium* and sometimes *close shots* foregrounds Gardner's desperation for job and his plight. In the *mise-en scène*, many smiling cheering and busy white faces are shown in contrast. It is the situation that contrasts the plight of the two groups of people. The scene captures the two modes of lives: the lives of the whites and those of black.

The movie at times critiques the supposed form of egalitarian notion— all humans are created equal. In the words of Fredrickson's parlance, in American society, "First, there came the doctrine that the Crucifixion offered grace to all willing to receive it and made all Christian believers equal before God. Later, the more revolutionary concept that all "men" are born free and equal and entitled to equal rights in society and government entered into the American society" (Fredrickson 11-12). Nevertheless, the movie shows that hierarchical and unequal structure was conspicuous in the then San Francisco. In the scene from 1.30.10-1.33.00 minutes, the camera casts many people including Gardner, queuing to get a spot for a night stay at Glide Memorial Church. The

movie portrays the people at church tussling and elbowing to get a space for a night stay more than a couple of times. Furthermore, in the queue the protagonist had to fight as another man who tries to usher his seat. In the sharp contrast to it, in sharp shots, young, cheering and smiling people in a sports car driving in their haute style pass by the line of the homeless at Glide Memorial Church. In the film, there is harsh criticism in contrasting young and smiling people in a sports car driving along the line of homeless at Glide Memorial Church. For some people life is the American Dream with success everywhere, whereas for many others it is a nightmare, yet some of them are still striving for success.

In this way, Gardner's social historicity—the status as an African descendant becomes more determining in his acquisition of the dream. The protagonist tries to pursue the American Dream in white sense. Chris Gardner becomes a typical subject of double consciousness because the strangeness of the feeling of being consciousness is acquired when the subjects *participate* in a certain socio-cultural context but do not simply represent it in that context (Kirkland 139). This situatedness of the protagonist posits a real challenge to his quest. He often embarks on the past to compensate for the hurdles he faces up to the present. While his striving for happiness whose countenance is spiritual, throughout the film the notion of happiness that the protagonist tries to define comes in tandem with the financial security—securing good job and taking care of family and family values. As striving for prosperity is often closely connected to these aspects and because this point is also one of the most intrinsic characteristics of the American Dream, it has to be part of the analysis, too.

The Cry of the Present

While the past of Gardner manifests in spiritual in its countenance, Chris Gardner must board on material pursuit to sustain the present. However, the accomplishment of his present dream is necessarily a conduit between his inward twoness and the prospect that he can succeed in the modern American society. This special situation of an African American also addresses what Du Bois calls, "A Negro Problem" (Du Bois, *The Souls* 8). In order to settle in the current society, he must strive for the "second sight", a distinctive feature of Du Boisian double-consciousness (Du Bois, *The Souls* 5). The "second sight" Du Bois characterizes as a "gift" in this American world and also as a "capacity for a sort of extra-sensory perception (e.g., of ghosts) or a kind of vision into the future—a capacity to see what is not generally visible" (Golding Williams 78). According to Gooding-Williams, Du Bois uses "second sight" to identify "the Negro's" capacity to see himself through the eyes of white Americans (77). In that sense, as observed by Owen, Gardner

situation, including his identity in the new world is "mediated through whiteness; it is fundamentally shaped by the racial order of white supremacy in which it is formed" (Owen 108). Gardner's striving for the pursuit of the dream, the happiness, then must come both against and along the whiteness.

For his recognition and creation of his self, Gardner has to reveal himself through the whiteness. This marks beginning of the formation of his identity. Gardner's presence in social arena is achieved through "the result of social processes, constructed and reconstructed through ongoing social interaction" (Itzigsohn and Brown 232). Gardner by now must understand the financial and economic forces of modern American society, which are basically pigmented with *whiteness*. In other words, in order to obtain his self-recognition and sense of identity, Chris Gardner has to paint himself white in his pursuit of dream. Gardner's attempt to paint his apartment white, after the landlord threatens him of eviction, demonstrates his desire to assimilate in the white society. He paints the room white. The *long focus photography* accentuates Gardner's act of painting (*The Pursuit of Happiness* 37.57-39.35). Another important occasions in which Chris Gardner "see[s] himself through the revelation of the other word" when he visits a white man, Ribbon (Kurt Fuller) in which he is taken along with his son to a football match (Du Bois, *The Souls* 5). Gardner visited Ribbon to apologize as he could not arrive on time last day to talk about the Dean Witter products. However, he sees himself through contrasting images of life style of Mr. Ribbon, a white. Here, Gardner, with reference to the words from "The Declaration of the Independence", contemplates that Mr. Ribbon is "in another place" because he is white and has a lucrative job that yields him that handsome amount of money even after his retirement. On the other hand, despite the constant demand of his son to watch the football match, Gardner is unable to afford a ticket for it. Gardner thereby ponders to find out the answer what disturbs the "harmony" of his dream. He turns himself in and realizes both racial American society and the dearth of options spoils his harmony. His can achieve harmony at the point when he gets financial security which he calls happiness. In other words, his dream is more conditioned by the materiality of the present.

