

Ronald E. Hall *Editor*

The Melanin Millennium

Skin Color as 21st Century
International Discourse

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In honor of Carlos Moore, the light of liberation

 Springer

Editor

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*“Doer of Diversity, Dean of Social Sciences:
Dr. Marietta L. Baba,”
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Preface

In any postcolonial civilization, the creation of knowledge is of plausible significance because it is the means by which culture is transmitted and sustained. By the fifteenth century, various European powers, including Great Britain, Spain, Portugal, and France, transmitted Western culture via the colonial subjugation of non-European peoples. Those who were colonized by the West were physiologically differentiated from Europeans vis-à-vis a relatively darker skin color. Referred to as “people of color,” these non-Europeans were native to Africa, Asia, the Americas, and the Caribbean. Subsequent to colonization, Europeans as Western operatives imposed their traditions and customs upon people of color while simultaneously denigrating anything other than the Western lifestyle. Germane to that effort is Western intelligentsia’s control of information by the selective manufacturing of knowledge, validated by the prestige of its academy.

As a result of colonization, a virulent intellectual narcissism evolved to control the information of the Western intelligentsia, which was indicative of the post-colonial era. Despite this pathology, people of color reacted to the narcissism that had internalized the West’s alien ideals in an effort to appease the Western power structure. Consequently, depictions of existential reality were conveyed in a context that was irrelevant to people of color. Accordingly, their pain and suffering became nonexistent or invalidated because it had not the force or permission of the Western intelligentsia. Enabled by the reaches of Western prestige, what operated as factual extended from Western power, Western tradition, and a Western colonial legacy.

The magnitude of the Western intellectual narcissism can be documented relative to the existential contradictions found among people of color. What is prioritized as fact, about black males in particular, by the Western social work academy attests to the force and will of the social work intelligentsia, who control the creation of its knowledge base through colonial traditions. Existential contradictions in the social work knowledge base then escape challenge and blur the lines between fact and fiction. For black males, existential reality becomes a product not of what they experience but of the might of Western operatives, the preferences of commercial interests, and the hegemonic outcomes of intellectual narcissism. These requisites impact not only the people social work proposes to serve but extend to the roots

of what is proclaimed to be objective scientific research. In the aftermath, that which is omitted by the social work intelligentsia is assumed to be neither valid nor significant.

In 2006 Dr. Ronald B. Mincy, an Affiliated Scholar with the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C., published an excellent work entitled *Black Males Left Behind*. Dr. Mincy compiled an extensive collection of social work data to substantiate his rigorously executed thesis, a dramatic illustration pertaining to the state of black males in America whose quality of life has been systematically neglected by social work's adherence to a postcolonial agenda. As a member of the social work academy, the efforts of this esteemed colleague—who is armed with Ivy League credentials—would normally carry the intellectual force of a factual tsunami. Instead, his works have managed little more than a trickle of response from the academy of social work and its social science equivalent at large. Suffice it to say that the gist of his research scientifically substantiates what many in a Western postcolonial academy are unprepared to acknowledge. That is, every other demographic—being more suited to the whims of Western discourse—permeates its literature, garners its sympathy, and relishes its resources. Enhanced by the legacy of the Western history of colonial imperialism, what prevails as “factual” products of modern social scientific endeavors have been reduced to the certification of colonial tradition. Subsequently, the needs and existential circumstances of black males are accordingly regarded as irrelevant, justifying their relative absence from social work literature, curriculum content—ultimately being assigned the most minimum of resource allocation. As in Western tradition, the needs of women and mothers in particular have been prioritized as being more urgent, commensurate with the ideals of the postcolonial intellectual power structure. The existential circumstances of black males are acknowledged only to the extent that they serve the intelligentsia, as stereotypical perpetrators who are prone to violent confrontation. In regimented unison, stalwarts of the social work academy who are opposed to Dr. Mincy's thesis maintain a perspective that institutionalizes the absence of men in need while simultaneously bringing forth an intellectual pedagogy, which trivializes the hardships of their existence. This is so, notwithstanding advances in science and a social work mantra of social justice by empowerment of oppressed populations. It is a contradiction between existential human realities sustained in the West by the omnipotent reaches of its intellectual narcissism. It is an unspoken but no less tangible offspring of a postcolonial empire in that the existential realities of the people, which fail to serve its narcissism, cease to exist.

Similar to that of black males is the denied existential reality among people of color, relative to the implications of skin color. The Western intelligentsia has long proclaimed the existential absence of skin color in its proxy for race. Indeed, in the postcolonial West, race has dominated discourse pertaining to human interaction. Subsequently, race has been validated as a skin-color proxy and, as such, dilutes any potential discourse devoted to the implications of skin color for people of color. Estranged from consideration is the existential reality of people of color who internalized alien ideals by colonial tradition. Such alien ideals sustained their colonization, not only physiologically—during Europe's imperial reign—but psychologically in this postcolonial era. Today, the various manifestations of their psychological colo-

nization are dramatic and include a predisposition to standardize race in discourse despite skin color being an existential force in their lives. By submission to the discourse on race, alien ideals pertaining to skin color evolved a self-destructive dynamic among people of color, a dynamic similar to physiological colonization. Relative to their submission, people of color then act out various forms of discrimination against other people of color as a manifestation of psychological colonization. Race is all but totally irrelevant. The most dramatic manifestations of discrimination have been the nefarious construct of a hierarchy, whereby inferiority is preferred and assigned in proximity to Western attributes. Thus, those who are lightest by skin color are the most celebrated among nonphysiologically Western populations. In contrast, those who are darkest have been denigrated as inferior by their least proximity to the Western ideal even to the point of being denied their humanity. Similar to physiological colonization, this more covert psychological version perpetrated by people of color is historically rooted in white racism and is acutely insidious. It is a critical aspect of world history that, for the most part via racial discourse and intellectual narcissism, has managed escape from investigation—such as the plight of black males from the scrutiny of Western academe.

Notwithstanding an intellectual faux pas, the psychological colonization of people of color, evident by the dominance of the race construct, is not a mere political abstraction reflected passively by culture, scholarship, or its institutional ideals. Nor is it representative of some nefarious plot to hold hostage and exploit people of color by some postcolonial Western intellectual. It is rather a tacit distribution of scientific discourse into aesthetic, scholarly, and philosophical texts. It is an elaboration not only of a Western intellectual empire praised as the ultimate ideal but also of an existential perspective of humanity. In this perspective, the intelligentsia of Western scholarship not only controls but also in some cases manipulates that which is manifestly different. It is otherwise a discourse that is by no means in a relationship of conspiracy with intellectual factions in the raw but is generated by an uneven exchange with various sources of power. These power sources include, but are not limited to, knowledge power, intellectual power, and existential power. Indeed, the legacy of Western imperialism and its product—colonization—do not represent the academy as a whole and as such have less to do with the domination of colonized subjects than with worldwide human coexistence.

Because the psychological colonization of people of color by skin color is a cultural, political, and social reality, it does not exist in an archival vacuum or demented fantasy. Quite to the contrary, it is apparent that what is thought or said about people of color follows certain intellectual patterns. It is seen as the mechanism of a broader Western superculture by a considerable degree of nuance and elaboration. Thus, most modern intellectuals, including those in social work, ignore the reality that social science “fact” evolved in a narcissistic Western colonial context. They overlook the explicit connection between that context and the standardization of race in the existential history of its colonized subjects, which keeps “scientific” investigations pure. Any effort to stray from the anointed preferences of a Western frame has been perceived as crudely iconoclastic. But there is no negating the fact that modern discourse in the shadows of Western academe has avoided an effort to seriously bridge the gap between what is and what

is intellectually preferred. Yet there will remain the perennial escape mechanism of saying that Western discourse is more concerned with investigation rather than postcolonial ideological analysis. In other words, the argument can work quite effectively to block the larger and more intellectually threatening colonial-less perspective. The result is a form of intellectual narcissism even more insidious than during Imperial Europe's attempts to rule the globe.

To undertake a treatise on psychological colonization by skin color as being proof of intellectual narcissism is to wade into an area fraught with academic hegemony and shameless bias. It may well be that doing so is tantamount to inviting visceral accusations of academic naiveté and jaded aspirations. Western gatekeepers who are so inclined have dominated intellectual discourse as an extension of colonial traditions relevant to their subjects, who have become psychologically predisposed. Thus, the existential universe where both subject and perpetrator navigate and create knowledge is directed by Western ideals, Western values, Western norms, Western culture, and Western objectives. It is a contrived reality fashioned to celebrate and enable longevity of the Western status quo. Those who elect to challenge the longevity of this status quo are subject to ridicule or relegated to corners of academic obscurity. Despite the fact that, in psychological colonization, colonial traditions such as skin color preference remain a stealthy commodity of human interaction, its existential potency amidst twenty-first-century population diversity can no longer be effectively contained by intellectual narcissism.

In 2008, America elected its first African American president, Barack Obama. President Obama received overwhelming support from the black community, but his election would not have been possible without the diverse support of conscientious white Americans and other people of color. Although his presidential authority does not extend beyond American shores, he is revered worldwide, much to the disgust of right wing operatives. Little more than a few decades earlier, President Obama would have been breaking the law in registering to vote—a facet of Western colonial tradition. His desire to become president of the United States would have been remote or impossible, even by virtue of active fantasy.

Acknowledgement of Western colonial bias and its cloak of narcissistic disdain reduce the long-term potential for human conflict and comply with the values put forth by the social work advocates of social justice. It is increasingly evident that psychological colonization is pertinent to understanding social, economic, and political well being, at least among people of color. A more acute prioritizing of their existential absence from the purity of Western academic discourse is a necessity in a world that is fast becoming not only skin-color diverse but ethnically and culturally diverse as well. This diversity has facilitated assertions on the part of immigrant populations—including people of color—to validate their concerns, linked to the oppositional prestige of the Western intelligentsia. Thus, issues like skin color involving people of color can no longer be assigned to “special” or “minority” concerns because they do not contain enough relevancies to merit attention. Adherence to unadulterated scientific investigation will compromise the trivialization of the Western Other and rescue Western intelligentsia from the historical influence of its colonial forebears.

As a member of the social work academy and one who values knowledge, I have agonized over the manner in which people of color are regarded worldwide. On more than one occasion, I have encountered students in social work and other human service professions who are trained to handle the keenest aspects of emotional and psychological adjustment with hardly any consideration given to the social and cultural gaps perpetuated by intellectual narcissism. In fact, most social work faculties have gone through their entire educational experience without a word being mentioned about skin color. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that students and faculties alike have not understood the role of skin color in the formulation of models and treatment strategies. For many reasons, the topic has remained an unspeakable taboo in practically every sector of the Western academy and society at large. This I see as dangerous and serves the ill-gotten tenets of Western imperialism and the insidious longevity of a colonial status quo. In the aftermath, people of color worldwide unwittingly define their civilized worth and human well being in association with the proximity to the directives of a tenacious colonial ideal.

The fact that today a black man is the leader of what remains the world's foremost superpower is representative of a new era in the creation of knowledge by intellectual investigation, analysis, and scientific discourse. This new era is destined to divorce intellectual narcissism from Western science and present the world and its people as they are, instead of serving the intellectual gods of an imperial agenda. Some of my colleagues might argue that to write about the unspeakable is provocative and will do more harm than good. But it is my opinion that confronting such a provocative topic literally is a healthy and socially appropriate way to benefit people of color and the world's humanity in general. Although it is only a start, a start is where solutions begin. From the perspective of all the world's peoples will be forged an existential study fashioned by an intelligentsia inclined to variations in race, gender, culture, geography, and nativity. Their contributions will enhance intellectual discourse and, from scientific investigation, will direct humanity, not by faction but by totality, to its next level of civilization. This will require the recognition of works for their scholarly merit rather than for popularity or institutional affiliations. It will require that the intelligentsia resort to the spirit of debate and disciplined research in their incorporation or dismissal of ideas. Western civilization must then move beyond the trappings of colonial tradition and be willing to retire them in exchange for exploring the unknown. This will enable the purity of science in hopes of rescuing the academy from the bigotries of Western hypocrisy. Doing so will accommodate newer and more applicable models of existential reality. Doing so will free knowledge from the tyranny of race as contrived conjecture and ultimately align the state of humanity with the conscientious election of a black president, commensurate with the existential plight of both black males and people of color worldwide.

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Chapter 1

The Bleaching Syndrome: Western Civilization vis-à-vis Inferiorized People of Color

Ronald E. Hall

People of color, including those of African, Asian, Latino, and Native American descent who are socialized through Western influences, ultimately come to idealize concepts and behaviors that are of an alien origin. These alien ideals, which people of color internalize, become standards of personal consequence. Such standards do not require litigation, although they maintain the support of both *du jour* and de facto institutions. Subsequently, Western influences then impose upon people of color in the way they organize their universe and perceive themselves by determining what is ideal and, consequently, what is inferior. In conjunction, what evolves as the internalized ideal and its inferior counterpart are the principal vehicles by which people of color assimilate into Western civilization. Given the extent of Western influence, life for people of color is problematic. In the modern world, their existence is commensurate with a denial of self, by their willingness to embrace all that is Western physiologically, psychologically, and culturally—by whatever means necessary.

Despite being alien to some, the ideals of a society are important for holding it together. Those who are deemed to be inferior contribute to the reinforcement of social ideals, including the implied or expressed, the formal or informal phenomena instilled in a nation's citizenry. Notwithstanding their alien character, Western ideals are internalized by people of color and eventually become synonymous with their goals and expectations. When the goals and expectations of the people and the society at large are conducive to quality of life, it enhances the ability of the species as a whole to thrive. However, for people of color who must assimilate within a hostile, alien Eurocentric environment, their ability to thrive is compromised. Their human predisposition to idealize self is interrupted by Eurocentric influences, which define the non-Eurocentric as inferior. The resulting pain is made manifest in an

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attempt by people of color to internalize what is, in fact, pathological by nature. The alternative solution for rescuing themselves would be to negotiate an equitable environment that is conducive for all. However, absent an equitable distribution of power, such an alternative remains inaccessible to people of color.

Alien ideals introduced to people of color through Western influences may be internalized by choice, as a matter of subliminal processes, or by coercion, as a matter of power. Apart from the ethical implications of ideals that are coerced as a matter of power, ideals do in fact merit worth in the stability and order they bring to the psyche. Similar to most social-psychological phenomena, ideals are not solely static references to the fortunes of life but are additionally fluid resources, constantly responding to the social leans of a dynamic course of action. The inability of people of color, at home and abroad, to recognize this course of action and to interject at the appropriate point is an obstacle to their escaping from the effects of an idealized alien Other. Dominated by an idealized alien Other, people of color are located on an axis of inferiority, where absent active objection becomes their native, and indeed, celebrated identity.

According to Linda Acupanda McGloin (1992), the issue of identity is relevant to both men and women among people of color. But, unlike their Eurocentric counterparts, people of color throughout the world have experienced centuries of assault upon their psyche by more than one colonial power, including Spain, Portugal, France, and the UK. Today, each of these psychic assaults is manifested in various forms of inferiorized subjugation. This subjugation is insidious, insuring by covert means its tolerance and, indeed, oversight by victims of color. No doubt people of color are not immune to psychic problems, absent Western influence, as some such problems existed among people of color prior to Western colonization. However, in the aftermath of Western social, economic, and political domination, identity for modern world people of color has been complicated exponentially. Thus, given the internalization of alien Western ideals and the importance of social and historical events, the following questions are posed pertaining to people of color: Will informed discourse contribute to the repair of a denigrated, non-Eurocentric inferior self? Will awareness enable the dissipation of self-denigrating fantasies of inferiority? No doubt becoming informed has played a key role historically in the liberation and psychological rescue of inferiorized people. Similarly, for people of color, healing will be contingent upon their ability to obtain organized glimpses into the psychological damage they have incurred over time. Thus, their rescue from colonial and postcolonial inferiorization via the internalization of alien Western ideals is best understood through the comprehension of the Bleaching Syndrome: a conscious and systematic process of self-denigration and aspiration to assimilation on the basis of alien ideals.

The genesis of the Bleaching Syndrome is conveyed in the old “beauty” creams and folk preparations used by African Americans. Having internalized alien ideals, African Americans regarded dark skin as a note of inferiority and thus aspired to the idealization of light skin as colonial Western ideal. According to Webster’s *Dictionary* (Mish 1989), “bleach” is a verb that means to remove color or to make white. A syndrome consists of a grouping of symptoms, including behaviors that occur in conjunction and make up a recognizable pattern (Mish 1989).

In combination, historical folklore and English terminology literally define the Bleaching Syndrome. The Bleaching Syndrome has a universal effect; among people of color today, the Bleaching Syndrome is a worldwide metaphor that is relevant to all populations that are exposed to the socialization products of Western civilization. The recent availability of computers and other forms of media technology renders the possibility of escape from its influence virtually impossible. The Bleaching Syndrome is universal because its application is limitless across geographic space and time. When applied to people of color today, its existence is substantiated in a most dramatic fashion: for it is they who have had to idealize norms that are not only radically inconsistent with their physiological makeup (Levine and Padilla 1980) but also the norms and traditions that root them in reality. Additionally, the psychological pain they suffer from denigration of self is exacerbated by Western culture's general lack of tolerance for its growing diversity by migration to various countries in search of a better life. The effort on the part of people of color to assimilate into Western nations and simultaneously bring about a reduction in psychological pain is made possible by their obsession with a "bleached" ideal. That ideal is manifested in their accepted inferiorization through strategies, which include self-monitoring, self-denigration, and perceptions of attractiveness. No other aspect of their inferiorized being is more revealing.

The Bleaching Syndrome is the conscious and systematic process of self-denigration and aspiring to assimilation on the basis of alien ideals, resulting from colonial domination. The ultimate objective is a desired quality of life that can only be realized by acceptance into the dominant mainstream population—the Eurocentric Western ideal. Given the disparities in power, people of color who aspire to the Western ideal are not in a position to negotiate. This position of subjugation is psychologically painful and becomes a strong incentive for internalizing pathology. People of color internalize this pathology, even though the process is understood by many to be harmful. It is a linear progression of stages consisting of power, domination, assimilation, and finally the Bleaching Syndrome, which amounts to inferiorization versus normal assimilation. It has three components: (1) perceptual, according to internalized ideals; (2) psychological, according to reactions to those ideals; and (3) behavioral, according to the ideals manifested as direct and indirect actions.

The Bleaching Syndrome is also the conscious awareness of the cognitive and attitudinal levels of the similarities and differences between the dominant mainstream and dominated inferiors to negate and thus dismiss one's self for the purposes of assimilation. The quality of life this may infer, according to Abraham Maslow (1943), includes the fulfillment of physiological needs such as wealth and income, and safety needs such as housing and standard of living. Belongingness, self-esteem, and self-actualization needs are irrelevant in the context of the Bleaching Syndrome, which means that the Bleaching Syndrome prevents people of color from advancing beyond the tangible base of Maslow's *A Theory of Human Motivation* (1943). It requires substantive knowledge and empathic appreciation of the mainstream culture at the expense of the native and otherwise ideal self. Thus, the Bleaching Syndrome suggests that those who are affected by it ultimately alter themselves,

as dictated by the influences of Western power, to approximate the idealized alien mainstream. It is a quasi-functional strategy that eventually fails, ending in the destruction of all but the Eurocentric.

The Bleaching Syndrome is a process of orientation that requires submission. Were it not for the differential in power, it could not exist. Much of what the Bleaching Syndrome requires is denigrating to people of color and could not otherwise be imposed because it is contrary to the nature of human psychological and physiological health. It may be manifested by people of color not only in their disdain for dark skin but in their values, interactional styles, behavioral responses, language use, and so forth. It is thus a distortion of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman 1990). Such distortions are not only denigrating but are accommodating to destructive alien forces. The intensity of the destruction may subside over time, but the ultimate ill effects are not lessened. Depending on the assimilation status of the victim, these tendencies may cause little concern because they are the standardized norm and thus a familiar aspect of mainstream reality. Eurocentrists who are not members of the inferiorized Other may take note of them, but are less apt to act because of the apathy of Western civilization as a whole and the disruption it may cause. The intent of the Bleaching Syndrome as an informative agent is to squash the apathy and calm the fears of disruption by couching colonial traditions in nonjudgmental terms. As it pertains to people of color worldwide, those who are capable of comprehending the totality of the life situation may have an advantage by using this approach, with an informed ability to interact. They are thus immediately privy to the historical implications of skin color among people of color where Western intellectual discourse has failed to take note, despite its formidable scholarship.

Synonymous with the Bleaching Syndrome is the "bleached" ideal. Light-skinned people of color who invest their efforts in reaching the "bleached" ideal are at a decided advantage in their attempts to escape from their inferiorized status. The "bleached" ideal, for all intents and purposes, is accessible to them by virtue of having light skin. In submitting to the Western power structure, light-skinned people of color expect and often acquire some measure of structural assimilation and a better quality of life accordingly. Such African Americans are regarded in folk terms as "oreos." Their Native, Asian, and Latino American counterparts are regarded as "apples, bananas and coconuts" respectively—[colored on the outside and white on the inside] (Kitano 1985).

For light-skinned people of color, the Bleaching Syndrome facilitates a narrowly defined pattern of existence. Its relevance is universal because its scope is much broader than the context of any one race, nationality, or geographic location. However, when applied to those who are of a skin color extreme, including both the light and dark, the Bleaching Syndrome is substantiated in a most dramatic fashion. For unlike modestly light- or dark-skinned people of color, those with extremes of skin color have often had to make their life choices in constant association with the influences that skin color demands. Their effort to idealize themselves and simultaneously minimize the influence of their inferiorization is made possible only by their obsession and confrontations with the "bleached" ideal.

The origins of the Bleaching Syndrome, within Western colonization, must not be limited solely to Eurocentric factions. It is similar to and simultaneously distinct from racism, although racism will be a factor to the extent that the West remains a racist cultural civilization (Hall 1994). However, to their credit, people of color do not control the institutions of Western power: they are more likely victims of the racism it bestows upon society at large and the prevailing world order. Like all Western inferiorized groups, people of color are subject to the whims of the Eurocentric world order. Those among people of color who aspire to a better life and to benefit from the applications of their efforts do so because they are Western citizens. However, they have never enjoyed the possibilities of developing to their fullest potential because a stigma is associated with their “otherness,” which defines their native self as inferior (Hoetink 1967). Submission to the thought that self-denigration will lead to eventual equality for people of color is no less absurd than having aspirations to the “bleached” ideal. However, for scholars and other interested parties, this Bleaching Syndrome phenomenon remains an accurate barometer of the progress toward an equality eventuality. While objection to existence of the Bleaching Syndrome is a legitimate intellectual discourse, American history, its judicial documentation, and color-based confrontations between peoples worldwide provide a formidable suggestion to the contrary.

Prior to the arrival of Christopher Columbus, native peoples who are generally called Indians occupied the Americas. In the aftermath of colonial domination, Indians are no less a part of the Bleaching Syndrome than other people of color at home and abroad. Today, various forms of stratification exist, on the basis of their skin color. The issue of skin color is particularly apparent among those of mixed parentage (Katz 1986). A few scholars have approached this topic as it existed during the antebellum. However, the contemporary, urban manifestations have commanded less attention for various reasons. The fact is that among Indians the Bleaching Syndrome, on the basis of skin color, has resulted in an unspoken hierarchy that is particularly evident among those who reside in urban areas. Mixed-parentage Indians in such areas experience tribal recognition status commensurate with their “white” blood quantum.

Antonio Gramsci offers a useful reference to illuminate this issue among Indians residing in the San Francisco Bay Area. This area boasts one of the largest concentrations of urban Indians in the USA, the result of relocation programs during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. In the aftermath of such urbanization, those who relocated experienced increased associations with the dominant Eurocentric ethnic. Thus, socially they exemplified increased assimilation and acculturation to the dominant group mainstream. In the aftermath, Indian urbanization distorted the multiplicity of individual tribal identities into one monolithic population that was characterized as Indian. This postbellum social dynamic enabled an Indian conglomerate that pushed African-mixed-parentage Indians (dark-skinned) to the fringes of tribal recognition. In fact, one of the largest Indian tribes, the Cherokee, recently sent expulsion letters to approximately 2,800 of its members who, being darker-skinned, were thus presumed to be of African descent; they would be denied membership in the Cherokee tribe and loss of medical care, food stipends, and other assistance (Juozapavicius 2011).

African-mixed-parentage Indians are well aware of their Indian roots and are not ashamed to reference them (Hooks 1992). “Speaking primarily to the folks who have always denied the many truths of US history that tell of imperialist expansion, cultural genocide, and racism, Katz makes it seem that it is important to convince his audience that black Indians never even existed.” Hooks (1992) criticizes William Loren Katz, author of *Black Indians* (1986), for not acknowledging Eurocentric colonization/domination that has made the African-mixed-parentage Indian “invisible.” Furthermore, the invisibility of African-mixed Indians has been facilitated by the social discourse of “full-blooded” Indians and their lighter-skinned, Euro-mixed-parentage counterpart, particularly in urban locations. Arguably that discourse contributes to the inferiorization of dark-skinned Indians of whatever parentage by light-skinned Indians, “full-blooded” or otherwise.

Extended from the antebellum era, Ronald E. Hall (Russell et al. 1992) refers to the “one-drop” theory of racial identification. According to the “one-drop” theory, the smallest measure of African descent is enough to define one as “black.” This notion was invented by antebellum Eurocentrists to assist in their control of slaves. Years later, Indians—given to the influences of Western colonization or domination—are not immune to their influence in the context of urbanization. Thus, “full-blooded” Indians and those of mixed Eurocentric parentage—by virtue of being light-skinned—have allowed for the alienation of dark-skinned Indians on the basis of the “one-drop” theory (Dominguez 1997). In fact, according to Virginia R. Dominguez, it may be that a substantial number of African Americans have at least 25% Eurocentric ancestry and perhaps 80% Indian ancestry. Were those same African Americans citizens of South American countries, they would undoubtedly be considered *mestizo*, or of mixed blood.

For various reasons, irrespective of urbanization and blood quantum, scholars contend that the Indian population appears to be experiencing significant growth (Snipp 1989). Unfortunately, their research has ignored the implications of Western domination and its effect upon the Indian perception of dark skin. Surely, some such as Nagel (1997) have acknowledged it in their research, but this acknowledgment has been all too subtle. Perhaps there is a feeling that the implications of the Bleaching Syndrome on the basis of skin color would invite group disjointure at a time when unity is imperative (Jarvenpa 1985). However, scholars in their hesitation may in fact contribute to group disjointure. In Avery Gordon’s *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, racism can be banished from the research literature, but not from the reality of the people (Gordon 1997). Such banishment contributes to tension in the absence of dialogue, making it even more controversial and less likely the subject of healthy intellectual debate. Those who prefer to define Indian identity on the basis of skin color and other phenotypic features exacerbate disjointure.

The issue of the Bleaching Syndrome as it pertains to Indians today lives on in African and Native American confrontations. Arguably, it is the influence of Western colonization or domination that has encouraged the phenomena in both the antebellum past and the postbellum present. It is not limited to the Cherokee tribe or any historical era. The continued submission of Indians to Western ideals regarding

dark-skinned populations is apparent in racial slurs aimed at African Canadians or Black Canadians (dark-skinned populations in Canada). Perhaps one of the most noted, due in part to media attention, is the case of professional hockey player Chris Simon. Apparently Mr. Simon—a member of the Ojibwa tribe—was fined \$36,585 and suspended three games for directing racist remarks at a “black” player named Mike Grier (Zinser 2007). Inarguably the most “white” and homogeneous of major sports, the behavior of modern-day Indians is analogous to that of their Cherokee forebears. In addition, Indians have criticized African Americans for playing on sports teams that degrade Indians by symbolic mascot representation, such as the NFL’s Washington Redskins and the major league baseball Cleveland Indians (Loving 1992). Yet no African American has ever hurled public racial slurs or degraded Indians in their use of mascots for professional sports teams—their ownership is all but nonexistent. Indian criticism of Eurocentric sports team ownership is all too tacit. This oversight on the part of Indians is arguably a manifestation of the Bleaching Syndrome or Western colonial influences.

Among various skin color discrimination, Bleaching Syndrome-inspired litigation is that of *Walker v. the Internal Revenue Service* (1989). The case was tried in the Atlanta Federal District Court. The plaintiff, Ms. Tracy Walker, was a permanent clerk typist in the IRS’s Atlanta office. She is a light-skinned African American. Her supervisor—the employee of the defendant—is Ms. Ruby Lewis, a dark-skinned African American. Employees of the office in which the plaintiff and the defendant worked were predominantly African American. In fact, following her termination, an African American replaced the plaintiff. According to documentation, the working relationship between the plaintiff and the defendant was strained from the very beginning—that is, since approximately November of 1985. The plaintiff contends that the defendant singled her out, because of her light skin, for close scrutiny and reprimanded her for many things that were false or unsubstantial. After expert testimony by Dr. Ronald E. Hall, the court determined the plaintiff’s case had merit. Therefore, the federal court granted the defendant’s summary judgment motion to plaintiff’s 1983 claim, plaintiff’s 1981 claim, and plaintiff’s Administrative Procedure Act claim, and denied defendant’s summary judgment motion to plaintiff’s Title VII claims (*Walker v. Internal Revenue Service* 1989).

The first case of the Bleaching Syndrome-inspired litigation in the USA did not involve African Americans but involved Latinos. In 1981, a case (*Felix v. Manquez* 1981) involving a dark-skinned plaintiff—Felix—versus a lighter-skinned defendant—Manquez—was litigated by the US District Court of the District of Columbia. Both the plaintiff and the defendant were Latino American employees of the Office of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in Washington, DC (OCPRW). The plaintiff alleged that the defendant did not promote her, on the basis of skin color discrimination—having dark skin. At the trial, the plaintiff introduced the personnel cards of 28 of her former fellow employees. Felix testified that, among them, only two were as dark or darker in color than she. All of the other employees in the office, according to the plaintiff, were light-skinned. In summation, the court determined that the plaintiff was not promoted in grade for legitimate business reasons, having nothing whatever to do with her skin color (*Felix v. Manquez* 1981).

Another case involving Latinos, *Falero v. Stryker* (1998), was brought to trial, litigated by the US District Court of the District of Puerto Rico. Falero, the plaintiff, is a dark-skinned male while Rigoberto, the corporation defendant, is a light-skinned male. The plaintiff claimed he was terminated from his job on the basis of having dark skin. The defendant contended that the plaintiff did not establish that someone outside of the protected class replaced him. The defendant further stated that the plaintiff's job had not been filled by anyone, but admitted that one of his areas of work was assigned to another employee. Thus, direct evidence of skin color discrimination was lacking.

In summation, while the fourth element of *prima facie* had been established, the court decided that no reasonable trier of fact could conclude from the evidence in the record, when viewed in the light most favorable to plaintiff, that the defendant discriminated against the plaintiff on the basis of his skin color. Therefore, the court granted the defendant's motion for summary judgment. Additionally, after dismissing the plaintiff's foundational federal claims, the court reassessed its jurisdiction over the supplemental state claims. Thus, in the exercise of its discretion, and after balancing the competing factors, the court declined to exercise jurisdiction over the plaintiff's supplemental claims. The plaintiff's state law claims were then dismissed without prejudice (*Falero v. Stryker* 1998).

Variations in skin color among African and Latino Americans have been a historical source of secret tension. While the ability of plaintiffs to prevail in a court of law has failed, this should not imply that the issue of skin color discrimination is without merit. Regardless of the outcome, the mere filing of litigation makes the importance of skin color obvious, vis-à-vis the Bleaching Syndrome among African and Latino descent people of color.

Civil litigation on the basis of skin color among people of color has been the most prevalent form of adjudication. However, criminal examples of violent racism exist as well. Perhaps the most dramatic pertaining to the Bleaching Syndrome involves an Indian Asian who migrated to the USA. Among Indian Asians, the caste system, pertinent to skin color, is a tradition that spans centuries in the history of Indian culture. In India, not only are dark-skinned, African-descended persons despised but any among dark-skinned Indians are despised as well. Thus, according to Washington (1990), there have been numerous reports of discrimination in India directed at African students, who when visiting India find themselves the victims of social isolation and relegated to pariah group status (Washington 1990). What is more, in Eastern and Southern Africa, there are large Indian communities that may have arrived during British colonialism, which would account for their group discrimination against African-descended peoples. Thus, prior to their migration to the USA, immigrant Indian Asians also detested associations with Africans or any other dark-skinned peoples because by virtue of Indian culture they view them as inferior. The tendency of Indian immigrants to view African Americans as racially inferior was litigated in the murder trial of an Indian immigrant named Chiman Rai.

On October 10, 2006, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* reporters Beth Warren and Jeffrey Scott wrote of the murder of Sparkle Reid-Rai, an African American woman (Scott 2008). Sparkle Reid (her name before marriage) was told by her Indian Asian

husband, Ricky Rai, that his parents were dead. The husband's motive was inspired by the fact that his parents did not approve of the marriage to Sparkle Reid because she was black. According to the Reid family, to prevent the marriage, the Rai family had gone so far as to offer Sparkle \$10,000 to break up with their son. When Sparkle would not accept payment from the elder Chimán Rai to break up with her husband, the patriarch acted to have her murdered.

Plans for her murder were unknown to Sparkle Reid-Rai; her fiancé, Ricky, had convinced her that his mother had been killed during an earthquake in India the year before and, a few months later, his father had died of diabetes. Sparkle Reid-Rai had not known that her fiancé's parents were alive and well on the day of the couple's marriage in Atlanta's Fulton County. When word of the marriage reached the 67-year-old immigrant patriarch, police contend that he organized a plot to have her killed, wherein he sought and hired a contract killer. After being paid, a group of killers went to the Rai residence in Union City, Georgia, under the pretense of delivering a package. When the 22-year-old black bride opened the door, a 300-lb ex-convict attacked her with a knife. When the attack was over, Sparkle Reid-Rai had been brutally stabbed at least 13 times in the back, neck, chest, and ribs. To ensure her death, the attacker then strangled her and slit her throat. According to detectives, the 20-year-old Ricky Rai discovered her body when he returned home from work. Fortunately the couple's 7-month-old daughter, in the room adjacent to the murder, had not been harmed. Initially the case could not be solved for lack of evidence. It was not until 4 years later that police were able to make progress in the case, when a female, who had accompanied the killer during the attack, was arrested by Atlanta police on a drug charge. It was by her testimony that the Indian Asian patriarch was arrested and eventually convicted on charges of having Sparkle Reid-Rai murdered (Scott 2008).

The issue of inferiorization associated with the Bleaching Syndrome among Asian Americans conforms to European colonization or domination and has a long, established history (Banerjee 1985). When Japanese migrated to America, they brought notions pertaining to light skin that exacerbate the denigration of persons who are dark-skinned (Washington 1990). When they begin the Bleaching Syndrome process, their belief that light skin is superior and dark skin denotes inferiority imposes upon their ability to interact socially with darker-skinned Americans (Washington 1990). This may have contributed to recent tensions between African and Korean American communities in Los Angeles and various other parts of the nation (Kim 1990). It is a reflection of Western colonization whereby the Bleaching Syndrome, as per Asians from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka who—once they are settled in the USA—constantly seek ways to prove themselves “white” (Mazumdar 1989).

An equally dramatic illustration of the Bleaching Syndrome among persons of Asian descent pertains to marital patterns. Free and uninhibited assimilation would view the selection of marriage partners as an indicator that color would not be a barrier (Aguirre et al. 1995). An alternate approach would infer exogamy as a function of inequality in dominant, stratified societies. For Asian persons who partake in exogamy, marriage becomes a vehicle for the exchange of status

characteristics (Shinagawa and Pang 1988). The result is eurogamy. Eurogamy is a postcolonial, Western social phenomenon that pertains to marital patterns predisposed to selection by skin color per the Bleaching Syndrome (Hall 1997). On that basis, dark-skinned persons are presumed to be ineligible, though they be of equal or higher socioeconomic status. While some do marry dark-skinned people of color, Asian-descended males who marry exogamously or eurogamously are less likely to do so than females (Rhee 1988).

Eurogamy is a universally apparent manifestation of the Bleaching Syndrome. It is utilized as an assimilation strategy under the rubric of Western colonial domination. It is the preferred marital pattern of a darker-skinned group (factually or as metaphor), Asian Americans, into a lighter-skinned group (factually or as metaphor), Eurocentric mainstream. In acquiring Eurocentric genes via marriage, the stigma of being Asian is altered in offspring. This phenomenon is most frequent among Asian Americans who settle in large urban centers.

In New York City, Asians who practice eurogamy tend to be second generation or later, born in America, female, older, better educated, of higher occupational status, and have higher incomes (Sung 1990). These urbanized citizens are associated less with the customarily closed Asian community. Whether or not their marrying eurogamously adversely affects their children has not been substantiated, but their children do appear to have problems (Sung 1990).

Perhaps the most spectacular manifestation of the Bleaching Syndrome among Asian populations is referred to as “brown racism.” According to Washington (1990), brown racism is perpetrated by Chinese, Filipino, and South Asians against dark-skinned persons of African descent. It is a variation of discrimination that probably occurred as a result of Western colonization. The behaviors are obvious but seldom addressed given the portrayal of discrimination as a purely black/white racial issue.

The Bleaching Syndrome, while active in the USA, is quite apparent in nations abroad. To its credit, Israel is one of the few postmillennium international countries where true ethnic diversity exists. Perhaps more than any other culture, it encompasses a rich mixture of skin colors, languages, and religions (Ashkenazi and Wein 1983). Unfortunately, what is to its credit has also caused problems. Increased diversity has led to discrimination by various factions for the conduct of policy on the basis of being light- or dark-skinned (Henik et al. 1985). Different languages and religions contribute to the tension, but the color of skin is by far the most potent factor.

Those with the darkest in skin color among Jewish Semites are arguably the Beta Israel or Ethiopian Jews sometimes referred to as Black Jews or Falasha (Yilmah 1996). They do not “look Jewish” nor do they pretend to look Jewish. Many of the women have intermarried with tribes of varied skin colors—some Hamitic and some Semite. Opinions as to their migration to Israel are varied. But some insist that discrimination pertaining to the color of their skin is a major source of conflict. In fact, Ethiopian Semites in Israel are in more quality of life jeopardy than those who are lighter-skinned from the Soviet Union.

Assisted by Israeli Semites in the spring of 1979 and early 1980, the American Association for Ethiopian Jews unified significant numbers of Ethiopian Semites with their families in Israel (Yilmah 1996). The organizations worked with Christians in Ethiopia and Ethiopian Semites in Israel to substantiate the authenticity of the persons who were rescued. However, matters grew tense when an Israeli Jewish Agency threatened the association. Pressure from other Jewish organizations and several US senators in 1980 convinced the Jewish Agency to implement a family unification program, much like the one developed by the American Association for Ethiopian Jews. Tensions were relieved after various factions agreed to cooperate. The co-op was a successful strategy. A considerable number of Ethiopian Semites joined their families in Israel. However, Israel remained reluctant to permit migration of Ethiopian Semites for a number of reasons. The late Emperor Haile Selassie opposed migration until 1974. It was not until 1975 that the Law of Return satisfied the Israeli government opposition to the entry of dark-skinned Ethiopians. Today, an unspoken inferiorization remains in Israel—that of Ethiopian Semites associated with a pattern of color discrimination that is indicative of the Bleaching Syndrome in Western world countries (Foulkes 1994).

In India, “brown Jews,” or Bene Israel non-European Jews as they are called, reside for the most part near Bombay in Rangoon, Calcutta, and Malabar (Barton 1934). Their skin color is a shade of brown, and their features look more like those of Hindus rather than the typical Semite. Even so, brown Jews state emphatically that they are in no way a product of Hindu miscegenation. Brown Jews divide themselves into two distinct castes: “black” and “white.” Inter marriage for women is vehemently opposed. Many among the white caste—Gora—are darker in skin color than those of the black caste, but insist upon the “white” terminology nevertheless. Poverty and the extreme heat of the Indian climate over the years are the rationale for their complexions having darkened.

As per the Bleaching Syndrome, white Jews maintain numerous methods for separating themselves. Jews who are deemed as inferior, such as black Jews, are not allowed to touch white-Jew kitchen utensils and are served ritualistic wine only after white Jews have been served. While relations between the two groups in India appear cordial today, the lines of demarcation in this male-dominated society remain ever poised for group confrontation.

Consistent with Australian diplomat Cavan Hogue (Garrett 1999), the most obvious indications of the Bleaching Syndrome among Asian populations globally exist in the attitudes of the Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans (Garrett 1999). All three peoples have a significant degree of racial homogeneity within their population. It is among the Japanese that the strongest evidence of the Bleaching Syndrome exists. They have historically maintained myths that rationalize the superiority of light-skinned people, which has been relevant to inferiorization of dark-skinned people. Thus, according to the Japanese, the global population is composed of the light-skinned idealized and their inferiorized counterparts referred to as *ghigin*. It should come as little surprise that this belief would be relevant to Japan’s treatment of non-Japanese—particularly the dark-skinned. Furthermore, the Japanese were no less arrogant and brutal in their management of colonial subjects than Europeans

(Chang 1997). Color discrimination in Japan is manifested by a strong sense of superiority, which they apply on the basis of skin color thereby ranking those darkest at the very bottom. The same system is applied to Japanese citizens who may be among Japan's minority group.

In *The Rape of Nanking*, author Iris Chang refers to the cruelty and brutality of the Japanese toward the Chinese during their colonial occupation (Chang 1997). However, the Japanese and the Chinese are not so different in their discrimination against dark-skinned people. Like the Japanese, the Chinese have historically regarded themselves superior to dark-skinned people. Any descendants of Africans are considered barbarians who would welcome the opportunity to stain the purity of Chinese blood. As a result, when Chinese students traveled abroad to be educated, they were warned by their elders not to return married to a "black devil," whom was not perceived as human (Garrett 1999). So-called black devils were, of course, dark-skinned people from Africa and various Western locations. Hence, as with the Chinese, those who were dark-skinned occupied a rank so low on the scale of human existence as not to even be considered worthy of denigration. This ranking is still apparent in a recent rock-throwing incident by hundreds of Chinese students who descended unprovoked upon visiting African students to mainland China (Washington 1990).

In the interest of objectivity, the issue of color discrimination as per the Bleaching Syndrome in China is much more complex than the Western version. China did in fact assimilate Mongolian and Manchu invaders, whom they regarded as barbaric. Furthermore, China also absorbed a population of minorities, making the issue of skin color in many ways confusing to non-Chinese observers. In their logic, to be superior is to be light-skinned and Chinese, which would create great difficulty for the assimilation of any foreigner. In contrast, Chinese living off the mainland in places such as Hong Kong participate actively in exogamy. In fact, in postmillennium nations—such as Australia—the Chinese engage in exogamy more than any other migrant group, but not with dark-skinned people (Garrett 1999).

Attributable to the Bleaching Syndrome, people of color actively engage their own inferiorization at home and abroad. Those of African descent have been the decided focus, but indicative of pathology evidence, also have been the internalization of alien Western ideals. Subsequently, in Canada a 16-year-old girl of African descent, a student named Grace, gets up in the morning and while standing in front of the mirror is hurt by what she sees as herself (Hall 2008). The image that is reflected in the mirrors is one that causes her to be severely depressed. She does not like her kinky-permed-straight African hair in a world where almost all idealized hair is straight. Her nose is broad and her lips are thick in a world where idealized noses are keen and lips thin. Her dark brown eyes suggest she is ugly and hence inferior. Having no way to escape, she resorts to applying bleaching creams to her skin. Each time she resorts to the bleaching creams is an opportunity to escape her self-convinced ugliness. With each application, she can approach diversion from her inferiorized dark ugliness and get closer to the idealized light-skinned Western ideal. When the cream wears off, Grace is forced to acknowledge the fact that she is black. She is convinced by way of the Bleaching Syndrome that she is undesirable

to men, and only by bleaching to lighten her skin can she be rescued from her fate. She believes her failure to bleach will sentence her to a life of horror and shame in her dark skin (Hall 2008).

A similar girl of African descent named Latoya is a 17-year-old Jamaican who is determined to bleach her skin, which the locals call “brownin’” (Hall 2008). Brownin’ is a Jamaican term used all over the Caribbean island in reference to blacks who have light skin. La Toya applies thick layers of bleaching creams to her face despite the fact that some may contain dangerous steroids. She is aware that the warning labels advise her that the practice of bleaching could damage her skin. Without concern, she goes about daily bleaching because she is pleased with what she sees of herself. “When I walk on the streets you can hear people say, ‘Hey, check out the brownin.’ It is cool. It looks pretty.” This Latoya wants more than anything else. “When you are lighter, people pay more attention to you. It makes you more important” (Hall 2008).

Ms. Selina Margaret Oppong is a 50-year-old African woman living in Africa who started bleaching her skin “with the aim to brighten up the skin.” Her counterpart hairstylist, Ms. Maama Adwoa, is against the idea of bleaching as a practice for beautifying “ugly” dark African skin. She contends that fading, as it is called, does little good. African women fade “because they think they might look beautiful.” Another woman named Cecilia Animahh is inclined to be even more frank. “In Ghana,” according to her, “some of the men want bleaching girls.” That being so, it appears that getting a light skin that glows is all but impossible for the naturally dark-skinned African women. “I started bleaching 2 years ago but stopped because I started developing very bad stretch marks,” according to Ms. Diana Gyaamfua, who is 28 years old. Added to the incidence of stretch marks is the fact that those who bleach their skin eventually begin to look like they have been sunburned. Their faces develop a brick red and puffy look associated with black grotesque-looking splotches (Chisholm 2002).

In more extreme reactions to skin bleaching, African women incur increased risks to their health, leading to the disruption of organ performance. “There is suspicion of an increased risk of renal failure as a result of the mercury contained in some of the products that people use for bleaching,” according to African Dr. Doe (Hall 2008). Unfortunately too many women who bleach do not seek medical help until it is too late. This has spurred an effort on the part of doctors to promote public service announcements in hopes of educating the people to the dangers of bleaching. As with Maama Adwoa, she has encountered “stop bleaching” announcements in the media. “They say we should stop bleaching because of skin cancer and skin disease. But people don’t want to listen because they don’t know . . .” (Hall 2008). In the end, they develop such bad skin problems that they can no longer go out into the sun without risking more problems. The extent of such persons in Africa is becoming so widespread that some women are beginning to exercise caution. Unfortunately, in the reversal, other women are applying additional creams in hopes of getting their skin back to its natural state of color. But for women who are uneducated about bleaching and who have relied on Western beauty products, various West African nations continue to object to bleaching. For example, in Gambia, the government

has decided to outlaw all skin-bleaching products including Bu-Tone, Madonna Cream, Glo-Tone, and the American-made Ambi. Gambia decided to be lenient on those caught with bleached skin. Furthermore, officials in Europe have also begun to take issue with the practice as Denmark has also banned skin-bleaching creams and soaps. Officials there have traveled to a number of local African shops and confiscated the products. Unfortunately, Tura, a product outlawed by Danes, is still popular in Ghana and other African countries. While the business community may find these actions extreme, doctors concur that they are not without reason (Hall 2008).

Despite its painful reality, the Bleaching Syndrome is an essential fact of human endeavor regardless of where it is accepted or applied. Anywhere in the world, at any point in history, it has been a factor—particularly in heterogeneous societies. As long as less powerful people of color assimilate via colonial domination, it will remain relevant. To the extent people of color are willing to engage in their own inferiorization, it can become a factor in seemingly unrelated social ills, such as skin disease, racial confrontations, and pointless litigation. However, not every person of color elects to submit to the Bleaching Syndrome. While it is a critical social pathology, its absence in the discourse of Western academe amounts to an assault upon science. Psychology, counseling, sociology, and social work are conspicuous in their Eurocentric editing of scientific evidence. Most notable among the four is social work, where diversity and social justice are the mantras for some of its leading and most prestigious schools. Their editing is no less apparent in social work literature and content.

Relative to the Eurocentric editing of social work literature is the trivialization of skin color. Such trivialization is a postcolonial event that has dominated social work's literature throughout history of the profession (Monteiro 2000). This otherwise obvious assumption is not the least subject to challenge, as indicated by the Social Work Abstracts database. Between 1965 and 2004, the following topics are documented in the literature: AIDS = 2,628; children = 20,529; domestic violence = 492; elderly = 2,683; foster care = 1,541; G/L = 468; gender = 2,599; handicap = 281; homeless = 622; immigrants = 740; mental illness = 3,985; poor people = 507; poverty = 2,242; refugees = 281; rural social work = 1,679; skin color = 23; spousal abuse = 157; substance abuse = 1,587; and women = 7,086. Of particular note are the numbers of journal articles on women (7,086) relative to the number of articles on skin color (Washington 1990). Consequently, of the 23 journal articles published on skin color, none appear in the two social work journals dedicated specifically to women's issues. In the aftermath of trivialization, threats to women of color's physical and psychological health worldwide are deemed insignificant given their inferiorized status. What is more, in social work textbooks such as *Understanding Human Behavior and the Social Environment* (Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman 1990), the issue of skin color as it pertains to content on people of color is omitted from the index and the 300-plus pages of text, which compromises the Bleaching Syndrome as a worthwhile issue.

Schools of social work and the professional organizations in their knowledge base are no doubt a recapitulation of the Western colonial world order, which

has been sustained by a Western geopolitical tradition since the era of Europe's global imperialism. In addition, as part of a geopolitical tradition, the social work knowledge base originated largely in the West. Thus, until 1945, all mainstream social work literature had been manufactured in the West, including the colonial powers of France, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, and the USA. Furthermore, despite the twenty-first-century globalization of knowledge, social work's knowledge base remains a bastion of Eurocentric operatives (Iida 2000). Commensurate with these operatives, issues deemed to be significant evolved in correlation to Eurocentric problems, Eurocentric solutions, and Eurocentric perspectives of man's universe, such as Eurocentrism. Hence, it was virtually inevitable that the study of social issues as they pertain to the Western academe would be an extension of that tradition. Subsequently, all social science texts and peer-reviewed journals have become a marketing outlet for various manifestations of Eurocentrism (Holton 2000). People of color who excel in its domain are evidence of the Bleaching Syndrome by their ability to accommodate a perspective that may be alien to their personal views or counter to the well-being of their ethnic group. This pronounced contradiction between the ethos of academia and the experiences of an increasingly diverse student and practitioner population mandates profound challenges to academe's current structure and ideological configuration. In order to remain viable, it must accommodate flexibility in the focus of its knowledge base to facilitate emerging trends in population and paradigm shifts. The inability to do so will encourage accusations of solipsism from the very populations it proposes to serve: the uneducated and people of color (Barak 2000). The implication of this solipsism is that books, journals, and other literature comprising the knowledge base will convert to something myopic in both shape and substance. The Western academy, in particular, will then lend itself increasingly to Eurocentric standards at the expense of universally relevant and comprehensive knowledge (Park and Green 2000). This will stifle study of the Bleaching Syndrome among people of color and further jeopardize their existential well-being.

Acknowledging the Bleaching Syndrome has been met by the most minimal of possibilities. The Eurocentric intelligentsia—including those of color—would argue that any accusations of bias are little more than disputes between one faction, trying to bring about an objective science, and another faction, for reasons of intellectual discourse in opposition. In a postmillennium effort to accommodate the movement of people of color into Western cultural environments, this dichotomy is anachronistic. Prior to the emergence of diversity and social justice as valued cultural phenomena, scholars did not generally equate the Bleaching Syndrome with rigorous, significant, intellectual content. They disagreed about many things, but most shared a commitment to their self-serving version of reality. Subsequently, a universal predisposition by people of color to the Bleaching Syndrome had not been subjected to intellectual debate. Thus, those who might have disagreed with any other than Eurocentric paradigms were relegated to the fringes of the academy. What followed is the standardization of all things Eurocentric, which manifest in the absence of an objective reality.

There is evidence of an increasingly apparent objective reality that has existed for centuries across the global spectrum. Similar to people of color, its existence has been inferiorized by tradition of a Western colonial alien ideal (Russell et al. 1992). The acknowledgment of this reality would challenge much of Eurocentric scholarship, which has failed to search beyond its own narcissism. Thus, the Western accusations of hegemony hurled from the inferiorized corners of nontraditional scholarship have been rescued and validated by an alternative more global reality subject only to the whims of scientific fact. It is discernible by people of color in their quests to escape the intellectual hegemony of alien ideals. This seemingly impossible contradiction between the canonization of the preferred ideal versus the worldwide salience of what is real is made possible by universality of the Bleaching Syndrome.

