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White Fragility (Chapter 2) – Analytical Essay

Whiteness as a possession has many applications in a multitude of contexts. The whiteness denounced by Robin Diangelo in her work, *White Fragility*, assumes an unorthodox context: Whiteness is composed of the people who appear white and reap the benefits of white privilege in society. In the following text, I seek to engage a stark difference between the whiteness held by the fragile white people in Robin Diangelo's *White Fragility* and the angry white men in Michael Kimmel's *Angry White Men*, and how bi-racial individuals, specifically the mulatto, fit into the conversation.

Although Diangelo proclaims that the society she finds herself a part of is one in which race matters profoundly, her employment of the word race has been reduced to simply the color of one's skin. Whether of British descent or descended from non-English European countries, white people, as defined by Diangelo, are the people who can "pass as white" regardless of their heritage. This is because the context in which Diangelo engages whiteness is one that solely requires an exterior perception. I believe the reason she employs such a broad interpretation of white people is that the Caucasian-appearing, non-white person upholds oppressing beliefs by negating acknowledgment of their privileging complexion and grappling with heritage to identify themselves as "others". By believing they are not beneficiaries of white privilege, they fail to recognize the color-informed struggles of colored people. Contrarily, the angry white men Kimmel alludes to are the seemingly neglected heirs to the great American Dream, henceforth, his employment of whiteness only encompasses those who have strong ancestral origins in the United States and predecessors who've been done right by the American economy. Examining these applications separately runs smoothly, but when ideals start crossing, problems arise. The main error in logistics I've found comes from an interpretation of Diangelo's employment of race but under Kimmel's framework. Is Diangelo just to ask non-Caucasian descendants to identify as white and assume the oppressor's position in a system built by angry white men? I think the answer to this question is found by understanding the tenses on which these applications for whiteness are built. Diangelo's employment of race is a contemporary remark, aimed toward the

future, while Kimmel's employment of race targets America's past, hence his emphasis on ancestry.

One critical inquiry I pose is: How does the whiteness of a mixed-raced, mulatto, individual operate? I think the answer is not found by asking how does whiteness operate for the mulatto but rather, what does a mixed-race identity afford somebody under Diangelo's and Kimmel's employment of whiteness? Under Diangelo's utilization of race, the whiteness a mulatto possesses will seldomly afford white privilege; a visibly mixed person will "pass" as different things in different places, but universally, not white. Under Kimmel's employment of race, one that emphasizes ancestral origins, a mulatto would also be barred from accessing white currency and drawing a correlation to white ancestors, especially in a culture keen on practicing hypodescent. Under both circumstances, whiteness struggles to prevail in the case of the mulatto and othering becomes paramount for his perception in society. An unfortunate result for he who has the license to be white just as much as he does to be black.