One of the ways the relation between whiteness and blackness is revealed and mediated is through stereotyping. Stereotyping as one of practical and implied forms of racism that conditions the constitution of black self. The movie shows the gullibility of Chris Gardner, and the people around take him for granted because of his *right* skin of the color. On few but important occasions, Gardner is used to serve the interests of the whites. His honesty, sincerity and simplicity are taken for granted as he simply trusts the people, but he is deceived by them. The scene from 12.00 to 14.06 minutes shows that

Gardner applies for the internship at Dean Witter as he realizes selling scanner to make his living is not sufficient. Before going to office to talk about his internship, he trusts on a white Hippie girl (Joyrul Raven), a street girl who plays guitar and collects money; he leaves the scanner and supplicates her to look after and drops one dollar, and promises to give extra money the moments he returns. But ironically, he is easily duped; the girl flees away with the scanner which Gardner does not want to lose at any cost, for he has invested entire life's saving on it. Her confidence to cheat Gardner owes its strength to her whiteness. This color line creates different processes of self-formation among racializing and racialized groups.

Moreover, the professional stereotyping helps Gardner in constituting the formation of self or the subjectivity. During Gardner's internship at Dean Witter, Gardner encounters many instances of professional stereotyping. For example, Mr. Frakesh (Dan Castellaneta), a white person in position, treats Gardner to exemplify that "it is the professional ways of stating that blacks and Latinos are socially and culturally inferior to whites" (Solorzano 12). The power of stereotypes to cause people to confirm stereotyped expectations can also be seen in interracial relationships. At Dean Witter, only Gardner is asked for errands for the boss while he was engaging in his work. The internship head, Mr. Frakesh, always orders Gardner sometimes for coffee, sometimes for water and sometimes even to look after his car. Theoretically, all citizens regardless of their color can follow law and order when they are put together in an institution. All of them have equal responsibility to serve for both the institutional and personal growth. However, having adopted stereotyped ways of thinking about another person, people tend to notice and remember the ways in which that person seems to fit the stereotype while resisting evidence that contradicts the stereotype (Snyder 325). For example, in a scene, when Gardner fixes an appointment with Mr. Ribbon to talk about the Dean Witter products, Mr. Frakesh, the head of the internship asks him to look after the car whether it is parked at the right area or not. The head says:

Chris what's up? Hey man! Do you have five minutes. I have no minutes. I am supposed to present commodity report. Could you move my car? That really helps me out. It is Samson's, half locked. Just move it together side with another Samson. There are spaces. Hang on to this (showing and giving the key). And you have to give me that [key]. (*The Pursuit of Happyness* 1.06.15-1.06.49)

It is because he had to spend time doing personal favors to his that Gardner misses the appointment. He already has so many burdens to carry on, and he is added with some extra burden. Gardner's obedience to the orders shows that how the whites suppose that this is internalized, and blacks' subordinate status

is deserved, natural, and inevitable. The subtle thinking behind the image of obedience affirms the cultural stereotyping of black people. The head's supposition that Gardner will carry out his personal favors display racial prejudices. Because of such professional stereotyping, many "African Americans suffer from identity threat, as they believe the stereotypes and identity contingencies assigned to them by the dominant culture" (Taylor et. al 216).

Gardner's "dogged strength", which comes, according to Du Bois, by virtue of being African American, comes against the assumption of meritocracy that American Dream heavily depends on. According to Du Bois, this is the capacity that paves the way forward for the African Americans. However, the American Dream's meritocratic assumption is more inclined to Racial Darwinism—the survival of the fittest race, leading racial supremacy (Fredrickson, 86). Darwinian emphasis on the competitive fitness of the white man with the suggestion of a pseudo-paternalistic mission to improve the natives who were coming under European or American hegemony (Lauren 63). Racial Darwinism meant, according to Lauren, “nations and races progressed only through fierce competition” and therefore “had no choice but to participate in the struggle for the survival of the fittest” (73). During the internship, Gardner shows his strong survival instinct: he even does not take break between the calls he dials to his clients untiringly. Moreover, he even does not drink a glass of the water there to save the time:

I was not hanging up in phone between calls. I realize by not hanging up in the phone, I will gain another eight ten minutes to the day. I was also not drinking water. So, I did not waste any time in bathroom.
(*The Pursuit of Happiness* 1.04.52 – 1.05.19)