Lastly, the ability to accurately perceive, conceptualize, and interact with people of color is a necessity in a rapidly changing and complex world. In order to enhance harmony and reduce tenacious threats of colonization and inferiorization, concerned citizens of the world must acknowledge that all groups have assets, capacities, and strengths that should be reinforced despite denigration by an often-elusive power structure (Feagin and Feagin 1996). Since many of these assets are derived from cultural legacies, such as cultural technologies, all peoples of the world must increase and diversify their knowledge base considerably. Otherwise, their lack of education could contribute to the extinction of an irreplaceable component of mankind that might prove to be an antidote to intolerance. Furthermore, at a time of increased contacts between the world's various populations, members of Western civilization are confronted by issues and perspectives—such as the Bleaching Syndrome—that did not require intellectual consideration in the past (Hall 2001). They are thus challenged to develop creative and inclusive strategies that are less confined to and by Western bias. Additionally, social science, including social work journal editors, book publishers, and other affiliates of the “fact”-manufacturing industry, must be actively receptive to the Bleaching Syndrome and other alternative views. That reception must remain consistent and viable without interruption from unpredictable events to sustain the integrity and prestige of Western civilization. Doing so will accommodate comprehension and indeed acknowledgment of a worldwide reality introduced by the chapters that follow.

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Chapter 2

The Historical and Cultural Influences of Skin Bleaching in Tanzania

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Skin bleaching is a practice involving the application of topical creams, gels, soaps, and household products such as toothpaste, bleach, washing powder, or battery acid to lighten the skin expeditiously (Mahè et al. 2003). This practice has become increasingly more common around the world (Mahè et al. 2003). However, research suggests that African communities may be the heaviest users due to their increasing use of easily accessible local concoctions made from household chemicals and over-the-counter creams (Lewis et al. 2009; Ly et al. 2007). Skin bleaching rates in Africa are high, but also vary widely by city—from a low of 25% in Bamako, Mali, to an estimated 70% in Lagos, Nigeria (Mahè et al. 2003). High rates of skin bleaching have also been found in Dakar, Senegal (53%), and Lome, Togo (60%) (Mahè et al. 2003; Pitche et al. 2005). Although some men engage in skin-bleaching practices and do so with more regularity in particular regions of Africa (North Africa), women are the most frequent users across the continent of Africa (Ajose 2005).

Skin-bleaching products typically contain at least one of three bleaching agents: hydroquinone, corticosteroids, and/or mercury (Faye et al. 2005; Mahè et al. 2003).

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In Africa, skin-bleaching practices are particularly dangerous because bleaching products commonly contain high amounts of these agents, far exceeding safe levels, and users often mix these unsafe creams with household chemicals like battery acid, toothpaste, or washing powder (Ajose 2005; Pitche et al. 2005). This causes the skin to become fragile and irritable, putting bleachers at high risk for serious skin conditions that pose both aesthetic and medical complications, including skin lesions, hyperpigmentation, ochronosis,¹ eczema, scabies, and severe acne (Faye et al. 2005; Ly et al. 2007). The long-term use of skin-bleaching creams is also linked to a higher risk of developing cancers, hypertension, diabetes, liver and kidney disease or failure, and infertility (Pitche et al. 2005; Ramsay et al. 2003). In fact, research in sub-Saharan Africa suggests that skin bleaching is a major contributor to the high incidence of skin cancer and leukemia in Africa and among the four leading malignancies in Africa (Amir et al. 1992). Despite these great risks, skin bleaching is still prevalent on the African continent.

In recent years, more research has focused on attempting to understand skin bleaching in North, West, and Southern Africa, but few studies have examined skin bleaching in East Africa despite its increasing prevalence rates nearing 30% and observed use (Lewis et al. 2009). Only a handful of scholars have recently examined skin bleaching in East Africa, and Tanzania—the largest geographic East African country—is the main hub where this empirical research has taken place.

In their attempt to understand the demography of skin bleachers in Tanzania, Lewis et al. (2010) found several common characteristics among users. Findings suggest users are typically older (20+ years), higher income earners, married, and from the southwest region of Tanzania (a higher income-earning region due to tourism, and with increased access to manufactured mercury skin-bleaching products due to gold and copper-lead mines). Lewis et al. (2010) also found that skin bleachers in Tanzania have higher internalized Eurocentric standards of beauty as well as political affiliations with the Civic United Front party (CUF)—a nationally based liberal political party that is heavily represented by Zanzibaris of mixed ancestry. Lewis et al. (2010) argue that individuals possessing these common characteristics likely have greater access to resources such as higher quantities and more potent skin-bleaching creams and possess more widespread idealized beliefs that lighter skin is better than darker skin possibly due to the influences of westernization and neocolonialism on subordinate groups.

In a related study, Lewis et al. (2011) found that there are six key motivations behind why Tanzanians bleach their skin: (1) to remove pimples, rashes, and skin disease; (2) to have soft skin; (3) to be white, “beautiful,” and look more European; (4) to remove the adverse affects of extended skin bleaching use on the body; (5) to satisfy one’s partner or attract male mates; and (6) to satisfy and

¹Ochronosis is the deposition of dark pigment in connective tissues, usually due to exposure to chemicals such as phenolic compounds or hydroquinone. <http://www.medterms.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=39942>

impress peers. The authors (2011) argue that these contemporary motivations are linked to cultural contributions in society (namely, colonization and westernization) and psychological contributions (namely, objectification—the internalization and repercussion of oppressive and often unobtainable beauty standards set by dominant groups for subordinate groups). Despite these key findings, to date, no published research literature has examined how the historical legacies of slavery, colonization, and westernization in Tanzania, East Africa, may have shaped internalized dominant cultural ideals that have resulted in the dangerous bleaching of skin.

This chapter fills a major gap in the research literature by taking an exploratory look at the institutions of slavery, colonization, and westernization that may have placed Tanzanians in a color-conscious society and fueled potent skin-color ideals that resulted in skin bleaching among subordinate groups. This examination has great potential to inform our understanding of current skin-bleaching practices and the related prevention or intervention efforts underway in Tanzania.

Historical and Cultural Influences: Institutions That Placed Tanzanians in a Color-Conscious Society

A number of historical legacies have placed Tanzanians in a society that is conscious of color. These historical legacies, namely, slavery, colonization, and westernization, may have shaped a national and cross-national consciousness of color that distinguishes lighter-skinned members of the population from darker-skinned members, based on power and privilege. These historical legacies (spearheaded by dominant groups) and their remnants have instilled values and perceptions over time, both directly and indirectly; that lighter-skinned members of the community are somehow “better,” more powerful, and privileged than darker-skinned members (Keith and Herring 1991). This has disproportionately negatively affected members from subordinate groups (often darker) because they are unable to live up to the criteria set by members of dominant (lighter) groups. Yet for dominant groups, hierarchies built on color distinctions are an “effective mechanism for sustaining control” by allowing for and justifying unequal distribution of resources and the exploitation of the powerless. This method of control has persisted for centuries and is still evident today (Hall 2003) with the presence of a racially stratified distribution of power and status that is demarcated by skin color in both Tanzania and the rest of the world, which often results in the bleaching of skin (Hall 2000). These historical legacies and the mechanisms of education, politics, and religion that are used to perpetuate these notions of power and privilege around skin color and ultimate skin-bleaching practices in Tanzania are discussed.

Enslaved by the Arabs

Tanzania, commonly known today as the United Republic of Tanzania, is the largest geographic East African country, bordered by Kenya and Uganda to the north; Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo to the west; and Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique to the south. Tanzania includes the former state of Tanganyika and three small Indian Ocean islands—Zanzibar, Pemba, and Mafia—that are located 16–31 miles (25–50 km) from the coast.

As early as 800 A.D., these islands were important ports for trade from as far north as Arabia, the Persian Gulf, India, and China (Elkiss 1973). As Arab nations were in the midst of turbulent times with political turmoil, famine, and floods, many sought out settlements in Tanzania to start anew in an effort to establish positions of power in economic, religious, and political sectors (Martin 1974). Arabs began trading across the Indian Ocean to Persia, India, and China: gold, ivory, rhino horns, leopard skins, tortoise shells, and ambergris from whales; they also commenced interrelations with the native Tanzanians.² Many aspects of their own traditional Islamic religion and Arabic culture were shared with the indigenous Tanzanians they encountered, and, as a result, a new culture emerged that was a mixture of both Bantu African and Middle Eastern peoples. Intermarriage became a common practice that impacted many facets of life including the language of the people and created a by-product of the two cultures—Swahili (Lodhi 1994; Martin 1974; Schmidt and Walz 2007), which included people of mixed Arab and Bantu heritage that were generally lighter-skinned than the original inhabitants of Tanzania. Historically, little relevance was given to differing physical attributes such as skin tone; however, the increase in trade between Arabia and Africa as well as the onset of African enslavement by Arabs soon changed the consciousness of skin color across the nation and set the stage for later skin-bleaching practices (Harries 1964).

Around 1000 A.D., harmonious relations shifted to the brutal domination of the indigenous Tanzanian people by the Arab settlers as more Arabians arrived in search of opportunities to capitalize on Africa's increasingly lucrative, east-coast trade market (Elkiss 1973). Zanzibar was settled as a trading hub, and Swahili towns conducted a thriving trade that linked Africans in the interior, with trade partners throughout the Indian Ocean. Although spices, cotton, copper, and gold were among the chief exports, it was the trade of ivory and enslaved Tanzanians that became the most prominent and most profitable aspect of commerce.

By the beginning of the tenth century, the slave trade was in full force and the dominant Arab groups had established criteria by which the subordinate Tanzanians were expected to live. First, Arabs subjugated the indigenous Tanzanians to positions as laborers on plantations, builders of stone towns, human transporters

²Throughout the text, the term Tanzanian(s) is used to describe the original inhabitants of the central region of East Africa (hunter-gatherer communities, Cushitic- and Khoisan-speaking people, Bantu-speaking people, and Nilotic pastoralists mainly in South Sudan).

of ivory, domestic workers, or submissive concubines. Subsequently, Arabs imposed their religions and, in many ways, forced Tanzanians to adopt new religious beliefs in order to maintain universal control and order and to avoid exposure to other religious teachings that might result in African uprisings (Holway 1972). To further sustain the institution of slavery, Arab enslavers tortured and brutalized Tanzanians; they denigrated and forced them to adopt the beliefs and many cultural practices of the Arabs (Mazrui 1975). Essentially the ideas of their own heritage and culture (including Black or African pride) were reduced to a position of inferiority, making them conscious of the physical characteristics of separate social status, which over time arguably influenced many Black Tanzanians to aspire to be like the lighter Arab communities (Eastman 1988).

Arabs further reinforced these subordinating attitudes among Tanzanians by establishing a color hierarchy, within which dark-skinned Tanzanians were considered “primitive” and inferior to lighter-skinned Arabs (Torgovnick 1990). Literature argues that this hierarchy further fueled the earlier development of a widespread color consciousness, whereby “light” skin was considered more powerful, and “dark” skin represented powerlessness and subjection (Glassman 2004). Scholars believe this too laid the foundation for later widespread skin-bleaching practices that would ultimately be adopted by indigenous Tanzanians. One such example is how enslaved East African women absorbed the beliefs of the dominant culture and aspired to resemble the characteristics and beautification practices of the dominant Arab women whom they serviced (Eastman 1988). By painting themselves with henna and making attempts to lighten their skin by rubbing it with ground sandalwood—a tree that is an active ingredient in skin whitening mixtures (Eastman 1988)—women attempted to look like their enslavers and adopt their characteristics of power and privilege because of the criteria bestowed upon them. These earlier attempts to emulate the dominant group illustrate how instrumental slavery was in creating a society that was conscious of color, which in turn fueled potent skin-color ideals resulting in physically altering one’s appearance. As a function of this experience, Tanzanians developed a heightened awareness of the extent to which inferiority was attached to their existence, and the privilege associated with being Arab (Eastman 1988). Essentially, the strains of existing in a labor-intensive environment, where their culture and values were denigrated, created a breeding ground for suffering and a diminished self-image that further laid the foundation for skin-bleaching practices among many Tanzanians (Moodley 1991). This lasted for nearly a thousand years, through Arab enslavement and Portuguese reign, and was again perpetuated via British control, German colonialism and ongoing westernization (Mazrui 1975).

Controlled by the British, Colonized by the Germans

The Arabs, who had been enslaving Africans for centuries and profiting greatly from the trade of enslaved Tanzanians and other goods, experienced a dramatic reduction in its economy with the British abolition of slavery in 1867; they resorted

to trading spices such as cloves, sugar, and indigo as an alternative to the lucrative ivory and slave trade (Nicolini 2006; Kaufmann and Pape 1999). As the new market in Tanzania became deficient in sustaining itself in comparison to the wealth it previously generated, the country grew increasingly dependent on the monetary assistance of the British, which created another layer of power and domination (Eliot 1905).

Influenced by the Age of Enlightenment, many British believed that they were the chosen people, and had a social, political, and moral responsibility to bring “light” to the “dark” parts of Africa (Alpers 2009). Hence, British missionaries set up schools and converted most of the remaining indigenous Tanzanians to Christianity (Harries 1964). This was done in an effort to “liberate” African people and “save” them from their “paganistic” teachings (Mazrui 2005). Like the Arabs, British missionaries further perpetuated widespread myths about what it meant to be African, through religious teachings. As religious conversions and racial mixing continued in Tanzania, there emerged an even clearer distinction in the social order between the “haves” and the “have nots,” which was generally aligned to color. With the recognition of this division came a wider-spread color consciousness and engagement in skin-bleaching practices (Aminzade 2003).

Germany was slow in seizing control of territories during the scramble for Africa (the European rush to colonize parts of Africa at the end of the nineteenth century), as they were preoccupied with both an economic boost brought by industrialization as well as a war with France (Koponen 1993). However, as Germany began to rise as a European nation, it proceeded, as the others, to occupy Tanzania (Wright 1969). By 1890, the Germans controlled virtually all of what is Tanzania today (Yang 2008) and had created regional buffers around their settler posts to further separate and disempower African communities while attempting to create an environment that looked like Europe (Yang 2008). This left mainland Tanzanians to endure the brutal occupation of German rule, which was based on White supremacy (Cana 1916). This division only deepened the spread of color consciousness throughout the nation and region and arguably further widened the spread of skin-bleaching practices by Tanzanians as they attempted to live up to not only the long-standing standards of the Arabs but also the standards set in place by White Europeans (Eastman 1988).

The Cycle Continues: Postcolonization

The cycle of domination, color consciousness, and skin bleaching continued even after colonization. For nearly 30 years, German rule negatively impacted Tanzania—contributing to not only the denigration of its inhabitants but to the death of over 200,000 Tanzanians by way of war, murder, and forced famine (Sunsuri

2003). Although the brutal German reign prompted East African resistance, in the successful Maji Maji rebellion from 1905 to 1907 and other key revolutions that led to Tanzania's independence in 1961 and unification of the United Republic of Tanzania in 1964 (Monson 1998), the nearly 1,000 years of social, political, and economic power completely possessed by dominant groups who were other than native Africans left a major imprint in the fibers of the countries' consciousness.

Because the development of a color-conscious society had been brewing in Tanzania for centuries, even when slavery ended and liberation began and the indigenous populations were given control of their own territory, the same counterproductive color consciousness ruled their opportunities. For instance, among their own communities, lighter skin tones determined higher social status, and the more Tanzanians assimilated to the dominate European and Arab culture, the better their chances were for positions of power (Mwakikagile 2006). Lighter-skinned individuals and those of mixed race were often the preferred group for positions of power and were frequently utilized as a buffer between the darker indigenous Tanzanian communities and the former rulers because those with lighter skin assumed the proximity in skin tone to their own and that made them more relatable to both groups. The consciousness of color that determined employment, housing, places of worship, and so forth was not only established by the dominant Arab and European groups but was accepted by the Tanzanians themselves (Mazrui 2005). It is arguable whether, in contemporary times, these beliefs and attitudes about color and self-identity slowed during Julius Nyerere's leadership as the first Tanzanian prime minister and president (1961–1985), with his infusion of self-reliance and Ujamaa³ (Spalding 1996).

After Nyerere's term, Ali Hassan Mwinyi took presidential office and made the first steps to reverse the socialist policies of Nyerere. He relaxed import restrictions, encouraged private enterprise, and, during his second term, multiparty politics were introduced under pressure from foreign donors. Often referred to as Mzee Rukhsa ("Everything goes"), Mwinyi's regime was characterized by a high degree of corruption and widespread tax evasion that flourished during his term (Heilman and Ndumbaro 2002). Many argue that during Mwinyi's tenure, the country did not have a proper and disciplined monetary policy because inflation was rampant and there was limited regulation over the type of products imported into the country (including dangerous skin-bleaching products with high concentrations of toxic agents) (Nyang'oro 2004). This created a breeding ground for the skin-bleaching practices that were already in effect from centuries before. Now members of the community could gain easy access to commercial skin-bleaching products in conjunction with their long-standing home remedies, and the idea caught on. This was the onset of westernization and neocolonialism.

³Ujamaa is an African model of development that formed the basis of African socialism, relinquished dependence on foreign entities, and encouraged community and nation-building (Spalding 1996).

Westernization and Neocolonialism

After the colonial era ended, Western influences persevered, albeit in different forms, including the global media that flooded Tanzania and the East African region. For years, billboard and print advertising in Tanzania portrayed Europeans and Arabs as the image of beauty. At the same time, the devaluing of darker skin continued as an accepted practice across the African continent (Blay 2009).

Only recently have print advertising (billboards, magazines, newspapers) and electronic media advertising (television, film) in Tanzania begun to feature Tanzanians with a range of different skin colors, though the predominant shade is still one of lighter skin and power. For, example, in the heart of the market place of Kariakoo in Dar es Salaam, there is an advertisement for mobile phone service on the largest building. It displays a series of individual images of people of different ethnic backgrounds (African, Indian, Arab). Each person's image is divided through the center of the face, one side being lighter than the other. All the lighter halves are depicted as professionals (businessmen, doctors) and the darker halves are depicted as either skilled workers (chefs, bartenders) or are unemployed. This illustrates the power associated with lighter skin.

Similarly, only recently has the cosmetic industry produced cosmetics to suit darker skin (Westerhof 1997), such as Dark-N-Lovely and Revlon products. Still, most material objects used to display or emulate fashion and beauty in and around Tanzania today are products made for European consumers. For example, the aisles of single chain retail stores are amassed with White manikins, European hair products for White women with packaging pictures of European women, or—more recently—European-looking, fair-skinned Blacks (Hunter 2011); entire aisles are dedicated solely to White dolls for young Tanzanian children.

Along these same lines, there is arguably little value placed on the health and safety of African people by many European and Middle Eastern distributors of skin-bleaching products (Malangu 2006). Although there is a complete ban in Tanzania on skin-bleaching products containing the harmful quantities of hydroquinone, mercury, or steroids, they are legally manufactured but not sold in European countries—only to be exported to Africa and abroad (BlackWater Media Group 2009). This is an example of neocolonialism, whereby a stronger country or set of countries exploit a weaker one and use the weaker country's resources (money from skin-bleaching product sales) to strengthen and enrich the stronger country's economy.

Colonialism and westernization can be understood as intersecting rather than as a distinct, unrelated phenomena. In its aftermath, colonialism left a region vulnerable to Western influences, including media images that portrayed lighter-skinned individuals as valuable and more powerful. Western media images (light-skinned, Black, Arab, or multiracial) reinforced the earlier racial hierarchies that were in place in Tanzania, presenting lighter skin as more beautiful and preferable than darker skin. Tanzanian men used these standards as a measure for suitable marriage partners and, in some ethnic groups, a gauge for a higher bride price to be paid

to women's families (Jaenen 1956). In turn, women aspired to live up to these standards. This has fueled, and continues to fuel, the color consciousness that exists in modern-day Tanzania, which has been documented in recent research (Lewis et al. 2011) on skin bleaching as one of the chief motivations for why women especially engage in skin-bleaching practices (to satisfy their mates). As a result, many women perceive light skin to be the more desired attribute and want to be accepted by peers and chosen as a wife, so they are more likely to bleach their skin (Lewis et al. 2009). Exactly how this color consciousness ignites potent skin-color ideals that result in efforts to assimilate into dominant groups is discussed next.

How Color-Conscious Societies Fuel Potent Skin-Color Ideals That Result in Efforts to Assimilate into Dominant Groups

As discussed earlier, the racial hierarchies produced by majority domination and colonization have fueled the development of color-conscious societies. Within such societies, one's value and status is often determined by skin color and how closely it approximates whiteness (Wallace 2009). Harry Hoetink's theory of somatic norm image similarly suggests that a group interprets its hierarchal placement based on physical attributes, such as skin tone, hair texture, and so forth. The oppressed position of the enslaved during slavery and colonization perpetuated an unfavorable self-image; therefore they identified with the subordinate placement (Oostindie 1996). These ideologies create global colorism, a framework that suggests that the uppermost individuals in status are those who approximate to the dominant group (e.g., Europeans or Arabs), and the darkest are among the lesser extreme (Hall 2001).

It is purported that "anywhere in the world where domination is the preferred model of assimilation, the characteristics (i.e., skin color) of the dominated groups will be stigmatized" (Hall 1995, 179). In line with this, the social structures of color-conscious societies like Tanzania initiate a systematic process whereby individuals of a darker complexion are stigmatized and oppressed due to their skin color, while greater access to opportunities, resources, and improved outcomes in areas of educational attainment, occupational choices, earning potential, and marriageability is afforded to individuals with lighter skin (Hunter 2004).

Intrapsychic Conflict and Motivation to Assimilate

The oppressive social conditions stemming from color-conscious societies hold significant psychological consequences for individuals of a darker complexion. For example, it is suggested that the association of darker skin and African genes with the increased likelihood of economic and social prejudice imposed by a

dominant group (e.g., Europeans and Arabs) may facilitate an intrapsychic conflict for individuals of a darker skin tone (Hall 2001, 1995). As people of color idealize beliefs about light skin under oppressive conditions, they may also simultaneously internalize negative beliefs about the self. This particular experience can cause an internal conflict and facilitate a negative sense of self-worth, feelings of inadequacy, and a rejection of personal physical traits that are inconsistent with the aesthetic ideal established by the dominant group.

Moreover, Howard Rabinowitz (1978) suggests that while these individuals may be successful in internalizing dominant culture ideals (standards of attractiveness and success) under the guise of oppression, it is likely that they will still be prohibited from gaining structural access to such privileges due to their skin color. W. E. B. Du Bois (Myrdal 1944) is one of the first noted scholars of his time to address the unique psychic conflict that people of color encounter in their attempts to assimilate to the dominant social group. He refers to this phenomenon as a “double consciousness,” and indicates that it was a response to cultural domination in color-ranking societies.

In an effort to reduce anxiety associated with this conflict and to escape stigma, some individuals may seek to assimilate because of the criteria set by members of the dominant group—by striving to acquire lighter skin through the process of skin bleaching (Brown-Glaude 2007; Hall 2005; Menke 2001). Researchers have referred to skin bleaching as both a method of assimilation into the dominant culture as well as an instrument of liberation used to enhance attractiveness, power, and opportunity to those who engage in the practice (Wallace 2009). Similarly, Kardiner and Ovesey (1951) contend that separation from the dominant majority group, as it pertains to stigma, privilege, and an unequal distribution of resources, can create a sense of hopelessness and despair, which may be the root to a psychic conflict that may cause engagement in dangerous skin-bleaching practices.

For example, Brown-Glaude (2007) observes that in European-colonized countries, like Jamaica [and Tanzania], there are perceptions that light-skinned individuals in the middle and upper classes typically fare better during economic turmoil than do darker-skinned individuals; these groups have managed to maintain their privileged positions and have actually thrived during economic hardships. This occurrence can facilitate the perception that skin color translates into real economic and social advantage. The structural aspect of color-conscious societies causes darker-skinned people to view skin bleaching as an avenue to overcome stigma and gain access to resources (mates, jobs, wealth), which can improve their life. Moreover, Beswick (2005) theorizes that in order to assimilate into the dominant society, dark-skinned Africans bleach their skin in an attempt to become more “Arab” (or European) looking, thus becoming a part of the higher social strata. Ultimately, it is suggested that, through these bleaching efforts, individuals become more optimistic about the possibility of assimilation, access to privileges commonly reserved for the dominant social group, and the quality of life that goes with it (Hall 1995).

Objectification theory has been employed as a conceptual framework in explaining the psychological processes and social conditions that may motivate individuals to engage in skin bleaching (Lewis et al. 2011). Objectification theory suggests that individuals often internalize socialized (and often imposed) values and attitudes and incorporate them into their own sense of self (Fredrickson and Roberts 1997, 175). Objectification intertwined with oppression, and the imposed need to approximate the cultural ideals of beauty and status to achieve power, may facilitate the practice of skin bleaching (Lewis et al. 2011). Self-objectification and the ensuing experience of self-consciousness lead to the habitual monitoring of one's outside appearance and a negative evaluation of darker skin tones because of the standards instilled by dominant groups. An individual's quality of life is impacted by habitual body monitoring, resulting from self-objectification, and may be perpetually engaging as a strategy used to control how one may be perceived and treated by others (Fredrickson and Roberts 1997). Self-objectification has been identified as a significant factor in body shame (Tiggemann and Slater 2001), poor well-being (McKinley 1999; Mercurio and Landry 2008; Sinclair and Myers 2004), negative health outcomes (Noll and Fredrickson 1998), low self-esteem (Breines et al. 2008; Rosenberg 1988), and, more recently, the desire to obtain approval from others through the process of skin bleaching, as found in Tanzanian studies (Lewis et al. 2011).

Charles (2009a, b) also indicates that the idea of achieving "beauty" as defined by the dominant group in their image holds promise for power and status among subordinate groups. In line with this perspective and as previously noted, Lewis et al. (2011) identify six primary motivations for why Tanzanians bleach skin. Several of these motivations (including the desire to satisfy one's mate, desire to impress one's peers, desire to be more beautiful and white-looking) also suggest that, to some degree, in order to be more desirable, achieve social positioning, or feel more attractive, one would have to modify their existence in adhering to Western standards of beauty. These types of imposed pressures that exist in color-conscious societies may facilitate an intrapsychic conflict, whereby one may feel pressured to reject aspects of one's own physical attributes in order to be more acceptable to others. More specifically, for individuals of a darker complexion, the process of internalizing racist ideals of a color-conscious society (light skin) may often be in direct opposition with one's own physical appearance. As a result of this conflict, individuals may struggle internally relative to their self-concept and outwardly reject aspects of their physical identity. The experiences of bias, stigma, and discrimination, encountered by individuals who live in color-hierarchy societies, can interact to disrupt the formation of a coherent, positive sense of self and identity (Tummala-Narra 2007). Overall, the motives identified by Lewis et al. (2011) reveal that skin bleaching in some respects has deep psychological roots and may be a way of coping with the psychological suffering that some Africans (especially many Tanzanians) experience as a result of persistent historical affliction and stigma (Kpanake et al. 2010).

The Psychological Consequences of Living in Color-Conscious Societies

The societal stigma associated with having a darker complexion, and the globalization of the ideal of whiteness, jeopardizes the mental health of people of color (Hall 1995). It is further suggested that the global ideologies associated with colonization and enslavement (that darker skin is less beautiful and linked to a lower status) produce feelings of inferiority, low self-esteem, and poor identity that are reflected in the practice of skin bleaching (Hall 2001).

Inferiority and Low Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is a person's overall positive or negative evaluation of himself or herself. A person with high self-esteem thinks that he or she is a person of worth and value. Alternatively, low self-esteem can be an indicator of self-contempt, rejection, or dissatisfaction with the self (Rosenberg 1989). The desire for social acceptance and the continual acceptance of negative views held about people of color or one's reference group can create feelings of inferiority and low self-esteem. As a function of living in an oppressive color-conscious society, ideals of inferiority can become internalized (Charles 2009a, b), and, in turn, this process of low self-evaluation or the belief that one is not good enough or attractive enough can lead to a low self-esteem. Some scholars have noted associations between self-esteem, self-concept, and skin complexion. For example, among African Americans, skin color has been demonstrated to be a predictor of self-esteem among women and self-efficacy among Black men (Thompson and Keith 2001). Additionally, Margaret L. Hunter (2002) observes that women of lighter skin tones have been found to have higher self-esteem than their counterparts of a darker complexion.

Charles (2003) directly assessed the relationship between self-esteem and the practice of skin bleaching in a small convenience sample, primarily comprised of Jamaican adolescents. In contrast to other studies that have discussed the relationship between skin color and self-esteem, this researcher finds that there are no differences in the level of self-esteem between skin bleachers and a comparison group of non-bleachers in this subgroup. Relative to this study, the investigator concludes that while the bleaching group did not suffer from self-hate, "they have been mis-educated into believing that the only standard of beauty is the one defined by European ideals" (Charles 2003, 726). This study successfully highlights the importance of evaluating for multiple factors (age, identity development, racial identity development, views on bleaching practices, and the origin of one's ideals of attractiveness) in working to better explain the phenomenon of skin bleaching and its relationship to self-esteem. However, the results should be interpreted with caution due to some methodological limitations relative to small sample size, generalizability (adolescent sample only), and explanatory power.

Similar lines of research have also been explored among African populations. Researchers have found that the colonial-Rhodesian practice of bleaching one's face in hopes "of getting hired in prestigious and good paying jobs that did not want 'ugly dark skinned faces' in the fore-front of the company" (Tsiwo-Chigubu 2005) continues to exist today, as contemporary Zimbabweans believe that lighter skin will make them more "acceptable-looking in society" (Siyachitema 2002). Similar findings have been noted with respect to the skin-bleaching practices of women of East African descent. It was reported that women within this group held the perception that skin bleaching made them more "acceptable-looking in society, improved their appearance, and allowed them to elevate their social status (Del Giudice and Yves 2002; Siyachitema 2002)." Comparable findings were reported in studies in Tanzania (Lewis et al. 2011).

It is suggested that the "logic" of skin bleachers is that it is important to bleach out the African blackness of the skin so as to be viewed among those considered of a higher rank (Blay 2009; Beswick 2005). Collectively, these studies highlight the relevance of the impact of color-conscious societies and power they have in engendering a negative self-concept, poor self-esteem (Tummala-Narra 2007), and feelings of insecurity about physical appearance, ethnic belonging, and authenticity.

Identity Development

While identity is influenced to a significant degree by physical appearance, it is also a dynamic process that develops as a function of interaction between an individual and the context of his environment (Rockquemore and Brunnsma 2002). Moreover, Pratyusha Tummala-Narra (2007) contends that skin color is as much as a social characteristic as it is a physical characteristic that influences identity development. The nature of these interactions ultimately determines the feelings that one develops about his or her skin color and subsequent identity development.

As a function of living in a color-conscious society where people of darker skin tones are systemically and socially regarded as less desirable, individuals who fall within this group may begin to develop feelings of inferiority and internalize negative beliefs about themselves, come to value lighter skin tones, and reject aspects of themselves (Hall 1995). Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) also comment on the significant impact of skin-color perceptions on one's psychosocial experience and subsequent behavior. They note that in changing one's appearance to achieve an aesthetic ideal, one's sense of self may begin to disintegrate as he rejects and even grows to disdain his natural physical appearance. By developing the perception, or actually reshaping one's outward physical appearance, the psyche is altered as well. This experience holds significant consequences with respect to how one may come to view one's self. Individuals who are met with challenges in this area internalize mainstream messages that Black and dark are not beautiful (Jones and Shorter-Gooden 2003, 177), believing that he or she can be assigned value and worth only after having taken on the physical traits of the dominant social group.

While the extent of the impact that colorism has had on identity development among African populations is unclear, it has been extensively explored among subpopulations within the United States (Cross 1991; Helms 1997; Phinney 1989). Rockquemore and Brunson (2002) conducted a study on racial identity development among a group of Black/White biracial individuals, finding that social perceptions of one's appearance are significantly associated with racial identity development while skin color alone is not directly associated with identity. The findings from this chapter further support the idea that social context and stigma mediate psychological outcomes relative to skin color. Given the extent to which social stratification and bias with respect to skin color operate within color-conscious societies, these findings underscore the importance of examining the interrelationships of social bias as manifested through color-hierarchy societies, skin color, and identity formation, especially in African nations such as Tanzania.

Where to Go from Here

This chapter fills a major gap in the research literature by taking one of the first exploratory looks at the historical and cultural institutions in East Africa that placed East Africans in general and Tanzanians in particular in a color-conscious society and fueled potent skin-color ideals that have resulted in skin-bleaching efforts to assimilate to dominant groups. While there have been many scholars and theorists who have made important contributions to the existing literature base on aspects of this topic, this chapter represents the first of its kind to link historical foundations to the psychology of color consciousness and skin bleaching in East Africa and Tanzania. However, more work is needed in this area, with major implications for research, policy, and practice.

Research Implications

In order to more thoroughly understand the historical and cultural influences of skin bleaching in Tanzania and how to prevent such practices, more studies are needed that examine the interrelationships of social bias as manifested through color-hierarchy societies like Tanzania, skin color, and identity formation. For example, biases such as preferential attention and information processing biases may be tested, which could bring clarity to the internal motivations of women who use skin-bleaching products. Future studies might also specifically test directional hypotheses regarding self-esteem, identity, and self-concept to examine their relationship to skin-bleaching practices, especially in African nations like Tanzania. Additionally, more historical research is needed to clarify the precise origins of skin bleaching in Tanzania. It is possible that other skin bleaching beginnings exist that have not been represented in the literature, yet warrant further examination and analysis by

historians. Together, these examinations would better inform our understanding of the psychology of skin-bleaching practices in Tanzania.

Additional research should also be devoted to evaluating the psychological impact of living in color-conscious societies on individuals in early childhood and throughout adulthood. Study findings in this area could be useful in tailoring intervention and prevention programs for these specific groups.

Policy and Practice Implications

Understanding how historical and cultural institutions played a role in the shaping of color-conscious societies and fueled potent skin-color ideals, resulting in skin-bleaching efforts to assimilate to dominating groups, can help policy makers and interventionists better understand the origin of the demand for these products. It can also help policy makers and interventionists understand why some products remain easily accessible, as well as why there is continued use of skin-bleaching products despite the bans and governmental regulations on their sale. With this deepened understanding of the origins of skin bleaching and the more recent developments of why some bleach their skin (Lewis et al. 2011) comes a need for more customized intervention strategies and policies that take into account the psychology of bleachers in a way that promotes national psychological and health liberation.

The Tanzania Food and Drug Authority (TFDA) (2011) has taken steps to institute policies to prevent the practice of skin bleaching. However, they have been largely ineffective at ultimately preventing the practice. More specifically, the TFDA (serving as a regulatory body under the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare from the Tanzania Food Drug and Cosmetic Act No. 1 of 2003) composed an extensive list (2011) of poisonous bleaching products that emerged from this Act that banned the manufacture, sale, or distribution of harmful cosmetics within the country. An additional 168 cosmetic products were banned in January 2005 subsequent to the TFDA Ministry of Health prohibiting the inclusion of 11 unsafe ingredients. The most recent list of banned products was integrated in May of 2006, after further evaluation and laboratory analysis determined more brands contained prohibited ingredients (TFDA 2011).

Essentially, TFDA regulators are cognizant that the ban of harmful products is one component of several in addressing Tanzania's skin bleaching crisis. However, increased funding is essential for the attenuation of hazardous bleaching products throughout Tanzania and the current resources are insufficient for (1) TFDA personnel to cover the many ports of entry for illegal products, (2) inspectors to monitor all the numerous community markets selling banned products, and (3) sufficient laboratory testing of newly imported products to occur (Lewis et al. 2009, 2011).

Similarly, regulators also recognize the need for nationwide education on the harmful side effects of skin bleaching that reach deep into remote areas of

the country. However, current resources are largely insufficient to address this need. There is a significant need for countrywide educational interventions that (1) heighten awareness of the extent to which the aesthetic ideal to be light is not necessarily ideal and is to a greater degree unattainable for the majority of the East African community with large-scale consequences for attempting to alter one's appearance, and (2) heighten understanding of the contributions of history to systematic bias that exists in East African communities. Some examples of suggested educational avenues for skin bleaching prevention made by some Tanzanian regulators themselves are (1) integrating prevention information into curriculum at the primary level, so as to reach a broad population of young people before the practices begin; (2) annual or biannual large-scale assemblies in Tanzania's major urban centers, such as Arusha, Moshi, and Dar es Salaam; (3) advertisements on television and radio; and (4) employment of a celebrity spokesperson to modify ideas of bleaching (Lewis et al. 2011).

Other possible larger-scale interventions or policies that need to be put in place to alter the national psychology of skin bleachers and relieve some of their interpsychic conflict are as follows: (1) community-level programming that affirms self-worth attached to natural beauty while building an increasing awareness of motivations for physical alteration; (2) international educational campaigns that heighten awareness of the importance of—and challenges attached to—expecting the broader society to appreciate the physical attributes of Africans in their authentic state even if Africans do not do so themselves (this allows younger generations to appreciate their uniqueness no matter how much the broader society may disagree); (3) social campaigns that embrace the discussion of skin color and equality as a strategy to overcome stigma; and (4) sociopolitical campaigns that challenge the presence of color-hierarchy societies from a proper sociopolitical context that takes into account the role and function of enslavement, westernization, and colonization, and the extent to which each serves to promote a select few in East African societies while undermining others. This in turn may allow individuals who are most oppressed within this social context to externalize a sense of blame and feel empowered through advocacy. Nevertheless, current resources are largely insufficient to address this need as well.

Some potential smaller-scale interventions and policies that can be put in place to alter the national psychology of skin bleachers and relieve some of their interpsychic conflict, without significant financial resources, are (1) the formation of population subgroups that can convene and engage in regular empowerment exercises to feel affirmed in their physical appearance and uniqueness, and (2) advocacy groups that promote equality and the development of programs that promote and celebrate the relevance of diversity (with respect to skin color) throughout all aspects of society, in an effort to challenge stereotypes and myths about individuals of a darker complexion.

Conclusion

In summary, the color consciousness created by historical and cultural institutions in East Africa has fostered national and cross-national internalized dominant (Arab, European) cultural ideals about skin color and what it means to be dark. Lighter skin is often perceived as more powerful, and members of the “out-group” (darker-skinned Tanzanians) are often unable to fully assimilate into the more powerful echelons of society because of limited access to money, jobs, education, healthcare, and other far-reaching criteria set by the dominant group. This out-group desires to improve their quality of life and live out their dreams, which often results in the development of a disdain for their own dark skin. This can lead to psychic conflict for darker-skinned members of the community. In order to reduce the psychic conflict and, at the same time to assimilate some darker-skinned members of the community resort to skin bleaching efforts to alter their color appearance. Much more research, policies, and practices are warranted to take into account the psychology of bleaching in an effort to promote psychological and health liberation.

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Chapter 3

Pathophysiology and Psychopathology of Skin Bleaching and Implications of Skin Colour in Africa

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It seems to come out of nowhere. I've tried to discover what touches it off, what leads up to it, but I can't. Suddenly, it hits me It seems I can be doing anything at the time—painting, working at the gallery, cleaning the apartment, reading, or talking to someone. It doesn't matter where I am or what's going on. One minute I'm fine, feeling gay, busy, loving life and people. The next minute I'm on an express highway to hell.

I think it begins with a feeling of emptiness inside. Something, I don't know what to call it, starts to ache; something right in the center of me feels as if it's opening up, spreading apart maybe. It's like a hole in my vitals appears. Then the emptiness starts to throb—at first softly like a fluttering pulse. For a little while, that's all that happens. But then the pulsing turn into a regular beat; and the beat gets stronger and stronger. The hole gets bigger. Soon I feel as if there's nothing to me but a vast, yawning space surrounded by skin that grabs convulsively at nothingness. The beating gets louder. The sensation changes from an ache to a hurt, a pounding hurt. The feeling of emptiness becomes agony. In a short while there's nothing of me, of Laura, but an immense, drumming vacuum.

—Lindner (1954)

Introduction

Psychopathology is the study of behaviour disorders that involve psychological disturbances, mental illness, mental distress, and abnormal/maladaptive behaviour. The term is most commonly used within psychiatry where pathology refers to disease processes. It is the branch of medicine dealing with the causes and processes

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of mental disorders. Abnormal psychology is a similar term used more frequently in the non-medical field of psychology. Many different professions may be involved in studying mental illness or distress. Most notably, psychiatrists and clinical

psychologists are particularly interested in this area and may be involved in either clinical treatment of mental illness or research into the origin, development, and manifestations of such states.

Psychiatrists in particular are interested in descriptive psychopathology, which has the aim of describing the symptoms and syndromes of mental illness. This is both for the diagnosis of individual patient (to see whether the patient's experience fits any pre-existing classification) or for the creation of diagnostic systems (such as the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (APA 1994) or *International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems* (APA 1992)) which define exactly which signs and symptoms should comprise a diagnosis and how experiences and behaviours should be grouped in particular diagnoses. Before diagnosing a psychological disorder, clinicians must study the themes, also known as abnormalities, within psychological disorders. The most prominent themes consist of deviance, distress, dysfunction, and danger. These themes are known as the 4Ds, which define abnormality (University of Wisconsin [UWC] 2011). We shall see how the skin bleachers conform to the 4Ds.

Skin Colour: Anatomy, Biochemistry, and Physiology

The skin is the outermost covering of the human body. It is the largest organ of the body, and its surface area is the body surface area. The functions of the skin cannot be overemphasized. Physiologically, the skin protects the body against invasions by microorganisms. It synthesizes vitamin D. It also plays vital roles in body temperature regulation through various mechanisms of heat conservation and dissipation. The skin contains melanin, the colouring pigment that protects the body from the damaging effects of the ultraviolet rays of the sun (Parvez et al. 2006).

The psychosocial roles of the skin are very important. The skin is an expression of human appearance, and it is one of the most significant attributes of an individual, which may be used to establish racial identity (Edward 1972). Moreover, the skin appearance cosmetically modifies an individual's beauty. The psychosocial roles of the skin, vis-à-vis identity and cosmetics, are almost always overshadowing its physiological functions and, therefore, are subjects of human manipulations for one reason or another.

The skin has two major layers: the dermis (inner layer) and the epidermis (outer layer). Located at the basal layer of the epidermis are melanocytes, the specialized cells that synthesize skin pigment called melanin, which primarily determines the skin colour. Melanocytes contain melanosomes, the organelles within which the biosynthesis of melanin takes place. Melanosomes contain tyrosinase, the rate-limiting enzyme for the biosynthesis of melanin. The substrate for melanin

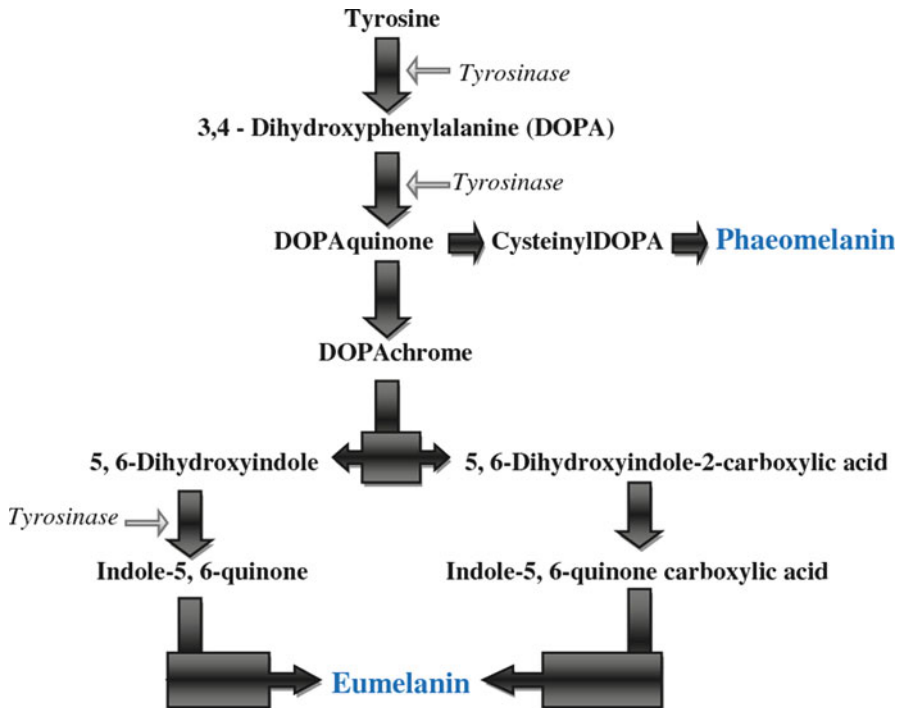


Fig. 3.1 Pathway of melanin synthesis

synthesis is the amino acid called tyrosine (Fig. 3.1). The melanin produced in the melanocytes is thereafter transferred to the keratinocytes, the dominant cells in the outer layer of the epidermis. The epidermal turnover period, which is the renewal of the cells of the epidermis, occurs in approximately 28 days (Olumide 1993).

The colour of the skin is primarily due to the presence of the melanin in the epidermis of the skin. The amount and types of melanin determine the skin colour (Taylor 2002). There are two types of melanin: phaeomelanin (yellow pigment) and eumelanin (dark brown pigment). The predominant type of melanin in the skin of an individual determines the skin colour. This trait is genetically determined (Miller et al. 2007; Wehrle-Haller 2003). For instance, the light colour of the skin of the people of the Caucasian race is primarily due to presence of phaeomelanin in their skin, while the dark colour of the skin of the people of the Negroid race is primarily due to the presence of eumelanin in their skin. Among the people of the same race, the gradation in the intensity of skin colour is due to differences in the amount of the melanin in the skin in response to the degree of exposure to sunlight in the environment (Fitzpatrick 1988). Thus, in the tropical area with high intensity of sunlight, the skin is dark in colour. Hence, there is global diversity of skin colour. However, this diversity is highest in the sub-Saharan Africa populations (Relethford 2000).

Some call us “colored”
 Some say we are “black”
 Hahaha, some call us “colored”
 Some say we are simply “black”
 As if their array of hues
 Would mend our lingering lack
 Just who will settle this quarrel
 Between you and your skin
 Asking, who will settle this quarrel
 Between you and your skin?
 You make your precious melanin
 Look like a cardinal sin
 The nail that sticks out
 Gets most of the hammer’s anger
 Yes, the nail that sticks out
 Gets most of the hammer’s anger
 But can it really be a nail
 If it doesn’t stick out?

—From *Random Blues* (Osundare 2011)

Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD)

People with body dysmorphic disorder (BDD), known as having *dysmorphophobia*, may also be skin bleachers. The concerns of people with body dysmorphic disorder, however, may be extreme. Sufferers may severely limit contact with other people and be unable to look others in the eye, or they become deeply concerned about some imagined or minor defect in their appearance. Many teenagers and young adults worry about acne, for example. Most often, they focus on wrinkles, spots on the skin, excessive facial hair, swelling of the face, or a misshapen nose, mouth, jaw, or eyebrow (McKay et al. 2008; Veale 2004). Some worry about the appearance of their feet, hands, breasts, penis, or other body parts. Still, others are concerned about bad odours coming from sweat, breath, genitals, or the rectum (Phillips and Castle 2002). As many as half of people with this disorder seek plastic surgery or dermatological treatment and often they feel worse rather than better afterward (McKay et al. 2008). David Phillips and Todd E. Ruth (1993) found that 30% of participants with body dysmorphic disorder were housebound and 17% had attempted suicide. Most cases of body dysmorphic disorder begin during adolescence. Often, people do not reveal their concerns for many years (McKay et al. 2008). Clinical reports suggest that it may be equally common among women and men (APA 2000). The following examples illustrate that this condition cuts across class and status: A state governor in Nigeria is known to have bleached his face and body not too long ago; a traditional ruler is known to have bleached himself; and recently, even a vice chancellor “toned” to the chagrin of his colleagues. The situation is worse with people of lower status and intellect. A dermatologist has opined that there are more living organisms on the skin of each human than there are humans on the surface of the earth. It is only wise not to tamper with such an

intricate area to avoid skin cancer, or a condition of slow or no healing of the area that had been bleached. There is need for vigorous public health education about this malaise.

What Are the Causes of Somatoform Disorders?

Theorists typically explain the preoccupation somatoform disorder much in the way they explain anxiety disorders (Bouman 2008; Noyes 2001; Noyes et al. 2008). Behaviourists, for example, believe that the fears found in hypochondriasis and body dysmorphic disorder are acquired through classical conditioning or modelling (Marshall et al. 2007). Cognitive theorists suggest that those with the disorders are so sensitive to and threatened by bodily cues that they come to misinterpret them. Ronald E. Hall (1999) observes that blacks (Negroids) saw light skin as a way to manipulate hypergamy or marriage customs.

The Light Skin Fad

Hall (1999) opines that Negroids see black skin as a pathological phenomenon that needs purification to move up socially. Upward social movement can be achieved by marrying light-skinned partners or by skin bleaching. People want to be attractive, and they tend to worry about how they appear in the eyes of others. These concerns take different forms in different cultures. People in the West worry in particular about their body size and facial features; African women of the Padaung ethnic group in Myanmar [Burma] focus on the length of their neck and wear heavy stacks of brass rings to try to extend it. Many of them seek desperately to achieve what their culture has taught them is the perfect neck size. One woman has said, “It is most beautiful when the neck is really long. I will never take off my rings. I will be buried in them” (Mydans 1996).

Western society also falls victim to such cultural influences. Non-Western society wants to look like the so-called white or the light-skinned among them, and uses brainwashing and inferiority complex to that end. I have never seen Caucasians paint themselves black, even though they travel at great expense to warmer areas of the world to attain a suntan. Comer (2008) has witnessed staggering increases in procedures such as rhinoplasty (reshaping of the nose), which was done during the lifetime of entertainer Michael Jackson. I was alarmed to see breast augmentation in Pigalle, France; it was very much in vogue among Nigerian actresses and those who would want to “keep up with the Joneses”. Elsewhere, women are known to pursue cosmetic surgery. Body piercing and tattooing all remind us that some cultural values greatly influence each person’s ideas and concerns about beauty, and in some cases, may set the stage for body dysmorphic disorder.

Pathophysiology of Skin Bleaching

The societal concept of skin colour is probably based on the presumption that the fairer you are, the more beautiful or handsome you are. Perhaps the lighter your skin colour is, the more acceptable or superior you are as a human being. Basic skin colour is genetically determined, but the intensity of the colour tone can be modified by both human and environmental factors. The most important environmental factor is exposure to sunlight. Adequate exposure to sunlight darkens the skin by increasing melanin synthesis; this is called tanning. Conversely, lack of exposure of the skin to sunlight reduces melanin synthesis and therefore lightens skin colour. Skin bleaching refers to the act of artificially lightening the skin colour. Skin bleaching is a global phenomenon; however, its prevalence is high among the Negroid race. A study of traders in the Lagos State of Nigeria revealed a prevalence of 27.6% in men and 49.7% in women (Adebajo 2002).

Mechanisms of Skin Bleaching

Trigger Factors: Psychosocial Disturbances

The presence of one or more of the following psychosocial factors predisposes an individual to be involved in behavioural patterns and or application of skin-bleaching agents to lighten the colour of their skin: abnormal body perception, quest for beauty, inferiority complex, skin colour misconceptions, colonialism, ignorance about chemical structure of skin, and determinants of skin colour.

Exposure to Bleaching Agents

Bleaching agents contain active ingredients such as hydroquinone, mercury, or corticosteroids, which reduce or inhibit the synthesis of melanin (Olumide et al. 2008). Some of these agents act by impairing the function of tyrosinase, the rate-limiting enzyme in melanin synthesis (Parvez et al. 2006). Since the epidermal turnover period is approximately 28 days, for effective skin bleaching there is a need for recurrent usage of the bleaching agents on the skin. In order to maintain uniform skin colour, bleaching agents are applied to the entire body surface area. However, with exposure of parts of the body to sunlight—especially the face and the limbs—and renewal of epidermal cells, melanin synthesis becomes more active in these sun-exposed areas, and skin tanning occurs. This results in lack of uniformity to the skin colour. As such, an individual needs to reapply bleaching agent(s) to

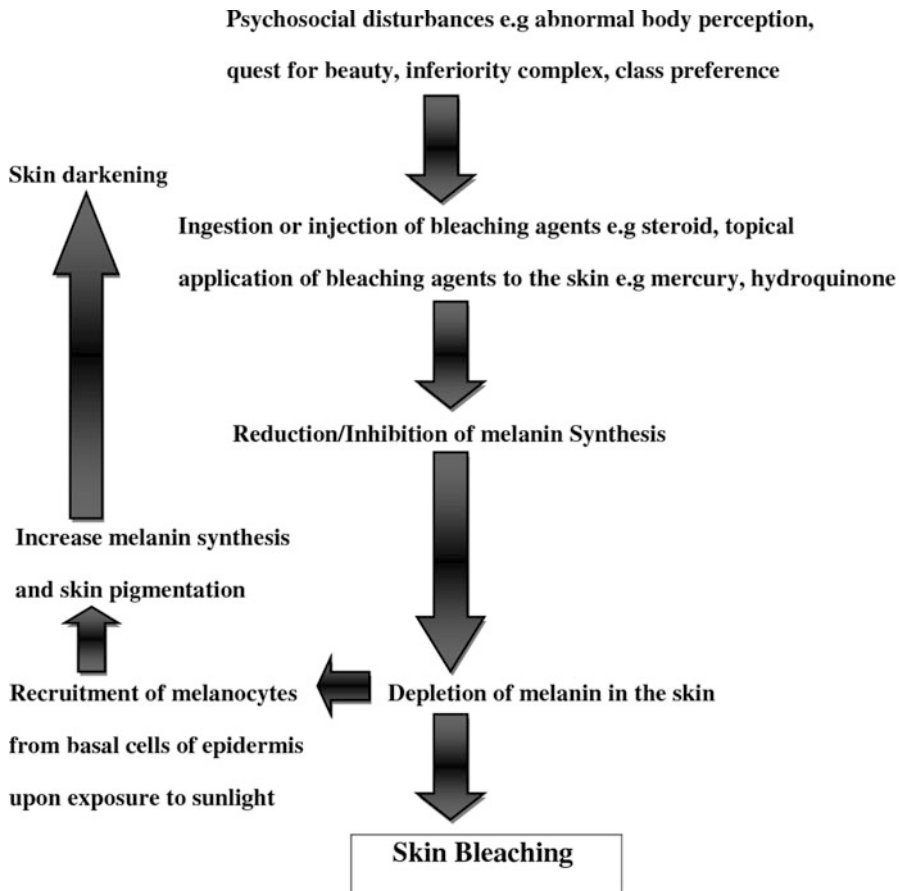


Fig. 3.2 Pathophysiology of skin bleaching

the sun-exposed area to prevent recurring skin tanning (Fig. 3.2). The cycle of skin lightening and tanning continues with its attending complications as long as the individual continues to use bleaching agents.

Alteration of the Skin Biochemical and Anatomical Composition

Repeated exposures of the skin to the bleaching agents inhibit the activity of the enzyme tyrosinase. This results in reduction in the quantity of melanin in the skin. Eventually, the skin colour becomes lightened, creating a temporary impression that the individual has a light skin colour. This perhaps increases the beauty and acceptability in the society.

In Contemporary Africa

Skin bleaching has been shown to be a contemporary issue in current Nigerian Negroid psychology. A piece in *Nation* newspaper tells of a skin bleacher who was not returned to the government house of Oyo State. The late Fela Anikulapo Kuti describes it in his songs *Yellow Fever* (1975/2000) and *Black Man's Cry* (1970/2010): “Talo so fun mipe awo dudu mo gbe sara mi oda o Emu wa ki nri o” [translation: Who says my black skin is not beautiful?].

Hall (2001) has shown that cutaneo-chroma (skin colour) in the postcolonial hierarchy is a global strategy for conflict resolution. Power, he argues, is associated with sovereignties characterized by light-skinned populations. Those characterized by dark skin are denigrated and assumed to be less qualified to negotiate global issues as equals.

According to Hall (2001), although political objectives are expected to stimulate conflict, skin colour is directly correlated with the present world order; moreover, most postcolonial sovereignties are heterogeneous one way or another and yet do not engage in destructive conflict. From a global perspective, conflict resolution will require postcolonial sovereignties, particularly those of relatively light skin colour, to forfeit their self-serving denigration of others. Hall posits that strategies for conflict resolution should ignore skin colour and incorporate measures designed to improve problem-solving, moral reasoning, and general etiquette skills of those engaged in any negotiation process.

Similarly, Hall (2004) opines that a result of Western domination is the trivialization of skin colour as a significant issue among people of African descent. Regrettably, he argues, research by psychologists the world over emphasizes race in the study of human social conditions. Despite the fact that race is increasingly irrelevant, Western psychologists adhere to it and are at a severe disadvantage. Oblivious to the implications of skin colour, their attempts to comprehend stereotypes, discrimination, and other various issues attributed to race vis-à-vis African peoples are an exercise in futility. Hall advises that it is not compulsory to discard Western social facts, but psychologists should familiarize themselves with African perspectives as a critical point of reference to the social issues of those of African descent. Sustaining the integrity and prestige of the social work profession will require a concept and a perspective less confined to Western domination.

Powerfully, Hall (2005) argues that the denigration of dark skin in Western civilization is an evolution of African pathology in the postmodern era. At the dawn of civilization, the depiction of Africans was in fact quite favourable to dark skin. Following the Atlantic slave trade, the West utilized science and religion to justify the exploitation of African peoples through the denigration of dark skin.

Consistent with Western ideals, Negroid peoples have come to feel inferior to lighter-skinned people and use skin lighteners and toners without knowing of the health repercussions—even in African countries where bleaching creams like *Solaquin* (hydroquinone) have been banned. Africans continue to use lighteners to the shame of the African continent and culture; they have been brainwashed to feel

that black skin is inferior to lighter skin. This existing body dimorphic disorder must concern all Afrocentric psychologists. Psychologists who engage with persons of African descent must address the skin colour issue to enable the therapeutic process.

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Chapter 4

An Introduction to Japanese Society's Attitudes Toward Race and Skin Color

Debito Arudou

Introduction

Japan, no doubt like any country or society, places cultural value on skin color and melanin content. In Japan's case, historically and traditionally, pale, unblemished white skin is held in high regard. For example, in classical Japanese *ukiyo-e* and woodblock prints, Japan's upper classes and historical figures are generally rendered with very pale skin, while Japanese women, seen mostly indoors, are generally rendered whiter than men. To the present day, Japan's traditional entertainers (from Kabuki actors to geisha) whiten their skin cosmetically, and its heroes (as seen, e.g., in Japan's Neputa Festival (JNTO 2011) in Aomori Prefecture) are depicted as light-skinned Japanese battling hairy, swarthy barbarians. In modern Japanese adult society, skin coloring and care is *de rigueur* for women and sometimes even men (Ashikari 2005). Despite being the tenth most populous nation in the world, Japan's cosmetics market is the world's second largest, with an annual turnover of 990 billion yen in 2009 (Austrade 2010), selling products to both lighten and darken skin. Notwithstanding Japan's fascination with African American culture, most related products, such as UV-blocking makeup foundation, sunscreen, visors, and parasols, help to keep skin light; darker tones due to sun exposure are often negatively associated with aging skin or outdoor manual labor (Ashikari *ibid*). Further, in a society where most members see themselves as similarly dark-haired and dark-eyed, distinctions are made in Japanese media by darkening skin tones and lightening or coloring hair. Darker skin features are also associated with villainy, such as the incorrigibly destructive *Baikinman* (Bacteria Man) character in the

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long-running *Ampanman* (Yanase 1988) animated series, or the generic, unshaven, darkened-skin burglars and petty thieves against whom police and other public service announcements warn the general public. In sum, Japanese society prefers their skin whiter rather than darker, and phenotypical representations of swarthinness, as we shall see below, can be associated with notions of “outsider” or even “not Japanese.”

This chapter will focus on Japan’s association of skin tone with race¹ and nationality. As an introduction, it will explore the cultural associations placed on people, particularly those deemed “foreigners” (*gaikokujin*, *gaijin*) in Japan, and their treatment by society and the media as the “other” due to their physical appearance.

Historical Japanese Treatments of Foreigners, Based Upon Skin Color

Archaic words for “foreigners”² focused less on skin color and more on their origin or apparent “insider-outsider” relationship to local society. For example, words referring to a person’s origin include *shinajin* and *tōjin*, “Chinese”; *kakyō*, “Chinese Diaspora overseas”; *ketō*, “hairy Chinese” (used for Westerner, from a time when most foreigners were seen as Chinese); *ijin*, “different person” or “barbarian” (depending on the *kanji* Chinese character); *ihōjin*, “different-from-Japanese person”; *ezo*, Ainu from Ezo (present-day Hokkaidō Prefecture); and the generic *yabanjin*, “barbarian.” Words referring to a generic lack of local connection include *gaijin*, “outside person”; *gairaisha*, “person who came from outside”; *gaiban*, “from outside our territory”; *toraijin* and *watarimono*, “person who crossed the seas to get here”; *nagaremono*, i.e., “person who washed up here”; *yosomono* and *yosobito*, “isolated person from outside”; *tabigarasu*, vagabond (literally “traveling crow”); *mizushirazu*, “person I haven’t seen before and don’t know”; and the very candid *atchimono*, is “somebody from way over there.”

This linguistic phenomenon was no doubt due to Japan’s enforced isolation period from the outside world (*sakoku*) between 1639 and 1854, when Japan only officially traded with one country through one isolated port in Nagasaki; foreign sailors shipwrecked on Japan’s forbidden shores could expect immediate arrest and probable execution by the authorities. It is likely that few Japanese at the time had much concept that other “races” and skin tones existed. Even the historical word

¹This chapter will work under TheFreeDictionary definition of “race” as “a local geographic or global human population distinguished as a more or less distinct group by genetically transmitted physical characteristics.” Available at <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Race>

²Based upon Japanese thesaurus results for the word *gaikokujin* at <http://thesaurus.weblio.jp/content/>

gaijin (“outside person”³), still in common use today, was once used to refer to Japanese as well (Arudou 2008a), as its provinces (*kuni* or *ban*) were still in a state of semi-isolation from each other, speaking different dialects of Japanese, and held in tribute to a weakening shogunate in Edo (present-day Tōkyō). People who were short distances outside their villages could be referred to as *gaijin*, and “Japanese” (*hōjin*, later *nihonjin* or *nipponjin*) as a nationality (*kokuseki*) was little seen as a concept since Japan was not yet a nation-state.

Japan's forced opening to the outside world in 1854, followed by the Meiji Restoration of 1868, brought in not only outside cultural influences but also outsiders. These were foreign cultural emissaries imparting Occidental knowledge and technology, as Japan embarked on creating a nation, enabling a “catching up” with the contemporary world. With the visual stimulus of different races and skin tones, new words were added to Japan's already rich lexicon depicting outsider status. For example, foreign words became Japanese—*sutoreinjā* and *etoranjē* (from the English and French words for “stranger”)—and a more sophisticated expression of differences in nationality began to be expressed—*gaikokujin* (“outside country person”), *seiyōjin* (Westerner, with *tōyōjin* for Oriental), and *amerikajin* (American, along with other countries by name with *-jin* attached). The phenotypical categorization of non-Asians and a concomitant association with outsider status is significant and indicative. Colorful words such as *kōmō hekigan* (“red hair and blue eyes”), *kinpatsu hekigan* (“blond hair and blue eyes”), and *hekigan bizen* (“blue eyes and beautifully full beard”) began to enter Japanese parlance, and clearly not all negatively. Over time, words began to describe offspring when foreigners began having inevitable liaisons with Japanese: the pejorative *ainoko* (literally “alloyed child,” or at a stretch “interspecies child”), *konketsuji* (“mixed blood child”), *hāfu* (“half,” for half-Japanese), and most recently, *daburu* and *mikkusu* (“double” and “mix[ed],” more politically correct versions of *hāfu*).

There are of course descriptors that became racially-based epithets. *Kokujin* (“black person,” for a dark-skinned person of African descent) also had permutations of *kuronbo* (“blackie”) or just *kuro* (“black”), not to mention later the word *nigā* (“nigger”), appearing in media designed to disparage non-Japanese with darker skin. Caucasians were labeled *hakujin* (“white people”), Asians were *ōshoku jinshu* (“the yellow-colored race”), while descriptors for other less phenotypically identifiable peoples remained less based upon skin color and more upon location; for example, *chūtō-kei* (“middle east lineage”) for Middle-Eastern features, *hisupanikku* for Hispanics, *yōroppa-kei* for Europeans (however broadly defined), and so forth.

A disclaimer should be made at this point: This is, of course, not to say that Japan was behaving in any way that was exceptional or different from the

³Both *gaijin* and *gaikokujin* mean “foreigner,” but the former “outside person” has a more racial component than the latter “outside country person” as it generally refers to non-Asians and is applied to people, including Japanese citizens such as this author, with differing skin color (Arudou 2008a, b). It is significant that *gaijin* was once deracinated and used to refer to Japanese.

rest of the world (there were many skin-based epithets in common historical use throughout the Occident to describe outsiders). However, for the purposes of this chapter, this discussion of the development of how Japanese lexicography encourages a differentiating of society by physical features is insightful toward an understanding of how Japan views skin tone and race today.

As for other Asians, descriptors were similarly based largely upon country of origin rather than skin color (albeit Asians are sometimes depicted as having yellower skin and, for want of a better word, “narrower” eyes than whiter, rounder-eyed Japanese). In impolite company, Koreans are still negatively offset from Japanese as *chon*, as Chinese are with *shinajin*, and lumped together with other Asians under the descriptor referring to wartime Japanese Imperial subjects (*sangokujin*). However, there are nearly a half million Asian “special permanent resident foreigners” (*zainichi*) who have been born and living in Japan for generations, largely visibly indistinguishable from the rest of the Japanese population. Other Asians with less tenure in Japan are generally labeled by country when necessary (*firipin-jin*, *betonamu-jin*, and so forth), or the generic descriptor *ajia-kei* (Asian).

Roots of the Coloring of the World: Fukuzawa Yukichi’s Theories of “Civilization”

Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835–1901) is a man of great stature in Japanese history (earning a place on Japan’s 10,000-yen bank note). A proponent of the *fukoku kyōhei* (“rich country, strong military”) ideology during the Meiji Era (1868–1912), his ideas held great influence in the development of Japan as a colonial power and, for the purposes of this chapter, Japan’s attitudes toward the outside world. One notable essay attributed to his authorship is entitled *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization* (1875). Within it, he diverges from the classical definition of “civilization”⁴ to offer an updated, static concept including a spiritual element—one where a society attains “both material well-being and the elevation of the human spirit . . . abundance of daily necessities and esteem for human refinement” (Fukuzawa 1875/2009, 48). Fukuzawa also offers political purpose to a nascent post-feudal Japanese society (when Japanese systems for universal literacy and tertiary education were established): fostering a Japan that could deal with the outside world on its own terms. *Outline* is an argument for societies as a whole to emulate and learn from more “civilized” lands, in this case to create a sovereign Japanese nation-state (Fukuzawa 1875/2009, xv and xxv). This advice, history demonstrates, was quickly and assiduously taken by Japanese society and government, as Japan grew into a colonial and industrial power within a generation (Ōguma 2002; Russell 2009).

⁴The classical definition of civilization is a society with a written language—as seen in the very word for “civilization” (*bunmei*) in Chinese and later Japanese, with characters meaning “clear script”—through which its history is recorded for posterity.

There is, however, a racial component to Fukuzawa's theories, where he couches his analysis of social behavior in terms of, for example, "young men of the Caucasian race (persons of white skin)" (Fukuzawa 1875/2009, 57). While one may argue that Fukuzawa was merely reflecting the contemporary rhetoric of Social Darwinism, the point is that Japanese social science proceeded to rank peoples hierarchically based upon skin color. According to Fukuzawa, societies composed of "persons of white skin" (i.e., the USA and Europe) are at the highest stage ("civilization"), then Asian countries ("semi-developed," such as Turkey, China, and Japan⁵), and at the lowest ("primitive") are people of dark skin, such as Africans or Australian aborigines.

It may sound archaic, but this paradigm can be seen in contemporary Japanese social science and institutional attitudes. For example, Japan has intellectually handicapped itself by pigeonholing people based upon "civilizedness" (in more convenient shorthand, skin color) regarding Africa and African studies. Philips (2005) argues, "the example of African history is a case study of Japan's failure to interact with the wider world of international scholarship and its perpetuation of discredited ideas" (604). Philips writes that Japanese discourse on Africa reflects a distortion of the theories of French anthropologist Georges Balandier (1920–), who claims that the histories of colonized peoples could only be written by anthropologists, not historians (609). Therefore, in Japanese academe, Africa has an ill-studied history or, rather, no history, because historical Africa is viewed as a continent of black people without a written language (whereas studies of northern Africa's lighter-skinned Islamic civilizations, with a long history of literacy, are studiously ignored and underfunded in the Japanese education system). "The presence or absence of history in a society, in the view of Balandier's disciples in Japan, is purely a matter of race. Black Africans have no history, whether they write or not. Other peoples do have history, whether they write or not" ⁶ (Philips 2005, 620).

This is but one example. Some may theorize that this phenomenon is an expression of an intellectual "Galapagos effect" (Zielenziger 2009; Tabuchi 2009), where ideas long discredited in their societies of origin are imported to a more linguistically isolated island society to take on a new life and permutations over generations (Hall 1998; McVeigh 2002; Philips 2005, 610). However, the effects of this preeminent strain of Japanese social analysis, where whole peoples are phenotypically pigeonholed into behavior patterns, are clear: Anyone who has experienced

⁵Incidentally, despite China's indelible influence on Japanese as a written language, Japan was ranked highest.

⁶A notably disparaging attitude toward Africans is seen in the statements by Nakajima Hiroshi, who commented in 1995 while heading the United Nations World Health Organization (WHO), that some of his African staff members have poor English skills (Chronicle News Services 1995) (he retained his post due to pressure from the Japanese government as the largest donor to several UN African aid agencies) (Philips 2005, 607). There have also been inferences that Dr. Nakajima's opposition to and interference with the WHO's efforts toward AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa may reflect this bias (Hilts 1990; Limb 2004).

a significant period of living in Japan will no doubt attest that attitudes exist toward people based upon skin color. Someone who “looks Japanese” (and that includes foreign Asians who do not, such as “Chinese,” “Koreans,” and so forth) will be generally treated as Japanese unless their nonnative Japanese language skills give them away as “foreign”; whereas someone who “looks foreign” (*gaikokujin mitai*) will generally be treated as “foreign,” regardless of their actual legal or life status in Japan (as in Japanese birth, Japanese upbringing, Japanese citizenship), or how advanced their Japanese language skills are (Arudou, PhD dissertation, forthcoming). This social differentiating or, rather, socially extreme centrifugation process became apparent during the Otaru Onsens Case of 1993–2005 (Arudou 2006).

The Otaru Onsens Case and Japan’s Judicial Valuation of Skin Color

A significant indicator of Japan’s legal treatment of skin color may be deduced through the Otaru Onsens Case (Arudou 2006). In 1993, a public bathhouse (*onsen*) in Otaru, a port city in Hokkaidō, Japan’s northernmost prefecture, put up a multilingual sign on their front door saying in English, “Japanese Only.” Citing poor bathing manners from visiting Russian sailors, in practice this bathhouse refused all patrons who did not “look Japanese” (regardless of whether they were Russian or not). There were protests, but Otaru city authorities responded that it was not illegal in Japan for a private-sector business to refuse customers based on race, as there is no law expressly against racial discrimination in Japan’s Civil Code. Otaru officials advised the protestors to go to other bathhouses. In 1995 and 1998 respectively, two more *onsens* put up their own exclusionary signs. In 1999, the author (a Caucasian, non-Japanese), several friends, and their Japanese families went to bathe at these *onsens* and found that only certain members of their party were welcome, despite being their fluent in the Japanese language. The people who “looked Japanese” (the Asians, including a Chinese woman) were allowed in, whereas those who did not look Japanese (three Caucasians, including the author) were refused entry (Fig. 4.1).

Complicating the case further was the fact that the author’s young children are both native speakers of Japanese who were born and raised in Japan and bear Japanese citizenship. These children were subjected to the same scrutiny. One child looks more “Asian” and the other looks more “Western” (with lighter skin, hair, and eyes); the *onsen* in question decided that one child would be admitted while the younger, more foreign-looking (*gaijin*) child would be refused entry. This example clearly set the paradigms for extreme racial centrifugation: An Asian-looking noncitizen (Chinese) would be treated as a Japanese, while a Caucasian-looking, Japanese citizen (the author’s younger daughter) would be treated (and excluded) as a foreigner. This ideology was repeated after the author received Japanese citizenship in 2000. Returning to the *onsen*, the author, despite having his Japanese citizenship acknowledged by the management, was again refused entry and was told that he still did not “look Japanese.”



Fig. 4.1 The author's children; one looks more "Asian" and the other looks more "Western" (Photograph courtesy of Debito Arudou)

In 2001, the author and two other excluded Caucasians brought lawsuits in Japanese civil court. One of the Otaru *onsens* in question, a place called Yunohana, was sued for racial discrimination and defamation of character. Also, the city of Otaru was sued for negligence under the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD 1995) and under Article 14 of the Japanese Constitution, which explicitly guarantees equality under the law, forbidding discrimination by race (despite the lack of Civil Code codification). In 2002, the Sapporo District Court ruled that defendant Earthcure KK, the parent company of Yunohana, was liable to pay damages for "unrational [sic] discrimination" (*fugōriteki sabetsu*) and "discrimination that transcended socially-acceptable boundaries" (*shakai teki ni kyoyō shiuru gendo o koeru sabetsu*). Therefore, Yunohana was not explicitly punished for racial discrimination. However, the defendant, Otaru City, was exonerated as passing local laws against racial discrimination, albeit required under the CERD, was a "political duty," not an absolute measure to be taken when measures other than overt legislation were theoretically possible. On appeal, in 2004 (Debito.org 2004), the Sapporo High Court reaffirmed the lower court decisions against the defendants, Yunohana and Otaru City. In the latter case, Otaru City was exonerated because legislation was at the "discretion" (*sairyō*) of the government, not something that could be enforced by the judicial branch, as it would violate Japan's separation of powers between judicial, administrative, and legislative branches. A final appeal by the author to Japan's Supreme Court against Otaru City resulted in a 2005 decision (Debito.org 2005) that dismissed the case as "not involving any constitutional issues."

Hence, Japan's legal system, although punishing an individual offender for a discriminatory action, neither penalized racial discrimination *per se* nor penalized the authorities for nonenforcement of either the signatory treaty or the nation's constitution. Thus, in Japan, differentiation by skin color that results in discrimination would not be eliminated by judicial or legislative fiat. Nearly two decades after signing the UN CERD treaty, thereby promising to "prohibit and bring to an end, by all appropriate means, including legislation as required by circumstances, racial discrimination by any persons, group or organization" (CERD 1995, Art. 2(1) d), Japan still has no national law explicitly outlawing discrimination by race. There are still, incidentally, "Japanese Only" signs and rules in several places and business sectors nationwide in Japan (Debito.org 2010), selecting customers as "Japanese" based upon skin color and phenotype.

Contemporary Japanese Media Expressions of Valuation of Skin Color

Japan's contemporary mass media has public expressions of distinctions by skin color and race that might make outside observers hark back to less sensitive and self-conscious days, where icons such as Stepin Fetchit, the African-American maid in *Tom and Jerry* cartoons, and minstrel shows held common currency in the West. Since the topic of skin color is an inherently visual issue, there is no substitute for including and evaluating some modern media images, as noted below. The following are some examples of the common currency of Japan's differentiation by race and skin color in Japanese marketing (Figs. 4.2 and 4.3):

These modern reprints are time capsules of century-old attitudes toward the Orient. *The Story of Little Black Sambo* (Bannerman 1899) and *The Five Chinese Brothers* (Bishop 1938) are now controversial books in their societies of origin due to their racial content. They were republished in 2005 with great fanfare as *Chibi Kuro Sanbo*⁷ and *Shina*⁸ *no Gonin Kyōdai* by Zuiunsha, Inc. (Tokyo), despite the former being removed from Japan's market after protests in 1988. *Sanbo* became a bestseller, allegedly due to the nostalgic effect of adults buying a treasured tome from their childhood (McCurry 2005; Wallace 2005). However, without any acknowledgment of historical context or archaic attitude by the publisher, *Sanbo* has inspired at least one 2010 preschool musical (in Saitama, near Tokyo), with the following song about skin color (Chozick 2010):

Little Black Sambo, Sambo, Sambo
His face and hands are completely black
Even his butt is completely black (Black Tokyo 2010)

⁷The Japanese text and illustrations can be downloaded at <http://www.debito.org/chibikurosambo.html>.

⁸*Shina* is an archaic word for China, seen as offensive by some Chinese.



Fig. 4.2 Modern Japanese reprints of *Little Black Sambo* (Bannerman 1953/2005) (Photographs courtesy of Debito Arudou)



Fig. 4.3 *The five Chinese brothers* (Bishop 2005) (Photographs courtesy of Debito Arudou)

This has also become a marketing campaign for other products, including Sambo dolls, much to the consternation of some non-Japanese residents of color who do not want their children being nicknamed “Sambo” at a tender age (Debito.org 2007). The following examples illustrate that skin color and ethnicity are also used as a component of marketing techniques that might be considered crass in other societies (Figs. 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9, 4.10).

Fig. 4.4 Sambo dolls (Photo taken 3 December 2007, at Rainforest Café, Chiba, next to Tokyo Disneyland; Photograph courtesy of John C.)



Fig. 4.5 Black melon pan bread for sale in a Japanese convenience store, using a Japanese anime character with darkened skin and an Afro. November 2010 (Photograph courtesy of Debito Arudou)



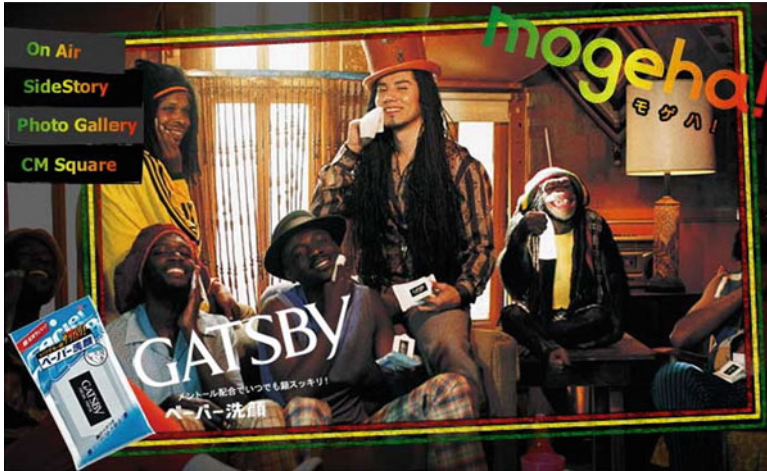


Fig. 4.6 Mandom Inc.'s Gatsby line of men's toiletries sells facial wipes by using Jamaican "Rasta Man" imagery and juxtaposing a chimpanzee using the product. This TV advertising campaign was discontinued after protests (Community 2005) (Photograph courtesy of Debito Arudou)

Fig. 4.7 Selling as a "party joke" in Tokyu Hands department stores in November 2008, the prototypical *gaijin* [sic] features the caption *harō gaijin-san* ("Hello Mr. Foreigner") using the more racially charged version of the word (Arudou 2008a). Note the light hair, fair skin, big nose, blue eyes, and cleft chin, not to mention automatic English capability (Photograph courtesy of Debito Arudou)





Fig. 4.8 An illustration from a primary school textbook published by *Dōshinsha* (ca. 2001) for 7-year-olds: learning the *kanji* character for *go* (language). The concept of language is illustrated by differentiation, depicting a Japanese schoolboy *unable to understand* a blonde carrot-nosed foreign-language-speaking “Westerner” (Photograph courtesy of Olaf Karthaus)



Fig. 4.9 Image from a September 2010 TV commercial, from the Nagasaki Prefecture Convention and Visitors Bureau, advertising historical buildings in Nagasaki as a place where Japanese can come and feel “foreign” (i.e., with lightened features, blond hair, and big noses) (Photograph courtesy of Debito Arudou)



Fig. 4.10 Image from a September 2010 TV commercial, from the Nagasaki Prefecture Convention and Visitors Bureau (Photograph courtesy of Debito Arudou)

A subtler example of skin color marketing can be seen in the evolution of Japanese pop idol Crystal Kay. Crystal Kay Williams, the child of an African American military serviceman and a Japan special permanent resident (*zainichi*) South Korean mother, was raised as an English-Japanese bilingual in Japan (Poole 2009). Beginning her career at age 13, Kay has as of this writing released some nine studio albums,⁹ with an appreciable lightening of her skin on her album covers as her popularity in Japan increased. The following examples show the major change in her skin tone over 8 years, from her first album in 2000 to her 2008 album (Fig. 4.11).

However, when media is in black and white rather than color, it becomes more difficult to suggest subtle differences in skin tone. In this case, other “foreign” stereotypical facial and body features are used to differentiate (Fig. 4.12).

⁹Kay’s major releases include *C.L.L. Crystal Lover Light* (2000), *Almost Seventeen* (2002), *4Real* (2003), *Natural* (2003), *Call me Miss . . .* (2006), *All Yours* (2007), *Color Change!* (2008), *Spin the Music* (2010), *Best of Crystal Kay* (2009), *ONE* (Single, from *Color Change!*; alternative Pokemon edition) (2008).



Fig. 4.11 Changes in Kay’s skin tone over 8 years show on her album covers, from 2000 to 2008 (Photographs courtesy of Debito Arudou)

Facial stereotypes are not just found in popular media. They are also visible in Japan in a more official capacity, as when the National Police Agency warns the public in official notices about foreign crime (Fig. 4.13, 4.14, 4.15).

There are also, of course, overt cases of intentional racist invective in Japan, as there are in all societies. One famous example was the publication of *Gaijin Hanzai no Ura Fairu 2007* (“Underground Files of Foreign Crime”) (Arudou 2007; Anonymous 2007), exposing non-Japanese who intended to “devastate (*jūrin*) Japan,” which went on sale in convenience stores nationwide until it was discontinued after protests. The magazine’s purpose was to expose how widespread and threatening foreign crime was in Japan, with powerful visual and verbal invective (Fig. 4.16).

Gaijin Hanzai’s cover is a case study in facial stereotypes, with center stage being the angular eyes of a Chinese thug; in the foreground is the injured face of a person of African descent, and in the background are various gimlet-eyed Asians (with a waving North Korean leader Kim Jong-II), incensed Caucasians, and a fanatical Middle-Easterner. While for the purposes of this chapter, skin color is downplayed when rendered in halftone; the magazine interior did resort to tonal and facial stereotypes (Fig. 4.17):

Is it tax-free?

【イズ イット タックス フリー】
免税で買えますか？



A: I'd like to see that gas lighter.
(あのガスタイターを見たいのですか)

B: Oh, that's a really good buy. ... Here.
(それは、いい買い物です。... はい、どうぞ)

A: Is it tax-free? (免税で買えますか)

B: Yes, if you show me your passport.
(ええ、パスポートを見せていただければ)

I'm here on business.

【アィム ヒア オン ビズニス】
出張で来ています。



A: How long are you staying?
(どれくらい滞在しますか)

B: Four weeks. (4週間です)

A: May I ask what brought you here?
(失礼ですが、どういう目的でこちらにおいででしょうか)

B: I'm here on business. (仕事で来ました)

16

日	月	火	水	木	金	土
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

TUESDAY

16

日	月	火	水	木	金	土
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

FRIDAY

Large or small?

【ラージ オア スモール】
大ですか、小ですか？



A: Something to drink? (お飲み物はいかがですか)

B: Coke, please. (コーラをください)

A: Large or small? (大ですか、小ですか)

B: Large, please. (大をお願いします)

I'd like to check in, please.

【アィドゥ ライク トゥ チェック イン プリーズ】
チェックインしたいのですが。



A: Good evening. May I help you?
(今晚わ、いらっしゃいませ)

B: Yes, I'd like to check in, please. My name is Yamada Taro.
(チェックインしたいのですが。私の名前は山田太郎です)

20

日	月	火	水	木	金	土
				1	2	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

WEDNESDAY

25

日	月	火	水	木	金	土
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

WEDNESDAY

Fig. 4.12 Four 1999 calendar pages created by Ōbunsha, Inc., to help Japanese learn to speak English with “foreigners” (Photograph courtesy of Debito Arudou)

(2002年10月、浅草通) UFJのATMに2掲示)



地域ニュース

発行日 平成14年8月9日

上野警察署・地域総務

(3847-0110内2912)



被害にあった、不審者を見たためらわず
すくーー0番

守ろうよ あなたの好きな 街だから

Fig. 4.13 Tōkyō Ueno Police Department public warning about darker-skinned, dark-haired foreigners (judging by their accented speech) sizing up a lighter-skinned, light-haired Japanese exiting a bank with money (panel one). Then she is told that she dropped some change (panel two), is approached by a second darker-skinned associate while distracted (panel three), and finally has her bag snatched (panel four). Dated August 2002 (Photograph courtesy of Debito Arudou)



Fig. 4.14 Excerpt of Ōsaka Ikuno Ward Police notice warning the public about illegal foreign workers who engage in visa overstays, fake marriages, falsified passports, and illegal work. “Foreigners” are thus generally rendered with blond hair and exaggerated facial features, unless they are one of the more swarthy South American laborers seen in the fourth example. June 2007 (Photograph courtesy of Debito Arudou)

There are other examples, and, of course, renderings of hatred targeting skin color happen in every society. However, in Japan there are no explicit laws against hate speech (*ken'ō hatsugen*), so these underground expressions can be found in more respectable, widely distributed print media to perpetuate the stereotypes. Given that the Japanese government has argued to the United Nations that specific legislation against hate speech and racial discrimination is unnecessary under the current judicial regime (Debito.org, 2003), there are no signs that this situation will change soon.



日本に**不法滞在**する来日外国人の多くは**不法就労**を行い、その一部は、近年深刻化している**国際組織犯罪**等への関与を深めていると思われます。

日本の治安に大きな影響を及ぼしているこれら不法滞在・不法就労防止のため、県民の皆様のご理解と協力をお願いします。

そこで、神奈川県警察では来日外国人による犯罪や不法滞在、不法就労を助長する犯罪等の**取締り**を強化しています。

外国人の不法滞在や不法就労の情報がありましたら、最寄りの警察署、交番等にご連絡願います。



神奈川県山手警察署
045-623-0110
国際犯係・経済保安係・外事係

Fig. 4.15 A warning about illegal foreign laborers, issued by Yamate Police Department, Kanagawa Prefecture. July 2010 (Photograph courtesy of Debito Arudou)

Conclusion

This does not mean values of “good” or “bad” are necessarily assigned to skin color in Japan (as, again, many Japanese are enormous fans of “black culture,” however it is defined) (Sterling 2010). The treatment of skin color in Japan does, however, mean overt differentiation, and “different” by itself can lead to exclusionary practices.

Fig. 4.16 This magazine's purpose was to expose how widespread and threatening foreign crime was in Japan: *Gaijin Hanzai no Ura Fairu 2007* (*Underground files of foreign crime*), (Anonymous 2007) (Photograph courtesy of Debito Arudou)



As has been shown above, different skin color in Japan can result in noncitizen treatment, even when there is legal status and evidence to the contrary, meaning equal protections of the law may not automatically be applied or enforced. Light or dark skin aside, the entanglement of race and nationality in Japan, further promoted by the media, is inextricable, meaning that one generally has to “look Japanese” in order to be considered “a Japanese.” Social conceits and business marketing using skin tone and racially based phenotype have the effect of differentiating and separating peoples. Japanese society’s *de rigueur* sorting and pigeonholing by physical appearance will continue to expose not only people considered as outsiders or foreign, but also Japanese people, to a different set of rules for treatment within Japan.



Fig. 4.17 African American US serviceman putting a chokehold on a Japanese bus driver in order to rob him. He says in black speech bubble, *gibu mī manē* (“Give me money”) (Photograph courtesy of Debito Arudou)

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Chapter 5

Mapping Color and Caste Discrimination in Indian Society

Varsha Ayyar and Lalit Khandare

This chapter is an attempt to map out historical discourse of color and caste discrimination practiced in Indian society. It is very well-known fact that Indian society is sharply stratified and organized on socioreligious lines rooted in a system with a hierarchical caste order. This unique form of social stratification and its contribution in creating social inequalities have been contested by several critical theorists. Along with that, nexus of caste and gender inequalities, praxis of sexuality, and coercive practices in everyday life have been analyzed. However, what is relatively understudied is the trajectory of color discrimination in India, more so because this form of discrimination is simplistically understood as a consequence of colonial domination. At the light of evidences, this explanation appears to be one-dimensional and problematic as it abbreviates this as a postcolonial phenomenon.

In mapping color and caste discrimination enshrined in ritual texts and colonial discourse pertaining to race theory, we suggest there are deeper linkages of color discrimination converging with Aryan supremacist theory. This chapter argues to consider color discrimination practiced in Indian society as precolonial and emerging from mythical Aryan/racial theory propagated by the “upper castes” and not emerged as a consequence of colonization. Besides, the prevalence of color discrimination and continuous devaluation of dark-skinned women and men is still practiced, permeated, and perpetuated through cultural constructions of beauty, femininity, and superior social status. Lastly, role of multinational corporations is analyzed in promoting and perpetuating such regressive constructs.

This chapter is mainly divided into three parts—(1) foregrounding racism in India, (2) revisiting the mythical “Aryan supremacy,” and (3) notion of beauty and contemporary ways of preserving white superiority. The first part of this chapter

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documents some of the well-known instances of racial discrimination faced by the international tourists of African descent. Second part of this chapter discusses one of the most dominant discourses of ancient India, the Aryan race theory. This is discussed through analyzing scriptures and popular imagination of “upper caste” and their belief in Aryan supremacy. The third part of this chapter is subdivided in two sections: beginning with “the notion of femininity and beauty in India” and “the rise of whitening cream culture and its contribution to retaining white supremacy.”

Foregrounding Racism in India

“India is Racist and Happy About It,” a shocking testimony of young African American Deipiriye KuKu was published in India’s leading national weekly, *Outlook*. Diepiriye KuKu narrated his firsthand experience of racism that he encountered in India’s capital, New Delhi (KuKu 2009). Diepiriye KuKu recalls several instances where he felt he was tormented, disgraced, and humiliated. His accounts of day-to-day discrimination comprised of explicit comments, taunting, disgraceful remarks, and direct hurtful comments. KuKu recalls this as “dehumanizing experience” and concludes “Indians are devoid of humanity” (KuKu 2009).

This testimony of KuKu can hardly be contested, particularly in the light of widespread color discrimination and its obtrusive manifestations witnessed in the sociocultural milieu. Conspicuous advertisements targeted at both women and men promoting skin lightening creams at the cost of condemning and disgracing dark-skinned men and women are explicit and regarded as acceptable. Moreover, prejudice and contempt toward dark-skinned is justified as “natural.”

Constitution of India provides every citizen with fundamental rights—equality before the law (Article 14) and social equality and equal access to public areas (Article 15). Moreover, the state cannot discriminate against any of the Indian citizens on the basis of their caste, creed, color, sex, gender, religion, or place of birth (Basu 2009). These discriminatory practices, although banned by the constitution of India, are witnessed in everyday life, and the discriminatory language and practices thrive in public sphere, unapologetically. In addition, there have been a number of other similar instances of color discrimination experienced by tourist and students of African descent. This clearly suggests a large number of Indians hold prejudice against those with darker skin color and in particular of African descent.

For instance, it was reported in newspaper that a Nigerian student at an engineering college in Greater Noida was spat at by one of his seniors, whereas in Pune, a city known for being host to a large number of international students, a Kenyan student was denied an entry to a pub (Dasgupta 2009).

Another controversial instance involving racism was reported in the year 2008, involving cheerleaders from the United Kingdom hired for a popular cricket series known as the Indian Premier League (IPL). This controversy involved accusations from cheerleaders of African descent who alleged of racism. Ms. Ellesha Newton and Ms. Sherinne Anderson, British nationals of African descent, claimed they were

racially discriminated by an event management company that was contracted by the IPL (Dasgupta 2009). Newspaper reported that these two professionals from the UK were hired to perform as cheerleaders for IPL cricket series and later denied of participation because they were of dark-skinned. Organizers of the event informed these two professionals that “*people in India don’t want to see dark girls. They wanted beautiful white girls*” (Dasgupta 2009). The entertainment company rubbished off this as allegation and accused Ms. Newton and Ms. Anderson of having an “*ulterior motive*” (Daily Mail Reporter 2008).

The idea here is not to discuss and judge these cases but rather document these as significant instances to foreground undercurrents of color and racial discrimination that exist in India.

It is in this context that KuKu’s testimony is of great significance as a crude reminder of such discrimination. Furthermore, KuKu’s testimony describes contrasting experience of his white partner. His partner received friendly and a high-class treatment from the same Indians who despised and dishonored KuKu.

Although one may argue that color discrimination and racism is not unique to India, some countries and cultures are known for their hostility toward all foreigners, tourist, and immigrants. This argument could be used to dispute claims that India is a xenophobic country. On the contrary, Indian society can be regarded as racist as put forward by KuKu. The seriousness of KuKu’s testimony and other similar instances need to be studied, and proactive policies should be implemented to address this issue.

Ministry of Tourism, a portfolio of Government of India, recently launched a massive campaign in order to attract tourist to India. “Incredible India” was the first high-profile campaign by the Government of India, an initiative that had public-private partnership designed to attract global tourist to India (Kant 2009; *Times of India* 2005). The primary objective of this branding exercise was to market a distinctive identity of the country. This massive campaign involved providing various stakeholders and service providers training on basic hygiene and cleanliness, fostering good conduct and behavior, and promoting integrity, honesty, safety, and the security for foreign tourist. There were also a series of advertisements carrying social messages against vandalism of national heritage sites, harassment of foreign tourist, and promoting practices of good hygiene and proper sanitation.¹ This campaign was largely aimed at encouraging Indians to return to hospitality values. These campaigns projected Indians to be kind, hospitable, friendly, welcoming, and dignified. In addition to the values of kindness and hospitality, it also shows that Indians treat their guests with reverence and equate them as gods. The campaign used a very well-known adage, “*Atithi Devo Bhava*” [our guest is like god]. This maxim was consciously used and promoted by the Ministry of Tourism among several other programs. The core charter of the program was aimed at sensitizing those who were directly and indirectly associated with tourist-related services.

¹These advertisements can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DIWs-38t2-o&feature=related>, and in addition, Amitabh Kant’s book *Branding India: Incredible Story* marks the process of Incredible India and marketing strategies.

However, the testimony of KuKu and several other instances exposing racism in its blatant forms seems to have been ignored. Clearly, as part of the campaign that entailed sensitization of Indians toward tourist and their safety and security, Government of India has a significant role to address racial/color discrimination.

It is important here to first foreground these varied instances of color and racial discrimination, which is rooted in India's obsession with whiteness. It is a historical fact that color obsession in India is not new but deeply entrenched. With the above contrasting views as a reference point, it is pertinent to examine whether India's prejudice against dark-skinned as a result of a colonial rule or India has roots of color discrimination entrenched deeper than any other civilization. The next section analyzes historical discourse surrounding racial supremacy theory and its association with whiteness.

Revisiting the Mythical “Aryan Supremacy”

Besides the testimonial of Diepiriye KuKu and allegations of Ms. Newton and Ms. Anderson, there are multiple evidences that suggest Indian society has great contempt toward dark-skinned. The aversion toward dark-skinned was captured in a large-scale survey conducted by a world's largest matrimonial website for Indians, shaadi.com (Singh 2011). In order to discern this color discrimination prevalent in Indian society, it is important to understand the context of *varna*. Hence, before this chapter examines contemporary forms of color discrimination in India, it is imperative to discuss the origins of the caste system particularly located in constructed racial theories, *varna* order, and myths of Aryan supremacy and its impact on cultural milieu of Indian society particularly for its role in shaping and influencing prejudice and contempt toward dark-skinned.

The following sections will discuss how *varna*-caste-color discrimination has prevailed for centuries even before the advent of the British and how it came to be continued in postcolonial period. This part of the chapter has sections on “What Scriptures Say,” “Aryans, *Varna*, and *Jati*,” “Revisiting the Aryan Supremacy,” and “Questioning the Aryan Supremacy Myth: Non-Brahmanical Contestations.”

What Scriptures Say

Varna has several meanings, ranging from color, lineage, occupation, and ritual ranking; *varna* was most commonly held as signifier of “skin color.” It may be noted that there has been no consensus on what actually *varna* signified among scholars. For instance, Hutton (1969, p. 64) explained that “*varna* is a term which is often confused with *jāti* (caste), though it is far from having the same meaning.” On the other hand, Fox (1969) argued that *varna* should be considered as “indigenous ideological integration of regions and subregions in traditional India and an apparatus merging

castes into larger status categories or classifications.” Mandelbaum (1960) explained *varna* as “categories that facilitate intercaste interactions,” whereas Dumont and Pocock (1958) uphold *varna* as a system that demonstrated prevalence of certain values in the society commonly held by all members of caste. Evidently, scholarly assertions on what exactly *varna* means remain contested. *Vedic* scriptures explain that *varna* was essentially a stratification ordained by divinity; hence, it is forbidden to transgress the divine hierarchical order (Jaiswal 1991). While there are several competing and conflicting views associated with *varna*, there are some inseparable features of *varna-jāti* (caste) that remain intrinsic to this system.

Besides the difference is being born from different body parts of *Brahma*, Maharshi Bhrigu discusses the evidence of color distinction in *Mahabharata*. Bhrigu noted the priestly class; ritually, the most superior, *Brahman* was of white color, *Kshatriya* of red color, *Vaishya* was of yellow color, and the *Shudra* of black color (Ambedkar 1979b, p. 199). Although historical text like *Mahabharata* does not account for facts as they are inconsistent with previous spiritual texts like *Rig-veda* on *varna* description, such descriptions in various texts which people worship underscores elements of hierarchy, race, and color as being part of religious scriptures and segregation order of Hindu organization remain embedded.

Manusmriti scripture discusses the fifth caste, *Avarna* or “untouchables” (Buhler 1886). According to these scriptures, “untouchables” are below *Shudra*. Dr. Ambedkar’s analysis of origin of “untouchables” and “*Shudra*” is discussed in the upcoming section—“Questioning the Aryan Supremacy Myth: Non-Brahmanical contestations.”

Dr. Ambedkar (1979b) critically examines this origin of *varna* and dismantles this false notion of superiority. He noted:

On the issue [of] the relations intended by the creator for binding together the four Varnas the Rig-veda lays down the rule of graded inequality based on the importance of the part of the creation from which the particular Varna was born. But the white Yajur-veda denies this theory of the Rig-veda. So also the Upanishad, Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Puranas. Indeed the Hari Vansha goes to the length of saying that the Shudras are twice born. This chaos seems to be the result of concoction of the theory of Chaturvarna which the Brahmins quietly singled into the Rig-Veda contrary to established traditions? What was the purpose, what was the motive of the Brahmins who concocted this theory? (p. 204)

Ambedkar critically analyzes and lists down all the explanation in scriptures on the origin of *Chaturvarna*; however, he finds no consistency or uniformity in the explanation. He contends that *Rig-veda* says the four *varnas* were created by Prajapati, but no clarity on which Prajapati (there are many Prajapatis in religious texts). One Prajapati says they were created by Brahman, another state they are created by Kassapa, and the third says they were created by Manu. Similarly, there is no agreement on how many *varnas*.

This clearly suggests that the articulation of division of Indian society on *varna* remains severely contested. Interestingly, there are some of these linkages which have been intrinsic to the various standpoints and theorization. These linkages reveal association of hierarchical division, association of supremacy, and element of color description.

It will be helpful to now move toward the *jāti* discourse from the contested and multiple meaning and connotation of *varna* to find some other evidences suggesting division and distinction based on birth, labor performed, and skin color.

Aryans, Varna, and Jāti

It will be hard to dispute that Indian society is one of the most highly stratified societies in the world. Caste system is a unique form of social stratification, division, and the organization of its society. Although there are several scholarly views on caste, it may be pertinent to discuss a few important ones that are relevant for this chapter.

Although there are rhetorical themes inevitable in discussing *varna* and caste, there are conflating opinions and positions taken by those in academia different from those images that conjure in the minds of among common people. For sociologist, *varna* is a broader and traditional category under which caste and its “ethnographic reality” were subsumed (as cited in Srinivas 1962), whereas in layman’s understanding, *varna* division was ordained in divinity and not to be transgressed.

Prominent sociologist G. S. Ghurye provides an alternative explanation for *varna*. He argues that in “*Rig-veda*,” the word *varna* is not applied to any classes, that is, *Brahmana*, *Kshatriya*, etc.; rather there is only one *varna*, “*Arya varna*” or the Aryan people that is contrasted with the “*Dasa varna*”² (Srinivas 1962). Thus, the division of society had two groups—Aryans and *Dasa varna*. Another noted sociologist M. N. Srinivas (1962) points out that in text such as *Rig-veda*, there is no single term to refer the fourfold division of the people. Instead, it mentions distinctions based on color and appearance. Those with dark skin were the conquered aborigines (*Dasyus*), and the conquerors were the fair- or light-skinned invaders (*Arya*). This came to be referred to as “one hierarchical division of society.” Srinivas (1962) also attempts to explain caste as rooted in *varna* order. He argues that with extrapolation of castes, the *varna* scheme refers at best as classifying broad categories of the society and not to its real and effective units.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar defined caste as “division of laborers” and summarized “this as social division of laborers” distinct from sexual division of labor (Ambedkar 1979a). Although the definition of caste provided by Dr. Ambedkar may appear brief and comprehensive, caste system as an institution has greater complexity. Division of labor may appear as intrinsic and central but certainly is not the essence of caste. He also pointed out some other aspects of caste such as endogamy, exogamy (among the clans), and religious innate hierarchy. Though a sociological definition of caste which appears to be more comprehensive encompasses dimensions such as heredity, endogamy, and traditional occupation, a particular position in the local hierarchy of

²Darker skinned indigenous people.

castes and usually a localized group (Srinivas 1962, p. 3). However, in contrast to these broader articulations, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar summarized essence of caste system as “division of laborers” (Ambedkar 1979a). It should be noted the *Vedic* denigration of color and caste as a duality of inferiority endowed upon lower castes could have stemmed from inferior occupation imposed upon them besides association of dark skin color.

So far, theoretical understandings of concept of *varna* and *jāti* have remained controversial and the most debated concepts in Indian academia. There is no consensus among scholars on origin of caste and *varna*. As stated earlier, some of them have argued that *varnas* served broadly as functional categories and were based on color, whereas scholars such as Trautmann (1964) summarized *varnas* to be inclusive and integrative, working categories used for theoretical simplicity and perhaps the result of divine origin.

Regardless of the ambivalence, controversies, and debates around these concepts of *varna* and *Jāti*, Ambedkar (1990), Trautmann (1964), and Thapar (2008) have stressed that the Aryan supremacy is a myth, with its association with physical embodiment and not as language or cultural group. Thereby, in popular imagination of India, race is still understood as a biological concept, and physical characteristics such as white color, cephalic index, nose, and other physical features distinct from darker races remain foundational to the imagination and construction of superiority of races.

Trautmann (2004) elaborated this point he says in the context of India:

... complexion is not race in and of itself but may be *construed as a sign* of race; what is in question is whether complexion was in fact taken by the authors of the Veda to characterize large and opposed groups that we may call races. The racial interpretation of Indian civilization says that it was, and in examining its case we become aware not only that its makers over read the evidence but also that they did so out of a sense of the objective character of race, especially of white and black races, and of the permanent, transhistorical nature of certain attitudes of whites towards blacks. It is this belief that justified taking the Jim Crow system of American South and the segregation of South Africa as evidence of the reactions, deemed natural, of Aryans to *Dasyus* thousands of years earlier. (p. 214)

Although the origin of *varna*, *jāti*, and its meanings may be debatable, the insistence of “upper caste” in asserting that they are Aryans has remained consistent (Leopold 1974). Max Müller, one of the early scholars, is known to have actively encouraged and endorsed this view. Müller in his important paper titled as “*On the relation of Bengali and the Arian*”³ and the Aboriginal Languages of India”⁴ concluded that the “*race of Hindoos themselves at least higher caste, or the so-termed twice-born tribes, who call themselves Aryas, must be looked upon as genuine descendants of the Arian conquerors of India and of one kindred* (cited in Leopold 1974, p. 583).”