The internship program at Dean Witter judges him in terms of his strength to survive and the meritocracy. Within the office hour, he has to do all the assigned works of calling the clients, meeting them and introducing the Dean Witter products. Besides, he has to run extra to sell the scanners to make his living because the internship pays him no salary. Nevertheless, he is soothed by prospective completion of the dream. So, he survives to the point he keeps on struggling and proving his best. When he fails to become the best, he loses everything. He is the only among many black as such who has guts to chase after the American Dream and having a peculiar ability to surpass everyone other proving himself the best. Importantly, this is always a story of a single lucky person. All men are not 'created' having equal strength. And the weaker ones are swallowed in their pursuit of the dream.

The effects of being African American, living with twoness, is reflected in the trauma of capitalist modernization— a historically specific

response to the question of satisfying human material needs. In the decade of 2000s, Gardner must seek the opportunities and the moments to make his family stable. Gardner in the film grapples hard to meet his demands and needs in American society of the decade. The decade characterizes a slowdown of the economy preceding the great recession (2007-2009) in which economic growth and job growth both fell in 2006 from previous year (Weller). Similarly, the residential housing boom came to an end; consumers saw rising debt payments on the record debt built up in past years; this debt squeeze leaves less money available for key household expenditures and is already beginning to push many hardworking families over the edge amid rising loan defaults and bankruptcies. In such a situation, when he tries to keep pace with capitalist the needs of society, he faces his tough luck. During the film, Gardner is evicted from landlords, usually white Americans, since he is unable to pay the rents. Similarly, in the scene from 1.00.03 to 1.02.22 minutes, he gets ten minutes leave from his non-salaried job of internship. And yet, has to go to sell the scanner to make his living. On the way, he is hit by a white man's car; he loses his shoe. He gets back to the work with his one foot bare. His one bare foot is contrasted with others and startles the other staffs. Despite the white man's desire to wait for the police and investigation, he leaves the spot. If he does not get in the office on time, he is likely to lose the hard-earned seat at Dean Witter. This scene is pathetic and has a sardonic humor about how the capitalism makes the lives of people of lower social order so complicated.

The quest of dream is accomplished as he wins the job at Dean Witter. Gardner cries overjoyed, climbs down the stairs and the mixes with the same "goddamn crowd" he had met before he entered into Dean Witter. He claps for himself and cover his face with his palms and sobs. This is what Gardner calls "happiness" with spelling "I", not with "y". But, Gardner's cry leaves lots of questions unanswered. However, from the seen it can be concluded that the happiness Chris finally assumes to have embraced is ironic — the happiness that came by embracing its spiritual dimension but by striking a financial break through. Moreover, Gardner's personal success raises an important question of whether this story is just an example of a single lucky person or Chris Gardner is a representative of the whole American population. Is the American Dream as depicted in Gardner's movie really feasible for everyone in America? Nevertheless, Chris Gardner's striving makes the following point starker: "It is uniquely in the West that we find the dialectical interaction between a premise of equality and an intense prejudice toward certain groups that would seem to be a precondition for the full flowering of racism as an ideology or worldview" (Fredrickson 12). In this, the society as depicted in the

film sustains itself in the ambivalence of promise and delivery. As such, the film also shows Gardner is not denied with the opportunities, but he grapples with the limited resources to materialize his dream.

Conclusion

Overall, the analysis shows that Chris Gardner's double consciousness becomes a determining trope in his dream, and allows the contradiction of sustaining the national fantasy of the American Dream. The complexity that an African American should undergo to obtain a middle-class life undercuts the comfortable imagination of raceless society. The quotidian racial forms of difference across the institutions of society pose a threat to the racialized subjects in their pursuit. The protagonist is divided between the inward journey constituted both from his being blackness and the racialized society and outward striving for future also promised by the same society. Despite the question of race underscores his striving, Chris Gardner becomes able to cultivate and harbor the dream with his dogged strength and optimism. In this sense, Chris Gardner's case slightly revisits the original conception of Du Bois' formulation of double consciousness. In that, in the film, Chris Gardner does not necessarily privilege the spiritual over the materialistic, commercial world of white America, but overcomes the spiritual sense and a softening influence against a cold and calculating world by accomplishing what he envisioned. However, Gardner's case implies that Gardner cannot utterly be representative of all the African Americans. Also, the African American of the modern American are not only-inward-looking as depicted by Du Bois and their consciousness is not merely a source of inward "twoness" putatively experienced feeling because of their racialized oppression and devaluation in a white-dominated society. Individuals like Chris can traverse through the inwardness and form their identity.

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