³Arian and Aryan is one and the same, only written differently; here, the connotation was Aryan as a biological race and not as cultural/language group.

⁴Originally from Müller, Max (1847). On the relation of Bengali to the Aryan and Aboriginal Languages of India, In Report of British Association. P. 339.

It may be noted that the term *Aryan* itself has been a vague and controversial concept in academic discourse. However, in religious scriptures and popular imagination in a different period in history (*Sanatani*⁵), it was largely equated as European/Caucasian race, a nonnative race. Regardless of the clarity of the concept, the theory of the *Aryan* race as conquerors was viewed as foundational to Indian history (Thapar 2008, p. 33).

The popular imagination of Indian society still constructs Aryans as warriors, possessing traits such as physically sturdy and of handsome feature due to their lighter skin, blue eyes, and sharp nose as distinct and appealing features. In contrast, the enslaved indigenous people were deemed as ugly, largely due to their dark skin, puny, and unattractive features in comparison—to invading Aryans. These kinds of descriptions have been extensively documented in the canonical text of the Hindus. It is in this context that the *Rig-veda* is regarded as one of the four canonical texts considered as a sacred text and a key text to unravel the *Sanskrit* civilization. It refers to *varna/color* as skin pigmentation and gives an explicit description of the fair-skinned Aryans conquering the dark-skinned aborigines (Thapar 2008, p. 67).

As mentioned earlier, racial discourses of Indian history are intrinsic and unassailable in spite of the controversies. There are positions taken by scholars radically opposing each other's view. Romila Thapar (2008) strongly argued that *Aryan* was a specific term of language and a marker of superior social status. Furthermore, she alleged that certain theorists have created confusion and used the term *Aryan* indiscriminately to refer to it as a race, a “biological determinism,” such a view as a result reinforces the identities similar to “social Darwinism” (Thapar 1996, 2008). Interestingly, her well-substantiated arguments was regarded as a threat to the Hindu right-wing politics that viewed her articulation as detrimental to the image of “upper caste” Hindus, who held themselves as biologically superior (*Frontline* 2003).

It is at this juncture, next section examines this aspect of Brahmanical contestations. Brahmanical as a concept is built on *vedas*; supremacy of Brahmins and Sanskrit are essential elements of Brahminical paradigm. This is interwoven through caste institution built on patriarchy, endogamy, and controlled sexuality (Ambedkar 1990). The following section will also look into the string of debates and series of *Aryan* supremacy debate from religious scriptures and colonial scholarship.

Revisiting the Aryan Supremacy

This part discusses how *Aryan* supremacy was a mythical construct and how historically it is being preserved by “upper castes” to sustain caste order. Trautmann

⁵Sanatan—“in Sanskrit, ‘eternal, timeless,’ the phrase sanatan dharm is often used for what are claimed to be ageless religious practices going back to the Vedas.” (<http://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/mmt/ambedkar/web/terms/6764.html>).

(2004, p. 214) has rightly said that the “race is socially constructed, that it is not objective but conventional, and that, therefore, it has contingent, historical character that is not perduring but governed by forced in play at a given time.” There is no dearth of literature on this thread of history.

Although the concept of Aryan itself has been controversial, indescribable, and vague, Indian history is known to have been built on the very foundation of the so-called struggles between Aryans and non-Aryans. Interestingly, the description of Aryans and non-Aryans is unclear, conflating, and ambiguous due to diverse opinions and scholarly debates among historians, social anthropologists, and linguists who have their independent analysis on the subject matter.

According to Thapar (2008), the earliest sources from India suggest the term *Arya* was used not only in racial sense but linked to “upper caste” status in system of “*varna*-based society.” In addition, there were marked distinctions based on the use of language and worship of deities. On one hand, the usage of Sanskrit was prestigious and won admiration and so was the worship of *vedic* deities. Besides, the language, physical difference, worshipping of deities, and traditional occupation also served as the markers of one’s status (Thapar 2008). Thus, in this opinion, this association of language, occupational status, notion of purity, and worship of *vedic* deities created two divisions, that is, *Aryans* and *Dasyus* (Thapar 2008). Thapar’s (2008) contestations on racial discourse on Aryans from different positions are articulated by several scholars. She classified them broadly as four groups: oriental scholars who glorified Sanskrit and Hindu race (“upper caste”), anthropologist mainly from Britain interested in using anthropological data as technique to control and regulate people, Hindu right-wing activists propagating Hindu philosophy, and lastly radical social revolutionaries from non-Brahmin castes.

The idea here is to discuss the non-Brahmin revolutionaries like Jotiba Fule and Periyar Ramaswamy who used racial theory to critique the oppressive cultural regime of the “upper caste” insisting its dismantling as against the viewpoint of Hindu revivalist and right-wing activist such as Swami Dayanand Saraswati, V. D. Savarkar, and B. G. Tilak, to name a few, who also used the Aryan supremacy theory but in order to promote and preserve the privileges of Brahmins and revive *sanatan* Hinduism (Oommen 2002; Thapar 2008). The ideas of the latter are regarded as regressive, conservative, and believed in maintaining caste purity. It is widely known that Aryan reformist such as Swami Dayanand Saraswati, founder of Arya Samaj, prescribed strict practice of endogamy (prohibition of intercaste marriages), and inter-dining rules in order to preserve caste and racial purity (Ilaiah 2010; Omvedt 1976). Bhatt (2001, p. 14) elaborates that, “for Besant [Annie] self-rule was to be the prelude to an international Aryan federation. Conversely, for Ranade [Govind], Ghose [Aurobindo] and Tilak [B.G.], the European racial connotations of Aryan supremacy, and for the latter two the idea that Indians subjugated by the British could share a common descent, was anathema.” Several national leaders including M. K. Gandhi widely used the term “Aryan” (Bhatt 2001). It is not surprise that “upper caste” Hindus have pleaded to the colonial masters several times to be treated as “exclusive, special, and better” than the other “lowly non-Aryan races” (Leopold 1974).

Another two noteworthy Hindu right-wing activists, V.D. Savarkar and M. S. Golwalkar contributed in popularizing “Hindu” as a race itself unlike the earlier understanding of Aryan being exclusive to “upper caste” Hindus. In this conception, the “Hindu” race comprised of *Aryans*, *Dravidians*, and tribes. Thapar (2008) in her meticulous analysis regards this as a part of “*Brahmanical politics*” to accommodate non-Aryans, tribals under the rubric of Hindus but a rule led by Brahmins. The trend continued over the period of time. This is particularly used by the ones largely from “upper caste” locations and particularly by the right-wing Hindu religious organizations such as Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

Although the race theory itself has undergone several changes and has not remained consistent, one can note the tenacity of caste and color associations. An association of skin pigmentation/color has continued and persistent with notions of social hierarchy and racial supremacy. It is evident that the language of this racial discourse was strengthened with racial profiling under colonial domination where for the first time, Indian population was divided into category of Aryan and non-Aryan. The colonial administration used anthropometric data to divide the populations in these two broad categories. Thereby, massive exercise was employed by the colonial administration entailing large-scale surveys detailing physiology of Indian population based on skin color, height, cephalic index, and so on. This exercise of colonial administration employing physical anthropologist was considered as a type of “science,” which is widely known for “institutionalizing racism,” and this came to be widely used in India (Oommen 2002, p. 123). In some sense, it is understood that the colonial anthropologists were using the racial profiling as the basis for division and deepening the rift of physical distinctions.

This partial view of understanding Indian society based on ancient texts such as *vedas and Manu Shastra Dharma* (Hindu religious law of codes) has been critiqued by many leading scholars. In promoting this “partial, dominant, and top-bottom view,” the Middle Orient scholars (South Asia) projected Indian society through Hindu-Brahmanical view and greatly admired Aryan heritage and Sanskrit language (Oommen 2002; Buhler 1886). This view was predominantly a “racial view” and held Brahmins, the highest caste, as a superior and pure and descendants of noble race, “Aryans.”

The contradictions of nationalist movements expose to the double standards that Brahmin leaders had adopted. Brahmin leaders on several occasions pleaded to the British to receive fair treatment at the hands of the British because of their Aryan descent and, on the other hand, cried foul to achieve independence (Leopold 1974; Bhatt 2001). Indian society was already a highly segregated society based on structure of caste and *Varna*, and “upper caste” leaders aimed at maintaining their supremacy under colonial or postcolonial rule.

Besides, Oommen (2002) points out that caste/race is not a colonial construction. He cites two important history texts of Hindus, the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, to unravel highly significant information on identification, organization, and systematization of Hindu society. Both the epics mention that Hindu society was hierarchical and race was the basis of this hierarchy; the ones on the upper scale of ranking were the fair-skinned *Aryans*, and the lower scale were the dark-skinned *Dasyus*.

Studies undertaken by James Forbes, William Ward, and R.V. Risley suggest that Hindu society was divided into caste that had rigid laws on commensality and endogamy (Oommen 2002). There was marked distinction between the castes that was largely based on skin color. It was also suggested that Indian society was based on two broad races occupying geographical areas of northern India and southern India. The north Indians were largely dominated by the “purest” of the Aryans who oppressed, dominated, and subjugated “races” of the southern India, who were believed to be natives, pre-Aryan, and non-Brahmin (Oommen 2002, p. 119).

In this racial discourse of India, oriental scholars who used the *vedic* canon are known to have promoted and reinforced the Brahmin supremacy because of their admiration of Sanskrit language, which they held as the “mother of all languages.” A result of these factors led to the Brahmin retaining its status of a privileged community. This indeed benefited the Brahmins, yet they complained of being marginalized under the colonial rule. Dirks goes on to the extent of suggesting the colonial rule had adopted “no intervention” policy after 1858 (Brun 2010). Therefore, colonial rule and its intervention need to be examined in the light of “specific interactions and encounters” that took place amidst the rulers and other castes/*varna* and not just the Brahmins or few privileged castes. It is only through this detailed and comprehensive incisions can one arrive at an understanding on the nature of situational encounters of the colonial rule with all sections of Indian society.

Utility of these micro-perspectives and studies lies not in reinforcing race theories but in deepening our understanding of social stratification. However, the contemporary scholarship of subaltern studies insists on dismissing the colonial intervention to be viewed and examined in the light of what the oppressed had to say about the colonial administration. For instance, in the process of expansion of colonial rule, strengthening of military became extremely important. British rule used extensive anthropological data for their recruitment process. This massive exercise surprisingly seems to have benefited some excommunicated castes who were given opportunity to work for the British through military service.

There have been sharp criticisms against use of anthropological data by the colonial administration. Nicholas Dirks argues that these massive surveys and other anthropological data collection undertaken by the colonial administrators were used to control the subjects; it was a move toward creation of “ethnographic state” (Dirks 2001).

Undoubtedly, scholars appointed by the colonial administration were using socio-anthropological data as a technique to administer the subject with aim of generating knowledge for politics. British not only employed anthropological data in recruitment of military service personnel but they also coined the concept of “martial race.” It was through this exercise several excommunicated castes were enumerated along with others. This also led to the interaction between the excommunicated castes and colonial rule. Colonial administration maintained racial details, and fair complexion communities were regarded as of Aryan lineage, whereas the dark-skinned communities were classified as non-Aryans (Dirks 2001).

Interestingly, the British allowed “non-Aryan races” to enter military services. Regardless, of their caste locations and race classification, services of all castes,

including that of “ex-untouchables” (from different parts of India), have been used by the British military. In fact, contributions of Mahars, an “ex-untouchable” caste of Maharashtra, to British rule in India are very well known (Keer 1990). George MacMunn’s (1979), a historian and a high-ranking officer in the British army in his work, “*The Martial Races of India*” gave a detailed view of the “martial race.” Attributions of caste, color, and anthropometric descriptions became predominant features of categorizing martial races for military recruitment.

The point of discussion here is to understand various threads of discourses on *varna-jāti* and how they came to be altered through the British who actively recruited the untouchables into the military rank. It is observed that most of these concepts and particularly that of *Aryan* and *varna* are ambiguous and vague; nevertheless, they do highlight multidimensions of social life coded in colors, castes, *vedic* deities, and languages, all of which have been very intrinsic to these conceptualizations. Racial differences were constructed as the backbone of these primitive divisions based on skin color and caste. Theories were applied to explain natural supremacy of *Aryan* and used by both British and “upper castes” of India to uphold “Brahmanic supremacy.” A trajectory of difference in the language of Aryans and non-Aryans (singularly identified as Dravidians) was another dichotomy of Indian society.

The following section will discuss non-Brahmanical contestations posed by academia and scholars. Their engagement and standpoint on the imperative questions such as *who were Aryans* and *who were the indigenous* is an important thesis in this contested history. Several questions have been raised, such as whether Aryans migrated from elsewhere or have they been natives. Some of these served as the key questions in unraveling and understanding debates around nativism, race, caste-*varna*, and other dynamics of Indian society.

Questioning the Aryan Supremacy Myth: Non-Brahmanical Contestations

The colonial period also witnessed a series of non-Brahmanical discourse that impacted sociopolitical and religious movement during that time. Jotiba Fule, Periyar, and Ambedkar were the some of the prominent voices questioning and refuting the myth of the Aryan supremacy.

The entire Dravidian movement of Tamil Nadu was based on the belief that Dravidians constituted a race, a distinct aboriginal race, and as far as they are non-Aryans, they were ordained low ranking into caste order. The link of race-caste is explicit and can be seen in the Dravidian movement markedly. Periyar Ramaswamy(1879–1973), father of self-respect movement, led this non-Brahman movement but also offered a critical response to “politics of pity” and patronization played by Gandhi (Braj Ranjan Mani 2008; Geetha and Rajadurai 1998). The Dravidian movement asserted that it was the tyrant Aryans responsible for

subordination and subjugation of the Dravidian race. Aryans dominated Dravidians in all spheres of life. Dravidians were dominated culturally, socially, politically, and psychologically by the oppressive Aryans. The advocate of this anti-Brahmin movement led by Periyar Ramaswamy was of the “Shudra” caste origin from Tamil Nadu. Besides, Periyar Ramaswamy, another social revolutionary from Maharashtra, had similarly attacked the cultural repression perpetuated by the Brahmins in western part of India.

Jotiba Fule (1827–1890), social revolutionary from western India, wrote extensively on peasants, ex-untouchables, race relations, and cultural slavery at the hands of Brahmanic oppressions. Jotiba Fule championed rights of education to women and “ex-untouchables.” It is pertinent here to discuss his position on racial history of India. Jotiba Fule argued on a very radical racial line and can be traced in his famous work *Gulamgiri* (“Slavery”), where he argued that Brahmins were nonnatives and of Aryan race (Ambedkar 1990). They were invaders and have enslaved, “lower castes” (*Shudras*), “ex-untouchables” (*Avarnas*), and tribals. He argued that the natives were peace loving and were worshippers of “*Bali*,” a local god. The Aryan invasion led to the divisions that were responsible for further exploitation under the rule of Brahmins (Braj Ranjan Mani 2008).

Although Dr. Ambedkar (1891–1956) considers Fule as his one of the three teacher (others—Buddha and Kabir), he posed integrationist approach, which is also different than Periyar. Omvedt (n.d. cited in Pai 2007, p. 390) claims that, “Ambedkar was much more farsighted on these issues,” rejecting the “Aryan and non-Aryan dichotomy” as a historical explanation and asserting that caste was vastly different from race. He carefully characterized the enemy not as “Brahmans” but as “Brahmanism,” which he harshly attacked but defined not in terms of a specific group and simply as “the negation of the values of liberty, equality, and fraternity.”

Ambedkar digs deeper into details on the origin of *Shudras* in his famous books, “*Who were the Shudras?*” and “*Untouchables, who were they?*” He points out that the primitive *varna* stratification was sophisticated because it clearly set out a vertical hierarchy in a religious flavor. As the *varnas* were claimed to be ordained in divinity, there were several codes or guidelines for regulating the behavior for all four *varnas*. Transgressions of these codes were prohibited.

On the exploration of origin of *Shudras* and to discover the cause of their degradation, Dr. Ambedkar (1990) establishes the following theoretical propositions in his book, “*Who were the Shudras?*”:

- (1) The Shudras were one of the Aryan communities of the Solar race; (2) There was a time when the Aryan society recognized only three Varnas, namely. Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas; (3) The Shudras did not form a separate Varna. They ranked as part of the Kshatriya Varna in the Indo-Aryan society; (4) There was a continuous feud between the Shudra kings and the Brahmins in which the Brahmins were subjected to many tyrannies and indignities; (5) As a result of the hatred towards the Shudras generated by their tyrannies and oppressions, the Brahmins refused to perform the Upanayana of the Shudras; (6) Owing to the denial of Upanayana, the Shudras who were Kshatriyas became socially degraded, fell below the rank of the Vaishyas and thus came to form the fourth Varna. (p. 204)

Dr. Ambedkar rejected the *vedic* scriptures and western scholars' argument and provided a thesis that there is no racial and color difference between *Shudras* and Aryan, and *Shudras* were not enslaved by fair-skinned Aryan. Dr. Ambedkar (1990) categorically refuted the Western theory of Aryan and non-Aryan, and he summarized as:

(1) The Vedas do not know any such race as the Aryan race; (2) There is no evidence in the Vedas of any invasion of India by the Aryan race and its having conquered the Dasas and Dasyus, supposed to be natives of India; (3) There is no evidence to show that the distinction between Aryans, Dasas and Dasyus was a racial distinction; (4) The Vedas do not support the contention that the Aryans were different in color from the Dasas and Dasyus. (p. 85)

The worst sufferer of this Aryan myth and Brahmanic supremacy is the “ex-untouchable” caste—also referred as *Ati-Shudra* or as *Avarna*. They suffered extreme inhuman atrocities since thousands of years and continue to suffer in post-independent India. They constitute 16.2% (166,635,700) of India's population (Census of India 2001). According to National Crime Record Bureau, “Every hour two Dalits are assaulted; every day three Dalit women are raped, two Dalits are murdered, and two Dalit homes are torched” (Mayell 2003). This explains the continued hatred and contempt toward certain castes due to certain notions of untouchability considered as the lowliest in the stratified order.

Dr. Ambedkar (1990) theorized and deconstructed the derogatory and false construction of fifth caste in *vedic* scripture. He summarizes his thesis on origin of untouchability as:

(1) There is no racial difference between the Hindus and the Untouchables; (2) The distinction between the Hindus and Untouchables in its original form, before the advent of Untouchability, was the distinction between Tribesmen and Broken Men from alien Tribes. It is the Broken Men who subsequently came to be treated as Untouchables; (3) Just as Untouchability has no racial basis so also has it no occupational basis; (4) There are two roots from which Untouchability has sprung: (a) Contempt and hatred of the Broken Men as of Buddhists by the Brahmins; (b) Continuation of beef-eating by the Broken Men after it had been given up by others; (5) In searching for the origin of Untouchability care must be taken to distinguish the Untouchables from the Impure. All orthodox Hindu writers have identified the Impure with the Untouchables. This is an error. Untouchables are distinct from the Impure. (6) While the Impure as a class came into existence at the time of the Dharma Sutras the Untouchables came into being much later than 400 A.D. (p. 242)

Antithetical to the Swami Dayanand Saraswati, and others like Gandhi's *varnashrama Dharma*⁶ and *vedic* proponents of caste and color segregation, Dr. Ambedkar repudiated the notion of superiority of caste Hindus (high castes); he articulated that scripture and popular imagination in a different period in history was an attempt to “idealize” the “real” that is full of inequalities and oppression.

⁶Gandhi and Ambedkar had conflict over the addressing the problem of caste; Gandhi believed in maintaining caste order and destroying untouchability; Dr. Ambedkar believed that such a proposition is highly impossible in realizing demolition of caste order; Dr. Ambedkar said, “sanctity of caste and *varna* can be destroyed only by discarding the divine authority of the Shastras.” This is elaborated in classic essay on “*Annihilation of Caste with Reply to 'Mahatma' Gandhi*” (Ambedkar 1979a).

Dr. Ambedkar contended that, “existence of classes is the *de facto* condition of every society, nevertheless, no society has converted this *de facto* state of affairs into *de jure* connotation of an ideal society” (Ambedkar 1990, p.26). However, in the case of *Rigvedic Purusha sukta* and other related scriptures made it possible to elevate the “real” (caste/*varna* order) to the dignity of an “ideal.” Similarly, these scriptures and epics like Mahabharata dominated the public psyche through various modes adopted in contemporary Indian society. Alongside, the same proponents have popularized the idea of “*Sanatani*,” (meaning everlasting *vedic* scriptural truth). National leaders like Aurobindo Ghose equated *Sanatan dharma* with nationalism (Bhatt 2001). In this context, the creation of mythical Aryan supremacy based on color or caste/*varna* order, and such “idealization” of “real” for Dr. Ambedkar, was nothing short of criminal serving the interests of caste Hindus, the perpetrators. He further said, “It means perpetuating inequality on the ground that whatever is settled is settled for all times. Such a view is opposed to all morality. No society with ideal conscience has accepted it. On the contrary, whatever progress in improving the terms of associated life between individuals and classes has been made in the course of history, is due to entirely to the recognition of the ethical doctrine that whatever is never settled and must be resettled” (Ambedkar 1990, p. 32).

To conclude the above discussion, it is argued that Dr. Ambedkar was one of the leading intellectuals not only to dismiss Aryan supremacy but discard all elements of racial connotations and particularly that of supremacy and inferiority. In spite of the constitutional efforts of underpinning equality, fraternity, and liberty, persistence of these supremacist elements has continued, and they influence contemporary India, particularly through the notion of beauty, femininity, and womanhood.

Notion of Beauty and Contemporary Forms of Preserving White Superiority

This part of the chapter maps contemporary forms of color discrimination and intersecting elements of gender, beauty, and its cultural construction. We argue that notion of beauty in Indian society has not been created in vacuum but has a historical linkage of racial discourse. This part of the chapter deliberates on notions of femininity and beauty in India, the growing whitening cream culture, and the roles of multinational companies in reinforcing this discrimination.

Notions of Femininity and Beauty in India

Literary sources of ancient India have extensively documented and described images of beautiful and erotic women. For instance, during the Kushan Empire which is known to have ruled from the second-century B.C. to the third-century A.D., beautiful women were described as those who had “large black rimmed eyes, coral mouth, long dark tresses, and skin-like color of gold” (Varma and

Mulchandani 2004). This archaic criterion still plays a very important role in contemporary Indian society and influences the ideas of femininity and beauty. The Indian ideal of female beauty is largely defined based on skin color. Fair or lighter skin color is considered the most vital because it is believed that light skin color has the ability to override all the other facial and bodily defects. This idea of feminine is based on features such as lighter skin color, lighter eyes, a sharp nose, and delicate nostrils. This perception of ideal womanhood and beauty is clearly constructed on the foundation of color and caste nexus.

It is evident that *varna*-caste supremacy not only influenced the past but also influences notions of beauty and femininity in contemporary India. Those who do not fall under these standards of Aryan are deemed ugly and made to face discrimination and condemnation. The trend of discrimination has continued and evident in different kinds of manifestation. The matrix of domination of Indian society is embedded in caste hierarchy; thus, there is asymmetry of burden/exploitation/social location/oppression. Invariably, women of “lower caste” continue to face more burden than other women of “upper caste” locations due to entrenched sociocultural hierarchies. Thus, in any discussion on a notion of beauty and femininity in India, it is imperative to acknowledge the basis of stratification and nexus of *varna-jāti* hierarchies. Thus, it can be argued that perceptions of beauty not only translate into communal burdens but they are also distributed along the caste lines.

In a remarkable anthropological study on middle-class Christians of south India, Amali Philips (2004) draws our attention to the enormous importance associated with lighter skin color and concludes that lighter skin color is the “most defining feature of female beauty, feminine identity, health and moral conduct” (Philips 2004, p. 253). Further, she explains that the prescriptions of beauty and femininity are coded in racial-caste connotations. Even among the progressive and educated Christians, dark skin is considered as a marker of inferiority and caste location.

Philips (2004) also highlights that Syrian Christians take pride in their race and their tradition, as they try to trace their lineage to Brahmins who are regarded as Aryans, connoting superiority. It can be illustrated from this milestone anthropological work that lighter skin color is marker of the social status, caste location, and morality even in southern India, hitherto known as a progressive belt for its radical anti-caste politics. These articulations and historical linkages suggest that caste, social status, beauty, and femininity have clear links preceding colonial history. Moreover, damnation of dark-skinned women is embedded in *varna-jāti* institutions. It is thus no surprise that perceptions of beauty, femininity, poise, morality, and womanhood are based on the lines of class position, caste location, and degree of melanin.

Lighter skin color brings several advantages, and dark skin color inadvertently affects life choices, career options, and marriage. Manjusha Nair (2004) exposes attitudes, preferences, and perceptions of recruiters of India’s national air carrier—Air India. Nair interviewed an Air India human resource manager, involved in recruiting airhostesses and pursers. Nair (2004) narrates a description of an interview where the manager (a woman) described beauty mainly locating in a geographical belt of Northern India. According to this recruitment manager, she

described beautiful women as, “damsels that were tall, lissome, glowing with grace and manners came largely from states like Punjab and Jammu Kashmir” (Nair 2004, p. 1016). It is unsurprising to have such exclusive construction of beauty that has caste/geography and class connotations. In the year of 2004, Air India director of operations commented that, “*Dhed aur chamaro ki ladki Hawaii sundari nahi ho sakti* (Daughters of untouchables and cobblers cannot become airhostesses).” This controversial statement attracted wide protests from several Dalit groups (Sequiera 2004). Interestingly, amidst the many social markers of beauty, ideal beauty is located in certain geographical region of India, popularly known as “Aryan belt.” However, what is ironic is the fact that such constructs of beauty are standardized and used by those involved in public sector, who bears responsibility of being inclusive, not allowing discrimination and maintaining diversity as part of constitutional mandate. This exclusive conception of ideal beauty focuses on a region, caste, and class location and foregrounds this as a “privilege” to those who belong to certain category of people hailing from geographical and caste location.

It can also be implied that these “skewed standards” of beauty have a direct bearing on “lower caste” women and their morale, as they are regarded lowly due to their inferior caste lineage, and supposedly they are unattractive and ugly due to their non-Aryan skin tones and facial features. With these standardization of beauty embedded in skin color, women of lower castes particularly of darker skin color will never be deemed as beautiful, feminine, and chaste. Besides the cultural oppression of lower caste women, mainstream ideas of nationalism, womanhood, morality, beauty, and femininity are another space of exclusiveness as this image is largely built on chastity of “upper caste” women. It can be inferred that the idea of beauty, femininity, morality, and fertility is constructed at the cost of damnation and devaluation women particularly “untouchable” caste women and tribal women who fail to meet the standards derived from Aryan/racial discourse.

It may be debated that the all “ex-untouchables” are not homogenous categories and certain excommunicated castes all over India have lighter skin color and in appearance similar to the upper castes. In addition, there are several myths constructed among the “ex-untouchable” castes that have lighter skin color who trace their lineage to Aryan or Brahmins (Bhonsale 2003). Conversely, narratives in Marathi Dalit literature describe elements of physicality particularly of the dark skin tone as marker of “caste purity” (versus Brahmanical notion of purity) and indigenously. Dalit literature is a testimony to the fact that most of the “ex-untouchable” communities are dark-skinned and physically distinct from the rest (Robertson 1938; Kamble 2008).

Interestingly, despite wide presence of dark skin among community members, Dalit are known to have subscribed to the standards of beauty as laid down by the dominant Brahmanical discourse. It is also noted that a large number of women and men of dark-skinned color are discriminated in these communities that are known for its higher melanin. A large part of Dalit literature, particularly which emerged in Maharashtra, underpins the presence of dark skin color as an intrinsic to Dalit (caste specific—Mahar) existence. Shantabai Dani and Kumud Pawde, two important Dalit women autobiographers, have described their life experiences. They mention their

lighter skin color won an immediate adulation and was regarded as exclusive due to their distinctness amidst dark-skinned majority. This color advantage earned them easy admiration and adulation and enabled them to enjoy greater social status within the community (Rege 2006).

This kind of color adulation was already echoed by a leading sociologist, André Béteille (1967). He notes that there is a preference for light skin color in almost all sections of Indian society and it is evidently found in the form as a criterion for selecting marriage partners. He elucidates that, “fair skin color consideration weight greater in choosing bride than a groom” (Béteille 1967, p. 453). Thus, there is enormous pressure on girls/women to have lighter skin color in order to be accepted and eligible for marriage. A noted anthropologist Peter Frost who points out even in cultures without European contact, higher-ranking men preferred marrying women with lighter complexion, and this he described as “sexual selection” (Sailer 2005; Frost 2005).

Another study by D. G. Mandelbaum (1970) on India notes that the women’s general appearance and the degree of her lighter skin color were some of the implicit rules in marriage negotiations and a bride with lighter skin color had an upper hand in utilizing this as an advantage. Brides with lighter complexions are not only preferred but stand a better chance in negotiating dowry (Philips 2004).

Historical evidence on India suggests that color and physical characteristics were among the several factors that defined indigenous, social, and moral categorization (Rothfield 1928, cited in Philips 2004). Furthermore, women of different castes and communities were granted moral ranking. Inadvertently, “upper caste” women—in particular, Brahmins—were described as of high morals, delicate, sensual, and beautiful, whereas dark-skinned women were described as hardly attractive, dark, stunted, and immoral.

This culture of stigmatizing dark-skinned women is not unknown in India. In fact, it can be regarded as one of the longest surviving tradition, which continues to discriminate women. Judging beauty and womanhood based on skin color seems to be originated in *varna*-caste organized society. This stratification is further perpetuated by the new market forces in India, where whiteness creams have become the fastest selling commodities.

One may wonder with the integration of world economy, encounters with modern institutions have forced to alter these aspects of regressive culture besides persistence of caste in private and public life. On the contrary, it appears that in spite of being globally integrated to new forms of economies, cultural, and social milieu, the roots of color discrimination in India have only fortified. And this is evident by a recent survey undertaken in 2011. This survey was conducted by India’s most popular matrimonial website shaadi.com⁷ revealed that almost 49% of men want a “fair and lovely” women as their partners (Singh 2011). The finding further

⁷14th survey on marriage trends in India was conducted by Shaadi.com. The respondent base was 150 thousand Indians between the ages 18–45 years with an annual income in the range of Rupees 50,000 and above. The survey was conducted across 300 Indian cities, towns, as well as NRIs living in the USA, the UK, Canada, Middle East, South East Asia, New Zealand, and Australia.

elaborates that there were few takers for darker skin brides. Another alarming trend that the survey revealed is the tropical region of South India, known for its duskiest skin tones; an increasing number of men have indicated they too want “fair and lovely” brides.

Based on discussion in previous section, it is observed that judging beauty and aesthetics based on skin color is not invention of colonial rule, but it has been legacy embedded in the *varna-jāti* organization under Brahmanical/Hindu society even before the *Mughals* and British invaded India.

The spin-off effect of the desire for fair skin is so prevalent in India that even the lower caste communities have started emulating and ascribing to the “upper caste” descriptions of superiority, beauty, and aesthetics. Inferior social status is accorded to those with darker skin colors, and this in turn is a marker of lower caste identity. It is not surprising that even the “lower caste” has been drawn into this lighter color obsession in order to avoid further stigmatization.

Another alarming trend is availability of skin lightening creams, hydroquinone creams, bleach and sunscreens, and other skin products that have flooded Indian markets. Multinationals like Unilever, Nivea, Neutrogena, and Oriflame have institutionalized and exploited this primordial cultural obsession. In a constitutional democracy, where grounds of discrimination such as caste, class, and sex cannot stand ground, dark skin is blatantly projected as a curse, a wrath, and a social handicap, whereas a fair skin is regarded as the magic wand to bring luck in marriage and career.

Social media, television, and films reinforce that fair is beautiful (Madison 2011; Mukherjee 2008). Freida Pinto, a leading actress of *Slumdog Millionaire* movie, told British newspaper, “*It’s just this thing that people (in India) are so fascinated by white skin*” (Kapoor 2011).

These skewed imageries associated with skin colors have entered “public sphere” and now assume an “acceptable cultural ethos.” Multinational Corporations (MNCs) are at the forefront as carriers and new instruments of promoting and institutionalizing color prejudice. These companies are not only promoting harmful creams and lotions but also promoting discrimination and preserving *pigmentocracy* and *varna-jāti* hierarchy by correlating success in life with lighter skin color. Thus, prejudice against dark-skinned people is newly reinforced by the MNCs.

Whitening Cream Culture

The culture of revering fair skin women at the cost of stigmatizing dark-skinned women is not new in India. In fact, it is one of the longest surviving traditions. Neoliberal market forces have launched whitening creams and similar products to alter darker complexion to lighter ones. In India, whitening creams have become best-selling commodities, and this have deepened stratification rather than bridging, largely because these companies have focused on altering skin color rather than acceptance and appreciation of color diversity.

This clearly suggests they not only have compromised on ethics but are also practicing and promoting color-based discrimination. This conflict of profit over ethics and public goods has been discussed in a very significant critique by Aneel Karnani (2007), drawing on a case study of “Fair & Lovely.” “Fair & Lovely,” a global product, was launched in 1975, catering to markets in Asia, Middle East, and Africa. This whitening cream is regarded as one of the most popular and largest selling fairness creams in India, marketed by Hindustan Lever Limited (HLL), a subsidiary of Unilever (Karnani 2007). The market for skin-whitening creams has grown exponentially and was valued at \$200 million, with a growth of 10–15% per annum and having a wide customer base of 27 million in India alone (Karnani 2007).

In this burgeoning market of whitening creams, companies such as Beiersdorf, Neutrogena, and L’Oreal have also launched their whitening products to cash on this institutionalized cultural bias. MNCs are clearly new instruments for promoting and institutionalizing color prejudice. They have not only promoted discrimination but also in a way preserving pigmentocracy (Hall 2010). MNCs have played a role in reinforcing prejudice against dark-skinned people. Due to blatant advertising disregarding sensibility, ethics, and sensitivity, “Fair & Lovely” had received criticism and severe opposition from women’s group and parliamentarians, and one of its advertisement came to known as “air hostess ad” was taken off air as parliamentarians found it extremely racist and deeply insulting against dark-skinned women (BBC 2003).

Two years later, another company Emami launched their product “Fair & Handsome” for men in 2005. This was also the year that prompted a series of protests against such products from various sections of society. Then Health Minister Anbumani Ramadoss asked the Information and Broadcasting Ministry to initiate an action against manufacturers who cannot prove that their products work, and hence, they should ban advertisements that humiliate dark-skinned men and women and propagate racism and color discrimination (Page 2009).

Despite criticism and protests, no serious action has been evoked against these companies and those who promote such products. These products and advertisements have been around since 1970s but only recently have faced criticism. Few women organizations have protested against the advertisements, and parliamentarians have expressed concerns, yet no serious legislation has been passed to restrict these discriminatory, demeaning, and racist advertisements. Besides, those from the modeling circle, media, and artists who have opposed color discrimination have not clearly pronounced caste as a major factor that is embedded in understanding color discrimination and its practices in India.

Those who have defended for the rights of consumers and MNCs have suggested that MNCs should not be held entirely responsible for racism but just as actors who are acting on existing prejudices and preferences but giving “affordable choice” to people to alter skin color (Karnani 2007). It is a fact that MNCs are profiting from and taking advantage of societal perceptions but at a serious cost of compromising on ethics and larger public welfare (Karnani 2007). Most of these advertisements

have portrayed dark women and men in poor light at the cost of condemning the darker skin tones and projecting them as unwanted, disdainful, and cursed. It is thus important to understand and draw our attention to the role played by MNCs and in perpetuating color discrimination.

Considering the preference for lighter skinned women in India, there is an additional concern related to gender inequality. The 2011 Census on gender inequality shows that the sex ratio (914 female against 1,000 male) is skewed and lowest since independence (*Economic Times* 2011). Besides, the alarming female feticide is more common among the educated middle-class than rural and poor families. In doubling the burden of gender and color, it may be said that dark-skinned women perhaps have to face the brunt of social damnation in far severe ways than one can imagine.

Moreover, such degrading advertisement underpins inferior social status as a burden to dark-skinned women and men. This kind of continued condemnation of dark-skinned women adds several layers of cultural and psychological disadvantages to their lives and can have detrimental impact on societal well-being.

In retaliation to such racist slurs and extremely humiliating advertisement, a handful of women's organizations in India have taken up a stand and underscored this as a sexist and gender issue rooted in backwardness and "cultural bias" (*BBC* 2003). However, this superficial understanding essentially eliminates the possibility of identifying intersections of caste, class, and gender that all multiply, which produce differential outcomes, intensity, and magnitude of experiencing color discrimination.

Conclusion

Anthropologists have suggested that almost all cultures have expressed their preference and appreciation for women of lighter complexion regardless of their levels of exposure to colonial rule. India is no exception. In fact, India has a long and a complex history of several contestations. Retaining "caste purity" has been an important project in the cultural life of the upper castes, and this was achieved through the help of several regressive practices. This thread of purity is linked to contend that Brahmins were racially superior and belonged to the so-called noble Aryan race. The domination of the Brahmins retained over subjugated classes was mainly through religion, culture, traditions, and unequal gender relations, all interwoven through controlling sociopolitical and religious life organized hierarchically.

Caste system remains a key and a central feature to understand Indian society; however, an older discourse of *varna* significantly understood as connoting color, race, caste, and region was intrinsic in the formulations of creating Brahmanism hegemony. Maintenance of "caste purity" was one of the prime concerns for upper castes. In order to maintain "racial purity," it was regarded significant to the cultural and nationalist discourse of the upper castes to keep distance from inferior

race through limited social interaction. This was achieved through the praxis of controlling women's sexuality, imposing rules of inter-dining, thereby retaining their nobility and supremacy.

"Upper castes" claimed they were of lighter skin color and of "superior race" against that of "lower castes" and "untouchables" who were dark-skinned. These claims and historical linkages of this discourse suggest that in order to understand current devaluation of dark-skinned women and men, it is significant to consider some of these claims. The discourse of domination, isolation, and maintenance of racial/caste purity was achieved through archaic and strict practices.

Ironically, noted historians and social anthropologists have already cautioned against understanding race as biological, yet in the minds of common people, Aryans were of the superior race due to their biological features distinct from non-Aryans. It is this discourse of binary of superiority/inferiority and of Aryan/non-Aryan an element of contested histories can be traced. In addition, disdain toward dark skin is prevalent, and achieving lighter skin color remains a constant obsession. Therefore, revulsion toward non-Aryan races underpins deeper and entrenched history. These are deeply connected to *varna-jāti* hierarchies.

Therefore, instances of racism and widespread color discrimination cannot be understood without considering these embedded aspects of Indian history. Contempt toward dark-skinned is thus rooted in Brahmanical tradition and culture built on the praxis of caste purity. These notions of grounding femininity, beauty, and superiority in lighter skin color have resulted in creating a culture that devalues dark-skinned women and men.

As aptly concluded by KuKu (2009), color discrimination in India is blatant, vulgar, and accepted in the public domain. Clearly, there is blind acceptance and naked manifestation in favor of retaining color supremacy of the lighter skin tone. This cultural springboard has enabled Indian market to be flooded with skin lightening creams.

Besides perpetuating discrimination, stigmatization, and division are the harmful effects of these skin lightening creams. In addition, their advertisements are meant to demean, belittle, discourage, and humiliate dark-skinned women and men. Psychological effects caused by this kind of violence, humiliation, and discrimination remain severely understudied and underestimated, and engagements of civil society to counter such regressive discourse remain disengaged.

Therefore, the possibility of understanding contemporary forms of color discrimination in India can be mapped only through examining the linkages to caste and racial discourse of India. Brahmanical hegemonic discourse reveals its extensive projects and desperate attempts to retain cultural domination through controlling women's sexuality and caste codification meant to distance from the lower castes. In addition, notion of beauty, femininity, superiority, and chastity is premised on caste and color location. Lastly, this cultural arrangement fostering obsession with whiteness has been opportunistically exploited by multinational companies aiding to deepening of Brahminical domination which essentially reproduces gender and caste inequalities.

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Chapter 6

Indigeneity on Guahan: Skin Color as a Measure of Decolonization

LisaLinda Natividad

Introduction

Colorism or skin color bias is a phenomenon that is well discussed in the context of African Americans in the USA. For people living on Guahan (Guam), in the Mariana Islands of Micronesia, colorism is not so explicitly apparent. Chamorus (Chamorros) are the native inhabitants of the Mariana Islands (Tolentino 2009a). Chamorus migrated to the Mariana Islands roughly 4,500 years ago and have survived numerous colonial arrangements. All colonizers of the island have historically been of a skin tone that is lighter than the shades of brown consistent with those of Chamoru descent. How is color perceived in a society where the majority of its members are varying shades of brown? How have historical experiences shaped these perceptions of color for Chamorus and others living on Guahan? How has the global shift toward indigeneity impacted perceptions of color? This chapter attempts to answer these questions from the perspective of Chamorus and others living on Guahan.

Language evidence suggests that Chamorus migrated into the Pacific via the Austronesian Diaspora, originating from South China and Taiwan (Bellwood et al. 2006). Traditional Chamoru society was matriarchal, with women playing a pivotal role in society (Freycinet 2003). Chamoru core values included *inafa'maolek* (positive relationships) (Iyechad 2001) and *respetu* (respect) (Russell 1998). Chamorus maintained a subsistence economy in which they lived and farmed off the land. They were noted for their swift sailing canoes (*sakman*) and participated in regional trade (Tolentino 2009a). Chamorus were described as being a peace-loving people whose traditional values strived for societal harmony. Their villages were organized according to family clans, and their strong connection to the land for sustenance was

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also noted. Chamorus practiced ancestral veneration and kept the skulls of ancestors in their homes as an act of reverence and to evoke on the spirit of ancestors for assistance.

For Chamorus living on Guahan, the first documented contact with the Western world was made on March 6, 1521 (Madrid 2009), when Ferdinand Magellan, sailing under the Spanish flag, stumbled upon the island en route to Asia. The Spanish government laid claim to the island in 1565 (Shuster 2009), and Catholics of the Jesuit order later set up a mission in 1668. Spain remained the island's colonizer through the end of the Spanish-American War in 1898, when the island became a war prize to the USA through the Treaty of Paris (Platt 2009). In the period that followed, the USA governed the island via the Department of Defense's Naval administration. As part of its World War II attack on the USA, the Japanese Imperial Army invaded the island in 1941 (Higuchi 2009) and remained in control until 1944, when the USA came back to retake it. The USA continues to be the island's administering power with its current political status as an unincorporated territory of the USA. Guahan remains on the United Nations list of [16] non-self-governing territories of the world (Shuster 2009). Chamorus are one of the longest colonized peoples globally, with a colonization experience of nearly 450 years.

Traditional Concepts of Skin Color

Few references are made to skin color in examining early accounts of ancient Chamorus. Chamorus were described by Rodriguez in 1565 as being born with a skin color "almost white, becoming darker as they grew older" (Madrid 2009). In addition, women were notably lighter than men because of men's greater exposure to the sun in carrying out their daily roles of fishing and the like (Flores 2009).

Traditional Chamoru society was highly hierarchical in structure. Early accounts consistently referenced two primary castes in society: the *chamorri*, or upper caste, and the *manachang*, or lower level (Tolentino 2009b). Dominica Tolentino (2009d) synthesizes ancient accounts of Chamoru social stratification and states that the *chamorri* caste was further stratified into the *matao*, the nobles and highest-ranking members of family clans and village groups; and the *acha'ot*, who ranked directly below the *matao*—who likely functioned as the helpers or assistants of the *matao*. Members of the *matao* were the decision makers in village matters and maintained leadership positions. The *matao* caste was privileged with living along the island's coastline and had exclusive access to the ocean—inclusive of the lagoons, reef, and open ocean. Consequently, members of the *matao* caste were fishermen, sailors, traders, and canoe builders. This privilege was only afforded by those from the *manachang* status with expressed permission from the *matao* when earned (Tolentino 2009c).

The lower class, or *manachang*, lived primarily inland, where they farmed to support themselves and the *matao*. According to Thompson (1947), Spanish accounts referenced the *manachang* class as being smaller in stature and darker in

color as compared with the noble *matao*. This is the only explicit reference to skin color as it relates to social status in early European accounts of ancient Chamoru society. Tolentino (2009b) states that the reported malnourishment of members of the *manachang* class was likely due to poor diet and continual sun exposure.

Related to this, a few other concepts of beauty were discussed in European accounts. For example, Father Peter Coomans describes Chamoru women as bleaching their long hair white, through a process using lime and oil in the sun's rays at noon and then sprinkling it with sea water to enhance the whitening process (Flores 2009). This practice was a fashion noted in the seventeenth century. In addition, Flores reports that red or blackened and etched teeth among women were other indications of beauty.

The Impact of Colonization and Western Values

The island of Guahan (Guam) has survived numerous colonizers in the course of roughly 450 years. More specifically, Spain, Japan, and the USA have all influenced the traditional practices, values, attitudes, and beliefs of today's Chamorus. These influences have left an indelible mark on the psyches of Chamorus who have struggled to balance between traditional values and those introduced by colonial powers.

The establishment of Catholic missions on the island in 1668 paved the way for the Hispanicization of the Chamoru people. This process resulted in a significant shift from traditional practices and beliefs to that of the Catholic Church. For example, Chamorus were traditionally matrilineal, with women playing a critical role in land tenure and decision-making. First-born women of *matao* family clans were given the title of *maga' hâga*, or female chief (Marsh 2009). While women continue to play a critical role in Chamoru society today, the introduction of patriarchal values by the Catholic Church has undoubtedly created a shift away from these traditional values for many Chamoru families. In current times, the Catholic Church continues to play a pivotal role in Guahan society, with about 17 churches throughout the 212-square-mile island.

While the Spanish introduction of Catholicism facilitated cultural change for Chamorus, the more recent vehicle of rapid Westernization has been US colonial rule. In the post-World War II period, following the return of the USA to Guahan in 1944, the new world order dictated a shift from a traditional agrarian society to one of wage labor. As part of this shift, Chamorus were pressured away from farm life and into the workplace. Consequently, Western education and speaking the English language became central to survival. Sister Joanne Poehlman (1979) describes the post-World War II climate around speaking the Chamoru language: "In the new order of things, a good education meant a thorough training in the English language. Even before the war, Naval Government law had required that English be spoken in all public buildings at all times. In schools a system of monitors and punishments had operated, but with uneven results. After the war, an all-out campaign was launched by the government to promote spoken English

not only in schools but also in the homes.” Consequently, learning the English language—particularly for children—was seen as a necessary process to ensure future employability and personal success.

Employment on the island’s postwar American military bases became a major force of the local economy. Affiliation with military bases was a coveted endeavor because of the higher standard of living for those within military fences. Further, all things American and Western were viewed as desirable and quickly became the standard of success for many Chamorus on island.

With the rise of American values for populations living on Guahan (Guam) following the World War II period, the American value of light skin was also transposed. This is evidenced in a number of ways. For example, babies with a lighter skin complexion at birth were often desired and found to be more attractive. Hence, marriage to someone of lighter skin was suggestively advantageous because the children of such marriages would have lighter skin color. In addition, the tone of voice used when describing someone who was dark in color was often negative, whereas the tonal reference to someone with a light or white skin color was often positive. A university student describes this well when she states, “My sisters would tease me saying ‘ewww, you’re dark!’” (Natividad 2011, personal communication, Mangilao, Guam: University of Guam).

Informal discussions among Chamoru university students on the island reveal a mixed perspective about the value assigned to a person’s skin color. One student describes how being of a darker skin color is not desirable because it is associated with farming and being at the “ranch” (Natividad 2011, personal communication, Mangilao, Guam: University of Guam). Further discussion reveals that, because of this association, those who are darker are perceived as being of a lower class or with less access to material wealth. One student eludes that, with a lighter skin color, it suggests that a person works in an office setting and out of the blazing sun (Natividad 2011, personal communication). Students were asked to complete the following sentence: “I wish my skin color were _____ and why?” To complete the sentence, they had the choices of “lightest,” “light,” “medium,” “dark,” and “darkest.” While no Chamoru students respond with “lightest,” a few state the wish for a “light” skin color (Natividad 2011, personal communication). Reasons given for the preference of a light skin color include that it looks clean, as well as its connection to being able to get tanned when at the beach. One student states, “To me, lighter skin is more attractive” (Natividad 2011, personal communication). She proceeds to qualify, however, “I would not want to be pale or ‘sickly’ light” (Natividad 2011, personal communication). Hence, for these students, the value assigned to white skin color over a darker tone is consistent with theories of colorism.

Indigeneity and Decolonization

The post-World War II period was a time of rapid transition and change for Chamorus. This process did not go unnoticed. Poehlman (1979) examines culture change and identity among Chamoru women on the island and reports the following:

“‘Change’ was a topic everyone wanted to discuss. Many claimed that after the war the old Guam disappeared—almost overnight. Today a number of Chamorros voice their concern over the effects of that rapid Americanization process. There is a keen sense of ‘cultural loss’ and an awareness of the need to develop a positive Chamorro identity” (p. 16).

Various political processes occurred in the decades following World War II, in which Chamorus sought out an exercise of their right to political self-determination and to resolve their political status question as an unincorporated territory of the USA. Robert A. Underwood (2009) reports various initiatives taken by the local government, from the 1970s through 1990s, which include the creation of a Political Status Commission, the Commission on Self-Determination, and the Guam Commission on Decolonization. Numerous referenda were held to decide on the political status option to be pursued and, ultimately, a Guam Draft Commonwealth Act was introduced into the US Congress on four occasions, receiving two hearings (Underwood 2009). The outcome of these hearings was unfavorable, wherein federal officials explicitly expressed their opposition to Chamoru self-determination. Nonetheless, the issue of Chamoru self-determination remains unresolved today.

Part and parcel to the process of Chamorus exercising their right to political self-determination, a rise of rethinking of what it means to be “Chamoru” and a surge of nationalist identity ensued. Vivian Dames (2000) quotes former Guam Senator Hope Alvarez Cristobal, a staunch proponent for Chamoru self-determination: “The process would add to our national pride, national self-esteem, and national dignity” (p. 347). Cristobal shares internal reflections that spawned her process of questioning her sense of identity as a Chamoru woman (p. 302): “Although every morning you look at yourself and you see yourself in that mirror and it didn’t quite fit the woman on T.V. But you were getting there [laughs]. You were working your way there. And I was working my way there when you know they kept telling me that I’m not, and I had an ‘accent’ and that my English was ‘different.’ So if they, themselves, told me that I wasn’t [a white American], then God, where did I belong?”

This internal dialogue is reminiscent of the struggle for defining self. The Chamoru movement toward a more deliberately expressed indigeneity was paralleled with a simultaneous evolution of indigenous movements at the regional and global levels. What impact have the decolonization movement and the global shift toward recognizing and centering indigenous culture had on the value of Western and American influences for Chamorus? More specifically, how have they impacted perceptions of skin color?

When Chamoru university students were asked to complete the following sentence: “I wish my skin color were _____ and why?” the majority of students respond with “medium” (Natividad 2011, personal communication, Mangilao, Guam: University of Guam). The most common reason given for the preference of a medium skin color centered on the theme of self-acceptance. One student states, “I do not wish to be any other color than I am already. I am proud to be the color I am” (Natividad 2011, personal communication). Similarly, another student states, “I am comfortable in my own skin! I am who I AM, and for that I feel I should not want to be something (skin color) I am not” (Natividad 2011, personal communication).

These sentiments are echoed by a third student who links self-acceptance to his indigenous identity: “I am satisfied and extremely happy to be the color that I am. It helps me realize that I am an islander, a descendent of Guam’s native people—the Chamoru. I would not want to be any lighter or more dark than I am already” (Natividad 2011, personal communication).

Self-acceptance can be seen as a function the growing indigenous identities of Chamoru students as decolonization has become a critical discourse on the island. In the case of three other Chamoru students, harassment by family members for being a lighter skin tone is reported. One student states, “I was lighter at one point, but was often teased from family members” (Natividad 2011, personal communication, Mangilao, Guam: University of Guam). This experience is also shared by a 17-year-old student, who says her reason for wanting to be medium skin color is, “because I am too light compared to my family. I get teased about it but I am okay with my color” (Natividad 2011 Personal communication). A third student indicates: “Because I need a little color due to the fact that I am the only light one in my family. In my childhood, I was the outcast of my siblings, always being teased [that] I was adopted or I was mistakenly given to the wrong family” (Natividad 2011 Personal communication).

The experience of these three students, who are of a lighter skin color and desire to be darker (a medium shade), evidence a shift away from the Americanized value of having a light skin color.

In the discussion with university students, an 18-year-old student of Caucasian ancestry reports a desire to be a darker skin color because of his lack of acceptance by others around him. He reports living on the island for about 8 years. He states: “I would prefer to look more mixed/more local so I would be more accepted on the island. There are some cases where my White-ness shows, and it affects me a great deal here. Guahan is my home just as it is to anyone else on this island. I wish I would be treated as such more often than I currently do” (Natividad 2011, personal communication, Mangilao, Guam: University of Guam). In this case, a reversed colorism phenomenon may be transpiring.

Perceptions of skin color are discussed in the findings of a doctoral dissertation (Storie 2009) that examines Chamoru teacher responses to contemporary fiction books as a mechanism for examining cultural authenticity as discussed in Guam-centered children’s books. M. R. Carriveau Storie (2009) had participants discuss the story entitled *Lola’s Journey Home*, which tells of an adopted Caucasian, blonde-haired, blue-eyed girl who struggles to find her sense of place in her Chamoru family on Guahan. Research participants valued relationships over the function of skin, eye, or hair color. Storie quotes participant Kiko as follows: “You notice . . . that none of the family said ‘hey, you can’t be their daughter because your hair is different.’ That is so special about our culture because we don’t [take that into consideration]. When [my cousins] first came, it’s obvious looking at them that they were Haole-ish. But none of that mattered to us . . . this was our cousin” (p. 168). “Haole” is a reference to a White person in the Hawaiian language. In this context, the reference to being of white skin color is seen as a limitation rather than a strength, or as something desirable.

Storie (2009) also discusses another participant's response to the story of *Lola's Journey Home*: "it was a twist that [she] could deal with [because] there was total acceptance from the family . . . [and] that's pretty much the norm for Chamorro families. It doesn't matter what your skin color is because we don't really focus on skin color" (p. 169). Storie additionally discovers that what is significant to participants is not Lola's biological identity but, rather, her Chamoru identity in spirit.

As the process of reverse colorism seems to be unfolding on Guahan, this does not indicate that the island is without racial tensions. In particular, the Chuukese population from Chuuk State of the Federated States of Micronesia is often the target of racial discrimination. Chuukese residents are racialized as a problem group and are often the brunt of jokes on radio shows, labeled as engaging in drunken behavior, and perceived to be troublemakers. In 2011, a gang violence incident among Chuukese youth resulted in the deaths of three people (Taitano 2011). This incident is symptomatic of larger problems on Guahan wherein the Chuukese population is singled out. Because the skin color of Chuukese and other ethnic groups on Guahan are in the same palette, the oppressive acts experienced by Chuukese is not related to skin color.

Conclusion

As members of the Oceanic family, Chamorus and others living on Guahan give meaning to skin color in a way that is becoming increasingly different from the person-of-color experience in the USA. The most common skin color among people living on Guahan involves differing shades of brown rather than the polar ends of black and white. While the process of Americanization on Guahan has resulted in the valuation of color consistent with colorism, the more recent historical experiences of Chamorus and others on Guahan have resulted in a shift from the desirability of a lighter skin color to the varying shades of brown skin. In the past few decades, people on Guahan have embarked on varying processes toward embracing their indigenous identity and decolonization; noteworthy have been efforts toward the preservation and reconnection to traditional Chamoru culture. More specifically, the emergence of Chamoru dance, establishment of language immersion programs, and the coordination of community events that have reintroduced the island's people to elements of traditional culture—such as the annual Lunar Festival—have led to a more profound understanding of cultural practices and values that play a part in a deepening sense of self for Chamorus. This decolonizing experience has interrupted the process of colorism on Guahan and, in some cases, led to a reverse colorism.

While the reversal away from the value of light skin color is in process on Guahan, it is important to recognize that Chamorus and others on the island are at varying points along a continuum: on one end of the continuum is the value of light skin color and Americanization, and on the other end is the value of indigenous identity and self-acceptance, inclusive of skin color in the shades of brown. As a

collective community, people on Guahan are shifting toward embracing their uniqueness and brown shades of skin. As Western countries move into the melanin millennium of the twenty-first century, it will be interesting to see how the trajectory of indigeneity and decolonization impacts the value assigned to the color of one's skin on Guahan.

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Chapter 7

A Tale of Two Cultures

Eneid Routté-Gómez

In the late 1940s, my father, a light-skinned Lutheran minister, put on a turban, threw a robe over his suit, and rode a Jim Crow¹ train from New York City to Mobile, Alabama. A Jim Crow train ran on the fumes of discrimination, winnowing black and white passengers like wheat and chaff.

My father, the Reverend Jesse Wayman Routté, was traveling to the Deep South to officiate the wedding of his younger brother Louis, also a minister. My father spoke several languages and used Swedish on the train, confounding fellow passengers who were seated with him in the “whites only” car. He was treated as a foreigner, not as a black man who, through a dramatic disguise, was challenging racism and the fundamental ignorance behind white supremacy (Kramer 1943). News about his “Turban Trip” was reported in the *New York Times* (1943) and the *Long Island Sunday Press* (1943), whose publisher was a friend of the family. In response, the Ku Klux Klan burned a cross on our lawn in Jamaica, Long Island, scarring my memory with its frightening image. Jim Crow was alive and well, even up North.

I was born in 1944 and schooled in the boldly democratic belief in civil rights and racial equality. Media stories about riots, murders, and lynching in the South fueled my imagination. To a precocious preschooler, the Deep South, where my father journeyed, was a living nightmare. It was peopled with figurative goblins, ghosts, and spooks, male and female, covered by white sheets. Their bloodcurdling

¹Jim Crow laws closed public facilities—hotels, theaters, restaurants, and movie houses—to black Americans and segregated trains and buses. After decades of protests by the NAACP and other civic organizations, the Civil Rights Act signed into law in 1964 by President Lyndon Johnson, banned racial discrimination in public places.

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hate speech and actions were inflamed with utter contempt for black people like me. How could this be, I thought? How could they hate me so just because my skin was black? They didn't know my family.

My father impressed on us that his Christian duty as a pastor was to "wear out soles to save souls," to break down the massive walls of racial hatred, erected by descendants of the Founders. Many of these descendants were upstanding members of the white ruling class, men and women who decided the domestic policies of the land of the free and the brave. My father instilled that sense of duty in his children. It seeped into our hearts and minds like water into fertile soil.

At times, however, it was hard to shrug off the shadow of inferiority that showed up where, and when, least expected. The racial slur stalked us like snipers in guerilla warfare. At Chapel of the Redeemer parochial school, for example, a classmate called me "nigger" on the last day of school. That slur shook me to my core. I had no idea my fellow sixth-grader was a racist. I thought he was my friend.

My parents and their spiritual and secular colleagues were engaged in a character-producing war against prejudice. We were steeped in the wounding history of slavery and racism and matured in the liberating principles of resistance, self-esteem, and faith. There was no relenting. The harsher the racist attack, the more categorical was our response. The chair of the legal redress committee of the Long Island branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Negro People, better known as the NAACP, my mother Maud often spoke of her successful attempts to open windows and doors of gainful employment for qualified black men and women. When a manager at the Brooklyn Navy Yard said that he could not find a qualified black person for a supervisory job, she applied for the job and kept it until she could find a qualified black to fill the position. Education, my parents believed, was the key to advancement for both blacks and whites, for everyone. Education was the great equalizer.

My father, Reverend Routt , was a distinguished member and president of the Long Island Lutheran Synod chapter. He reasoned that his children should attend the Lutheran school established by the Lutheran Synod. He shamed the hierarchy into letting us register in the school. Luther, Jesse, Carmen, and I had to excel as students, and we did. We were taught not to think we were either lesser persons than our white classmates or unequal American citizens mired in the limited circumference of race. Sometimes, that thought—that we were Americans—seemed like a whirligig, an illusion gone wild.

I still remember our home in St. Albans, a community of middle-class black and white families. Our neighbors were performing artists, ministers, teachers, and other unsung professionals. It was a lovely house with an attic that served as a bedroom for my brothers and a basement that housed my father's study—where he wrote his scholarly sermons, many of which were peppered with humor. A room on the first floor harbored my sister and me. The bathroom separated our bedroom from that of our parents. Facing the backyard was the kitchen's breakfast nook. In the summer, we enjoyed ripe peaches that dropped off the tree and deep purple grapes that clung

to the vines encircling a small hill in the backyard. The basement also boasted a second kitchen where my Spanish-speaking grandmother cooked Sunday meals on a gas stove; she didn't take to the new fangled stove in the kitchen upstairs.

On Sundays, my sister and I set the dining room table for the family, neighbors, and the elders of the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, my father's church. I looked forward to Sunday dinners where my father, after blessing the banquet of my grandmother's baked chicken, rice, and vegetables, would state in his best dramatic baritone: "Rise, slay, and eat." And so we did. Thanksgiving Day was special. My father took baskets of food to needy families in the neighborhood. And, as his spirited little girl, I would skip along after him. Our Thanksgiving dinner took place after all the baskets were delivered. At Christmas, we found a bounty of books under the tree. One year, Luther was delighted by the model train that we helped him to set up. In the early days of television, we watched news programs, game, and talk shows—all in black and white—in the comfort of our living room. We were fans of the Brooklyn Dodgers: Jackie Robinson, Roy Campanella, Pee Wee Reese, and Don Newcomb were our idols. We listened to the songs of Ella, Sarah, and Dinah and the music of Nat King Cole, Duke Ellington, and Louis Armstrong.

Every weekday, my older brother Jesse, younger sister Carmen, and I took three buses from our home in St. Albans to Flushing, where we went to grade school (Luther went to prep school in upstate New York). At Chapel of the Redeemer, we were the only black students. Some days we did not catch the buses on time, arriving late. Waiting for us at the bus stop stood the principal—an old German disciplinarian named Pittlekow—a fearsome portrait in unremitting gray. Gray hair, gray eyes, gray suit. Gray spirit. Walking behind us to the school, he would mock us, saying over and over as we struggled forward, "What's the matter? Are there eggs in your shoes?"

Even today, so many decades later, I can still hear his brutal marching orders and allow myself a survivor's chuckle. Despite Pittlekow's barely hidden hostility toward us, what we learned at the Chapel of the Redeemer stood us in good stead when we settled in Puerto Rico. Although we did not yet converse in Spanish, we were still able to do well in school. Spanish would soon become our second language.

When the US Supreme Court (1954) ended a century of sanctioned discrimination with its momentous decision that public school segregation was unconstitutional, the Routtés were considering a move. We had humiliated Jim Crow with my father's Turban Trip and had chalked up a modest victory integrating the church-owned Chapel of the Redeemer in Flushing. But the mood of the country was becoming uglier. The paranoid Senator Joseph McCarthy saw communists everywhere and went on a rampage, tarnishing reputations with wild-eyed accusations until the legendary broadcast journalist Edward R. Murrow helped expose him as a dangerous fanatic.

Two events then galvanized the black community. In August 1955, Emmett Till, a 14-year-old boy visiting relatives in Mississippi, was lynched, mutilated, and thrown

into the Tallahatchie River. Allegedly, he had whistled at a white woman.² That December, Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a city bus, becoming the iconic mother of the civil rights movement. Both were turning points in the civil rights struggle, and my parents believed that the battle for social equality would take a turn for the worse, that enough was enough—at least for us children. The following year we left St. Albans for San Juan, Puerto Rico, a small island in the Caribbean. There, our Spanish heritage—from my mother’s side—would take root and flourish.

Puerto Rico’s remarkable economic progress, through the New Deal—initiated during the administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt—was transforming the island from a “poorhouse” to the “showcase” of the Caribbean. We stepped off the plane and into the heat of a tropical paradise that seemed to promise freedom from the slings and arrows of racism that we had fought so hard to erase from our lives. Could our dream of racial and social equality come true in Puerto Rico?

Such a question could not provoke an immediate answer. That much was clear. In hindsight, the decision of our parents proved providential, enriching our lives, although splitting our family into two cultures. We were two sides of the same fated coin of color: black American and multiracial Puerto Rican. My father and oldest brother, Luther—who was by then a college student and is today a Lutheran minister in Pennsylvania—remained in the USA as black Americans. Jesse, Carmen, and I flew to San Juan to start a new life with our mother as Puerto Ricans. I was 10 years old.

At first, we were the proverbial strangers in a strange land. Palm trees and sandy beaches were not part of our physical geography. We were used to tree-shaded streets and backyards, adorned with peach trees and grapevines. But our natural curiosity and sense of wonder had not abandoned us. Despite our liberal, Northern upbringing, we blended into the multiracial physical and social landscape.

The pain of adapting to a more conservative culture—the twisting and turning involved in conforming to Puerto Rico’s social construct—came much later as we began to understand the prejudices of our adopted land. We took heart in the roots of Puerto Rican identity—the Ta no, African, and Spanish branches—that were entwined in the trunk of a mixed-race culture, which was, by turns, welcoming, befuddling, and bewitching.

My mother began to create a home for us in Rio Piedras, a university town that was once an independent municipality and was now part of the capital city San Juan. She was resourceful in finding a job as a teacher; after all, she was a G mez on her mother’s side: the *Latina* grandmother who cooked Sunday dinner on a gas stove in the basement of our Jamaica, Long Island, home and who claimed the island of Vieques as her birthplace. But a Spanish heritage wasn’t enough to ease the way, to insert ourselves into the island’s culture and daily life.

²Thousands attended Till’s public funeral in Chicago and photographs of his mutilated body were published in the black press. The killers, husband and half brother of the woman, were acquitted, but in 2004 the Justice Department reopened the case.

Our first school was in Caguas, which was then considered the boondocks, where my mother taught English to grade-schoolers. Every weekday, she sped down the Old Caguas Road in her brown Hillman to make it to her class on time. We enjoyed the ride and her class where, as students, we were subject to the curiosity of our classmates, some of whom spoke to us only in Spanish. For eighth and ninth grades, I attended Barbosa B public school in Rio Piedras, which happened to be near the prestigious University High School, where Jesse and I were destined to go.

During her last 30 years of teaching, my mother taught at the University of Puerto Rico (UPR). She never took the bar exam in Puerto Rico nor did she get a realtor's license. Puerto Ricans lived up to their reputation of hospitality, but the unspoken practice of exclusion, because of skin color as well as politics and gender, was prevalent in the 1950s and 1960s. While struggling to gain a foothold on the island, Mom did not have the political connections needed to resume her previous careers.

Did her skin color deter her return to law or entry into the real estate market? If it was a factor in her inability to maneuver through the labyrinths to the required licenses, she did not let on. Nor did she complain of the sexist attitudes of Puerto Rican males, which held women back. Fortunately, she loved teaching and she earned several degrees in education at the University of Puerto Rico. She worked by day and attended night school, holding to her belief in education as the key to success. I treasure the five red-covered portfolios containing her degrees in education from UPR.

How my brother Jesse and I got into University High School is another tribute to my mother's resourcefulness and perseverance. University High was affiliated with the University of Puerto Rico, where the children of professors, politicians, lawyers, and doctors were guided toward a life in public service; at first, there was no room for the Routtés. There were no desks for us, Mom was informed. "I will provide the desks," she responded. I graduated from the High with honors in 1961. I was 16 years old.

Meanwhile, my younger sister Carmen attended the respected, private Commonwealth School, whose American superintendent—Herbert Warfel—was accused years later of racism.

The business of newspapering infused our family, starting with my mother who wrote a social column for the *Pittsburgh Courier*. In 1959, my brother Jesse, a budding journalist, interviewed Puerto Rico Governor Luis Muñoz Marín and New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller during a Conference of Governors in Dorado Beach, Puerto Rico. Brilliant and bold, Jesse had established a newspaper at University High and also was a cub reporter for the *San Juan Star*. In 1960, he interviewed President Dwight Eisenhower, who was in Puerto Rico to address an American Assembly luncheon—and to play some golf at Dorado Beach. In 1962, Jesse was slain while on a trip to New York. His murder had the characteristics of a hate crime. My mother's calm demeanor crumbled and she needed me. That need deepened my engagement with Puerto Rico. I had to abort any thought of returning to St. Albans.

I was studying history at the University of Puerto Rico when I took a job as a weekend receptionist-telephone operator at the San Juan *Star*, established in 1959, the year of the Cuban revolution. Although as a child I had delivered newspapers in my Long Island neighborhood, I did not realize at the time that I would be following in the footsteps of my brother and my mother. I wanted to become an opera singer but fate intervened. I was to become a journalist.

We had moved from a rented house in Rio Piedras to an upwardly mobile, solid middle-class residential area in Guaynabo. Our next-door neighbor, Victor Manzano, was a pressman at the fledgling San Juan *Star*. He told me about the job and I applied. It paid \$15 a week and we needed the money.

I was hired because I spoke unaccented English. I imagined myself as the voice of the newspaper, the first person with whom callers spoke, at least on weekends. In between calls, I read books on history—my university major—or sketched portraits of politicians I admired. I wasn't at the switchboard for long. I climbed the *Star* ladder rapidly, filling every vacancy posted on the bulletin board of the editorial department: from part-time telephone operator I moved up to proofreader, chief proofreader, copy editor, reporter, and finally to Women's Editor and special writer. That's what I learned at home, to widen the circle of opportunity for black people, to fill every vacancy that uplifts the race. Along the way, I fought against the underlying currents of racism and overt sexism, not much different from the USA but excused as being part of a Latin culture. Being both black and a woman amounted to double prejudice, a heavier rock to push up the hill.

I was acutely aware of the undertow of racism and sexism at the newspaper and beyond, but I was still holding onto the dream of racial equality. Unlike the institutional racism of the USA, encapsulated in such phrases as “whites only” or “if you're black stay back,” racism in Puerto Rico manifested itself with subtlety. You had to recognize the signs. Each week, for instance, we crossed the highway to a bank where tellers were white or light-skinned, a hiring practice of banks well into the 1980s, and a decade in which the simmering debate about black invisibility was heated. On the boards of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture was an African heritage museum.³ There were advances in acknowledging and accepting the effervescent reality of *la tercera raíz*, or third root, as essential to Puerto Rican identity. But the underlying story about race was different.

I will never forget the day when a group of society women hesitated at my office door, apparently doubtful that a dark-skinned woman could hold the position of Women's Editor of the San Juan *Star*. After all, I thought, I was the same color as their maids. Without a word, they left to locate the managing editor, who escorted them back to my office. In the late 1980s, despite the journalism awards I had earned and the acceptance achieved among prominent leaders of Puerto Rican society, I was still vulnerable to prejudice by virtue of my skin color and being female.

True, I had been warned. Over time, I would I agree with my friend and mentor, the prolific playwright Francisco Arriví (1915–2007). This big, bulky, mustachioed,

³Ricardo Alegria (1924–2011) established the Museum of the Americas in 1999.

and loquacious man directed the theater office of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture and was known as the Father of Puerto Rican Theater. Through his plays, Paco, as he was known, explained how racism in Puerto Rico is based primarily on skin color. In fact, he added, racial fear teems behind what he called “la máscara Puertorriqueña,” or the Puerto Rican mask, the title he gave to his trilogy of pioneering plays on the subject (Arriví 1971). He confirms what I had long been reluctant to accept, especially in a country that had adopted my mother and siblings and welcomed us as Puerto Ricans. This was my cultural circumstance: On the one hand, as a journalist, I was appreciated by the island’s social hierarchy; on the other, I was often the only black guest, or one of a very few, at gala benefits and other high-profile cultural events. My categorical imperative on the vocabulary on race bias was to point this out, which I did as a writer, as an advisor to the Commission on Civil Rights, and as a board member of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture.

In describing the contradictory contours of his native land, Paco coined the felicitous phrase *esquizofrenia portoricensis*, or Puerto Rican schizophrenia. These contradictions surged, like meteors, from a cauldron of mixed-race emotions. The historic rhythms and roots of Puerto Rico’s three branches of racial soul—brown, black, and white—in turn, season these emotions. Each branch performs its distinctive masquerade, with each masquerade flowing into one defining vessel—that of identity. The skin color of children in the same family often mirrors the rainbow, with hues ranging from white to brown to black.

Any debate about race and racism is akin to climbing up, or sliding down, a slippery slope. Still, none dispute or refute the fact that skin color is a major element in social mobility. Clearly, the lighter the skin, the higher the perch on the island’s socioeconomic ladder. Hidden behind the mask performing the masquerade is the specter of Jim Crow dangling from the palm trees. Sometimes, I want to scream “boo” just to throw light on the shadow and rattle the complacent public.

Families—both the elite and the not so elite—are still known to fret about daughters or sons marrying a dark-skinned person. Improving or “whitening” the race often trumps Cupid. No “white” person wants to be seen by the American empire as inferior because of his or her color. Ignorance persists. In 2003, when Jesse Jackson came to Vieques to support the island in its efforts to oust the Navy, a female legislator called him *negro parajero*, or “uppity Negro.”⁴

To this day, few visibly black individuals, male or female, hold public positions of power. On February 4, 2009, Erick Kolthoff Caraballo became the first black Associate Justice of the Puerto Rico Supreme Court in recent years.

Shoring up the discredited “white credo,” the 2000 Census indicated that 80.5% of the Puerto Rican population identified themselves as “white.” This finding is included in the Puerto Rican Profile of General Demographic Characteristics. The island’s racial demographic history shows the majority of Puerto Ricans who saw

⁴Numerous personalities including Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton, Robert Kennedy Jr., and Rigoberta Menchu became involved in protests against the US Navy’s use of the small island of Vieques for bombing practice.

themselves as white increased in the early 1900s (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). Perhaps, in a nod to self-awareness, fewer Puerto Ricans self-identified as white as the new millennium unfolded. The 2005–2009 American Survey estimated the percentage of whites at 75.2% (U.S. Census Bureau 2009).

In Puerto Rico, as in the USA, Blacks have been stereotyped by their dominance in sports and musical genres such as rap, reggaet n, and bomba y plena. The operative word is stereotyped. For many years, black characters on local television were performed, in blackface, by island actors and actresses.

More than 30 years ago, a dark-skinned entrepreneur named Victor Santos established a Miss Piel Canela (cinnamon skin) competition for young *puertorrique nas* of color. In the 2010 competition, a disgruntled contestant showered him with racial epithets, much to his dismay (Tirado 2010).

To encourage black women to compete in mainstream beauty pageants, my sister Carmen—then known as Siva—started the first black modeling agency in Puerto Rico in the early 1980s.⁵ Until recently, dark-skinned women did not participate in major beauty contests such as the Miss Puerto Rico pageant.

In 1996, eight black Puerto Rican artists presented an art exhibit (Edmondson 1999, 78–79) and asked me to write an introduction to the catalogue. Despite the exhibit’s success, an influential critic decried it, arguing that black Puerto Rican art did not exist, only Puerto Rican art. The exhibit and criticism, however, came together to motivate a cyber-web adventure helmed by artist Edwin Velazquez,⁶ one of the eight black artists in that controversial show. The adventure—Centro de Cultura Afro Puertorrique na⁷—offers a broad overview of cultural and social resources that help define the black creatives of Puerto Rico.

Anecdotal evidence about the levels of racial injustice abound. Opponents of racial exclusion have popularized several ditties to poke fun at negative behavior focused on color. The most famous asks, “ y tu abuela donde est ?” (“And your grandmother, where is she?”), alluding to unequivocal racial ancestry. In other words: your Grandma was black and black blood is part of your heritage, runs in your family, in your veins; no matter how pale the *boricua*, Puerto Rico is unquestionably a mixed-race culture.

Yet remnants of racial prejudice still smolder in my adopted country. Many black people obviously remain in the background or are invisible. Many are poor and lack ambition, as exemplified in the primarily black communities of Loiza and San Anton in Ponce. Even in my adopted Puerto Rico, my dreams of racial and social equality remain deferred—which, in the still of the island’s enchanted night, makes me want to put on a turban like my father and speak Swedish on the island’s urban train.

⁵The agency was called Azabache; the model, Malin Falu, a New York City radio personality, became a semifinalist in the Miss Puerto Rico competition.

⁶Velazquez’s vita is at <http://africahuna.ning.com/profile/EdwinVelazquezCollazo>.

⁷<http://culturaafropuertorico.blogspot.com/>

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Chapter 8

Where Are You From?

Stéphanie Cassilde

Introduction: The “Where Are You From?” Question

“Where are you from?” is a common question that is asked on a daily basis in Europe.¹ At first glance, its meaning concerns a geographical origin (where). Thus, the answer is expected to mention a city, a region, or a country. However, the historical roots and the recurrence of this question call attention to a lack of clarity. What does the “Where are you from?” question really mean? Can the “Where are you from?” question provide supplemental or enlightening information about European society? If yes, how?

First, the “Where are you from?” question assumes that “you” is identified as being different by the person asking the question. The assignation of “you” to otherness, or being different by definition, is taken for granted; cultural and physical norms, which are contextually defined, set this otherness. At the scale of European societies, these norms can rely on the typical representation of the local group, which I call an “in-group” or reference group.

Second, the questioner identifies otherness on the basis of visible or audible features: skin colour, hair colour and texture, features of the face (nose, lips, and eyes), clothing, and behaviour are visible features. Audible features include a patronymic (a name derived from the name of a father or ancestor) and accent. They trigger the “Where are you from?” question without verbalizing; expressions like “given your skin colour”, “given your scarf”, or “given your knowledge of how to properly use chopsticks” do not arise prior to the “Where are you from?” question.

¹Other phrasings can be used: “Where do you come from?” “What is your origin?” “Where do you live?” and “Are you from here?” are examples. The “Where Are You from?” question is conceived here as an ideal-typical question for all the phrasings having the same implicit meaning and role.

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I use the word “melanin” as a metonymy (the substitution of the name of an attribute for the thing that is meant) to refer to all these features. Following Maryse Tripier’s critique (2009), social class indicators are included in “melanin” here.

Third, the “Where are you from?” question can be interpreted in different ways, either from the point of view of the asking person or from that of the respondent. It can be intention-free, benevolent, or malevolent. For instance, kindness can be expressed by the questioner, being willing to show openness and interest for another culture, or by the respondent, presenting her or his home town, region, or country. Spitefulness can be shown by the asking person using otherness to exclude “you” or by the respondent expressing annoyance; for example, whatever the point of view, when the “Where are you from?” question is not intention-free, it deals with self and other situations within the society. These situations rely on objective and subjective elements. They also concern the definitions of in-group (reference group) and out-group identities. From the moment of the “Where are you from?” question, there is an opportunity for (mis)understanding between the asking person and the respondent. First, they do not know the interpretation of the question (or lack of intention) by the interlocutor. Second, their interpretations can differ. For instance, the “Where are you from?” question can demonstrate the asking person’s interest for the other’s culture, while it can underline a repeated gap between self and assigned identity for the respondent. The latter situation is well described by Gaston Kelman in his *Je suis Noir et je n’aime pas le manioc [I am Black and I don’t Like Manioc]* (2003).

Current trends should be taken into account to study the “Where are you from?” question in European societies. Indeed, the past 10 years have demonstrated increasing evidence of racism and xenophobia in Europe (CNCDDH 2010, 2011). The political far right gained more votes (as in the Netherlands in 2011 for example) and even accessed to government, as is the case in Austria. The manifest of Behring Breivik, the Norwegian terrorist who carried out two attacks in Oslo in 2011, was against multiculturalism and especially against Muslim people.

In France, Alain Finkielkraut, the presenter of *Répliques* broadcast (France Culture radio), regularly sparks controversies (Maschino 2002; Maler 2005; Todd 2008). For example, he recently defended the position of invited speaker Richard Millet (Labat 2011; Najiels 2011) who notably claimed that descendants of immigrants who still give foreign names (e.g. Mohamed) to their children show an “act of barbarism and/or of civil war [sic]”. Former French Home Secretary Minister Brice Hortefeux (Davies 2010) (past adviser to President Sarkozy and European Parliament deputy) was first sentenced for abuse of a racial nature (Tribunal de Grande Instance de Paris 2010) and then discharged on appeal.

Even in the academia, a change should be noticed regarding some focuses and hypotheses to study the French society, with a shift from social matter to racial matter (Fassin and Fassin 2006/2009). Researchers also contradict each other about relevance, conceptualization, and collection of so-called ethnic statistics in France (CARSED (2009a) versus Wiewiorka (2008)). The relevancy of race (or “race”) is questioned, too (Matas and Pfefferkorn 2010).

Setting the interpretations of the “Where are you from?” question in this specific context of growing racism and xenophobia in Europe brings out the following

working assumption: The “Where are you from?” question has a comforting role indicating an intention to set differences on the basis of melanin,² which make their representations real. Some people, not all, are enjoined to clarify their perceived otherness. This issue deals with in-group and out-group identity definitions. Following Colette Guillaumin (2002), who asserts that racism makes race and that race does not exist prior to racism, I underline a performative dimension of the “Where are you from?” question.

France, as an example, helps to shed light on the definition of in-group and out-group identities. Indeed, Didier Fassin asserts “. . . all the confusion existing [in France] between ‘foreign’ and ‘immigrant,’ ‘foreign’ and ‘from a foreign origin,’ ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ does not result from mistakes in terms of what should be a good definition of these categories They [these categories] tell a deep and unacceptable truth: real nationality matters thoroughly less than perceived otherness; some French people are still seen as not being from around here” (Fassin 2006/2009, 35).³ This assertion could be easily extended to other European countries and at a European level. Several European countries were within colonial empires; thus, they are confronted with postcolonial issues, and they have a different kind of relationship with people from these areas or living in European overseas territories. The same applies concerning migrations and immigrant’s offspring. Moreover, the way to access nationality was modified in some European countries, as with Germany (2000) and Luxemburg (2008):⁴ *Jus sanguinis* [law of blood] no longer prevails. Thus, they became closer to France concerning in-group and out-group identity definitions.

This chapter introduces a field research project that is based on literature (evidences, researches, conference papers, and magazines), informal and spontaneous talks, my own experience, and my research in Brazil with a comparative perspective. On one hand, the material I will use benefits the respondent’s point of view, which is more accessible through published works (Belhaddad 2001; Kelman 2003, and Xenakis 2004/2005), novels (Mansouri 2011, 95), research (Ndiaye 2009; Aouici and Gallou 2011; Lapiere, Aouici and Gallou 2011), and other books (Dicale 2011; Olivet 2011). However, the reported reaction following the answer to the “Where are you from?” question reveals the asking person’s point of view. On the other hand, I use some conceptual findings of my research concerning Brazil to inform my apprehension of the “Where are you from?” question.

²Melanin is defined here as all visible and audible features that make somebody identified as different from the reference group.

³“[. . .] toute la confusion qui règne aujourd’hui entre les catégories «étranger» et «immigré», «étranger» et «d’origine étrangère», «racial» et «ethnique» ne résulte pas d’erreurs au regard de ce que serait une définition correcte de ces catégories [. . .]. Elles disent une vérité profonde et inacceptable, à savoir que la nationalité effective importe bien moins que l’altérité perçue, que des personnes françaises continuent d’être vues comme n’étant pas d’ici” (Fassin and Fassin 2006/2009, 35).

⁴In fact, it was possible to receive Luxemburgish nationality on the basis of a Luxemburgish place of birth and fluent Luxemburgish language skills for a long time. However, in 2008, applicants are not obliged to deny their original nationality anymore.

First, I make a distinction between colour (seen as flexible) and race (seen as exclusive), which respectively refer to individual and collective strategies (Cassilde 2010a).⁵ Upper cases will be used on first letters to denote race (i.e. Black, White), and lower cases will be used to signal colour (i.e. black, white). For instance, from this perspective, American President Barack Obama is *métis* (from mixed origins) and *Noir* (Black), and Michelle Obama is *noire* (black) and *Noire* (Black). I extend this distinction to melanin (e.g. “white” versus “White”, “having an individual Muslim practice” versus “Muslim”).

Second, colour can be concomitant with race, and the balance between colour and race sets the extent and the expression of conflicting situations (Cassilde 2010b, 151–202)(Cassilde Forthcoming): The more that collective strategies (race) are chosen, the more potential conflicts or domination between groups arises (e.g. Whites versus Blacks). And the more individual strategies (colour) are chosen, the more potential conflictive dynamics occur rather within groups (e.g. colourism, the Polish plumber phenomenon).⁶

Third, answers to the “Where are you from?” question are considered as a rational choice storytelling, following the analysis and the modelization of skin colour declarations in Brazil (Cassilde 2010b).

To understand the definition of in-group and out-group identities, I consider France as its European part (the Hexagon and Corsica), Martinique, and Guadeloupe.⁷ Usually, the last two are separated from the former because of a different experience of migrations and slavery, which is true. Indeed, the issue of skin colour and mixed origins regarding parental skin colour can be salient on a daily basis in Martinique and Guadeloupe. It is close to the mechanisms that take place in Brazil (i.e. concerning miscegenation and the spread of intermediary categories of colour) or in the United States (with regard to colourism). Conversely, in the European part of France, migration, place of residence, and melanin (as previously defined) articulate each other in the meaning of origin. However, the “Where are you from?” question calls a similar construction of the answer because I assume that the real meaning is the same everywhere in France (Hexagon, Corsica, Martinique, and Guadeloupe in this text): an assignation to otherness. In doing so, I considered French people in an aggregated way: French nationality prevails. Finally, I am

⁵Skin colour declarations are endogenous in Brazil. Thus, given the context people can shift from one colour to another and can shift from an individual strategy to a collective strategy.

⁶When presented, the Bolkestein’s directive of the European Parliament (European Parliament 2006) lead notably to accusations that this was a legitimization of social dumping: the expression “Polish plumber” was initially an illustration of that accusation and become an expression per se in order to speak about social dumping. Following Steve Garner (2009), who analyzes white identities in Britain, it appears that there are boundaries within white people group. If I am allowed to commit such a neologism, it is like a “white colourism”.

⁷The whole French territory is composed by the Hexagon, Corsica, Martinique, Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Réunion, Mayotte, French Polynesia, Saint-Pierre and Miquelon, Wallis and Futuna, St. Martin, St. Barthélémy, New Caledonia, French Southern and Antarctic Lands, and Clipperton Island. The sources I consulted did not allow me to go beyond the four first-listed parts of France.

focusing directly on the origins rather than on the migrations: Both keep linked because origins link migrations.

First, I deal with the mechanisms of the “Where are you from?” question. I try to find out the reasoning of people when they ask and answer the question. Depending on individual experience, this question directly refers to migration and/or to skin colour. Doing so, it clarifies the meaning of the “Where are you from?” question. Second, I confront the “Where are you from?” question as a research question, with existing researches and controversies related to melanin in France. Notably, it reveals conflicting dynamics of the French republican integration project.

How to Answer the “Where Are You From?” Question

The respondent answers the “Where are you from?” question on the basis of her or his own experience. I present two modalities: reporting the founding migration and setting in-group and out-group in the case of mixed-origin people.

The Founding Migration

When the respondent has direct⁸ or indirect migration experience,⁹ the “Where are you from?” question is interpreted as “Where are you migrating from?” The expressions “second-generation immigrant descent” and “third-generation immigrant descent” also underscore that migration still matters after decades: It refers to a “primeval” event. Whenever it happens, migration acts as a founding event.

In this context, the answer to the “Where are you from?” question takes into account this founding migration. The storytelling starts explicitly with this event, as in Mâkhi Xenakis’ (2004/2005) and Souâd Belhaddad’s (2001) work, or it is mentioned at one point (Aouici and Gallou 2011).

When the answer does not contain the origin of the migration, the asking person may repeat the “Where are you from?” question. If she or he repeats it, this reveals they are waiting for other information (the lacking founding migration). Thus, from the questioner’s point of view, there is a distinction between a good and a bad answer. Moreover, this implies that mentioning the founding migration alone can be enough to satisfy the asking person. Furthermore, the founding migration should be reported at the appropriate geographical scale. When it is not the case, the asking person usually repeats the “Where are you from?” question.

⁸In the case of direct migration, migration belongs to the respondent’s experience by migrating with parents (Aouici and Gallou 2011; Belhaddad 2001; Kelman 2003; Xenakis 2004/2005) or through adoption (Denechere 2011; Saada 2007). In the 2000s, continents of origin of adopted children were Asia (27%), Africa (27%), North and South America (27%), and Europe (20%), and in 2004, the first three countries of origin were Haiti, China, and Russia (Denechere 2011, 322).

⁹In the case of indirect migration, the respondent is the offspring of migrants.

Table 8.1 Typical individuals confronted with the “Where are you from?” question (Single melanin element considered: Arabic versus French names)

Melanin element	Nationalities	Own migration	Parents/ancestors migration
Julien	French	No, always lived in Paris	No
Jacques	French	Yes, from Lyon to Paris	No
Pierre	French	Yes, from Algeria to Paris	Yes, from France to Algeria
Mohamed	French	No, always lived in Paris	Yes, three generations ago from Algeria
Tarik	French	Yes, from Lyon to Paris	Yes, three generations ago from Algeria
Oubeid	French	Yes, from Algeria to Paris	No
Jean	French and Polish	Yes, from Poland to Paris	No
Rachid	French and Algerian	Yes, from Algeria to Paris	No

This table presents theoretical options, rather than field research observations, on the migratory background of individuals

To illustrate these points, I confront ideal and typical French individuals (presented in Table 8.1) with the “Where are you from?” question. To make it simple, I consider only one melanin element: Arabic versus French names. Assuming that this question is asked in Paris, the norm to define otherness is different from a typical French inhabitant of Paris, Julien.

One may argue that Mohamed also constitutes a typical French inhabitant of Paris. However, in practice, Mohamed will be confronted with the “Where are you from?” question on a regular basis, while Julien will not be confronted. Furthermore, if Mohamed answers that he always lived in Paris, the “Where are you from?” question will be repeated until he mentions his founding migration: His ancestors came from Algeria three generations ago. Parisians Tarik, Oubeid, and Rachid are expected to report their founding migration too, where their names originate. On the other hand, the probability is high that Jacques, Pierre, and Jean will not be asked where they are from. In all case, the melanin element prevails.

Adding other dimensions to the effect of melanin enlarges the number of individuals confronted with the “Where are you from?” question. For instance, on the basis of regional or foreign accent, Jacques, Pierre, and Jean could be identified as different from the norm.

Being confronted with the “Where are you from?” question is not straightforward: “Being pointed out as what you are not. Being called with a different name. As you can be putted under house arrest, you become putted under race arrest. It could be alienation. It could make you crazy. Or stupid, or nasty” (Dicale 2011, 147–148).¹⁰ Modalities of doing good or bad answer (from the asking person’s point of view) to the “Where are you from?” question reinforce these difficulties.

¹⁰“Etre désigné comme ce que l’on n’est pas. Etre appelé d’un autre nom. Comme on peut être assigné à résidence, on se retrouve assigné à race. Il est possible que cela soit une aliénation. Il est possible que cela rende fou. Ou con, ou méchant” (Dicale 2011, 147–148).

Indeed, a good answer, which is expected to mention the founding migration, can be done with a short sentence or a whole account. The latter gives place to a complete and balanced story, which takes all the dimensions of an individual's background into account. The former expresses what the asking person is waiting for, which can exclude some dimensions of individual background. For example, Mohamed and Tarik can explain that they are French and their ancestors migrated three generations ago, or they can say they are Algerian (which is false on a basis of their nationality; see Table 8.1). In the first case, they are on the side of an individual strategy, which rejects a one-dimensional assignation to otherness. In the second case, they choose a collective strategy (being members of the assigned group), which can be driven by identity affirmation or by assignation acceptance.

A bad answer either gives an unexpected geographical element (e.g. Tarik saying "I come from Lyon") or is a refusal to answer. In the first case, even without developing a whole account, the respondent chooses an individual's point of view. In the second case, it can be a rejection of being obliged to report the founding migration. Both strategies (individual and collective) can be expressed through this second case. I will develop this when presenting the second modality of answering (when there are mixed origins).

Concerning this issue and focusing on immigrants and French people having parents from Africa, Aouici and Gallou (2011) find different strategies depending on nationality. Binationalists are most likely to assert their French nationality (without rejecting their second nationality) and to embrace a storytelling based on individual strategy. Some French nationals with African ancestral origins adopt the nationality they are assigned (i.e. African), even without having been there in their life (Aouici and Gallou 2011, 188).

In the case of binationality, the founding migration seems to be conceived as a part of the respondent's own experience. Thus, she or he keeps both nationalities when responding to the "Where are you from?" question. In the case of a single French nationality, the respondent is assigned to something situated out of her or his own experience. Some respondents embrace and appropriate this otherness through a learning process, by adopting cultural practices, clothing, language, and so forth (Aouici and Gallou 2011, 181); they learn to be "other". Some reject it. Whatever their choice, there is a split regarding identity because part of their history was left behind. Similar mechanisms can be found for mixed-origin people.

The Founding Origin

When the respondent has mixed origins, the "Where are you from?" question is interpreted as referring to those origins. I use "mixed origins" (*métis*, in French) rather than "multiracial" for two reasons. First, the word "race" was banned in France; it appears recently again in the fields of social and political sciences and politics to underline "racial matter" and "racial discrimination". Second, mixed origins may refer to nationalities and religions as well.

Table 8.2 Typical individuals confronted with the “Where are you from?” question. Melanin element considered: skin colour (White versus Brown)

	Parent		Own skin color	Nationality
	Father	Mother		
Anne	French + White	French + White	White	French
Julie	Polish + White	French + White	White	French
Sophie	French + Black (French Indian)	French + White	Brown	French
Lucie	Senegalese + Black	French + White	White	French
Marion	Polish + White	British + White	White	French

This table presents theoretical options, rather than field research observations, on the origins of a *métis* individual

The expressions “multiracial”, “multi-ethnic”, and “multi-religion” explicitly underline parents’ different races, ethnicities, and religions—to the parental inputs. Instead, *métis* focuses on the result. According to Bertrand Dicale (2011), *métis* people share a situation and an experience: They are situated at the intersection of their parents, and they are used to double things (double culture, double language, double skin colour, and/or double religion). However, they do not constitute a group because each mixture is conceived as singular (Dicale 2011).

Métis people belong to both the in-group and the out-group. However, the “Where are you from?” question refers only to the origin of the out-group part. This origin acts as a founding origin concerning the assumed otherness of mixed-origin people.

In this context, the answer to the “Where are you from?” question takes into account this founding event (Dicale 2011; Olivet 2011). Similarly to the case of migration, the lack of this element leads to a repetition of the “Where are you from?” question by the asking person: This reveals that a good answer should contain at least this element.

Table 8.2 presents ideal-typical individuals to illustrate mechanisms of the “Where are you from?” question regarding mixed origins. The only melanin element considered in this example is skin colour. I suppose the “Where are you from?” question here is asked in France, and that otherness is defined as being different from a typical French woman, Anne.

Despite her French ancestry, Sophie will be identified as an atypical French person because of her skin colour. Thus, she will be confronted with the “Where are you from?” question. On the contrary, based on the same colour criteria, the probability that Julie and Marion will be confronted with the question is low. Nevertheless, by taking other melanin elements into account (e.g. foreign accent or food cultural practices), Julie and Marion could be identified as different from the norm and thus be enjoined to answer to the “Where are you from?” question.

The element the questioner is waiting for is just one part of the respondent’s identity. Thus, respondents often do not recognize themselves in the good answer they are expected to give, from the point of view of the asking person. Julie, Sophie, Lucie, and Marion are all French, but the “Where are you from?” question can “put them under founding origin [race] arrest” (rephrasing Bertrand Dicale 2011).

A good answer (from the asking person's point of view) either presents a whole description of their mixed-origin background or at least gives information on the foreign part of their origins, which in this example are respectively Polish, West Indian, Senegalese, and British (or Polish).

Furthermore, the trade-off between individual and collective strategies, between flexible and rigid melanin assignation, becomes more difficult when familial history is embedded in colonial history. According to Francis Affergan (2006, 11),¹¹ "the old conflict between Master and Slave, far from disappearing, was transformed into an endogenous dissension. Nowadays, French Indian should fight against the French she/he wanted to become in order to realize what her/his own identity is." Writing thus, Affergan is himself in favour of acceptance of all origins participating to the respondent's mixed origins. In practice, the repeated assignation to otherness through the "Where are you from?" question makes it difficult. Mixed-origin people, when identified on the basis of a melanin element, are often assigned to their out-group identity, even if they belong to both groups (in-group and out-group).

The "Where are you from?" question is also applied within French Indian societies. Meaning and representation of melanin are polarized between masters' offspring (White) and slaves' offspring (Black).¹² Between these two colours (White and Black), there is a whole skin colour mosaic, which is described with an abundance of intermediary colour words. René Girard's concept of "triangulation of desire" (*triangulation du désir*) (1999) can be used to describe the attractiveness of whiteness and (European) French culture (Louis 2006),¹³ and preferences for smooth hair demonstrate that skin colour hierarchy ideology is still internalized (Smeralda 2004). This can lead to categorizations among Black people—to colourism, which was well discussed by Kathy Russell et al. (1992).¹⁴ In such a context, the "Where are you from?" question adds a dimension of otherness to *métis* people. Indeed, they are confronted with their assignment to a founding origin, and, within this origin, they are enjoined to situate themselves in function of a "master/slave" opposition, which is sometimes rephrased as an "overseas/hexagon" opposition.

¹¹"L'ancien conflit entre le Maître et l'Esclave, loin de disparaître, s'est métamorphosé en une dissension endogène, l'Antillais d'aujourd'hui devant, pour prendre conscience de sa propre identité, lutter contre le Français qu'il a voulu lui-même devenir" (Affergan 2006, 11).

¹²Slaves masters' of spring are *métis* (so, in between), but/and they are mainly associated to the Black group.

¹³The "triangulation of desire" describes that a subject wishes to obtain a given object because it is seen as desirable for a third, called mediator (Girard 1999): Thus, the object is not desired per se but rather because of the mediator's expected desire for this object.

¹⁴The present paragraph focuses on French Indian societies. Please note that colourism may exist in whole France (as previously defined), including those of French African immigrant descent and African foreigners (Ndiaye 2006/2009). Contrarily, Fabrice Olivet (2011) rejects analysis relying on colourism because he interprets them as an assignation to choose the Black group. In practice, both might apply: There are *métis* people who feel uncomfortable with their Black part (or their White part), and there are *métis* people who feel comfortable to be in between. I found similar results in Brazil (Cassilde 2010b).

Melanin: An Insuperable Sign of Otherness?

Migration and mixed origins are only two elements within the melanin arena (defined earlier as two visible and audible features among those that make somebody identified as different). Given the answer is constructed on the basis of the respondent's experience, the "Where are you from?" question may imply other contents, too. Among the other main elements of melanin, in France and in Europe, four elements merit discussion: First, regional geography matters. European country histories point out that the unification of a nation was not taken for granted. For instance, histories of Italy, Germany, and France show different ways to bring all their regions together. Nevertheless, they all used language to do so. During a long time, regional accent was at the origin of the "Where are you from?" question, for example. It is still the case for some of them, especially concerning regions with strong cultural identities.¹⁵ Second, urban geography matters, as in neighbourhoods. Negative prejudices against people living in the suburbs in France are well known. There is also distinction between neighbourhoods in a city. In this case, the "Where are you from?" question refers to, for instance, clothing (people do not wear same type of clothes), accent (French—ways to master or not as well as regional accent), and cultural practices. Third, social class matters. The "Where are you from?" question is released, for example, by income and occupation, as well as by cultural practices. Fourth, religion matters: In this case, the question leads to a stigmatization of Muslim people.

Whatever the melanin element, mechanisms of the "Where are you from?" question are similar (Fig. 8.1). First, there is an iterative learning process. According to Sabrina Aouici and Rémi Gallou, "... others' look, which confront children of African people with an unknown otherness . . . , requires on the long run to think about it and to situate themselves regarding their skin colour, and thus regarding their origins, even situated far away in the past" (Aouici and Gallou 2011, 186).¹⁶ This can be extended to all respondents, whatever their background. Naïve answers rely on a literal interpretation of the "Where are you from?" question. It arises at an early stage of the learning process, during childhood and adolescence. Repetition of the question points out that the answer given by the respondent is not the answer expected by the asking person. The iterative learning process therefore refers to the understanding of the implicit meaning of the "Where are you from?" question expected by the asking person.

Second, this question can lead to three levels of conflicting situations. Refusing to answer means a rejection of assignation to otherness. This refusal, in turn, can be interpreted by the asking person as a denial of her or his origins by the respondent.

¹⁵In France, examples of such regional cultural identities are Corsican, Basque, Breton, and Alsatian.

¹⁶"[. . .] le regard des autres, qui confronte ces enfants d'Africains à une altérité qu'ils ne ressentent pas comme telle [. . .] leur impose à long terme une réflexion et un positionnement face à leur couleur de peau et donc aux origines, aussi lointaines soient-elles" (Aouici and Gallou 2011, 186).

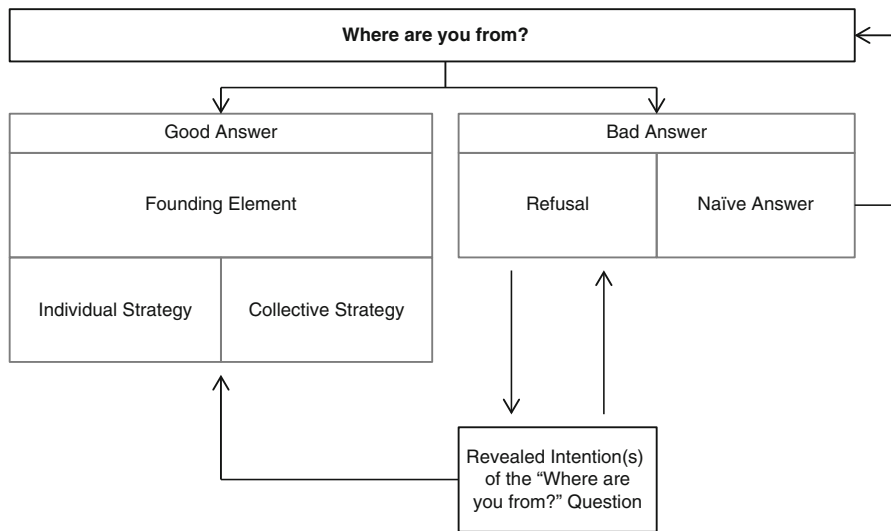


Fig. 8.1 Mechanisms of the “Where are you from?” question (*Black boxes* indicate that it comes from the asking person. *Grey boxes* indicate that it comes from the respondent)

In the former case, the conflict might arise between interlocutors because there is a misunderstanding between them. In the latter case, the asking person situates the conflict inside the respondent. Finally, refusing to answer is an unsteady state because the “Where are you from?” question is repeated by the asking person: Either the respondent still refuses to answer (the conflicting situation is maintained) or she/he gives in and shifts to the expected (good) answer. In the latter case, the asking person often convinced the respondent by demonstrating benevolent intentions of her or his “Where are you from?” question.

Third, the “Where are you from?” question can be followed by a good answer, the content of which depends on the respondent’s own experience, regarding her or his salient melanin element. The answer raises individual strategy rhetoric or collective strategy rhetoric. The latter underlines that assignation to otherness, which can lead to stigmata claim (Goffman 1975; Aouici and Gallou 2011).

The recurrence of the “Where are you from?” question allows making the answer flexible. Indeed, the learning process first leads to a shift from the naïve answer to a refusal or a good answer. The respondent learns the meaning of the “Where are you from?” question regarding her or his own life experience (e.g. migration and/or mixed origins). Second, she or he can change the way to answer to the question: the founding event, the strategy, and/or the choice of a good or bad answer. For instance, the asking person does not know which founding event is in the question: As a consequence, the former may switch between several founding events. Moreover, some melanin elements can be changed: Even skin colour can be modified, for example, with bleaching creams. The choice of an individual or a collective strategy is not definitive; it depends on the context under which the

“Where are you from?” question arises. Finally, choosing to answer given that the first answer is not necessarily the answer forever.

During some informal and spontaneous talks with questioners, I tried to reveal the real meaning of the “Where are you from?” question. Given the ordinary nature of the question, from the asking person’s point of view, the interpretation as an assignment to otherness was quite disturbing. It seems that this question is useful for people to structure their environment. This role of the “Where are you from?” question corresponds to a cognitive use of stereotypes as well (Villain-Gandossi 2001). This point should be further analysed from the viewpoint of the asking person.

The answer to the “Where are you from?” question depends on the respondent’s experience. The respondent is expected to mention at least one founding event, the existence of which is assumed by the asking person on the basis of respondent’s melanin. In practice, the respondent’s experience can rely on all founding events; founding events are not exclusive from each other. Furthermore, passing occurs when melanin elements do not appear or when they are erased.

I highlighted the founding migration and the founding origin to underline some boundary locations of in-groups and out-groups, defined from the asking person’s point of view. Concerning mixed origins, being limited to otherness implies excluding one part of the self. Regarding migration, out-group can be confined to private life, while in-group belongs to public space.¹⁷ Thus, an irreducible assignation to otherness implies being excluded from the French society.

Promise and Delusion of a Project?

The “Where are you from?” question challenges the respondent belonging to an in-group. In the case of France, despite the integration project of the French republican ideal (described later in this chapter),¹⁸ the respondent’s “Frenchness” is not assumed. This tension between the spirit and the letter of integration arises within the controversy on ethnic statistics in France too.

Assimilation and Integration

As mentioned in the introduction, I focus on French people, those who have a French nationality, such as the ideal-typical individuals of Tables 8.1 and 8.2. When

¹⁷See Iman Bassalah’s (2009) evidence for an autobiographic account of such a boundary.

¹⁸Different words are used to speak about ways foreign people will enter into the French society: assimilation, integration, and acculturation. See Dominique Schnapper (2007) for a discussion of the concept of integration. Here, I apply the concept of assimilation to French people within the French society, because they are asked, “Where are they are from?”

being confronted with the “Where are you from?” question, they are investigated for their otherness, for what makes them different from Frenchmen (the norm) from the point of view of the asking person. The latter stresses differences rather than similarities.

The initial French republican assimilation project declares that everybody can be a French national, whatever her/his skin colour, religion, and/or other features.¹⁹ The French republican project is color-blind and promises assimilation. Fabrice Olivet (2011) states that assimilation has deep historical roots. For instance, the civil code implies that all freeborn inhabitants of Senegal’s full-right municipalities (1830) are French (Olivet 2011, 164–165). This was followed with several laws and acts (1848, 1870, and after the First World War), which enlarged the ways to become a French national. Emmanuelle Saada (2007) reminds us of the events of 1928 and the French-race-based citizenship (*citoyenneté par la race française*) of mixed-origin children. Geographical, historical, migratory, and other (e.g. adoption and mixed marriage) variables constitute sources of melanin diversity among French nationals.

However, there is a gap between *de jure* and *de facto* assimilation or integration. Indeed, the “Where are you from?” question indicates that the asking person assumes that the respondent is not completely French (maybe not at all), in the sense that a founding migration and/or a founding origin is expected to belong to the respondent’s experience. The same reasoning can be found in regional identities. An informal talk with a blond, blue-eyed policewoman coming from the eastern part of France (near the German border) stresses that in the south of France, she was regularly called “casque à pointe”, or “spiked helmet” (a German helmet used during the First World War). She emphasized that past German-French relationships are still salient regarding her occupation, which was informing her assignation to Germany on the basis of her regional origin.

In fact, the “Where are you from?” question stresses a delusion regarding the French republican project: “[assimilation] is a trap: exactly, it expresses a “paradoxical” command because it requires a result, which is supposed to be impossible to reach a priori. Thus, in fact, its [assimilation’s] success lies in the failure of its project” (Giraud 2006, 90).²⁰ In practice, it seems that French nationality could be recognized in daily life only as the constantly evolving result of an ongoing assimilation. Thus, if recognized in process, French nationality is always a challenge.

Melanin leads to the “Where are you from?” question. This is why Michel Giraud emphasizes that “. . . while adopting [French republican] culture, they will always

¹⁹Except an existing additional local citizenship in New Caledonia (Faberon 2006), French citizenship rules apply on the whole French territory.

²⁰“Si elle [l’assimilation] est un piège c’est précisément parce qu’elle exprime une injonction que l’on dit “paradoxale” en ce qu’elle exige un résultat qu’elle suppose *a priori* être impossible à obtenir et que ton succès réside ainsi, en définitive, dans l’échec de ce qu’elle disait être son projet” (Giraud 2006, 90).

miss this “almost nothing”, which is the reward for having a milky skin colour”.²¹ Whatever the language skills,²² whatever the efforts (Mansouri 2011), sharing common republican values does not mean a change in the appearance of individuals. French nationality does not make somebody White. Outward migrations of French nationals increased greatly in recent years; some of them explicitly mention the “where are you from?” question assignment as a reason to migrate abroad.

Assimilation is not gender specific; it seems that assimilation is easier for women. First, they are less confronted with the “Where are you from?” question than are men. The melanin threshold, which opens this question, appears to be higher for men. Second, when they are confronted with the “Where are you from?” question, their storytelling reports much more individual strategies (based on flexible categories) than collective strategies (base on rigid categories), even within a set of siblings (Kelman 2003, 105–135). Third, women are seen as being assimilated easily because they can be married out of their group. Maybe the two former explanations of gender-based assimilation result from the latter.

At the same time, the promise of the French republican assimilation project remains attractive and desirable: “We cannot reduce the ‘overseas’ people passion for ‘assimilation’ to a mimetism that alienates themselves to colonizer’s values. We should rather interpret it as an inalienable requirement to finally keep [French] republican’s promise” (Giraud 2006, 95).²³ First, this quotation can be extended to all French people confronted with the “Where are you from?” question. Second, 2005 events could be interpreted as a rejection of being assigned to otherness, to a *de facto* fake foreign nationality instead to their real French nationality.

Ethnic Statistics in France: Wishes and Fears

The controversy about ethnic statistics in France illustrates the tensions around the republican project. Some researchers advocate such statistics as a tool to implement the French republican project, while other researchers are against them because having ethnic statistics is considered an introduction of communitarianism within the French society and thus as a violation of the French republican project. I present the main pros and cons that have been emphasized during this controversy. Then, I use the “Where are you from?” question to inform the debate from another point of view.

²¹“... dans l’assomption culturelle entreprise, il leur manquera toujours ce ‘presque rien’ qui ne se mérite que par la couleur laiteuse de la peau” (Suvélor, as quoted by Giraud (2006), 93).

²²Speaking French is a key skill. Paraphrasing Frantz Fanon: In France, we say: speaking as a book. In Martinique: speaking as a White [“En France, on dit: parler comme un livre. En Martinique: parler comme un Blanc”] (Fanon 1952/1971, 16); the following is also salient: “In France, we say: speaking as a French,” which opposite would be “speaking as a foreign person”.

²³“On ne saurait réduire la passion de “l’assimilation” qui s’est emparée des peuples “d’outre-mer” à un mimétisme aliénant vis-à-vis des valeurs du colonisateur. Il faut plutôt y voir l’exigence imprescriptible que la promesse républicaine soit enfin tenue” (Giraud 2006, 95).

Pros and Cons of Ethnic Statistics in France: A Short Review

The ethnic statistics debate occurred while TeO survey (*enquête Territoires et Origines* [the territories and origins survey]) was proposed and designed by INED and INSEE.²⁴ TeO was finally realized in 2008. Controversy around TeO and ethnic statistics in France emphasizes wishes and fears through four points. The following comments are based mainly on two reports: COMEDD's report in favour of ethnic statistics (2010)²⁵ and CARSED's report against ethnic statistics (2009a).²⁶

First, there is opposition regarding what should be studied: social matter or racial matter? Fassin and Fassin (2006/2009) already underline a shift from the former to the latter. For them, the purpose is first to stress that a racial issue exists in France. Second, this can deconstruct the representation of French society as a "pigmentocracy" (Lipschütz 1944), because, in practice, social and racial matters articulate each other (Fassin and Fassin 2006/2009).

Researchers against ethnic statistics assert that racial matters seem to hide social matters (Amselle 2009; Tripier 2009). For them, the relevance of analysis is thus challenged. Notably, for some of them, the social dimension is the most important (Kesslassy 2004).²⁷

Second, there is no agreement about what should be measured, and the expression "ethnic statistics" is unclear; sometimes, it is replaced by "statistics of diversity." The content of what is expected to be measured is heterogeneous. COMEDD (2010) stresses six elements: origin, physical appearance, patronymic, nation, ethnicity, and race. Such a focus is justified by a less extended legislation to the contrary of other characteristics leading to discrimination (COMEDD 2010).

Researchers against ethnic statistics emphasize this limitation. The word "ethnic" is denounced as inappropriate and is perceived as hiding the real purpose of racial statistics collection (Dozon 2009). Furthermore, the focus is seen as irrelevant, because it should be on migrations rather than on origins: "French history is the result of combined migratory and colonial histories. Therefore, this result implies

²⁴Initial findings were already published (Beauchemin, Hamelle and Simon 2010). See TeO and related documentation at <http://teo.site.ined.fr/>. INED is the Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques, i.e. National Institute of Demographic Studies (www.ined.fr). INSEE is the Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques, i.e. National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (www.insee.fr). This is the second controversy. The first occurred about MGIS survey (Mobilité Géographique et Insertion Professionnelle, i.e. Geographic Mobility and Occupational Insertion), realized in 1994, which led to the collection of place of birth and of the nationality of parents at their birth (Silberman 2008).

²⁵COMEDD is the COMité pour la Mesure et l'Evaluation des Discriminations et de la Diversité, i.e. Measure and Evaluation of Discriminations and Diversity Committee.

²⁶CARSED is the Commission Alternative de Réflexion sur les "Statistiques Ethniques" et les "Discriminations", i.e. Alternative Commission to Think about "Ethnic Statistics" and "Discriminations".

²⁷Limitations of addressing diversity are well known by researchers defending ethnic statistics (Wieviorka 2008; COMEDD 2010).

that the main decisive element expressing this diversity is really migration” (Blum 2009, 93).²⁸ Thus, Jean-Luc Richard argues that a category “being immigrant’s offspring” should be constructed (Richard 2009).

Third, the debate continues with the way of measuring ethnic statistics. Terms of reference received by COMEDD refer explicitly to statistics (quantitative research) and to an objective measure (COMEDD 2010). For researchers, the purpose is also to stay involved, in the sense that the private sector can already collect skin colour, for example (Wieviorka 2008). Furthermore, COMEDD (2010) advises separation of mandatory and additional surveys; the former would be dedicated to the collection of objective indicators (categories, which can be used for policies), and the latter, which would be used by researchers without any immediate policies application. It is also reluctant to use self-identification and identification by a third and offers to use self-other-identification, how the respondent imagines that somebody else identifies herself/himself.

Researchers who oppose them point out that diversity and identity are subjective (Amadiou 2009; Cussó 2009; Le Bras 2009). Notably, Michel Giraud (2009) reminds us that context matters. Ethnic statistics are seen as arbitrary regarding the delimitation of offered categories in the questionnaire (Bopda 2009). And regarding who is asked what in TeO, for instance, linguistic skills should be addressed for the whole population, not just for immigrants and immigrants’ descendants (Guerin-Pace 2009). A collective text of CARSED criticizes the focus on “visible minority” (CARSED 2009b). Finally, qualitative research is presented as more relevant than quantitative research concerning discrimination and racism (Bonniol 2009), and, especially, the focus should be on processes and people who are racist and who discriminate rather than on the categorization of people who suffer from racism and discrimination (Giraud 2009).

Fourth, the use of ethnic statistics is conflicting. Researchers who favour them wish to measure and quantify inequalities and discrimination. Some associations would like to implement affirmative action, which is translated in French as “positive discrimination”. The fact is that, except on the basis of urban geography (Doytcheva 2007) or socioeconomic characteristics (Keslassy 2004), positive discrimination is usually rejected in France.

Researchers against ethnic statistics focus on already-existing studies and political recommendations, which are not used or implemented (De Rudder and Vourc’h 2009). Others argue that it is impossible to collect enough observations and, second, to obtain reliable measurements (Jugnot 2009). The performative dimension of statistics is denounced and associated with setting rigid categories (Filippova 2009). In fact, the main fear related to ethnic statistics relies on a risk of differentialism (CARSED 2009b), communitarianism (Badinter 2009), and antirepublican trends

²⁸“Celle de la France tient à une histoire migratoire combinée à une histoire coloniale. Or cette combinaison fait que le déterminant principal exprimant cette diversité est bien la migration” (Blum 2009, 93).

(Bonniol 2009). The current French political context concerning immigrants, binationality, and identity seems also to be inappropriate to collect such statistics (De Rudder and Vourc'h 2009).

Informing the Ethnic Statistics Debate Using the “Where Are You From?” Question

Going through these four points again, I will participate to the ongoing academic debate from the “Where are you from?” question point of view. It is neither a matter of sustaining the existing conflicting issues nor a matter of solving the controversy. It is rather an explorative research framework dedicated to all variables, which could lead to discrimination or inequality of opportunity.²⁹

The “Where are you from?” question, as a research question, deals with both social and racial matters and with other additional matters as well. Indeed, the “Where are you from?” question is prompted by melanin. Furthermore, social and racial matters influence each other at various levels.

First, when focusing on social dimensions or racial dimensions, the researcher sometimes assumes that another dimension is approached at the same time. However, under this assumption, dealing with social matters through a racially focused research question does a by-default analysis with the latter (Smeralda-Amon 2002). The same applies when racial matters are studied through the only social research question. Dealing with both at the same time allows deconstructing the implicitly assumed linearity, as proposed by Fassin and Fassin (2006/2009).

Second, there is a reverse causality between social and racial characteristics. Indeed, there are not official categories regarding race and/or skin colour in France, and identities as a whole are conceived as flexible and drawn on several sources. From this point of view, the situation is close to skin colour/race declarations in Brazil,³⁰ where researchers agree that context matters in order to define self—and others’ skin colour or race category (Harris 1964; Ianni 2004; Osório 2003; Cassilde 2010b, 319–436). A similar situation in the USA concerns Latino and Latina identification (Golash-Boza and Darity 2008).

Third, relative proportions of melanin elements within a given individual’s experience lead to different ways to answer the “Where are you from?” question. Thus, this issue crystallizes individual and collective situations in a given context at a point in time. Analysing and following these situations give information about society’s conflicting dynamics and about the evolution of in-group and out-group identity definitions.

Thus, a “Where are you from?” research question framework relaxes the strength of the content delimitation, which can be enlarged. Indeed, melanin, as defined

²⁹COMEDD (2010) reminds us that 18 variables are identified as such.

³⁰The question is as follows: “What is your skin colour or race?”

regarding the “Where are you from?” question, is multidimensional. Beyond the joint analysis of social and racial matters, several other topics also may be addressed: migration, mixed origins, social origin, social class, religion, language, educational career, and place of residence.

The corollary of covering all these melanin-related elements would be a dedicated research. Indeed, with regard to existing surveys, grandparental country of birth and nationality at birth are not collected because the length (thus, the cost) of the whole questionnaire would be too long (COMEDD 2010).³¹

The main drawback of a dedicated research would be its potentially sporadic nature. It goes against the only introduction of a few questions focused on policy-based variables. However, many advantages can be seen. First, qualitative and quantitative methods can be used jointly and in an iterative way. Second, the whole population could be under study.³² This allows us to address the reference group as well and to compare it to out-groups. Moreover, this relaxes the focus on the discriminated group. In doing so, on one hand, both sides of discrimination are analysed (discriminators and victims of discrimination, racism, stereotypes, prejudices, inequalities, discrimination results, and categorizations). On the other hand, it takes into account that someone can be both a discriminator and a victim of discrimination; these roles are not exclusive. Third, a dedicated research could deal with different measurements at the same time. For instance, each of self-identification, identification by a third, and objective elements of identification informs in-group and out-group identity definitions and their relationships. COMEDD’s (2010) offer of a self-hetero-identification addition could be considered as well. Moreover, each of these identification sources can lead to inequality and/or discrimination (Cassilde 2010b, 515–577); self-identification might lead to self-limitation or self-incentive, identification by a third might lead to discrimination or favouritism, and objective elements of identification can be correlated to opportunity inequalities.

Regarding the fear of a performative effect concerning ethnic statistics, the Brazilion example shows that this is not a mandatory implication. Indeed, skin colour/race has been collected in Brazil since 1872 within five categories, while, at the same time, more than 100 words are still used in daily life to speak about skin colours. Moreover, affirmative action in Brazil is extremely recent and limited. Finally, the case of Brazil shows that, even confronted with rigid categories, individuals might shift from one category to another.

The “Where are you from?” question informs promise and delusion of the French republican project. Indeed, respondents are assigned to otherness while wishing

³¹These variables were not collected, except for a dedicated survey (Simon and Clément 2006). Without information about grandparents, identification of “second-generation immigrant descents” is difficult. Algava and Lhommeau (2009) use an additional data collection in registry offices to identify them.

³²Usually, surveys focus on the “first-generation immigrant descents” and on foreigners. TeO adds overseas people and overseas people descendants.

to belong to the reference group, being recognized as a French national without presumption of being or having been a foreigner. The debate on ethnic statistics in France arises in a context of awareness with regard to assimilation conflicting dynamics. Researchers in favour of ethnic statistics underline an opportunity to measure and quantify inequalities and discriminations regarding characteristics like skin colour and foreign ancestry. Researchers against ethnic statistics highlight risk-taking to intensify and fix the categorization of the population.

Using the “Where are you from?” question as a research question, I propose to change the point of view, in the sense that everybody would be asked where they are from and that melanin covers a wide range of in-group and out-group boundaries.

Conclusion

The “Where are you from?” question occurs when “you” is identified as being different by the asking person. The latter might not be aware of the assignation to otherness, which belongs to the “Where are you from?” question. Moreover, she/he might be benevolent while asking this question, for example, demonstrating openness and interest regarding another culture.

However, the respondent learns the real meaning of the “Where are you from?” question by iteration. Initially, she/he can commit a naïve answer, answering literally—giving a local geographical element. But the repetition of the “Where are you from?” question by the asking person clearly invalidates such an answer. During childhood and adolescence, respondents learn first that “Where are you from?” is an assignation to otherness and second that questioners might be unaware of this meaning. They learn what a good or a bad answer is with regard to the “Where are you from?” question. Sometimes, they choose to refuse to answer—knowing that this is a bad answer—and other times they choose to answer. They learn that this assignation to otherness refers to their melanin element(s): a regional or a foreign accent while speaking French, cultural practices indicating a migratory background, clothing showing a different social class, or a skin colour that is different from White, for example. They learn that the “Where are you from?” question refers to a founding event. They learn that they are expected to report this event. They learn that they can even reduce themselves to this founding event. They learn that belonging to the nation will be always a challenge, whatever their efforts. They learn that melanin is not dissolved in, absorbed, by the nation. They learn which melanin elements can be dissolved or hidden. Nevertheless, respondents to the “Where are you from?” question still believe in the French republican project, either requiring to become “transparent” (da Silva 2007) or focusing on equity promise through collective strategies.

The “Where are you from?” question finds a strong echo concerning the French republican project, i.e. assimilation into French nationality. Indeed, the “Where

are you from?” question challenges the effectiveness of respondent’s assimilation. While being French nationals, respondents are enjoined to report a foreign founding event, either migratory or racial.

The controversy about ethnic statistics in France can be seen as a way to go out of the current aporia of assimilation. Within the civil society, supporters of ethnic statistics point out a statistical answer to the “Where are you from?” question in order to make their melanin element recognized. Their assignment to otherness leads to a collective strategy, based on being French and other at the same time, for instance, being French and Black. Researchers in favour of ethnic statistics highlight a need for quantification to first make a diagnosis of the rejection of one part of French nationals and second to create and implement policies to overcome this rejection.

Researchers against ethnic statistics fear communitarianism, which is one expected answer to the “Where are you from?” question.³³ Extrapolating an interpretation from their stance and from the “Where are you from?” question point of view, it seems that they rather prefer individual strategies or another possible expected answer to the “Where are you from?” question.³⁴

Showing links between this current debate and the “Where are you from?” question, I propose that a research dedicated to this question could shed light on ongoing European social evolution and dynamics. The example of France results from migratory and colonial histories, which are more and more widespread in Europe, either through changes in law to obtain nationality or through shifts of population.

Cementing a European identity implies defining it, thus to indicate what otherness is. In practice, Christian religion was not written in law as a European identity element, and European geographical frontiers are becoming harsh.

Proposing a broad definition of melanin, as wholly visible and audible features making somebody identified as different, the “Where are you from?” question is salient regarding a wide range of pretexts to exclude others. However, with regard to some discourses in the media from politicians and from the political far right, I do not conceal that some melanin elements are more focused than others to prompt the “Where are you from?” question, elements such as Muslim or being seen as Muslim and being non-White.

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³³Then, to some extent, far right discourse’s shift from nationalism to communitarianism (Crépon 2010) meets this possible outcome.

³⁴Recent publication of a book dedicated to the 300 years presence of Black people in France (Blanchard 2011) seems closer to this reasoning and act as a counter balance regarding communitarianism, even if it can be used to sustain the later.

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Chapter 9

Social Work Futures: Reflections from the UK on the Demise of Antiracist Social Work and Emerging Issues in a “Post-Race” Era

Mekada J. Graham

Introduction

Social work is one of the few professions that places social justice and equality at the center of its mission and practice principles. These key perspectives have shaped a growing body of literature that seeks to address many forms of discrimination and inequality through integrating theories and practice principles into social work. This broad range of theories includes radical, structural, feminist, antiracist, antioppressive, and antidiscriminatory social work. Most of these forms of critical social work have been on the decline as neoliberalist discourses have come to dominate within social, political, and educational contexts as well as postmodern critiques (Morley and Macfarlane 2011).

With the demise of antiracist social work in the 1990s, in favor of a wider approach to forms of discrimination and inequality, a watered down approach to racism began to appear; this trend has continued to marginalize these issues and jeopardize the notion that racism remains a significant social problem in contemporary British society (Graham 2007). These trends emerged as antidiscriminatory theory and practice became an umbrella term to describe various sources and forms of oppression that interact with each other and reflect social divisions of class, race, gender, age, disability, and sexual identity (Thompson 1997). This universal oppression framework or equality of oppression model seeks to affirm the importance of all forms of oppression equally with scant attention given to the variations in the intensities of oppressions experienced by individuals in society. It is argued that this framework provides a more comprehensive understanding of social divisions in society that captures emerging postmodern themes, including multiple identities and intersectionality.

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With these concerns in mind, this is an opportune moment to review social work education and its approach to issues of racism and content about visible minorities in particular social contexts—to open new dialogues about the role of social work in reaffirming its commitment to racial equality. Although new racisms have emerged in the past decade, which extend beyond skin color as the only signifier of difference, this marker maintains importance and persistence in contemporary society. As Sefa Dei (1999) contends, it is “through the racial signification of skin color, individuals and groups are marked and classified for differential and preferential treatment.”

This chapter begins by mapping the dilution of antiracist social work and black perspectives into an antidiscriminatory practice universal framework, moving along to incorporate postmodern themes of diversity and difference. This debate provides the background to discussions about the possibilities of a recasting of antiracist social work and black perspectives and is framed within the “politics of recognition” in social and political theory, which interrupts social work paradigms to draw attention to the ways in which pressing concerns and critical voices are often left out of academic texts and discourses. By attending to these issues, social work learning and practice can support a more inclusive approach to professional knowledge, which recognizes changing patterns of social life, complexity, and multiple perspectives.

Antiracist Social Work Background and Context

At the center of the social work profession are concerns about issues of social exclusion and discrimination of vulnerable populations in society. Indeed, social work has adopted social justice as an important aspect of its mission and guide for practice to tackle widespread inequalities across a range of social arenas. Antiracist social work emerged in the 1980s, when social class dominated sociological literature as the main social division and underpinned professional knowledge in social work. Social problems of poverty, homelessness, poor health, and education were explained in terms of long-standing social class divisions, which lingered across generations. Indeed, the development welfare state was based upon a radical departure from the past characterized by gross inequalities, unemployment, and poverty to embrace the Beveridge model (Beveridge 1942)—centered on the primary needs of the whole population.

However, the exclusive focus on social class was inadequate to account for a wider range of divisions in society, and increasingly, race and gender required more study in their own right. New social movements, such as feminism and black civil rights, hastened the decline of class as the sole model of inequality in society, which gave way to the study of gender as well as race relations through analysis of interactions between minority and majority communities. These concerns referred to the need for economic and social reforms as well as attention to failing social welfare institutions. This model of deprivation and poverty failed to acknowledge other structural forces such as racism, sexism, and discrimination as well as the

specific needs of black people and women. It was widely believed that racism was as an attitude or personal prejudice outside of institutional structures that would weaken over time, as the majority society accepted black communities. These individualized understandings of racism and discrimination framed much of the discussions at that time.

Sociology is an important field, which underscores social work knowledge, and there was a growing interest in the sociology of race relations. The study of race relations adopted concepts of assimilation and the process of “adjustment” among black people migrating to Britain in the 1950s on, and these concerns became a popular area of interest in understanding social relations between black people and their “host” society. It was assumed that black and minority communities would adopt the norms of values of the wider society and become “British” in their outlook and thinking.

This was to be achieved by integrating models of assimilation into social policies and ensuring that the implementation of these strategies caused minimal disruption to the society at large. These issues were discussed within a political climate of intense hostility toward immigration in the mass media and society generally. As a result of these debates in political and public circles, immigration became increasingly racialized. In Britain, the “race-relations” perspective came to be associated with the work of John Rex (1973), who changed the emphasis of race-relations theory—shifting it away from physical and cultural differences and asserting that it was the existence of material inequalities between different racial groups that was the root cause of any conflict.

John Rex (1973; Rex and Tomlinson 1979) proposed that black people were positioned as a racialized underclass and seen by the indigenous working class as competitors for scarce resources such as jobs and housing. Gatekeepers to the welfare state shared this outlook with the rest of the indigenous working class and acted in ways that perpetuated immigrants’ exclusion from social citizenship; this created a vicious cycle because it helped reproduce existing material inequalities, which would continue to fuel conflictual race relations. Under these circumstances, it is only when minority communities achieve full citizenship and equal access to resources would this conflict come to an end. Crucially, Rex (1973; Rex and Moore 1967) and other proponents of race-relations theory claim that the process of exclusion can be wholly attributed to subjective racism, which was rooted in personal attitudes and individual behavior rather than in institutional procedures or structural factors. As a result, race-relations strategies have sought to deal with subjective racism by modifying personal attitudes and individual behaviors.

Early perspectives in social work appeared indifferent to the social conditions and experiences of black communities, as traditional approaches to casework tended to personalize the problems of black clients as being cultural deficits associated with their difficulties in assimilating into the British way of life (Turney 1996). Social policies often reflected this approach underpinned by a universal approach to welfare services, which tended to ignore particular needs of families and children from diverse communities. Although black people have formed part of British society for several generations, they were often viewed as immigrants with little

or no entitlement to social welfare; these widespread beliefs were sometimes used to justify differential treatment and perceptions as “undeserving groups.”

The shift toward a structural understanding of social problems and disadvantage moved attention to institutional forms of racism in social policies, institutional practices, and norms. Patterns of discrimination began to emerge within social work institutions, which produced a contradictory relationship between black communities and social welfare—where on one hand there was a high presence of black people in social control aspects of social work, such as mental health units and children in public care, yet they were underrepresented in receipt of social care services (Graham 2007). Negative stereotypes surrounding black families played a part in decision-making processes and contributed to the high presence of black children in public care. The lack of attention paid to these issues in policy and practice raised disquiet among black communities and concerned professionals, as they often felt their concerns were trivialized or not taken seriously. Some community activists considered social work to be a social control agency that was eager to remove black children from their families into the care system.

In addressing these issues, black social workers formed black workers groups in Local Authority Social Services and began to advocate for change within established social work institutions. These efforts led to the strengthening of antiracist social work and new initiatives in social work education, policy, and practice. Alongside these developments, social workers recognized the need for a national association, and in 1983, the Association of Black Social Workers and Allied Professions was created (Graham 2007). This professional organization became responsible for establishing antiracist social work as a critical framework for practice and support network. The organization also played a major role in shifting the ideological base of social work, as well as shaping legislative arrangements for the care black children.

The growing concern inside and outside the profession about social work with black families challenged conventional knowledge and practice. These issues led to a reexamination of social work priorities, knowledge, and forms of practice. As these issues were debated, social work began to acknowledge that the profession must change and realign itself with oppressed populations in a practical way (Dominelli 1997; Turney 1996).

As a result of these processes, social work was often perceived by many black communities as an instrument of social control, which fostered the breakdown of families rather than building family support and restoration (Graham 1999). Lack of attention paid to these issues in policy and practice caused disquiet among black communities and concerned professionals who felt that their concerns were trivialized or not taken seriously by local government authorities. It is within this context that antiracist social work became the leading model of practice adopted by social work education.

It is useful at this point to identify the main principles that informed this model of practice. This paradigm recognizes that race is a social construct that imports social and political meanings and continues to be used to justify and encourage differential treatment and oppression. This model of social work envisaged an evaluation of society from the standpoint of the disadvantaged as a key principle in critical theory

and practice. Taking this approach, it is possible to understand how systems of oppression shape the life experiences of those who are marginalized.

Antiracist social work is constructed upon several basic principles, which inform social work models for practice (Dominelli 1997, 2002). These are described in the following ways:

- Antiracist social work recognizes that “race” is a social construct that involves social and political meanings and has been used to justify and encourage differential treatment and oppression.
- Antiracist social work critically examines the dynamics of power relationships and institutional racism that produces racial and gender sources of oppression.
- Antiracist social work considers that the full social effects of racism cannot be understood without understanding other forms of oppression, self-awareness of prejudice, biases, and stereotypes in individual interpersonal relationships.
- Antiracist practice is developing a working knowledge of the interlocking nature of oppression as a tool for social change.
- Antiracist practice includes black perspectives, worldviews, and lived experiences of oppression.

This framework provides links between individual action and social structures and promotes self-awareness of prejudice, biases, and stereotypes in individual interpersonal relationships and critically examines the dynamics of power relationships and institutional racism that produce racial and gender sources of oppression.

Black Perspectives in Social Work

As antiracist social work became established as a critical form of practice, black perspectives emerged as an integral part of its content. Black perspectives consist of an overarching framework of approaches that emerged through the struggles and protests of black communities, professionals, and antiracist activists to give voice and agency to debates and discussions about social work issues. Central to these developments are issues of recognition, which have guided theory building in social justice with great promise in giving voice to groups who have been silenced along the lines of race, gender, and class as universal respect for shared humanity. Identity politics fuelled these discussions, with Charles Taylor (1994) contending that human identity is dialogical; that is, identity develops through interaction, the medium of language, and other social modes of expression.

In this regard, our identities are shaped in important ways by recognition, the absence of recognition, and misrecognition on the part of others. The acquisition and subsequent affirmation of identities can be distorted through misrecognition and when people or society mirror back to stigmatized communities confining and demeaning or contemptible picture themselves (Taylor 1994; Fanon 1967).

Black perspectives as an overarching framework of approaches emerged through the struggles and protests of black communities, professionals, and antiracist activists to give voice and agency to debates and discussions about social work

issues. Issues of exclusion and marginalization have been central to struggles of recognition and presence to various social groups including black and minority communities (Graham 2007). Maintaining a space for black perspectives in social work has been particularly challenging in the British context because of layers of oppressive contemporary social conditions emanating from colonial and other historical factors, which contribute to increased vulnerability and marginalization of black and minority communities. These conditions extend to academic institutions where, to date, there is still no institutional home for black studies in Britain (Graham 2009; Gordon 2001). After all, educational institutions are still struggling with the negation or erasure of minority peoples' histories, cultures, experiences, and identities in national curriculums and elsewhere.

The Demise of Antiracist Social Work

Social work education demonstrated a strong commitment to antiracism requiring students to “demonstrate their ability to develop anti-racist and other forms of anti-discriminatory practice and the capacity to work effectively within a multi-racial and multi-ethnic society” (CCETSW 1989, 4.2.5). These initiatives were intended to create a new workforce of antiracist social workers who would be able to recognize structural racism and facilitate antiracist practice. Social work education programs were mandated to implement and monitor policies and practices (Penketh 2000). However, the introduction of antiracist social work into social work education programs was fairly short-lived, as mounting critiques from public and social work circles began to question its legitimacy as a model of social work practice.

First, the meanings of race and the significance of the term became extensively problematized with concentrated focus on the language of antiracism, which was dubbed as political correctness. Although antiracist social work literature recognized race as a social construct implicated in social, economic, and political relations, early articulations of the discourse were couched in a crude dichotomy of black and white social relations. This approach, infused in race awareness training (RAT) courses, identified racism as a personal problem of white individuals. A grand theory of racism underpinned this approach, which ignored other salient factors such as gender and class. Critiques of essentialism were also directed toward proponents of antiracist social work as well as critical analysis of its theoretical underpinnings, leading to the assertion of Marie Macey and Eileen Moxon (1996, 297) that antiracist social work is “informed by neither sociological, political, nor economic theory or research.”

Second, there were particular concerns about the extent to which racism was embedded in British institutions and social work educators voiced unease about antiracist social work as a single-issue standpoint that privileges racism over other forms of oppression. These ensuing debates resulted in the revision of CCETSW's regulations and the dilution of antiracist social work in favor of an antidiscriminatory framework, which adopted a wider conceptualization of

oppression and discrimination. There is no doubt that antiracist social work made important contributions in shifting policy and practice in uncovering and dealing with racism in the profession.

As antiracist social work became subsumed into a new, wider framework, black perspectives also grappled with similar issues and critiques. Limitations in the use of the term “black” to describe some visible minority groups began to surface as divisions in self-definition became more apparent. These issues can in part be traced to Britain’s colonial past and the way in which the designation of the term “black” (initially the term “colored” was widely used) was invoked to homogenize and racialize African, Caribbean, and South Asian communities in the 1960s and 1970s. Cast in this position, visible minorities found themselves in similar structural standing, excluded from participation in nation building, which marked and protected “whiteness” as Britishness or Englishness (Fisher 2005).

Gurminder K. Bhambra (2007) berates sociology for neglecting to engage with postcolonial critiques in its understanding of networks of power and social relations in contemporary society. The legacies of colonialism are critical to modernity when distinct constructions of “white” and “black” people were conceived and developed into cultural distinctions between Europeans and colonized populations.

John Solomos and Les Back (2000) argue that, in the Victorian era, the experience of colonialism and imperial expansion played an important role in shaping ideas about race in relation to both Africa and India. Although this sweep of historical contexts does not address the complexities and depth of colonial encounters, they underlie continuities of power relations and racializing practices in British society. Later, the term “black” became a shield of political solidarity through struggles and protests of communities to marginalization and widespread discrimination. In the absence of a universal definition of black, many authors raise doubts about the viability of black perspectives in social work because of the diversity and differences between and among black and minority communities (Macey and Moxon 1996).

Postmodern Encounters

The rise of postmodern social theory has had considerable influence in shaping new thinking about the social arrangements in everyday life and social identities. This form of social theory emerged as a critique of modernist assumptions of universalism, scientific rationality, absolute truth, and the reliance on grand narratives in understanding the social world (Schiele 2007). Several authors discuss the difficulty in defining and grasping the main principles of postmodern social theory because it appears to be a slippery concept that attempts to understand and respond to the complexities of social life. Social change is a key tenet of postmodern theories and proposes that the traditional boundaries between social groups are breaking down, and it is more difficult in contemporary society to predict the lifestyles that people will adopt.

Amid postmodern concerns about discourse and society are central themes about social identities and shifts away from their fixed social positions in society. Instead, the self is conceived as a complex, ephemeral, and fluid web of interconnected (or intersectional) identities that exert an equal effect on the individual's self concept and definition (Seidman 2008). Postmodern thinking with its focus on new identities, otherness, resistance, and diversity—which opens opportunities for marginalized groups to be heard—also tends to suppress collective histories and experiences that are often the building blocks of shared identities and accounts of long-standing social oppressions.

Postmodern themes also place emphasis on differences between social groups themselves and the everyday experience of racism in its different guises and understandings. One growing area of interest is the hidden issue of colorism embedded in the processes of racial discrimination. This aspect of racism shapes a caste system that privileges light-skinned people over dark-skinned people of the same ethnicity. It is argued that, although all people of color are subject to experiences of racism, dark-skinned people experience a deeper degree of intensity of discrimination across the board and these two systems work together to create skin-color stratification (Hunter 2007). In the British context, skin-color stratification is not confined to people of African ancestry, but is also consistent within most Asian communities where light skin is valued, particularly among women, as this skin tone is regarded as the most attractive appearance for a potential husband. As Margaret L. Hunter (2007) maintains, “this layer of color hierarchy emerged from the European colonial project and is sustained by its legacy that the notion of dark skin represents . . . ugliness and inferiority . . . whiteness itself is defined by beauty and superiority” (Hunter 2007, 238).

The upsurge of bleaching cream sales over the past decades gives an indication of how the internalization of the white aesthetic ideal is a powerful cultural value that shapes the lives of many people of color. Uncovering these hidden processes of discrimination demonstrates that its insidious forms are more widespread and still operating intact in contemporary society.

Gloria Bravette Gordon (2001) points to these concerns and considers the postmodern movement as underestimating the social realities of racism that confronts black communities. These concrete political, economic, and social realities fly in the face of postmodernist thinking, which tends to shy away from structural constraints and instead shifts attention to individual texts and narratives. Even with these critiques, postmodern thinking has made important contributions in uncovering the linkages between power and knowledge as a mechanism of domination, as well as refining black perspectives to take account of the interlocking nature of social oppression, particularly in the area of gender and race.

Beyond the basic models of antidiscriminatory practice, several social work authors have tried to integrate a more complex understanding of social divisions and power into models of practice (Adams et al. 2002; Dominelli 2002; Graham and Schiele 2010).

Where Has All the Racism Gone?

Since social work draws upon knowledge from a range of disciplines, postmodern theories began to filter into theory and practice with emphasis upon identities and intersectionality. With the demise of antiracist social work in the 1980s, these issues appear to be given less attention in social work education. The shifts away from antiracism toward the adoption of a broader discourse of oppression and a priority of multiculturalism are articulated in CCETSW's policy language from "combat, challenge, and confront" to "counter, eliminate, and deal with" (Keating 2000, 77). Gavin Heron's (2004, 2008) research study, which examines students' ability to demonstrate antiracist thinking in assignments and learning process, suggests that social work students are often ill equipped to engage with issues of race and the complexities of inequality. Furthermore, Heron (2008) believes that antiracism has been marginalized and appears to be off the agenda in practice learning and opportunities to engage with these issues in innovative ways are often missed. Against this background, social work education has been subject to a major reorganization, culminating in a new social work degree. In 2002, the organizational body for social work education was replaced by the General Social Care Council, with codes of practice that make little or no reference to antiracist practice (Heron 2008). Yet, at the same time, recent legislation mandates a statutory duty for all higher education providers and public sector services to promote race equality by preventing acts of discrimination before they occur (RRRA 2000).

Heron, asking the question "where has all the racism gone?" (2004), refers to the unpopularity of speaking about antiracism unless it is linked to other forms of inequality. He suggests that this strategy distorts the very nature of racism, which is often undetected by most students. This worrying trend raises issues about the position and significance of race issues within broader antidiscriminatory models of social work. The context and consequences of debates about race and racism in sociology and public circles have contributed to the demise of antiracist perspectives.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have discussed the ways in which the issues of racism have been squeezed out as being increasingly irrelevant in social work education. Universal frameworks of oppression have watered down its importance without recognizing the intensity of oppressive social conditions in contemporary society. Black perspectives have also been in decline with lack of interest in the lived experiences of marginalized groups. This chapter has examined some of the social and political contexts that shape social conditions and sociological theories shifting the usefulness of structural approaches to embrace individual experiences. In the British context, there is a long history of racism and its legacy is expressed in

layers of colonial forms as well as in the use of language, culture, and religion. My focus is to chart the ways in which social work education has responded to new social theories, underscoring professional knowledge, and how these themes have contributed to undermining gains made decades ago to place issues of race and racism on the social work agenda. In conclusion, it is worth recalling that there is a resurgence of critical practice in social work in response to patterns of social inequality emerging from the economic recession in Britain. As the consequences of social inequalities begin to unfold, a critical social work may find a space to articulate antiracist social work and its possibilities in the twenty-first century.

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Chapter 10

Shades of Consciousness: From Jamaica to the UK

William Henry

Introduction

The great white man has succeeded in subduing the world by forcing everyone to think his way, from his God to his fireside. He has given to the world, from his bible to his yellow newspaper sheet, a literature that establishes his right and sovereignty to the disadvantage of the rest of the human race.

—Marcus Garvey (Martin 1986, 89).

If whites could ‘see’ themselves as others see them, perhaps they would see others differently too: the white aesthetic is an aesthetic of ‘the dead’ in the eyes of many others. (Synnott and Howes 1996, 149)

‘Black and white are not colours dad, they are shades.’ These words were constantly aimed at me by my last two children, while attending primary school during the 1990s. They would remind me of this reality whenever they saw me getting upset by some manifestation of whiteness that triggered a verbal response and perhaps a general rant at the TV or radio. One day, I actually considered what they were saying to me, and it dawned on me that their approach was right, because the way black and white, as racialized constructs, manifested in my life was qualitatively different from how it manifested in theirs. Moreover, it was an exposure to Marcus Garvey’s words that made me constantly question why so many black people regard themselves as inferior subjects, to a white ‘sovereignty’ that even told them how to be black. That is why it was a case of me learning to ‘see differently’ as I accept that, for me, the white aesthetic is an aesthetic of ‘the dead’, but my children they were far too young in their socialization to comprehend my reality. For instance, when I was their age during the 1960s, a handful of students attended my school who

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were of so-called mixed race, dual heritage, or whatever nomenclature you wish to bestow on the progeny of African and European sexual liaisons. More importantly, at that time, they were generally regarded as red brown or malatta (mulatto) by my Jamaican family, as half caste by black and white people, and as black or nigger by many white people—especially the racists who would give them the same treatment as any other African or African-Caribbean person.

The realization, as simple as it seems, made me change my whole perspective on ‘race’ as an organizer of consciousness, shifting my focus to understanding whiteness as the greatest divider of the human family ever conceived. The point I am making is that by merely focusing on skin colour—external amounts of melanin—whiteness as a system of human oppression continues to serve one of its key purposes, which is as the ultimate psychological distraction. Therefore, I will argue here that in order to combat this aspect of our everyday struggles to regain and retain our humanity as African people, we will need to ascertain the central role of whiteness worldwide, as ‘the ever present non presence that moulds and shapes reality’ (Henry 2007a, Back cover). Doing so will enable us to look beyond shades of skin colour to determine what the game is and how it’s being played, for once the racial dice are rolled, we seem to focus on them and not on the person who rolled them in the first place.

Reconfiguring Blackness

Afrikan Body

To transcend the downpression,¹ the black race ah face have to recognize our Afrikan base,
 Afrikan roots from an Afrikan race who were spread like butter, all over the place,
 treatment we get it was a big disgrace, treated like pieces of human waste,
 speak you own language kick innah you face, rebel gainst the master you gone without
 trace,
 even nowadays nuff of the white race, we roots and we culture no want we fi trace,
 because armed with the truth, you are a big threat, that’s why them talk bout forgive and
 forget,
 them will tell that foolishness to I and you, but them wouldn’t dare try tell that to a Jew,
 cau Jews tell the world everyday weh God send, remember the past, never again!

Chorus:

Afrikan body with a white man mind, can’t work again this ah judgment time,
 To deny you past is the ultimate crime and who no stand firm them ah go get left behind.
 Now we are told that we’re all the same, as long as red blood ah run through we vein,
 But there’s one big difference ah the mental strain, of an Afrikan body, white man brain
 Our harmony’s gone self destruction ah reign, that’s why we ah dead from crack and
 cocaine,
 You think of Afrika, you start feel shame,
 images of savages that the world can’t tame, of our natural looks them start feel shame,

¹Rastafari state that the enemy presses us down. Hence, downpressors/downpression.

and I'm not black is what they always maintain and bleach to disguise their Afrikan strain,
ah European look them ah try obtain, ah barbecue them hair, again and again!!

—Lezlee Lyrix 1991

The above lyrical extract is taken from a song I used to perform on the reggae sound system circuit, and it speaks to the manner in which whiteness impacts our everyday realities as African or black people. It documents that no matter how we strive to achieve an Africentric² worldview (Henry 2006, 12), it seems many are still wittingly, or unwittingly, measured by alien registers that have been normalized as part of the black experience. The fact that I suggest they have been normalized points to the historical dimensions that must be considered in debates such as the one I conduct here. To clarify the point, I wrote the above song because at that time unifying around the notion of being black was becoming a problem for many of us in the UK. It should not have been because black has a historical worth and merit to our struggles for liberation that should not be underplayed, yet many of us were infighting over who or what could be regarded as black. This led to an amazing level of unnecessary confusion, which ripples through our communities to this day, around the reconfiguring of an embodied blackness. Consequently, if you manifest behaviours that are considered 'white', through speech, dress codes, or even striving for or aspiring to positions that are not generally associated with black people, you could be branded a sell-out, an Uncle Tom, and so forth. It is easy to deal with when this manifests in the vulgar examples of self-effacement I presented in the extract, because a person who denies what they are in this way needs all the help they can get. However, it becomes far more problematic when many black people are measuring themselves against a yardstick that they are not even aware of, which is far too often the case. I am suggesting, in agreement with Higgins (2011): 'We are not Africans because we are born in Africa, we are Africans because Africa is born in us.'

Once you are comfortable with the idea of being an African, regardless of where you reside in the world, banal statements suggesting that to be African means you must partake in certain external behaviours, rituals, or dress codes become redundant. That is why I am in agreement with Mekada Graham's suggestion for recognizing the 'composite African' (Graham 2002), where emphasis is placed on the diasporan African being grounded and rooted in the contemporary world, based on a history of cultural destruction and ongoing racial reconfiguration. Therefore, any yardstick that places African and black in opposition by confusing a racial identity—associated with a land mass—with a political identity that is far too problematic to locate so conveniently due to its historical usage and associations is overly simplistic and ultimately divisive. For this very reason, it has been suggested that 'In Britain, where until recently, that was before the Asians courageously, some would say opportunistically, brought a dramatic halt to the farce, it was fashionable

²I use Africentric, not Afrocentric, as an Afro [hair] was a powerful aesthetic, a political statement linked to the poignancy of the Black Power or Black Panther movement of the 1960s and 1970s. As such, if we are to challenge the assumptions on which an 'enemy language' like English is premised, then we as Africans must determine how such challenges are made.

for whoever felt that they were “disadvantaged because of their racial background” to call themselves “black”, even if they were Aryan Caucasoids. In other words, the term “black” had ceased to have any discernible cultural or historical reference’ (Ekwe Ekwe 1994, 16).

In our attempts to reclaim cultural and historical reference, which places Africa at the centre of a ‘black’ worldview, many of us in the UK began to use ‘blak’ to separate ourselves from other oppressed groups who did not share African ancestry.³ This form of self-identification became known in the wider public arena when Caron Wheeler’s (1991) album *UK Blak* was released nationally; this marked a seminal moment in the political history of the black British experience. It did so because Wheeler was the voice behind a string of massive global hits, including *Back To life* with *Soul to Soul* in 1989; if you listen to the title track, you will see what I am getting at here, for instance:

In society you can find me, if you stop living life so blindly,
Daddy says we’ll never change things, but I have faith in the African abroad.
UK Blak, ending the silence now, UK Blak letting you know that we’re about.

—Wheeler and Macintosh 1991

Suffice to say that this notion of blak distinguishes itself from the negative usage of ‘black’ as the colour of doom, bad luck, and so forth, seeking to establish a blak presence in the UK that was visible and unashamedly African. I took this idea a stage further and began to use BLAK as an acronym—Black Liberation Afrikan Knowledge—and for several years have been running community-based discussions, hosted by grass-roots activists from myriad cultural, religious, and ideological backgrounds. The reason I did so was because to expect people to unify based on phenotypic similarity is, and will always be, in my opinion, highly problematic. This is why I am far from surprised when I encounter many in the UK, and in places I have visited in the Caribbean and the USA, who deny their obvious African ancestry because they are locked into these pejorative notions of that continent. Yet unlike many other commentators, I cannot simply condemn them for this self-contempt, for if all you are fed is a diet of ‘the savage, uncivilized African’, then why would you want to associate yourself with such negativity? As I stated above, these brothers and sisters need help and guidance, not just out and out condemnation. There is also the equally important matter of what do we do with the black activists, from the Caribbean and other places, who are not of African ancestry? Do we disregard their great works, contributions, and reasoning on the solutions to our contemporary global condition based on a shared history of white domination? In fact, on this point Brother Hakim (Henry 2010a) states,

I am in contact with black activists in Australia, New Zealand and Hawaii and they would be insulted if I had to Africanize them for their cases to be seen as a legitimate part of our struggles. In fact if we do that then we are no different from the racist Europeans who went around the world with their antihuman philosophies Europeanizing everyone.

³I go into more detail in my 2006 book *What The Deejay Said*, pp. 26–46.

Hakim (Henry 2010a) makes it clear that we need a different take on these discussions in the contemporary, because we live in a world that is dominated by a minority people whose racialized system, which we all have inherited, classifies them as ‘white/European’ and all others become non-persons. That is why the Europeanizing Hakim speaks of it through the process of cultural domination, within which shades of white and European are subsumed, as emphasis is placed on that which is being measured, assessed, evaluated, and re-evaluated against a white norm. With this knowledge, our notions of what it means to be ‘black conscious’ should contend this ideal that manifests as whiteness, and thus, being black and espousing a political blackness should not solely be about colour but the levels of consciousness that go with it. As Stuart Hall argues, ‘What we can say is that “Black” by itself—in the age of refugees, asylum seekers and global dispersal—will no longer do. It has become part of the disseminating axes of difference which provide intersecting lines of identification, exclusion and contestation, and which have – as usual – also proved to be both sharply divisive and artistically highly productive’ (Hall 2006, 22).

In line with Stuart Hall’s perspective, I think those of us who consider ourselves to be ‘black conscious’ must be careful not to exclude our fellow strugglers, according to these intersecting lines of identification, who prefer the idea of being black as unifying concept to many of the others that are, on offer, including identifying themselves as African or Nubian, and so forth. I am suggesting that, as I have stated many times, I know many black people, especially from the UK and the Caribbean, who will support anything to do with black liberation. However, they will not embrace being African, primarily because of the pejoratives associated with the continent that I mention in the above extract. I am, therefore, far from impressed when I hear dismissive statements about those who are of African ancestry and are on the path to African self-discovery, like ‘where is the land called black’ or if you put a ‘potato in an oven does it become a loaf of bread?’ Such statements deny the internal dynamics of all cultural forms that naturally adapt to situations and circumstances, within which not all who are exposed to, or even embrace, the cultural form are privy to the ephemeral and contiguous elements that make the culture ‘whole’ in the present. Consequently, according to Gilroy (2000, 129), ‘Contrasting forms of political action have emerged to create new possibilities and new pleasures where dispersed people recognize the effects of spatial dislocations rendering the issue of origins problematic. They may grow to accept the possibility that they are no longer what they once were and cannot therefore rewind the tapes of their cultural history... the concept of space is itself transformed when it is seen in terms of the ex-centric communicative circuitry that has enabled dispersed populations to converse, interact, and more recently even to synchronize significant elements of their social and cultural lives.’

Gilroy makes known that a politics of representation that speaks to, and from, a dispersed people must recognize that the mechanism that enables them to regard themselves as ‘one’, in a global sense, is in a constant state of flux. In such a state, notions of time, space, and cultural history are reworked, reconfigured, and adapted to suit the purposes of the present circumstance. Fundamentally, this is because

the way whiteness as a system works so effectively is that it empowers those who are classified as white, whilst disempowering those who believe or invest in the superiority of white people. Within this framework are gradations of white, which determine which whites are accepted or rejected—as in the case of the Irish who went from being oppressed by whites to become white oppressors of African people (Ignatiev 1995). This ‘flipping of the script’ by the Irish is important to note because many blacks believe they too can invest in this form of racial capital (Hunter 2011) as, ‘The quest for white beauty is very important because white or light skin is a form of “racial capital” gaining its status from existing racial hierarchies. Racial capital is a resource drawn from the body that can be related to skin tone, facial features, body shape, etc. I use the term “racial capital” to describe the role that white/Anglo bodies play in the status hierarchy’ (Hunter 2011, 145).

Hunter’s germane insight demonstrates how, for many black people, their pigmentation can be used as a resource; therefore, what needs to be explained is the difference between white supremacist thought and action, which leads to white power and privilege and the white superiority that many blacks simply accept as a given that dominates their self-perception and shades their consciousness. This is why I suggest that we consider an outernational⁴ blakness⁵ to realign the global African family with an ideal that challenges the notion that skin colour determines consciousness because, as Gus John states (2006, 95), ‘We seem to spend so much time talking, to, with, or about white people, or posturing for their benefit on matters to do with race and antiracism; the whole system has got us caught up in this activity that we begin to assume the existence of some sort of consensus amongst ourselves . . . based on being black.’

John’s suggestion is that it is all too convenient to speak of the historical and, in far too many instances, the contemporary role of white racists in our unseemly predicament without grounding them in a way that is palatable to those they impact the most. Therefore, we cannot continue to assume that we are of one mind, when it comes to dealing with our situation as black people, without separating the aspects of our oppression of which we can absolutely rid ourselves once we recognize their historical role in our oppression. For instance, the way markers of difference, such as the brown paper bag test, where your complexion had to be lighter than that object, or the ‘blue vein society’ that you could only join if one could see certain veins through your ‘brown’ skin, all stem from white racists teaching us that ‘nothing too black can’t be good’—a statement I was first exposed to as a teenager by my

⁴The term “outernational” has been featured in reggae musical culture since the early 1970s to describe the intra- and international nature of a form that, although created in Jamaica, cannot be restricted to this geographical space as its influences are global as is its appeal. Thus, outernational becomes wholly descriptive of a consciousness that is not geographically bounded, as it essentially entails a notion of the African being everywhere at once.

⁵Blak without the ‘c’ denotes a particular social, cultural, spiritual, and political orientation within the British context that recognizes that we are speaking of people of African ancestry. I also use the term as an acronym in much of my community work whereby BLAK equals Blak Liberation Afrikan Knowledge.

then girlfriend's Jamaican mother, who made said utterance after breathing a heavy sigh of relief once she saw what shade I was. Fact is, she was 'blue black', and the statement disturbed me to the point where I went home and discussed it with my mother, who explained to me that it was a form of self-hatred, embraced by foolish people, which is mirrored in the following suggestion by Gabriel (2007, 57): 'Anti-black racism was firmly entrenched in British society before the large-scale migration of African descendants from the former British Caribbean colonies in the 1950s. But coming from countries where social hierarchies based on skin colour existed, it was not only dreams for a better life that some immigrants brought with them, but their own form of prejudice which valued light skin and derided blackness.'

Gabriel raises a crucial point of discussion, which is that many of those who came from the Caribbean, especially from Jamaica where the majority of migrants hailed from during the post-1948 Windrush⁶ period, had a colonial mentality burned into their psyche. What this means is that many result in measuring their black selves along a racialized continuum of belonging that does not belong to them leads to instances where:

The thing that struck me the most is that there were things at work societally, which place all women, but certainly black women, on a hierarchy of beauty, she says. And the hierarchy of beauty for black women is different from the hierarchy for white women. For white women, it's about size and shape [thinness] but for black women it's all of those things, but also the shape of one's nose and lips, the texture of your hair and all those other things which are bound up within how 'womanly' or not you look. The issue, then, is that we have people being quite essentialist and saying you can only be really, truly black if you are darker skinned, compared with other lighter-skinned women who say they aren't considered to be truly black because they're lighter. She concludes: There were darker-skinned girls who felt they were policing what it meant to be black; policing the boundaries of blackness, because they're tired of other people doing it for them. (Weekes-Bernard, cited in Adewunmi 2011)

The above extract perfectly captures how a system of racial subjugation that is centuries old takes on its own dynamic and perpetuates itself in the present, both culturally and psychologically—culturally in the sense that its reference point is a homogenous notion of black that Weekes-Bernard (Adewunmi 2011) correctly states is essentialist in its practical application. But it is even more dangerous due to an uncritical acceptance of its worth as a mode of inclusion and exclusion. Therefore, it is based on a misguided sense of an autonomous choice that in reality is to the psychological detriment of the measurer and the measured, as they will never comfortably belong because the blueprint from which they work was not designed by them. That is why shadism is pervasive in this sense, because its real power is in the way it impacts the conscious and the unconscious mind. This is evidenced where 'darker-skinned girls . . . were policing the boundaries of blackness, because they're

⁶The *S.S. Empire Windrush* was one of the first ships to bring migrants from the Caribbean to England, which explains why blacks in the UK are generally referred to as the Windrush generation. For more information on the *Empire Windrush*, see <http://www.oceanlinermuseum.co.uk/Empire%20Windrush.html>

tired of other people doing it for them', which in reality means they are consciously doing their oppressors job for them whilst unconsciously perpetuating their own oppression by believing it is their choice in the grand scheme of things. The point is that disjuncture and continuity are often masked by a historical process that was devised and, of equal importance, constantly updated and adapted or applied by white supremacists to aesthetically 'turn us fool against ourselves', as they say in Jamaica.

To clarify the point, I will now focus on the notion of shadism and how it impacts the black psyche in peculiar and unexpected ways.

Shadism and Black Self-effacement

Shadism (Staples 2008), a legacy of slavery, is a form of skin tone bias that identifies groups and individuals on the basis of their degree of pigmentation. It is an evaluation of people that minutely registers traits such as skin color, hair, and facial features in order to construct social hierarchies. Shadism is closely related to 'colorism', another associated practice that is the manifestation of an internalized, colonial-induced racial self-hatred Shadism lurks in our collective peripheral vision and rears its ugly head every so often. In early 2011, there was a Twitter storm over a promotional flyer for a party in Ohio whose theme was 'Light Skin vs Dark Skin'. In May, the Afro Hair and Beauty show in London had a stall called 'Fair and White', which was advertising and selling skin-lightening products. In an interview with the black newspaper *Voice*, the co-organizer of the show, Verna McKenzie, said she had 'a responsibility to cater to the marketplace'. (Adewunmi 2011)

I begin with this quote from Adewunmi (2011) as the idea of 'catering to the marketplace' is important to us here: a few years ago, I was approached to deliver an anthropological take on beauty and love for a British TV holiday show. I spoke to a couple of people on the phone, and they wanted to fly me to destinations in Spain and Italy, suggesting that 'Spanish women are the sexiest and Italian men are the handsomest'. I then asked the person to whom I was speaking if they expected me to endorse this view on camera, and the answer was 'yes, of course'. I then asked them if they knew that I was an African man and, as such, it would be quite peculiar for me to go on TV and make such a statement, as it would mean that I don't value myself or women who look like me. The person with whom I was speaking was confused and really did not seem to grasp my concerns, suggesting that the show was 'apolitical', and that I discuss this with the producer. When I spoke to the producer, I received the same kind of incredulous response; again, they could not fathom what my concerns were, aesthetically, racially, culturally, politically, or otherwise—as for them it was just a show. A series of conversations continued on and off for about a week, because for some strange reason they really wanted to feature me in this program. However, said conversations ceased when I suggested to the producer that I would be willing to endorse their view if we bring in the history of the African presence and influence in that part of the world, as a way to explain

why the ‘handsomest’ and ‘sexiest’ Europeans reside there. I was not surprised by the reaction, for as Gilroy (2004, 155) argues:

This breakdown can be used to show where the facile assumptions of civilizationism become untenable. It is also necessary to affirm that the peculiar synonymy of the terms ‘European’ and ‘white’ cannot continue. And yet, against a wealth of detailed historical and cultural evidence taken from all across Europe, identity, belonging, and, consequently, the imperiled integrity of nation states are being communicated through the language and symbols of absolute ethnicity and *racialized* difference . . . Two practical consequences follow: First, that historians of Europe’s repressed, denied, and disavowed blackness must become willing to say the same things over and over again in the hope that a climate will eventually develop in which we will be able to find a hearing, and, second that we must be prepared to step back audaciously into the past.

The suggestion is that we must ensure that we have meaningful discussions that speak to the nuanced notions of what it means to be black or African in the twenty-first century, as part of our mental decolonization process—more so when we are audacious enough to locate the present in a past that has meaning to us, but mindful not to fall foul of the ultimate stumbling block, which is the fixation on skin pigmentation as a true marker of difference. As if a conflation of black, white, or mixed and dual have an organizing principle that makes sense beyond our inherited racialized realities. That is what afflicted the producer of the British TV holiday show, who, for some strange reason, thought that any conversation on aesthetics, in this white-dominated world, could truly be neutral. The fact that the show would have been mediated ‘through the language and symbols of absolute ethnicity and *racialized* difference’ was not an issue to those involved in its production as they were seemingly oblivious to ‘Europe’s repressed, denied, and disavowed blackness’. However, what is of real significance here is that, when presented with an opportunity to offer something more historically accurate and substantive, the producer declined the opportunity.

On the surface we can easily argue that a feature in a holiday show is not the right place for such content, yet what is of concern here is the fact that this type of show reinforces these aspects of white domination and normalizes European standards of beauty. More so when we consider that they expected an African to reinforce a perspective where a black aesthetic is not presented as the norm, in much the same way as selling skin-lightening products at an Afro hair and beauty event is also acceptable. I am arguing that the paradoxical natures of these occurrences need to be appreciated in a more critical fashion than they generally are, otherwise we will continue to have the wrong conversations. For instance, I clearly recall the furor created by reggae performer Banton (1992) when he controversially stated, ‘Me love me car, me love me bike, me love me money and ting, but most of all me love me browning’.

The suggestion is not that Buju’s words are revelatory, as in they offer new information; what he is telling is that he, as a dark-skinned African, found it necessary to speak them in a Jamaican context in the 1990s. The fact that he had to quickly record a counter to this song ‘bigging’ up the ‘Black Woman’ or that

many other Jamaican performers recorded counters to *Love Me Browning*⁷ is moot in a country whose primary slogan is ‘Out of Many, One People’. Yet a cursory glance across the social landscape reveals that the ‘One’ of the ‘One people’ seems to always favour the lightest complexioned One, the whitest or brownest One. Consequently, we now have the Jamaican performer Vybz Kartel (Kartel 2011), also known as Michael ‘Cake Soap’ Jackson, promoting skin-lightening products:

Look Pon We

Dem tell me dem love me!!
 Girl come kiss come hug me!!
 All when some boy hate me!!
 Dem gyal wah date me!!
 Di gyal dem love off mi brown cute face!!
 Di gyal dem love off mi bleach out face!!

—Vybz Kartel [Michael “Cake Soap” Jackson]

Kartel has a massive following and influence in the dancehall arena, not just in Jamaica but globally, and the real concern here is that he has already influenced many to adopt his style of ‘toning down’, as they say in Jamaica. This acceptance of bleaching is perfectly captured in the following where a young man, who, according to Carolyn Cooper (Henry 2010b), states that:

He knows that bleaching is wrong but he’s a Deejay⁸ and wants to look good for Christmas bleaches for Christmas, so he’s going to continue to bleach and going to put on a cap, put on a long sleeve shirt and when they see him people will think it is a browning coming through. And that whole notion of coming through suggests that there is a color barrier that he’s going to breach and he’s going to be somebody else. And to me that notion of seasonal brownness (Cooper 2004) was quite remarkable as he knows he isn’t brown but it’s like a kind of cosmetic, it’s an accessory. Light skin color is a fashion accessory which he is going to have for Christmas, like Christmas tree lights.

The most striking aspect of the above quote is not the fact that this young man, probably unknowingly, conflates these Eurocentric ideals, the invented tradition of Christmas with the desire to be light skinned. Rather, it is the hidden aspect that is seldom considered, which is that the organizing principle behind this mentality is whiteness, because ‘whiteness is taken to be a natural fact, existing beyond the bounds of consideration’ (Pickering 2004). This is whiteness as a conceptual framework and not a mere way to describe white people, which is where I think many fail to have the right conversation and thus draw the wrong conclusions as they focus on complexion and not a system of power. Moreover, as is suggested in Cooper’s extract, Jamaicans desire brown and not white skin, which means the psychological dimensions of being embroiled in this system of differentiation have myriad manifestations and differing expectations that are context dependent. An exemplar of my perspective here is the disgraceful treatment of Richard Hart, the

⁷One of the best counter recordings is *Them ah Bleach*, by Ranks (1992).

⁸Deejay spelt this way denotes the Jamaican MC, not a disc jockey who plays tunes and spins the wheels of steel.

‘white’ Jamaican historian who blessed us with one of the foremost scholarly works on the role that black people played in their own liberation, *Slaves who Abolished Slavery: Blacks in Rebellion* (Hart 2002). Yet when it was announced that Hart was to speak in the UK during Black History Month of 2007, a number of mischief makers published pictures of him on the Internet claiming that a ‘melanin deficient, white man’ was going to speak about black liberation and that the event should be boycotted. I remember being asked about the situation while delivering a talk (Henry 2007b) during that season, and I stated that:

When an eminent scholar like Richard Hart, whom I have had the pleasure of reasoning with and being guided by, is so openly disrespected due to a supposed lack of external amounts of melanin speaks to what is wrong with many so-called black radicals. The fact is those who are conducting this distasteful campaign are not fit to walk in the shoes of one who has given so much to our understanding of chattel enslavement and detailed how our ancestors resisted in ways that many were not aware of until he published his great works.

Consequently, whilst this mentality still afflicts and blights our communities as peoples of African ancestry, there are more worrisome trends around what it means to be black or African-conscious that are too often overlooked. This is evident in the opening extract above where I (Lezlee Lyrix 1991) state that ‘armed with the truth you are a big threat’. But what needs to be interrogated is the premise upon which that truth is espoused as ‘truth’ like ‘facts’ must be placed in a context, especially when that context is rooted in the very notion of an African diaspora. I am speaking particularly to those who shout the loudest for equality and justice when it comes to the freedom to speak, express, and dialogue with our brothers and sisters, whilst simultaneously espousing arguments based on gradations of melanin content in the skin as a way to determine who is accepted or not accepted as black or African. Indeed, it has been argued (Henry 2010c) that ‘We need to accept the historical process we have been through that has determined how we see each other which for me it’s just plain and simply white supremacy. Wherever it has reared its ugly head amongst African people, even Asian people, you have the Caste System in India, you’re gonna have the shadism. It’s just a result of white supremacy. I am a lighter skinned African woman but that has not stopped me from being abused by my own.’

Sister Juliet (Henry 2010c) makes known why these debates must go beyond phenotypic variations, or epidermal amounts of melanin, to really interrogate how this divisionary tactic has so much currency in the twenty-first century. What this means is even if you are considered to be brown or red or mixed or dual heritage, these notions of identity are always consciously or unconsciously performed in response to whatever form of whiteness is used to measure our humanity. Therefore, the modes of response to this form of domination generally absorb and synthesize various elements that, once sewn together, become a potent voice in the quest for real social change across the racialized urban landscape. Hence, a more positive notion of identity can be freely articulated because it is dependent upon making links that do not necessarily seek to prove a purity of origins; rather, it is based upon a similarity of life chances and experiences of racism. Although, as Gilroy states (Ugwu 1995, 23), ‘the desire to affirm and celebrate unbroken continuity is clearly a response to racisms that deny any historical currency to black life’, and

I would suggest that it is part of a process of discovering a more rewarding sense of who ‘we’ are in Europe’s New World. It is crucial for us to give this consideration because when the dominant ideologically based definitions of what it means to be human are faced with the unfamiliar, a conflict in ways of seeing and knowing the world arises. Paradoxically, we can locate this in the context of the Jamaican reggae dancehall space, where Buju made his statement, because ‘One of the beauties of Dancehall culture in Jamaica is it gives black women a space to see themselves as sexy and beautiful, because when you look at the mainstream media say in Jamaica the images used in advertising are the anorexic, light skinned type that is used to advertise the up-market products, and the working class body is used to advertise soap powder and this type of thing’ (Henry 2010b).

Cooper’s observation is telling, as it highlights how there is a power dynamic that needs to be considered because ‘advertising turned these domestic servants into icons of generalized servitude’ (Pieterse 1992, 155), and these domestic servants are the descendants of African chattel slaves. Therefore, are we surprised that a country like Jamaica, which is regarded in the outside world as a black country that is supposedly independent, has an organizing principle that is anchored in the supremacy of white, or light, skinned people? More importantly, Cooper (Henry 2010b) makes known that, whilst the barriers are in place and do in fact impact the lives of the majority black Jamaicans, those Jamaicans find modes of expression that embody an aesthetic appreciation of their darker skin that is often dismissed as fad or fashion. In this instance, ‘dance becomes what Pierre Nora terms a *milieu de la mémoire*, a commemorative site or mnemonic methodology of cultural survival, retention and transmission’ (Benston 2000, 86). To Benston’s poignant observation, we must add the transcendental nature of the cultural forms that are used in this way, as these libratory (oscillatory) spaces are those within which we, as African people, work and rework our identities in ways that make sense to us in the present because, as stated by Noble (2008, 157), ‘In many regards, modern Black popular culture can be defined as the formation and articulation of public spaces of resistance, reclamation and autonomous creativity against and beyond the hegemony of western modernity and racism . . . In the Ragga dance-hall, clearly, what is being celebrated and displayed is the highly eroticized female body; the “Black woman’s-body” spectacularly revealed – near naked – yet tantalizingly “veiled” in garish shocking pinks, yellows and lime greens. Hairstyles in contrast emphasize false or processed hair, often elaborately bedecked and intricately and rigidly gelled in place, starkly contrasting with the gyrating, twitching fluid “flexings” of the body below.’

In line with Noble’s suggestions, I want us to consider the way that certain aspects of black culture highlight the importance of understanding that such usage of artistic or cultural expression are direct challenges to the notion of ‘all things white and beautiful’ (Henry 2005). For instance, to see a ‘ragga girl’ with blonde hair, in a Jamaican or UK dancehall, cannot be read in the same way as you would with a black girl in the UK who adorns herself with blonde hair, from the belief that it makes her closer to white people. Furthermore, it is suggested by Gilroy (1993, 36) that the transformation of host communities by their exposure to black forms of popular culture is a consequence of how a ‘musical culture supplies a great deal of

the courage required to go on living in the present'. Gilroy demonstrates how this is an organizer of consciousness and, therefore, cannot be separated from a tradition of struggle against oppression, which subsequently promotes black solidarity in the face of mainstream misrepresentation. The seriousness of this perspective cannot be overstated as the alternative claims are derived from an exposure to an Africa before the chattel slave era, from which these Africentric, positive self-concepts are generated and expressed in alternative public arenas. In the final section of this chapter, I will present examples of these reconfigurations of a black aesthetic that manifest in music as politics.

Black Music and the Reclamation of Self

BE BLACK

Now everybody's wearin the red black and green
 Here's the point: do you know what it means?
 Red for the bloodshed, black for the people
 Green for the land to be utilized equal
 'Yo I'm from Africa' boy you're just a faker
 Name one city 'Uhh, Jamaica!'

—King Sun 1990

Me ask them if them ready and them nah talk to me like them no like me.
 You see when me little bit them used to call me everything bad,
 mock me say you black like ah this.
 Me no know if ah through the color.
 The international blackness.
 Oonuh no like me? Oonuh like me?
 If you like me put up you hand.
 Oonuh know say me love you; the blackness is real!

—Blackout 2010

For decades now, many of the most poignant critiques of popular constructions of blackness and black identity are aired and discussed within the alternative black spaces that are controlled on a grass-roots level by black people, such as those featured in the above extracts. In these spaces we have music as politics par excellence as what is being reasoned through are the things that affect us as African and black people, using language and aesthetic registers that we own and control. That is why King Sun (1990) can question many who wear the 'red, black, and green' without knowing what it represents or more importantly that it was espoused by Marcus Garvey⁹ as a way of symbolizing why we must unify based on a shared heritage that speaks to the commonality of our condition. Likewise, the Jamaican

⁹Marcus Garvey introduced a flag with wide horizontal red, black, and green stripes in 1920. For more history on the flag and what it represents, visit: <http://www.blackbusinessnetwork.com/MarcusGarvey/>

deejay, Blackout (2010), inquires as to whether a London audience liked or disliked him on the merits of his complexion and closes with 'Oonuh know say me love you; the blackness is real'. Thus, the parameters for debate and discussion are set by those who are of the culture, which means that white involvement is minimized in this sense; although, interestingly, such views are often aired in white-dominated arenas. For example, during the summer of 1997 in a New York radio interview with white reggae DJ Bobby Condors, the Jamaican Rastafarian deejay Capleton (1997) explains that what he was promoting was unequivocally blackness for edification and to be uplifted:

Cah you done know babylon even try limit I and I as ah nation as ah people even pon ah educational level becau them give we O' levels an PhD an then them lock we off an seh yow. What I want to know is that you know. But the real authentic thing you fi know bout yourself as ah race or ah nation or ah people in terms of heritage an culture, an philosophies an curriculum, that never taught innah the school, nor the institution or the college. So we haffi look pon it pon ah nature-al level so we won't get caught innah the disillusion or the fantasy. This is what life has taught I.

Capleton makes known that even though them 'give we O' levels and PhD', the knowledge base that these qualifications represent within the popular imagination does not convey a sense of self-worth for those of African ancestry. Furthermore, Capleton suggests that by the time many of us have gone through the Babylonian educational system, our notion of blackness is somewhat distorted. This is because the complex dynamics of black identity formation, which counter the most pernicious manifestations of whiteness, are being played out, negotiated, and renegotiated in arenas of which many are unaware, much less know how to access. That is why we need to comprehend the social, cultural, and political frameworks we find ourselves governed by as subjects of western and white, hegemonic rule. Therefore, 'The freedom to move in space, to demand of my own sweat a perfection that could continually be approached, though never known, waz poem to me . . . dance . . . insisted that everything African, everything halfway colloquial, a grimace, a strut, an arched back over a yawn, waz mine. I moved what waz my unconscious knowledge of being in a colored woman's body to my own everydayness' (Ntozake Shange, cited in Benston 2000, 87).

It is the transforming of the unconscious into an 'everydayness' that represents an embodied mode of challenging the supremacy of whiteness, as that moulder and shaper of reality, that limits you as a human being that is of interest here. For if you can constantly go through a process of cultural, racial, and spiritual renewal, based on re-evaluating what you are taught by an enemy that you can be as a black person, these limitations become untenable as the racial hierarchy you should be locked into becomes transparent, which means you can see alternatives that many cannot. A failure to recognize this aspect of our colonial conditioning as African 'other' to a European 'self' has led to a sense of an ingrained terror, fear, and distrust of our own African humanity, which too often manifests as the notion of shadism I have discussed here. The point is that by celebrating your otherness, without addressing the historical circumstances that created that shaded 'other' as an inferior, you run the risk of becoming embroiled in a series of meaningless endeavours. These will

serve to further obscure the seminal role you play in your own liberation, because ‘the white man has already implanted numerous historical myths in the minds of black peoples; those have to be uprooted’ (Rodney 1969, 51).

Conclusion

Decolonization of the mind is crucial to any understanding of racism and white supremacy but not to the exclusion of the continually lived experience of the most disaffected members of society who are invariably judged by their black skin—regardless of what shade of black that skin happens to be. What I am arguing here should not be confused with the arguments of successful blacks who think that decolonization of the mind is synonymous with an acceptance of a blind multiculturalism. The point I am making is that blacks who act up, pander for white acceptance, and behave according to this form of white expectation can gain acceptance or honorary whiteness in certain situations. But once you display ‘other’ tendencies, act ‘too black’—whatever that really means—your membership will be questioned or even withdrawn. For this reason, any explanation of contemporary black life must interrogate the critical role that notions of whiteness play in all aspects of black socialization, in an inherently racist society such as Britain. By doing so, we will be better placed to unshackle the African mind and mount a meaningful challenge to white supremacist ‘thoughts and actions’ (Henry 2006) that offer an alternative epistemological and ontological take on what it means to be black from an insider’s perspective. The failure to do so is to remain complicit in our own self-destruction, for the mainstay of the African and black communities has been and still is the identifiably black cultural forms that provide us with the tools to combat racism and other forms of exclusionary practices across a range of social, cultural, and political contexts. For this reason, I will close with the wise words of a Jamaican singer who was 16 years old when he wrote these words to the song, *Black is Our Colour* (Wade 1976):

Black is Our Colour
Black is Our Colour
 I’ve got something that I’d like to say,
 it’s rather colorful but I will say it anyway,
 black is our color and black is our name,
 health, strength, prosperity and wisdom is our gain,
 black we are and black we will always be,
 black in the sight of everyone is so beautiful to see,
 ah Jah Jah, baby, come on and show me how really black you are.

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Chapter 11

Fanon Revisited: Race Gender and Coloniality Vis-à-Vis Skin Colour

Linda Lane and Hauwa Mahdi

Frantz Fanon's now famous analysis of the alienating effects of colonization for colonized people is undertaken in chapters two and three of *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986), titled respectively *The Woman of Color and the White Man* and *The Man of Color and the White Woman*. In this chapter, we focus on chapter two because although both chapters are based on analyses of fictional characters drawn from contemporary literature, Fanon's extremely unsympathetic account of Mayotte Capécia's (1948) protagonist continues to inspire scholarly works. Among others, Lewis Gordon (2006) supports Fanon's reading of Capécia, while Gwen Bergner (1995) and Christiane Makward (1999) suggest that Fanon's harsh critique is based on his conviction that *I am a Martinican Woman* did not win the Grand Prix des Antilles on literary merit but presents a picture of institutionalized racism that is acceptable to French literary judges. T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting (1996, 1998) challenges Bergner, but she is critiqued by David Macey (2000). Although Fanon makes it plain that Capécia represents an alienated psyche, his dismissal of her work as "anaemic" and his own failure to explore how historical and cultural constructions of gender and class complicate race has left him open to charges of misogyny (Makward 1999; Bergner 1995) and superficiality (Gauch 2002). His disparaging treatment of Capécia's protagonist, a woman of colour, and her relationships with white men has been interpreted as evidence that Fanon held women complicit in the devaluing of blackness. In this chapter, our aim is to make a contribution to the debate by providing our interpretation of how we understand both writers within the context of intertwining class, gender, and race relations under colonization. We are keenly aware that we are walking a path

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that has been trodden by many, from a variety of perspectives. However, a text always involves multiple meanings, and how they are interpreted is influenced by the researcher's experience; by revisiting Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986) and Capécia's *Je Suis Martiniquaise* (1948), in English translation by Stith-Clark (1997), as historians, we want to do so with fresh eyes. The hostility of Fanon for Capécia—there is no evidence that Capécia even knew Fanon—is perhaps all the deeper because their lives on Martinique overlapped. And as their texts reveal, in their different ways, both Fanon and Capécia are well prepared to develop original interpretations of their Martinican experiences.

In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986), Fanon's primary concern is with race, examining how race perverts the lives of both men and women in the French Caribbean and in France and how the dichotomy of black and white under colonialism is constructed as opposites, or mirrors, of each other. For Fanon, the world is divided into white and black, separated by power relations in which blacks experience themselves as inferior, an inferiority that arises from power relations between whites and blacks—whites have power, blacks do not; blacks also have an internalization of inferiority expressed as a devaluing of oneself and a desire to be white. This is nowhere more true than under colonialism. In the hierarchy of race, white or light skin stands at the apex, the most valued. To be black or dark-skinned is the opposite, to have no value. For the black man, the wish to be acknowledged is the wish to be valued, not as black but as white. It is a desire to shed the raiment of dark skin and all that it represents. To achieve his agenda, Fanon adopts three approaches of interrogating Capécia's text: universalizing the particular, black male-centrism, and trivialism. Most importantly, he sets out this agenda not as a literary critique while envisioning *I am a Martinican Woman* but as an autobiographical production, a personal grudge toward Capécia. Admittedly, Fanon deals with the colonizer's abuse of women of colour or colonized women. We equally recognize that Fanon has either failed to engage the abuse of colonized women by colonized men or on some occasions openly applaud colonized men's subjection of their women. This applies when we seek to deconstruct his criticism of Capécia, where he directly affronts her conduct as "unhealthy behaviour". We think it is important to look at the location of different subgroups and groups in a hierarchy.

Under colonialism, the mirror of the black-white binary has been shattered by white colonials consorting with black and indigenous women. The introduction of an intermediate position is that of *métissage*, a term used to signify the result of neither black nor white. These mixed-race groups of mulattos or coloured people serve as visible links to colonialism's history of domination and power. Colonial masters were quick to make use of the condition they themselves created to drive a wedge between blacks and mixed-race groups and between all people of colour and whites. By privileging lighter-skinned, mixed-race groups, colonialists established a hierarchy that linked skin colour to economic and social class. Pigmentocracies or shadeism (shadism) arose as the result of discrimination by white colonialists against other races and the valorization of lighter-skinned, mixed-raced groups. Groups that gained political and economic power as a result of *métissage* maintained their dominant position by discrimination against others who are further down the skin colour scale. This discourse continues after colonialism and remains relevant

in the New World. In the United States, for example, the desire for light skin and the articulation of whiteness as representation, as a licence to social mobility and economic resources, is well documented (Hall 2006; Macey 2000). Winston James (1992) argues, convincingly, that not only did pigmentocracy operate at the level of ideology it also acted as a material force for binding colour to class position and privilege.

Therefore, we argue that to understand the texts of Frantz Fanon and Mayotte Capécia in the context of the space and time in which they were written requires analytical tools that resist seeing the world in black or white. The Martinique of both writers is a locale of interconnected cultural dynamics, which reflects the social struggles of various groups: whites (*bekés*—the landed aristocracy), foreign whites (*métropolités*), blacks, and every colour in between from the light-skinned straight-haired *chabin* to the dark-skinned, curly-haired *congo* (Fish 2011; Macey 2000). Fanon was certainly aware of how differences in skin colour under colonialism had become conflated with social class, and he is inclusive of mixed-race people in his definition of “black”. However, by posing race as dichotomy, white or black, at the universal level, he sometimes fails to appreciate and on occasion takes for granted the particularities of graduated power relations across the continuum of skin colour. Nor does he consider the manner in which these relations impacted the lived lives of men and women struggling to make sense of circumstances over which they have little control.

Our reading of Fanon seeks to broaden the scope of analysis of these texts by looking at them as works standing at the crossroads where issues of race, colour, gender, class, and power converge. Taking as a point of departure their depiction of the skin colour dilemma of Antillean women, we seek to explore the link between the quests for racial identity and women’s autonomy within the historical context of the period in which the texts were written. We also seek to explore Capécia’s and Fanon’s understanding of women’s options within that context, as writers and as critics.

Our goal is not to disparage Fanon, as we value the contributions his works have made to understand the lived experiences of colonized people. On the other hand, that understanding and the contributions do not exonerate him from documented “blind spots” (Hooks 2000, 41). He was as he proclaimed himself as belonging “irreducibly to my time” (Fanon 1986, 15). The question we raise is how Fanon’s blind spots, particularly those concerning gender and class, should be interpreted in light of the far-reaching consequences they have had for feminist readings of his text.

The approach we adopt means that we no longer allow Fanon to sit on a pedestal that we, not he, created. It requires reading his text in ways that acknowledge his historical particularity; it means not to elevate him above his localities of discourse as a transcultural, transhistorical, global theorist, nor simply to cast him into battle but to recognize him as a battlefield in himself (Gates 1991, 470). We argue further that Capécia must also be afforded the same privilege: to be examined, critiqued within her historical context, and not simply as a “mudslinging storyteller” (Fanon 1986, 53). If Fanon’s critique is fraught with blind spots so also is Capécia in *her fiction* (1948), at whom Fanon’s blind spots are focused. Capécia’s most obvious

blind spot is an articulated desire for white or light skin. In this chapter, our aim is to explore how one blind spot becomes more justifiable than another: Does Capécia's character's desire for white flesh and the denial of blackness justify the author being called a "mudslinging storyteller" by Fanon? Or are we prepared to accept one blind spot because of how we chose to position one writer in respect to another? Why does Capécia's portrayal of women in Martinique and Fanon's criticism of the book arouse our anxieties? Why do we believe we must save Fanon from uninformed feminist aggression by throwing Capécia to the wolves, or save Capécia by mudslinging Fanon? These are just a few of the questions with which we have struggled. We do not have the answers: far from it. What we do know is that counterfactual arguments as to the intentions of both Fanon and Capécia are useless here. On the other hand, neither do we believe that exonerating the authors from their blind spots as expressed in the text examined in this article is the way forward. While both texts are filled with repulsive and distasteful directness, which may appall modern sensibilities, they nevertheless contribute knowledge of individual experiences of colonialism. We argue that to understand Capécia's portrayal and Fanon's response, we need to place both in their own historical context.

We approach our task by adopting intersectionality as the theoretical perspective that allows us to understand and explain the lives and experiences of marginalized people. By examining the constraints and demands that influence their options and opportunities, we can understand how individual and group identities are influenced and shaped not only by individual categories of difference, such as race, skin colour, class, and gender, but by combinations of these categories (Hooks 1992). As a theoretical approach, intersectionality seeks to understand how social and historical processes construct and reconstruct privileged groups and how these groups create and sustain ideologies of superiority and valorization (Lane 2004). In adopting an intersectional approach, we claim that inequalities result from combinations of differences (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992; Collins 2000). Further, by exploring the multitudinous way in which inequalities occur, it is possible to expose relations of power, privilege, and agency between individuals and between and within groups while remaining cognizant of the variations of experiences of individuals and subgroups within the larger domain (Hancock 1998; Collins 2000; de los Reyes and Mulinari 2005). This enables an exploration of the "interpersonal experiences of individuals and groups; in the practices that characterize and sustain bureaucratic hierarchies; and in the ideas, images, symbols and ideologies that shape social consciousness" (Dill and Zambrana 2009, 5). We argue that an intersectional, analytical approach can help us dissect the ways in which colonialism, race, gender, and class mutually construct each other, cross-cutting hierarchies that inform both Fanon's and Capécia's interpretation and understanding of agency, opportunity, and action. Both authors approach the issues from diametrically different perspectives, thereby providing an additional argument for the applicability of an intersectional approach to the study of various groups' experiences of subordination constituted of complex arrays of differences. Understanding *Tan Robé* (Duffus 2005) Martinique during World War II provides an illustrative example of how these circumstances could be articulated, and in this regard, *Tan Robé* functions as a catalyst to the literary inspiration of both authors.

Historically, categories of difference and power relations of dominance and subordination between and within them were well integrated in the lives of Martinicans. The specific circumstances of colonialism as applied to the Antillean island of Martinique during World War II, under the command of Admiral Georges Robert (Macey 2000; Duffus 2005), commanding officer of French naval forces in the Caribbean for the Vichy regime. This is the period known among Martinicans as *Tan Robé*. It is this historical period that provides the background upon which Fanon and Capécia allow their characters to play out their frustrations and, thereby, give body and psychological insight to the destructive qualities of colonialism.

Citing a number of observers, Macey (2000) shows that Martinique—from the eruption of Mount Pelée, the destruction of Saint Pierre in 1902, to the outbreak of World War II—remained in the shadow of its slavery past, a condition that was accentuated by a declining sugar and rum trade and resulting high unemployment among the non-white population. It was a period characterized by a lack of agricultural development and agrarian reform, necessitating a reliance on imported foodstuffs, a general underdevelopment in health, sanitation, and access to education for those with limited economic resources. During the years preceding World War II, there were constant strikes by plantation labourers and sugarcane workers, often harshly repressed by colonial troops (Murdoch 2007).

Conditions were exacerbated by the Allied blockade of Martinique. The Allies demanded that French naval personnel be shored, resulting in the influx of large numbers of French naval recruits on permanent shore leave (Macey 2000; Murdoch 2007). In their wake, Martinicans experienced rising criminality and petty lawlessness, accusations of harassment and sexual misconduct, drunken violence, prostitution, and, perhaps for the first time since the abolition of slavery, open unadulterated racism, exemplified by abusive treatment of non-whites and segregation. Admiral Georges Robert openly favoured the *beké* population. Elected black officials were replaced with loyal whites and in general Robert treated non-white Martinicans as the colonized subjects, whom they were in principle. The blockade also meant that food supplies were limited as imports could not pass through and subsistence farming was unable to fill the void. Sailors on permanent shore leave led to housing shortages, rising property prices, and accentuated food shortages, resulting in rationing, illegal marketeering, hunger, and confiscated farm produce by Robert supporters. Martinicans remember *Tan Robé* as a low water mark for Martinican society, representing a reactionary, authoritarian regime that tried to reinstitute slavery on the island (Childers 2006; Macey 2004; Wilder 2004). In ideological and constitutional terms, a citizen of the French Republic is neither male nor female, neither black nor white, but is French; under *Tan Robé*, Martinicans learned that the epitaph really did not apply to them.

The Martinican attitude toward metropolitan France has been ambiguous and *Tan Robé* became the impetus for several distinct responses from Martinicans. First, local blacks and other coloured Martinicans were active in overthrowing Robert in 1943 (Macey 2005), and the end of the war saw Martinicans bidding for a new status in their relationship to the métropole. In 1946, a majority of Martinicans, together with Réunion and Guyane, opted to become a French Overseas Department and not for independence.

The second major change was negritude (Senghor 1962). Negritude urged blacks to reject the idea of nationalism as well as that of any white influence upon one's culture and instead embrace and celebrate one's African heritage. *Tan Robé* created a critical moment in Martinique's history whereby the ideas of negritude began the slow process of eroding the idealization of white culture. Negritude offered Martinicans an opportunity to recreate their own culture.

Against this background, how can we understand Fanon's critique of Capécia's first novel, *I am a Martinican Woman* (1948), in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986)? Both are writing from the métropole, and both books are informed by racism and pigmentocracy or shadeism, as well as gender and class ideologies, which constituted life on Martinique. By the complex ways in which they create and mutually construct each other, these ideologies form experiences of inequalities that are at once universal and particular, societal and individual under *Tan Robé*. Both are writing about experiences of their native land, but they approach the task in different ways and from different perspectives.

Fanon uses *Tan Robé* as a point of departure, but his goal is another. His aim is to come to grips with the confusion, the conflicts, and the emotions aroused in a period that forced him to take stock of who he was, a man of colour whose eyes were opening to the lies and unfulfilled promises of colonialism. Fanon grew up as a son in an upwardly mobile middle-class family that stressed "good" manners and education (Macey 2000), including command of the French language, where food magically appeared on the table and clothes were washed and ironed at the foot of his bed; tasks were performed by servants whose lives were a world apart from his. His life was sheltered from the dreary grind of Martinican life except he was the darkest of his siblings, born of light-skinned parents, and as such was a "throwback" or constant remainder of historical blackness. The abuse of the Martinican people under *Tan Robé* alerted Fanon that all was not well. His lighter skin, his economic status, and his command of the French language did not separate him from those that did not have these attributes in the eyes of the colonial powers. First and foremost he was his skin, and that skin, although not black, was not white and therefore was of less value. This budding awareness manifested itself more clearly following his experiences as a soldier and blossomed into full bloom when he went to study in France. He was compelled to make colour the nexus of his philosophy and existence; to define himself as the binary opposite to those who denied him his manhood, white. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon uses contemporary literature as empirical evidence to argue his case for how this dichotomy arose, how it is sustained, and its meaning for colonized people (Macey 2000).

Mayotte Capécia is also light-skinned; born Lucette Céranus to a market vendor and a married landowner who refused to give the child his name and financial support, she learns at an early age that skin tone alone is not enough (Makward 1999; Tinsley 2010). From birth, she knew of difference, the social economic meaning of skin colour, of being a woman, of trying to make a living for her and her children in a society where, under *Tan Robé*, the intensity of racialized class and gender was exacerbated. To make sense of her experiences, she creates a protagonist that gives voice to those like herself, caught in the middle, in a place not of her choosing

or design. The lived experience of being a Martinican working-class woman of colour taught her the complexities of being female in a patriarchal society, where males both white and black defined her freedom and agency. Lacking economic and social status, she uses the only asset she thinks she possesses—light skin—to define herself (Bergner 1995; Dayan 1999) in relation to those with darker skin than hers. For Mayotte Capécia's character, also called Mayotte Capécia (Capécia 1948; Stith-Clark 1997), racism is an internalized manifestation of racial discrimination and prejudice against people with darker skin, a consequence of historical evolution under colonialism where white skin is superior and whiteness as the norm forms the base for social and economic privilege. She can malign all those “niggers” and blacks because if nothing else colonialism has taught her that in the pigmentocracy of skin colour, she has higher status. In this respect, Capécia's historical whiteness—her Canadian grandmother—is registered not on her skin like Fanon's historical blackness but in her psyche.

Chapter two of *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986) is where Fanon sets out to critique Capécia's work and Capécia the character. In this chapter, Fanon uses his criticism of Capécia to generalize about all women of colour. Unlike his careful consideration of the psychology of the native man, he is resolutely rigid and simplistic regarding the native women: “It is because the Negress feels inferior that she aspires to win admittance into the white world” (Fanon 1986, 60). There is a dogmatic fatalism to this statement, which suggests that, for Fanon, native women cannot transcend either their inferiority or their desire to assimilate. Could the native woman's aspirations not be compared to the native man who, while also under great pressure to assimilate into the white world, can produce modes of resistance?

In the chapter, *The Woman of Color and The White Man*, Fanon begins to discredit Mayotte Capécia's worldview. “(I)t is our problem to ascertain to what extent authentic love will remain unattainable before one has purged oneself of that feeling of inferiority or that Adlerian exaltation, that overcompensation, which seem to be the indices of the black *Weltanschauung*” (Fanon 1986, 42). To achieve this agenda, he adopts three approaches to interrogating Capécia's text: universalizing the particular, black male-centrism, and trivialism. Most importantly, he sets out this agenda not as a literary critique while envisioning *I am a Martinican Woman* but as an autobiographical production, as a personal grudge toward Capécia.

Fanon opens the assault on Capécia's worldview with an excerpt from *I am a Martinican Woman* (1948), “I should have liked to be married, but to a white man” (Fanon 1986, 42). The central critique of the excerpt, including an additional one-page excerpt from her text, is to question the temporal and factual logic of her story. This approach in itself suggests that Fanon sees *I am a Martinican Woman* as a biographical text for which the facts need be ascertained. However, it also suggests that Fanon either thinks too little of the author to seek clarification of her claims or he chooses to ignore the stringency that an intellectual production requires. As we have come to know, Mayotte Capécia was a pen personality both in the text and as one of the many aliases used by the author (Tinsley 2010).

Yet, Fanon proceeds with, at best, the factoid content of the text, and, at worse, with a fictional character, to aggregate and attribute to the author an “Adlerian

exaltation (42)". Capécia's admission becomes an original sin of all black women—a generalized intent of whitening of not only Capécia herself but, indeed, all blacks into whites as the only means of rising to humanity (42–44).

Fanon extrapolates from Capécia's text and expands her meaning of whitening in herself by marriage to a white man. The process gives it more depth and breadth than she stated or intended. Considering the case of neurotic illnesses among black men and women, one can compare the case of the neurosis of character Jean Veneuse to that of Mayotte. After an analysis of Veneuse's neurosis, Fanon writes, "I contend that Jean Veneuse represents not an example of black-white relations, but a certain mode of behaviour in a neurotic *who by coincidence is black* [our emphasis]" (Fanon 1986, 79). Further, that "The neurotic structure of an individual is simply the elaboration, the formation, the eruption within the ego, of conflictual clusters arising in part out of *environment* and in part out of the purely *personal* way in which that individual reacts to these influences" (Fanon 1986, 81). There are occasional generalizations in the case of black men, such as when he discusses their desire to go bed with white women, he concludes, "Once this ritual of initiation into 'authentic' manhood had been fulfilled, they took the train for Paris (72)". This concluding submission has the tone of a "matter of factly" more than it is in the case when discussing black women's desire for "white flesh" (Fanon 1986, 70).

When dealing with Capécia's neurosis, Fanon's tone and words change. The diagnosis of her neurosis, unlike that of Veneuse, becomes a generalized diagnosis of all black women in a colonial situation. Note, for example, "It is because the Negress feels inferior that she aspires to win admittance into the white world. In this endeavour she seeks the help of a phenomenon that we shall call *affective erethism*" (Fanon 1986, 60). It is in the interpretation of what Fanon means and the manner in which he applies *affective erethism* to women, i.e. the pathological condition of hypersensitivity arising within colonial, that we differ with how other researchers such as Sharpley-Whiting (1996, 1998), Derek Hook (2004), and Homi K. Bhabha (1986) have understood his meaning. It is not the sickness as such that is at issue, both Capécia and Jean are sick, but rather the issue is the diagnosis of their neurosis and the source to which the sickness is attributed. The disease could be a general affliction of all colonized peoples or only black or coloureds, as these researchers propose. However, in our reading of Fanon's specific context, it was about a neurotic condition suffered by black women. While, in a similar disease suffered by black men, and Veneuse in particular, colour is incidental to the affliction.

We realize that Fanon himself believes he has explained the sickness of Capécia and Veneuse in the same way (81). Yet, even though he denies generalizing their mental conditions, Fanon does generalize Capécia's condition to coloured women in general. After having interrogated her joy about her white grandmother, he arrives at the conclusion that "... what Capécia wants is a kind of *lactification*" (Fanon 1986, 47), and then he proceeds to generalize by saying what she meant was "the race must be whitened; everyone woman in Martinique knows this (Fanon 1986,47)".

According to Fanon, Caribbean coloured women, brought up in a social-cultural milieu whose highest moral and aesthetic values are white, inherit an obsession

with *lactification* to whiten the family's genetic pool at the very least. It "is always essential to avoid falling back into the pit of niggerhood, and every woman in the Antilles, whether in a casual flirtation or in a serious affair, is determined to select the least black of the men" (Fanon 1986, 47). Who would know more about this than Fanon; surely the recriminations of his mother's family for marrying a darker-skinned man and his own lived experience of having the darkest skin of his siblings all bear witness to the way institutionalized practices of pigmentocracy and its prime instrument—*lactification*—inform the lives of all Antilleans. By refusing to problematize his use of Capécia as representative, Fanon manages to sidestep a discussion of how gender differences are created and sustained under colonialization. As Ella Shohat claims that Fanon reveals "selective empathy" as he unmasks the negrophobic environment that drives black men to seek out white women on the one hand and black women to seek out white men. Fanon's censuring, she claims, "(dis)places the lactification neurosis and the burden of miscegenation-as-betrayal on the black/mulatta woman alone" (Shohat 2006, 267). When he claims such attitudes, Fanon universalizes Capécia's neurosis to black or coloured women's affliction.

Blaming women absolves men from the painful reality that they are also partners in this construction. For what purpose seek to whiten themselves? "Women's identity, then, in the face of the Fanonian male frame of colonialism and the colonial powers' dictation of what and who their colonial subjects could be, is developed and explored as a reaction to control. Because women are valued in male systems only for their reproductive and nurturing functions (that is, because they can produce and take care of families), the locus of their identity rests in their bodies—body, not mind, spirit, or soul, establishes who and what a woman is" (Earley 2002, 337).

It is easy to understand Fanon's reactions to Capécia's text; in light of the post-war popularity of *négritude*, *I am a Martinican Woman* appears to be a throwback to an earlier, unenlightened age. The "whitening" of the race, and the rejection of black men that it implies, is the source of Fanon's anger toward Capécia. In the re-formation of Martinique's community, women are held to different standards than men because of their different biology. As we register Fanon's disdain, sex with white men takes on a new significance when it is not carried out under duress. Miscegenation by choice in order to achieve higher social status, which is what Capécia represents, is a blatant rejection of black men.

Fanon correctly observes that women's bodies were sites of sexual conquest between colonized and colonizer men. For Fanon, "colonial identity forms out of the mirroring relation between white men and black men, this process is played out through the bodies of women. In other words, women (both black and white) mediate between black men and white men, enabling the differentiation of masculine subject positions according to race" (Bergner 1995, 80). What Fanon failed to address is the power of colonialism to create pervasive beliefs that white is better, a perception that underwrites the choice of white men by Capécia and other women. Fanon relegates women to their traditional role in nationalism and community formation as maintainers of order through their reproductive capabilities. As such, women are understood as either a barrier or an aid toward the native man's struggle

toward agency. The idea that native women would have their own particular struggle toward agency—other than desiring to become white—is foreclosed. Fanon holds Capécia to a double standard. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, his blind spot concerning gender and gendered relations blinds him; he is unable to see who women are or what they do, inevitably lacking agency.

We do not hear women's own voices. Instead, we hear of women through others; these *others*, although not named by name, can be deduced to be men. One is forced to see women only through the eyes, words, tone of language as interpreted by Fanon. Fanon fails to see the effects and connections between global colonialism and gender, as well as the similarity of the relationship between the particular and the universal when it comes to gender. He sees the universal in blackness. He can see the universal that colonialism has in respect of men—he compares Martinican men with Senegalese men, pointing at the common catalyst of their behaviour, the French colonizers. Although the outcomes are different, the catalyst is the same. This vision, or lack of it, is noticeable in his ignoring the universal, especially of involving the emerging global structures and values in his critiques of gendered situations. In this respect to gender, we can say that Fanon is an ordinary man. He quite simply neither sees nor wishes to see women, especially in his more universalistic philosophy. This lack of perception is also palpable in his interpretation of the role women have played in more particularistic situations on Martinique.

Ultimately, Fanon's perspective settles with black men clear and visible as the group most desirable of, and entitled to, liberation. While women of any colour are treated as parentheses, they invite male anger if they do not submit to the patriarchal structure and values within their societies. The point is, when it comes to gender in specific women's perspectives, consciousness, Fanon focuses on the particular and ignores the universal. By that, he not only ignores racism in their conduct but he especially ignores the implications of patriarchy for their behaviours. He does not make the same links between the situations of men and those of women. "Unfortunately, it is not merely the politically naive who demonstrate a lack of awareness that forms of oppression are interrelated. Often brilliant political thinkers have had such blind spots. Men like Frantz Fanon, whose works teach us much about the nature of colonization, racism, colorism, classism, and revolutionary struggle, often ignore issues of sexist oppression in their own writing. They speak against oppression but then define liberation in terms that suggest it is only oppressed 'men' who need freedom. Frantz Fanon's important work . . . draws a portrait of oppression . . . that equates the colonizer with white men and the colonized black men" (Hooks 2000, 41).

As two black women, we have been fascinated by the depth of Fanon's understanding of the mechanisms and ideology of colonial oppression. At the same time, a persistent question over the decades has been to understand the virulence of his tone in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986). We have come to realize that one cannot grasp Fanon's tone toward women without putting his texts in the Martinican context. In this chapter, we have sought to engage Fanon's perception of colour

through gendered lenses, arising from those nagging questions about his treatment of women and the black experience in the New World.

Our readings of Fanon does not suggest that he wants to police black women's sexual desires or damn them as whores or prostitutes, although he is disparaging regarding their intentions for choosing white men. What we do find is a lack of consistency in his argumentation when analyzing the behaviour of black men and black women in their choosing of sexual partners. On one hand, Fanon proclaims women as free agents—free to exist as autonomous social beings—but he curtails this agency by demanding women to adopt his revolutionary vision. Those who did not, could not, or would not acquiesce are excluded. However, nowhere do we hear the woman's voice, and nowhere is her agency free from the patriarchal "gaze".

Regarding gender, we can say that Fanon is an ordinary man. He quite simply does not see women, especially in his more universalistic philosophy. This vision, or lack thereof, is noticeable in his ignoring the universal, especially of involving the emerging global structures and values in his critiques of gendered situations. This lack of perception is also palpable in his interpretation of the role women have played in more particularistic situations on Martinique. By analyzing his text, we have shown how his vision sidetracks women. We have also shown that his blind spot on gender is informed by his preoccupation with the role of race in colonial structures. Ultimately, Fanon's perspective settles with the black man, palpable and visible as the group most desirable of and entitled to liberation. While women of any colour are treated as parentheses, they invite his anger if they do not submit to the patriarchal structure and values within their societies. The point is when it comes to gender, and especially women's perspectives and consciousness, Fanon focuses on the particular and ignores the universal. By that we mean that he not only ignores racism in their conduct but he especially ignores the implications of patriarchy for their behaviours. He does not make the same links between the situations of men and those of women. Further, Fanon does not mention the connection in the struggle to be inclusive of women.

Fanon's agenda is not to locate women within a global context of decolonization. What he does is to look at gender and women exclusively within the local context, women as separate—Martinican women and Frenchwomen as separate. At the same time, he sees the universal in blackness. He can see the universal that colonialism has regarding men, by his comparison of Martinican men with Senegalese men. He acknowledges that the outcomes are different, but the source is the same.

In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986), Fanon examines the social and psychological processes by which white colonizers alienated the black natives from any indigenous black culture; he shows that blacks are made to feel inferior because of their colour and thus strive to emulate white culture and society. Fanon hopes that the old myths of superiority would be abandoned so that a real equality and integration could be achieved. His discussion of Antillean women starts with a narration of his experience of their attitudes toward black men. The analysis, however, slides into how black women's rejection of black men turns the latter into white women hunters and stalkers. Indeed, his study slides into an analysis of why black men hunger for white flesh. It is in this context of mudslinging that Fanon acknowledges

black women's role in the creation of racial hierarchy. It is based on examples such as this that one sees Fanon's blind spot, where women in general but black women in particular have no other interest but in their colour as pawns in the games men play. They do not have gender, or class; they are a colour. However, the way Fanon deals with desire of the black man to be whitened by his association to a white woman is very different from a reverse situation between a black woman and a white man. Both seek their redemption by association to whiteness—lightness.

Fanon's writings should be understood as part of the struggle against this excessive stratification by colour. In that sense, it is understandable that Fanon makes race the pedestal upon which he launches his philosophy of life and theoretical springboard for the deconstruction and location of race in colonial hierarchies. While he is very incisive about the knowledge of multidimensional factors, his location of the black male at the centre of his analyses has blinded him to the significance of class, and especially to the significance of gender, in how oppression is experienced and how redemption can be achieved.

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Chapter 12

Pigment Disorders and Pigment Manipulations

Henk E. Menke

Introduction

This chapter is about health problems that are related to skin pigmentation. Because of the professional background of the author, a dermatologist, the line of approach is basically biomedical. Furthermore, there is special attention for people of color for it is mainly in this populace, because of strong contrast, that diseases of the pigment system may generate a decrease in the quality of life, and in the context of this book, the author wants to stress this point. Moreover, in people of color, a normal skin itself can cause problems; some individuals do not accept their natural dark color and strive for a lighter complexion to hopefully increase their quality of life. Thus, we are going to discuss two issues: diseases of skin color, so-called pigmentary disorders, and the phenomenon of skin bleaching, that is, application of chemical agents to the normal skin in order to obtain a lighter skin color. This chapter is mainly based on medical literature concerning these subjects, completed with personal clinical observations and professional experiences of the author. Basically, the view to be presented is that natural-occurring disorders of pigmentation, as well as the “unnatural” phenomenon of intentionally performing pigment manipulations (in this case skin bleaching), are worldwide very common.¹ The origins of both, the diseases to be discussed and the phenomenon of skin bleaching, are complex and are, in part, a matter of speculation. Moreover, pigmentary disorders as well

¹In the context of this chapter, pigment manipulations are defined as (generally nonmedical) procedures to deliberately induce a permanent change in the appearance (regarding pigmentation or skin color) of the normally pigmented skin in a person without a pigmentary disorder (skin bleaching is one example; tattooing is another).

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as skin bleaching can go together with (sometimes serious) anatomical and/or functional damage of the skin itself, more particular of the pigment system, as well as damage of internal organs. Finally, they can have (again, sometimes serious or even dramatic) consequences regarding the psychological integrity of the individual and the stability of human relations. The aim of this chapter is to inform the reader about these issues, with the emphasis on medical features, but including the intricate biomedical and psychosocial mechanisms and consequences related to human pigment problems. But, in fact, no more than the tip of the veil that covers this huge subject is going to be lifted.

Biology of the Skin

The earth is populated by a variegated collection of people with a wide-ranging skin color, which is a result of evolution. According to the “out of Africa” theory, the early man living in the forested shelters of southern Africa initially had a light brown skin. The skin pigmentation of these people developed in two directions. The early modern man, who migrated to the open planes of equatorial Africa where ultraviolet (UV) radiation is most intense, developed a black skin. Those who moved to northern Africa, and out of Africa in the direction of Asia and Europe, had to adapt to the moderate climate with less sunlight and developed a lighter skin color (Underhill et al. 2001; Westerhof 2007). And so the earth is now populated by a number of modern races (although the concept of race is challenged by many biologists and anthropologists), which are, according to Coon (1962), Caucasoid (Europeans, Arabs, and Indians), Mongoloid (Asians), Australoid (Australian Aborigines), Congoid or Negroid (Africans), and Capoid (Kung San tribe of Africa). As a consequence of voluntary and involuntary (such as in American slavery) migration during the past centuries and subsequent miscegenation, a large variety of skin colors has evolved. Thomas Fitzpatrick (1988) recognizes six skin types based on the reactivity of the skin to solar radiation. This is the system most used by physicians, being especially advantageous for classifying the different tones of the white skin. Susan Taylor (2002) proposes the idea that people of color might be better served by a classification system that is not based on the sensitivity to UV radiation but is based on the propensity of the skin to become hyperpigmented, caused by an inflammatory stimulus. Unfortunately, thus far, no such generally accepted system has been developed.

The human skin is a complex organ, which is indispensable for the biological and psychosocial integrity of the individual. Anatomically, it consists of two layers: an outer layer, the epidermis, which is an epithelial structure covering the body, and an inner layer, the dermis, consisting of fibroblasts surrounded by a fibrous matrix. The dermis is traversed by a network of blood vessels, lymphatic vessels, and nerves and also contains sebaceous glands, sweat glands, and hair follicles, structures derived from the epidermis. Important functions of the skin are a defensive task, effectuated by the anatomical barrier of the epidermis and by the skin immune system; vitamin D production stimulated by ultraviolet light; and body temperature

regulation through sweating. Those are the biological functions. But it is of utmost importance in the context of pigmentary disorders and skin bleaching to realize that the skin strongly contributes—via its color or tone—to someone’s identity. Identity is an intricate concept, which has to do with the self-image, with how somebody views himself or herself with respect to others. It strongly relates to one’s functioning in society and to the psychosocial stability of the individual (Erikson 1968).

The color of the skin is mainly determined by the interplay of two biological pigments or chromophores, melanin and haemoglobin, of which melanin is by far the most important (Edwards and Duntley 1939). Other chromophores, like carotenes—exogenous pigments from food—may contribute slightly to the skin color by adding a yellow hue (Jimbow et al. 1999). Melanin, of which there are two types—eumelanin (black color) and pheomelanin (red color)—is produced by melanocytes, or pigment cells, which are located in the basal cell layer of the epidermis, close to the dermis. The melanin is packed (in the melanocytes) in membrane-bound parcels—melanosomes—that are transported alongside dendritic “branches” to the epidermal cells. The number of melanocytes in the skin of individuals of all races seems to be similar, but the capacity of these cells to produce melanin varies enormously between the different races. People with a light skin who tan easily, produce more melanin than those who do not become dark after sun exposition. In a chain of processes converting the precursor substance tyrosine into melanin, the production of melanin results from the complex interaction between melanogenic regulators in melanocytes and factors derived from keratinocytes (the epithelial cells of the epidermis) and dermal fibroblasts, with a central role for the enzyme tyrosinase. Besides genetic control, pigmentation depends on endocrine (hormonal) and environmental factors that modulate the amount, type, and distribution of melanin in the skin (Brenner and Berking 2010).

Pigmentary Disorders

A normal healthy skin is evenly pigmented and without any elevations, indentations, or other aberrations. This type of skin is in fact a utopia because nobody is perfect. Ironically, even a normal-looking, healthy skin can be considered by many individuals—and sometimes also by their family members and peers—as a problem and thus as undesired. This peculiar psychological fact of disliking, or emotionally “rejecting” a normal skin, applies especially to people of color. It is related to the specific function or role of the skin regarding one’s identity. This psychological “rejection” can lead to manipulation aimed at getting rid of the natural skin tone, in other words, to skin bleaching.² Pigmentary disorders can be genetically

²Many individuals dislike certain features of their own physiognomy and body profile, like the shape of the eyes, the texture of the hair, and the size of genital parts (all related to identity);

Fig. 12.1 Melanoma
(Photograph courtesy of
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induced or they can be acquired. If we classify them on the basis of their clinical features, three main groups can be recognized: (1) disorders of hypopigmentation—lacking pigment in the diseased skin—for example, vitiligo; (2) disorders of hyperpigmentation—containing an excess of pigment in the diseased skin—for example, melasma (hyperpigmented spots on the face, mostly in women, often caused by pregnancy or the use of contraceptive hormones); these hypo- and hyperpigmentation disorders or skin color disorders are two-dimensional, being flat or nonelevated; and (3) pigmentary tumors—generally three-dimensional—of which melanoma is an impressive example because of its potentially bad prognosis.

It is beyond dispute that melanoma, a melanocyte-derived tumor, is the most feared skin cancer and certainly one of the most ominous malignancies known (Fig. 12.1). If not rapidly diagnosed and adequately treated, this tumor can be fatal. Physicians are trained to detect it early, particularly in the premelanoma stage. There has been a strong, worldwide rise in its incidence over the past decades, related to an increase in sun exposure, as in the Netherlands, a country with a predominantly white population. The incidence of UV-related skin tumors in this country increased significantly and more steeply than did those of other skin malignancies in the period 1989–2005. The incidence of melanoma shows the steepest increase, with an estimated annual percentage change (EAPC) of 4.0% (Holterhues et al. 2010). It is a tumor of especially light-skinned people who easily sunburn, although people of color can occasionally also develop melanoma; the legendary Jamaican reggae performer and Rastafarian Bob Marley died in 1981 from melanoma.³ In hopes of

these features are psychologically not accepted by them. This is not restricted to people of color. Although this issue is, in terms of changing one's appearance and hence one's identity, related with the phenomenon of skin bleaching, it is not per se connected with pigmentation; therefore, we are not going to address it in this chapter.

³See “How and why did Bob Marley die?” by Megan Romer. <http://worldmusic.about.com/od/genres/f/BobMarleyDeath.htm>

preventing melanoma, the public (in countries with a white population) is educated in preventive measures, especially avoiding excessive sun exposure, in particular, sunburn.

Returning to pigmentary disorders in general, it appears that many of these aberrations are considered to be trivial by the public and also by physicians; they are often alluded as cosmetic inanities. Indeed, many could be categorized as such, but one should realize that there is a real range of pigmentary disorders reaching from insignificant to severe. The result of measuring the effect of certain pigmentary disorders on the health-related quality of life can be surprising, even some that look insignificant at first sight. Thus, one study shows that melasma severely affects social life, emotional well-being, physical health, and money matters in a cohort of women (Pawaskar et al. 2007). Another study shows that melasma and also vitiligo and lentigo (benign hyperpigmented spots generally in elderly people caused by sun exposure) pose a significant negative impact on quality of life. Anne Taylor and colleagues (2008) conclude that there is a need for effective treatments for pigmentary disorders based on their prevalence and effect on quality of life; further, that healthcare providers should consider the impact of pigmentary disorders on health-related quality of life and educate patients on possible treatments.

Some disorders of skin color (whether hyperpigmented or hypopigmented) do not just impair the quality of life, they can even have dramatic consequences in the sense that they comprise a heavy mental and physical burden for the patient. Moreover, they are challenging and stubborn or even impossible to treat. In the next section, we discuss three major diseases: vitiligo, albinism, and leprosy—as examples of diseases of skin color (or diseases with pigmentary features as a major symptom), which can cause a great deal of misery and agony.

Vitiligo

Vitiligo is a common worldwide disease, its occurrence varying by country (or even by region within a given country), but with an estimated global prevalence of around 0.5% (Nordlund et al. 2006). The disease is characterized by “milky” white spots, microscopically lacking melanocytes (Fig. 12.2).

There are several clinical types of vitiligo, based on skin surface that has lost its pigment, ranging from one or a few white spots to a loss of all skin pigment. The first prime minister in postcolonial, independent India, the eminent “Pandit” Jawaharlal Nehru, stated that vitiligo is one of the three greatest medical problems in his country, next to leprosy and malaria (Fitzpatrick 1993). Long before there was any significant attention given to vitiligo in the Western world, Indian people were highly concerned with this scourge. In ancient times, they developed a somewhat effective treatment, using an extract from a plant (*Psoralea corylifolia*) to be applied on the white spots, followed by sun exposure (Singh et al. 1974). This was reintroduced in modern medicine in the 1970s as PUVA therapy, a type of photochemotherapy (Zaynoun et al. 1977). The interest in vitiligo and the

Fig. 12.2 Vitiligo
(Photograph courtesy of
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importance of this disease in India are linked to the fear for leprosy, a disease that is also common in that country from ancient times to today. Vitiligo was referred to in ancient India as Sweta Kustha, meaning white leprosy (Parsad et al. 2003). Vitiligo can be associated with physical problems. Due to lack of protective pigment, patients can easily sunburn. Strangely, there are very few reports of skin cancer in vitiligo patients, so it seems that one way or another, there is a mechanism that protects them against the development of these malignancies. Furthermore, vitiligo seems to be associated with a number of internal hormonal diseases, like thyroid disease (Hari Kumar et al. 2011).

Vitiligo has long been highly neglected in Western countries, but during the past decades research to unravel its cause and attempts to develop an effective treatment have been initiated. The precise cause is still a matter of scientific debate, with several ideas being proposed. However, they might not be as controversial as they seem at first and can be combined into one integrated etiological and pathogenetic concept: it is most probably an autoimmune destruction of melanocytes in genetically predisposed individuals (Westerhof and d'Ischia 2007). Although some new promising treatments have been developed in the past decades, like UVB phototherapy and several modalities of autologous pigment transplantation, there is unfortunately no treatment that guarantees a cure.

Currently, about a half century after Nehru's statement, vitiligo is still a problem, not only in India but worldwide, especially in terms of mental suffering. Michael

Austin (2004), a patient from Los Angeles, California, exposes his feelings in a candid and moving narrative in a leading American dermatology journal:

Vitiligo is worse than diabetes. I don't know any doctors who agree with that assessment. The insurance companies that tell you vitiligo is just a 'cosmetic' problem certainly don't agree. And neither do the government agencies that fund medical research. But I am a patient that lives with both conditions and I cannot help comparing them. I know at some point in the future I could die from the physical complications of type-1 diabetes. But my experience, the deep psychological pain of vitiligo is every day a more destructive force in my life. (Austin 2004, S7). . . . my feelings about myself had changed. I knew pragmatically that this disease was just on the skin, on the surface, but emotionally I felt a deep scar. I felt my life was ruined. (Austin 2004, S8)

Indeed, several studies point at psychological problems in vitiligo patients. Many vitiligo patients are distressed, especially in relation with social encounters, or feel embarrassed when exposing the body. Moreover, they may suffer from low self-esteem and poor body image, experience discrimination from others, and feel stigmatized; vitiligo on the face/head/neck substantially affects the quality of life (Ongenaes et al. 2005). Quality of life impairment appears to be higher in vitiligo patients with a dark skin (Linthorst Homan et al. 2009). British women of South Asian descent described feeling visibly different and had experienced stigmatization (Thompson et al. 2010). But mental problems can get worse and rise to psychiatric symptoms. A study from Chandigarh, India, for example, reveals adjustment disorders, depressive episodes, and dysthymia in a cohort of vitiligo patients (Mattoo et al. 2001).

Albinism

The following is from a paper by Chinenye P. Davie-Odigie (2010)⁴:

Like a hunted animal run to ground, the little girl was cornered. Branded a 'ghost' on account of her striking white skin, Mariam Emmanuel had been chased through her village, in a remote corner of Tanzania, by a bloodthirsty mob. Exhausted and terrified, the five year old slumped in the dust at the end of an alley. She whimpered and cowered while the adults surrounded her and sharpened their knives and machetes. Then they set to work, butchering her and dividing her remains between themselves. She was killed like an animal, by grown men who showed no compassion for another human being. Mariam's crime? She was an albino.

There are more than 8,000 people with albinism registered in Tanzania.⁵ Africa is probably the continent with the highest prevalence of this disease. According to E. S. Hong and colleagues (2006), tens of thousands of people with albinism

⁴Davie-Odigie refers to a news item by Andrew Malone, published in Mail Online. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1215949/The-albino-tribe-butchered-feed-gruesome-trade-magical-body-parts.html>

⁵This information is from BBC news, 17 December 2007. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7148673.stm>

Fig. 12.3 Albinism
(Photograph courtesy of
Dr. Arjan A. Hogewoning,
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Dermatology, Children's
University Hospital,
Bratislava, Slovakia)



live in this continent. But it is a worldwide disease, with a global prevalence of about one case in 17,000 inhabitants (Grønskov et al. 2007). It is, in fact, a group of heterogeneous conditions of which the official medical name is oculocutaneous albinism (OCA). In the skin of patients suffering from this disease, the number and structure of melanocytes are normal, but due to a hereditary gene defect, their melanin production is reduced or has completely ceased. The patients show a variety of symptoms, depending on the genetic subtype from which they suffer. They can have ocular symptoms related to diminished or lacking pigment or other congenital eye defects—for example, photophobia, reduced visual acuity, and nystagmus. Also, due to the lack of pigment, their skin is more susceptible to the harmful effects of sunlight exposure. They do not tan, and at an early age, their skin shows signs of UV damage, including freckles (Fig. 12.3).

The most dramatic dermatological complication is the development of skin cancers. Squamous cell carcinoma is the most frequent type, but melanomas do occur. Skin malignancies are a major cause of death in people with OCA in Africa (Opara and Jiburum 2010), but primary melanomas of the internal organs (lungs, colon) also have been described in these patients (Ozdemir et al. 2001; McNicol and Jones 2005). There is no treatment available for patients with OCA. They have to protect themselves against sun exposure, and a regular check for skin malignancies is required. It shall be clear that these patients, because of their physical handicap, experience considerable social restrictions, as the result of the stigma related with this disease. A study among patients with OCA, in a Caribbean mulatto society,

shows that stigma indeed is associated with the absence of skin color (Westhoff 1993). Another study of 32 children with OCA in South Africa revealed a complete lack of information about cause and consequences of this pigmentary disease. The authors state that it is the social context, as much as, and sometimes more than, the physical condition, that largely structures and limits the lives of people with OCA (Gaigher et al. 2002). It has long been associated with stigma and superstitions, such as the belief that a white man impregnated the mother or that the child is the ghost of a European colonist. This points to racializing of this disease. Some organs of these patients are believed to possess magical powers, and these body parts may be sold for as much as \$75,000 on the black market. As a result, there have been over 100 albino murders in Tanzania, Burundi, and other parts of Africa in the past decade, which has now garnered international attention thus prompting novel legislation (Aqaron et al. 2009; Cruz-Inigo et al. 2011). Therefore, OCA appears to be a condition deeply immersed in myths and superstition. All these have resulted in stigmatizing and rejection of affected people, and it is in this context that one can try to comprehend, but absolutely not accept or let alone justify, the recent hunting and killing of patients with albinism.

Leprosy

Leprosy is a low-grade infectious disease of skin and peripheral nerves caused by *Mycobacterium leprae*, which can result in chronic disability. It is one of the oldest diseases of mankind. In the ancient biblical era, it was endemic in the eastern Mediterranean region. In medieval times, it was emphatically present all over Europe. Lepers were in those days, on the one hand, seen as cursed and subsequently isolated and avoided, but, on the other hand, they were covered with compassion. Leprosy appeared to be prevalent in Asia and parts of East Africa when Europeans arrived there in the sixteenth century, colonizing these territories. But it was unknown in West Africa and the Americas in precolonial times and introduced in these regions by Europeans, Africans, and others (Monot et al. 2005). In the nineteenth century, leprosy was “reconstructed” as a tropical disease, based on colonialism, contagionism (the idea that it is infectious), missionaryism, and racism (Gussow 1989). It was then seen as a curse of “the others,” the yellow, brown, or black people of the colonies. Leprosy was racialized in colonial times, but ironically, at the same time, it was still prevalent among whites in some remote, backward, corners of Europe—namely parts of Norway and Mediterranean countries. An extreme view regarding the racializing of leprosy was defended by Benjamin Rush (1746–1813), one of the founding fathers of the United States, signer of the Declaration of Independence, writer, and physician, who suggested the idea that the black color of Negroes was caused by leprosy. According to this (now) strange idea (all) Negroes suffered from leprosy, which caused their skin to become black. Moreover, the disease was also responsible for other typical physical features of the Negro. Even white women living with Negroes developed—according to this view—a dark color and Negroid features (Edmond 2006).

Fig. 12.4 The *white spot* on the cheek is a (tuberculoid) leprosy macule (Photograph courtesy of Department of Dermatology, Sint Franciscus Gasthuis, Rotterdam, the Netherlands)



Paradoxically, hyperpigmentation can indeed occur in leprosy patients, but it is exactly the opposite phenomenon—hypopigmentation (white spots), with sensory loss in that area—that appears to be a common characteristic feature of the disease, and it is also considered an important diagnostic feature (Fig. 12.4). The pathogenesis of this hypopigmentation in leprosy is uncertain; it is often roughly alluded as a postinflammatory phenomenon.

At present, two main clinical subtypes of leprosy are recognized (depending on the patient's immunity against the causal microorganism): on the one hand is the so-called multibacillary, lepromatous type with skin colored nodules, and on the other hand is the so-called paucibacillary, tuberculoid type with hypopigmented spots (Naafs and Faber 2006). Pigmentation is important in the conceptualization of leprosy in several ways: in the sense of racializing the disease in colonial times (and presently) and in the sense of perceiving the clinical features. Another group of important symptoms in leprosy includes those caused by damage to the nerves, resulting in chronic disability. It is the combination of the dermatological (including pigmentary) symptoms and the consequences of nerve damage that add to the repulsive nature of leprosy.

The microorganism that causes leprosy was discovered in 1873, by Norwegian physician Gerhard Hansen (Vogelsang 1978). In 1897, at the first international leprosy congress held in Berlin, Germany, the idea that the disease was infectious was generally accepted and a period of (renewed) physical isolation of lepers

in leprosaria or leper colonies commenced worldwide. Due to the emergence of chemotherapeutic agents, leprosaria were closed down in the second half of the twentieth century. Since the 1980s, leprosy has been treated worldwide with a combination of chemotherapeutic drugs—the so-called multidrug treatment (MDT regimen)—which, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), would lead to worldwide elimination of the disease in foreseeable times. In 2010, WHO registered a total of 228,000 new leprosy patients: 55% being from India, 15% from Brazil, and the remaining from other tropical countries in Africa, Asia, and the Americas (WHO 2011). Therefore, the disease as a worldwide problem has not yet been defeated.

Throughout history leprosy has been associated with extreme prejudice, fear, aversion, and social exclusion. Until today it has been considered one of the most terrifying and stigmatizing diseases, which places a considerable burden on affected people (de Groot et al. 2011). The stigmatization of leprosy patients is a complex issue. In the context of this chapter, it is important to point to the aberrations in skin color that accompany leprosy and to the fact that the disease was racialized, but the disabilities and the fear for contagion add to the stigma. Since leprosy is by and large a disease of “colored” people, the stigmatization related to ethnicity should also be counted. Moreover, clofazimine, one of the drugs used in the MDT regimen, causes—in all users—a reddish brown hyperpigmentation of the skin as an unwanted and detested side effect, which can also contribute to the stigma. As with many other diseases and issues, stigmatization in leprosy is a layered phenomenon, with several stigmatizing factors adding up to complete the picture of the stigma. But, despite the fact that much research has been done regarding this matter—Wim H. van Brakel and colleagues (2010) counted 56 articles on this subject in the period from 2002 to 2009—leprosy stigma is still an elusive concept in terms of developing effective measures to combat it. A stigma research workshop met in 2010, in Amsterdam, concluded that, despite the broad body of literature on the subject, there is a need for practical field guidance to contribute to the fight against leprosy-related stigma and discrimination (Voorend et al. 2011).

Skin Bleaching

A Worldwide Phenomenon

Skin bleaching (or skin whitening) is the phenomenon of applying chemical agents to the normal skin in order to hopefully obtain a lighter skin color.⁶ This procedure is practiced worldwide by people of color and much more often by women than

⁶The terms “skin bleaching” and “skin whitening” are used by the author—and many others—as synonyms. However, there is a trend to use the word “bleaching” when strong products are applied, which are more often related with side effects and the word whitening when “weaker” products

Fig. 12.5 The hyperpigmentation on the cheekbone is exogenous ochronosis (Photograph courtesy of Dr. Henk E. Menke)



men. Skin bleaching is not just something of the present. It was probably already practiced in ancient India in the context of the caste system (Gomes and Westerhof 2002). It was performed in early colonial times by Indian women who bleached their skin to please Europeans, on the Caribbean island of Santo Domingo (Hoetink 1971). Bleaching appears to be an old phenomenon, but we turn to the present and start looking at the situation in the Netherlands, the country where the author resides.

In the Netherlands, skin bleaching was described for the first time in the medical literature in 1992: two women from West Africa who bleached their skin were identified, both presenting⁷ at the dermatology department of a general hospital in the city of Rotterdam, with hyperpigmented thickened areas on the face that were diagnosed as exogenous ochronosis (Menke et al. 1992). This is a paradoxical effect of the use of hydroquinone containing bleaching creams, leading to deposition of a dark pigment of uncertain chemical composition in the dermis, together with permanent destruction of the normal architecture of this compartment of the skin; unfortunately, currently, there is no effective treatment for this unsightly disorder (Fig. 12.5).⁸

Additional clinical-epidemiological observations by H. E. Menke and colleagues (2001; 2002), observations by M. D. Njoo and W. Westerhof (2002), and an ethnographic study by P. D. Gomes and W. Westerhof (2001) identified Ghanaese women and Surinamese women of Indian (Asian) ethnicity as the main users of skin bleaching agents in the Netherlands. The identification of the latter immigrant group in the Netherlands correlates with the epidemiological finding that a high percentage of Indian (Asian) women in Suriname are using bleaching creams (Menke 2012). According to an epidemiological survey by the Nivel institute, more than one third

are applied. The pharmaceutical industries and physicians tend to speak of bleaching, while the cosmetic industry is using the term whitening. The difference is, of course, gradual.

⁷“Presenting” or “to present” is to come forward or undergo initial medical examination for a particular condition or symptom.

⁸Another pigment-related side effect of hydroquinone is leucoderma en confetti, that is, the appearance of speckled vitiligo-like white spots, phenomenologically just the opposite of exogenous ochronosis.

Fig. 12.6 Atrophic skin caused by application of potent corticosteroids to bleach the skin (Photograph courtesy of Dr. Arjan A. Hogewoning, Dermatologist, Department of Dermatology, Children's University Hospital, Bratislava, Slovakia)



Fig. 12.7 An ethnic shop that sells skin whiteners, Amsterdam (Photograph courtesy of Dr. Henk E. Menke)

of the Ghanaese women in the Netherlands use skin bleaching agents.⁹ About 25% of these women report side effects, namely, a darker skin (probably this includes exogenous ochronosis caused by hydroquinone), a thinner skin, and atrophic striae (which are well known as side effects of the topical use of potent corticosteroids) (Fig. 12.6).

Hydroquinone has been prohibited by European law—as an over-the-counter cosmetic—since 2000; however, it enters the different countries of Europe via illegal routing. A 2011 visit to several malls in Amsterdam-Southeast, the suburb where the Ghanaese people and other ethnic minorities live, confirms what we already knew: the selling of numerous skin bleaching agents, imported from African, Asia, and Western countries, in special ethnic shops (Fig. 12.7).

⁹A summary can be found online, at the Nivel Institute: www.nieuwsbank.nl/inp/2003/09/24/r211.htm

Among the products identified in the ethnic shops is “Fair and Balance,” a complexion brightening skin milk made in the USA, containing kojic acid (a skin whitening agent of fungal origin). Also noted is “Sure White,” a lightening and exfoliating soap, made in Switzerland, containing licorice extract (the whitening ingredient of licorice is called glabridin). Hydroquinone and other strong bleaching agents (specifically, corticosteroids and mercury), notorious for their serious side effects, could not be identified among the products on the shelves, and the seller emphatically explained that they were aware of the dangers of these products. The selling of bleaching products is alive in Amsterdam; hydroquinone and other illegal products are officially unavailable, but can be purchased—as is known through patient information—in the illegal circuit (Menke et al. 2001; Gomes and Westerhof 2001). Furthermore, it appears that the advertising for bleaching products in the Netherlands is modest, especially if we compare this to some Southeast Asian countries.

The current state (or at least some aspects) regarding the topic of skin bleaching in the United Kingdom can be illustrated by the following medical debate, which also demonstrates the dangers of this procedure. A. Chakera and colleagues (2011) described two female patients, both originally from Pakistan, who were seen in an Oxford [UK] hospital, with a membranous nephropathy. This serious and potentially life threatening kidney disease was induced by the application of UK-manufactured skin creams containing mercury; these creams were used to obtain a lighter skin color. Nigerian Dermatologist and Professor Yetunde M. Olumide (2010) highlights the negative effects of the use of skin bleaching creams in an editorial in the *British Medical Journal*, pointing to the fact that lack of recognition and regulation can have serious medical consequences. In reaction to this paper, Supreet Sidhu and colleagues (2011) report the results of their questionnaire survey of skin-lightening cream use, and knowledge of potential health risks in 122 consecutive attendees of a multiethnic South London general practice. Twenty-two percent of the 100 responders stated they had used skin-lightening cream at some point of their lives. The highest use was found in those of Black-African origin (58%), Indian origin (25%), and Pakistani origin (17%). Fifty-nine percent of responders agreed with the suggestion that some skin-lightening creams can be harmful.

Skin bleaching is an import phenomenon in Western European countries having immigrants with a skin of color. It is indigenous and common in practically all parts of the world where people of color live. A comprehensive epidemiology of skin bleaching that covers all continents has yet to be written, but from available reports in journals, the author’s own observations, and oral communication with professionals in different countries, the picture emerges of a diversity of regional patterns of skin bleaching. In this situation, each part of the world or perhaps each country has its own bleaching characteristics, most likely related to demographic, socioeconomic, and cultural factors. In Southeast Asia, for example, there is immense advertisement on billboards, TV spots, and in glossy magazines (Fig. 12.8). The skin-lightening or skin-brightening products, as they are called in Southeast Asia, are produced by prominent Western and non-Western cosmetic



Fig. 12.8 A billboard advertising skin whiteners, Kuala Lumpur (Photograph courtesy of Dr. Henk E. Menke)

manufacturers.¹⁰ Walking through a city like Kuala Lumpur gives you the feeling that the use of these products is incorporated in daily life.¹¹ But despite this enormous use, there is a paucity, almost a complete lack, of scientific publications from this region of the world on the issue.

A different situation exists in the South American countries of Brazil and Suriname. There, we encounter a strong formal denial of the existence of skin bleaching by medical doctors and other professionals. This gives the impression of keeping up appearances: “something like skin bleaching cannot exist in the ideal rainbow nation.” But skin bleaching does occur in Suriname and Brazil (Menke 2012). Like Southeast Asia, South America lacks scientific publications on this issue.

The situation is completely different in sub-Saharan Africa. This is where the strong products (hydroquinone, mercury, and potent corticosteroids) are commonly used. Yaba Amgborale Blay (2011) states—referring to the widespread use of bleaching agents—that skin bleaching is nothing less than a way of life in many parts of the continent (52% of the population of Senegal’s capital, Dakar, and 50% of the female population in Bamako, Mali, are using these products). But this is also the continent where governments show commitment, and some countries even have

¹⁰This “aggressive” marketing of skin-bleaching cosmetics resembles to some extent the marketing of the tobacco industry and of certain divisions of the food industry.

¹¹This report of Southeast Asia is based on the author’s personal observations in 2011.

laws to prevent the use of these potentially dangerous products. Moreover, there is a growing avalanche of publications from African medical doctors as well as social scientists on the subject. In fact, research in the field of skin bleaching is growing, with publications coming from the Americas (the USA and Jamaica), Europe, and African countries.

Do People Benefit from Bleaching?

One may assume that people who bleach expect to gain from this procedure. They invest money and time in something that hopefully improves their lives. But does bleaching of the skin indeed lead to the expected improvement? The answer is that it probably does for many; otherwise, it is impossible to comprehend why skin bleaching is so popular worldwide and why it seems that the phenomenon is even increasing. Unfortunately, an in-depth investigation to measure the precise outcome of the bleaching procedure in a large cohort has not been performed, to the best knowledge of the author. However, some small studies suggest that the people with successful bleaching feel better than before the bleaching (Gomes and Westerhof 2001; Lewis et al. 2011). But certainly not all who bleach, or try to bleach their skin, benefit from the process. As we have seen, severe internal and dermatological side effects can occur when using bleaching agents. Also, serious secondary psychological side effects can occur after unsuccessful bleaching. The author recalls several African women with exogenous ochronosis, having seen their faces turn darker instead of the lighter color they strived for, resulting in a lamentable mental situation. A Surinamese Indian (Asian) woman had to be referred to a psychiatrist for further professional treatment for a depression after the occurrence of vitiligo-like (white) spots on her face during the bleaching procedure. Those with a visible failure, unfortunately, have reverted to a situation that is worse than before the bleaching procedure. The stigmatization they experienced before starting to bleach increased because of the self-inflicted pigmentary disorder, caused by their attempt to deliberately manipulate their pigment.

Why Do People Bleach Their Skin?

But why do people bleach their skin? Social phenomena are complex and not easy to explain. Therefore, several ideas have been proposed to explicate skin bleaching, but unfortunately many are not based on well-wrought studies and are no more than hypotheses. Furthermore, the proposed explanations are certainly not contradictory or mutually exclusive. On the contrary, some are identical or just a reiteration; many are complementary. The author—after studying the variety of ideas—holds that basically all explanations can be reduced, one way or another, to the single concept: that skin bleaching is resulting from discrimination based on skin color, thus on

racism. But in an attempt to dissect the sometimes confusing diversity of ideas, four major concepts on understanding this phenomenon can be discerned. In order of importance, (the importance is estimated by the author according to the number of protagonists, and the evidence leading to the idea) these explanations are:

1. Skin bleaching can emerge when people of divergent color are living together (in a society) in a situation of dominance of the lighter colored over the darker individuals; bleaching is an attempt of the darker-colored individuals to narrow the difference.
2. Skin bleaching is a method to (try to) achieve (more) beauty; essential in this view is the basic assumption that a light skin is considered (by the people who bleach) more beautiful than a dark complexion.
3. Skin bleaching is the consequence of a “mental disorder.”
4. Skin bleaching was invented by whites to (further) isolate and eventually destroy colored people; this is, in fact, a sort of conspiracy thesis.

When people are asked why they bleach their skin, they generally answer that they want to look more beautiful and, furthermore, that they have social and economic advantages in a society that is not friendly or even hostile toward people of color—for instance, advantages on the labor and/or on the wedding market (Gomes and Westerhof 2001; Lewis et al. 2011). But we will look closer at ideas that have been proposed to explain skin bleaching.

According to Gomes and Westerhof (2002), who studied skin bleaching in Bangalore, India, this phenomenon is associated with the very old caste system, which is connected with Hinduism. From the color of the skin, one can predict the caste and class to which a woman belongs. Bangalore women confessed that their parents, families, and friends encouraged them to bleach their skin. With a lighter skin, meaning a higher caste, they gained personally—for example, on the wedding market—but lighter skin also contributed to the prestige of the family. The encouragement to bleach can also be found in ancient Indian books that praise a light skin and describe recipes for bleaching products based on natural ingredients. This theory might explain why people living in India and related countries bleach, but it cannot be applied directly to people living in non-Hindu settings.

Frantz Fanon (2008), the black French Caribbean psychiatrist, used Freudian psychoanalytic theories to explain the position of the black man in a colonial context vis-à-vis skin color. Fanon claims that the psyche of the Negro is shaped by the Eurocentric world in which he lives and is educated; as the result of an inferiority complex, he identifies himself with the white colonizer: he tries to be like him and imitates his culture. Fanon never refers to skin bleaching, but his work and—in particular—the titles of his books can be considered a perfect metaphor of skin bleaching.¹² The explanation proposed by Ronald E. Hall (1995) is also

¹²Frantz Fanon wrote *Black Skin, White Masks*, originally published in 1952 in French; the French title reads: *Peau noire, masques blancs*.

psychoanalytical by nature and corresponds with the view of Fanon. Hall explains skin bleaching as an answer to oppression. He has extended the concept by claiming that other ways of imitating white behavior and culture, for example, speaking and dressing “like the other,” are part of the wider concept of “the bleaching syndrome.” Thus, skin bleaching can be seen as a colonial and postcolonial phenomenon and is also related to black (American) slavery. And so it is indirectly connected with Judaism and Christianity because many have justified the system of African slavery with the biblical story of the curse of the son of Ham. Noah, who was seen naked by his son Ham, cursed Canaan, the son of the latter: “cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren” (Genesis 9:20–27). Because black slavery was introduced in northern Africa and the Mediterranean by the Muslims, it can also be linked with Islam (Goldenberg 2003).

Another line of thought labels skin bleaching as a method to achieve more beauty. One should note that in this context, beauty means Western, European-defined beauty. Donna Hope (2011) suggests—based on the Jamaican dancehall culture—that skin lightening and bleaching is more appropriately associated with modern modes and models of “appropriate” fashion and style that are socially and culturally relevant on the terrain of identities that fit across the dancehall stage. Christopher A. D. Charles (2003), who has studied the Jamaican bleaching scene, also defends the view that Jamaicans indeed bleach to appear beautiful and attract a partner. But he also says that the people who bleach have been misled into believing that the only standard of beauty is the one defined by European ideals and that in Jamaican society a negative representation of dark skin indicates that dark skin is devalued, whereas light skin is valued (Charles 2009). The two lines of thought (bleaching is a consequence of racism and bleaching is a method to obtain more beauty) might seem at first sight unrelated, but the striving for Western beauty can easily be viewed as an internalized, nonovert defense mechanism against racism.

A few authors see skin bleaching as a mental disorder, for example, Daudi Azibo (2011), who labels skin bleaching in Africa and people of African descent as a disease, which he names “skin-bleaching and skin-lightening behavior.” It is based on psychological “misorientation” caused by living under Eurasian domination and cultural principles, instead of African values. Azibo sees it as a self-destruction disorder. His ideas are in accordance with the self-hate thesis, proposed by many. Charles (2003), however, has doubts regarding this self-hate hypothesis, at least in Jamaicans. Charles found—in a comparative study between a small sample of bleachers and nonbleachers, measuring the self-esteem score—the two groups showing the same average score. Regarding the idea of bleaching being a mental disorder, it might be of some interest to take note of the view of the Dutch psychiatrist Joost à Campo (2004) who is, incidentally, unfamiliar with the phenomenon of skin bleaching (Menke, 2011, personal communication with Dutch psychiatrist Joost à Campo, at his office at “the Stichting Mondriaan Zorggroep,” Heerlen, the Netherlands). According to à Campo, conspicuous changes in appearance, due to manipulation, can be manifestations of a loss of ego boundaries and sense of reality. He refers to some people in identity crisis manipulating their appearance, for example, tattooing, piercing, plastic surgery, and gender change, sometimes

heralding a prepsychotic phase. From a survey among 171 healthy volunteers, he concludes that manipulations of the appearance are related to mild (pre) psychotic symptoms (à Campo et al. 2004). Taking an assumed analogy between skin bleaching and these examples of manipulation to one's appearance as starting point, the hypothesis can (carefully) be proposed that among a given population practicing skin bleaching, some individuals might exist with a mental structure that on the one hand drives them to bleach but at the same time comprises the basis for mental disintegration. Further research might clarify this hypothesis.

The last idea to be mentioned here, which can be considered as a conspiracy thesis, is from Awa Thiam (1986), an idea also defended by Azibo (2011) and others. According to this thesis, skin bleaching was invented by whites to keep their race pure, because by bleaching blacks can become lighter without mating with whites; moreover, it is considered a way to make blacks extinct. This view resembles other conspiracy ideas to explain medical and social phenomena, like the idea that AIDS/HIV was deliberately constructed to extinguish the black race.

Conclusion

Pigmentary disorders are very common worldwide. Some (especially disorders of hypopigmentation) can be considered a heavy burden on people of color, but despite this, these diseases are getting little scientific and educational attention. The three diseases discussed in this chapter (vitiligo, albinism, and leprosy) can be associated with (sometimes serious) physical complaints, but indeed also with strong mental suffering. The latter is the result of stigmatization and of prejudice and discrimination connected with disease-related stigma. Skin bleaching, a common and probably increasing phenomenon in people of color worldwide, is categorized as a type of pigment manipulation. It basically stems from racial discrimination, although this is not always recognized by the people who practice bleaching. People apply bleaching agents to hopefully narrow the color gap and thus improve their lives. But ironically, when the individual who bleaches the skin experiences an unwanted pigmentary side effect (like exogenous ochronosis or leucoderma en confetti), the procedure itself induces (or increases preexisting) color-related stigma and thus mental suffering, instead of bringing the hope for psychological and social strengthening. Therefore, pigmentary disorders and skin bleaching are not only connected by the fact that they are pigment-related phenomena in biological sense but also through pigment-related stigmatization.

Skin bleaching is a racialized issue. Regarding pigmentary disorders, however, this matter of being racialized is much more problematic. So far, there has been little research into the relationship between racism and pigmentary disorders. However, there are some indications that these diseases are indeed racialized. Pigmentary disorders, particularly those characterized by hypopigmentation, are more visible and more stigmatized in people of color. As we have discussed, leprosy is a racialized disease, although the reason for this is intricate and due not only to

pigmentation abnormality. Furthermore there are suggestions that albinism and vitiligo, which is (historically) linked in some countries with leprosy, are also racialized pigmentary disorders, at least in certain societies. However, this premise that pigmentary disorders are racialized has to be further sustained and specified by medical-anthropological-oriented research. The term racialized means that the race or the ethnicity of a given individual (patient) plays a role in the way others (including medical doctors) view and approach this individual (patient). Finally, it is important to note that the proposed idea that pigmentary disorders are racialized is no more than a hypothesis but worthwhile to investigate further because research might increase our understanding of the psychosocial structure and context of people with these diseases, thereby helping to improve our (professional) approach toward them.

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Chapter 13

Skin Color and Blood Quantum: Getting the Red Out

Deb Bakken and Karen Branden

Introduction

The relationship between Native American tribes and the US government is complex and controversial. In the past, many policies were meant to be between two sovereign nations but resulted in being genocidal approaches created by the US government to rid the nation of the “red problem.” Physical acts of genocide, such as shootings, hangings, and the Wounded Knee massacre, throughout the history of the USA were obvious ways the government attempted to get rid of Native Americans. Other acts hidden behind claims of “helpful” assimilation (forced relocation, forced boarding schools (Child 1998), forced foster care, forced adoption) decimated Native American culture, families, and communities. Brave Heart and DeBruyn (1998) identify the results of this history, stating

American Indians and Alaska Natives are plagued by high rates of suicide, homicide, accidental deaths, domestic violence, child abuse, and alcoholism, as well as other social . . . Racism and oppression, including internalized oppression . . . are continuous forces that exacerbate these destructive behaviors. We suggest these social ills are primarily the product of a legacy of chronic trauma and unresolved grief across generations. It is proposed that this phenomenon, which we label historical unresolved grief, contributes to the current social pathology, originating from the loss of lives, land, and vital aspects of Native culture promulgated by the European conquest of the Americas. (p. 60)

This powerful racism and oppression toward Native Americans has been based on skin color. It is important to recognize that Native Americans have been visually identified, as all minority groups in the USA have been. “Indians” look a certain way, skin color being one identifier—no matter how inappropriate and unreliable. The issue of skin color/blood quantum is one example of the ongoing historical

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traumas that continue to impact Native Americans. “Skin color/blood quantum” as an identification method is a process that often is not seen as a skin color issue, but it certainly began as one. This chapter will discuss the various definitions of skin color/blood quantum, the history of skin color/blood quantum, the creation of two Native American populations as a result of skin color/blood quantum, and ways Native Americans can liberate themselves from skin color/blood quantum oppression. The Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) is one of the tribes that is continually and negatively impacted by this concept; one tribal voice is used throughout this discussion as an example of this impact.

The History of Skin Color/Blood Quantum

Skin color/blood quantum in relation to Native Americans began when the US government wanted to know who were the members of each tribe, so the government could deliver goods (based on population numbers) according to treaty agreements. Rather than take tribal word for who was a member, the US government demanded “proof” that somebody was an “actual” tribal member. In this way, government officials took control of the decisions about who was or who was not a tribal member, beginning with simple statements like “this person is a half blood.” This is when Native Americans began to lose their identities. Eventually, tribal membership was determined by the amount of “Indian” blood an individual could prove was in his lineage.

The Beginnings of the Skin Color/Blood Quantum Concept

Many people might say that skin color/blood quantum began for tribes in the Upper Midwest during the 1930s or the 1950s, when enrollment committees were created, and tribes officially accepted (by their own decision-making process) that members would be required to demonstrate having 25% tribal blood quantum. However, the reality in skin color/blood quantum began long before that, and Forbes (2000) presents a more accurate history.

Many Native People have gotten so used to the idea of ‘blood quantum’ (degree of ‘blood’) that sometimes the origin of this racist concept is forgotten. Its use started in 1705 when the colony of Virginia adopted a series of laws which denied civil rights to any ‘negro, mulatto, or Indian’ and which defined the above terms by stating that ‘the child of an Indian, and the child, grandchild, or great grandchild of a negro shall be deemed accounted, held, and taken to be a mulatto.’ Thus both a person of American race and a person of half-American race (a ‘half-blood’ in other words) were treated as legally inferior persons.

... In 1866 Virginia decreed that ‘Every person having one-fourth or more Negro blood shall be deemed a colored person, and every person not a colored person having one-fourth or more Indian blood shall be deemed an Indian.’ (This is perhaps where the one-quarter blood concept used by the Bureau of Indian Affairs originated). The Federal government began to also use ‘degree of blood’ in the latter part of the nineteenth-century, especially in

relation to the enrollment of persons before the Dawes allotment commission. The use of 'full,' 'one-half,' etc. at that time was both an extension of the previous racist system and also a step in terminating Native Americans.

Skin color/blood quantum has been a government force for a long period of time and not only for Native Americans. The basic idea of blood quantum has always been based on skin color: The lighter you are, the more "competent" and less "inferior" you are. Blood quantum was a way for "white" people to somehow quantify their racist assumption of how people looked. In racist terminology, it is the delusional justification needed to keep the system going. The concept is the more white blood one has, the lighter one is, and the more competent and the more worthy of respect. Forbes (2000) summarizes this process well by stating

... Persons with greater amounts of white ancestry were assumed to be more competent than persons with lesser amounts. In other words, the degree of white blood was much more important than the degree of American ancestry. The white blood entitled an Indian citizen to greater privileges, including being able to have 'wardship' restrictions removed, being able to sell property, acquire the right to vote in state and federal elections, and so on. Thus it may be that many persons chose to exaggerate their amount of white ancestry when enrolling. Persons without white ancestry were restricted persons, with the Bureau controlling their financial lives. It was also expected that when a person became 'competent' (white enough) he [or she] would no longer be an Indian and that process would eventually terminate a tribe's existence.

For the Anishinaabe, the result has been a complicated weaving of oppression throughout generations, taking over cultural ways of tribal membership and self-identity. For an articulate and complete discussion of this process see *The White Earth Tragedy: Ethnicity and Dispossession at a Minnesota Anishinaabe Reservation* by Melissa L. Meyer (1994) and Hilger (1998) and Weil (1989). Also see Ebbott (1985). The effect is that one member of the family may be enrolled and another may not be. Children who have grown up knowing they are Indian are being told they are not Indian because they do not have enough blood quanta. Best friends and families are separated because of skin color/blood quantum eligibility requirements for reservation schools and housing. Children are devastated by this form of labeling and are forced to deal with feelings of inadequacy, inequality, and rejection, which last a lifetime. How can we expect our children to understand when we as adults don't understand the reason for discrimination? There is no way honestly to explain it or justify it. We are training our children to act this way toward each other. It is no shock that our children would have severe reactions to such treatment. Colonization has many side effects: the worst being that it is inherited, mutates, and is contagious. In both *Black Skin, White Mask* (1967) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), Frantz Fanon recounts growing up thinking of himself as French "only to discover as far as they were concerned he was only an imposter." The forced label of "imposter" represents the real oppression of labeling one skin color as less powerful than another. The skin color/blood quantum policies create the same syndrome. Unless you are a card-carrying Indian you are an imposter. Understanding the definition of skin color/blood quantum and the processes around it will help demonstrate this point more effectively.

What Is Skin Color/Blood Quantum?

The definition of skin color/blood quantum depends on who is asked. A somewhat complex discussion of skin color/blood quantum is found on the US Government Printing Office (GPO) and the Bureau of Indian Affairs websites (BIA 2011). A Certificate of Degree of Indian or Alaska Native Blood (CDIB) and the application process are described in a GPO document (BIA 2000, 20776): “A Certificate of Degree of Indian or Alaska Native Blood (CDIB) certifies that an individual possesses a specific degree of Indian blood of a federally recognized Indian tribe(s) . . . We issue CDIBs so that individuals may establish their eligibility for those programs and services based upon their status as American Indians and/or Alaska Natives. A CDIB does not establish membership in a federally recognized Indian tribe, and does not prevent an Indian tribe from making a separate and independent determination of blood degree for tribal purposes.”

Clearly, the federal government does not allow tribes to determine their own membership. This is disguised by the fact that tribes determine their membership internally. But the question that is often avoided is as follows: Why doesn't the government just ask for a list of members from each of the tribes? This is a unique policy that is not used by the US government in relation to any other sovereign nation.

The typical BIA discussion of skin color/blood quantum is quite different from the voices of Native Americans, which can be summarized by Roy Cook (2000), in the following:

The question of who's really an American Indian, what with the variation in blood quantum requirements from tribe to tribe, is confusing enough, and it's mostly because the Federal government has a long history of meddling, claiming the right to tell Indian people who they are and who they ought to be . . . Blood Quantum is the total percentage of your blood that is tribal native due to bloodline . . . As to how it affects you, that is a matter of some debate. Some Native Americans will never recognize you as “Indian” unless you are an enrolled member of a Federally Recognized Tribe, Band, or Nation. Others will recognize you as “Indian” if you are making an honest effort to reconnect with your own ancestral culture.

Most Indians realize that the tribal rolls (and therefore the skin color/blood quantum process) are illegitimate and have been altered and misused for the benefit of others. They also realize that they continue to lose privileges and land. Land settlement disputes going all the way to court are continuous. However, there has been little done by the US government to rectify or apologize for the continuous exploitation of the Indian. The government is afraid admittance would come at a price that is too high and would abolish the myth that the Indian and the Pilgrim held hands and lived happily ever after. Annette Jaimes (1999) brings up very important points related to skin color/blood quantum:

Contrary to virtually universal practice, the United States has opted to preempt unilaterally the right of many North American indigenous nations to engage in this most fundamental level of internal decision making . . . Typically centering upon a notion of ‘blood quantum’ – not especially different in its conception from the eugenics code once adopted by Nazi Germany in its effort to achieve ‘racial purity,’ or currently utilized by South Africa to

segregate Blacks and 'coloreds' – this aspect of U.S. policy has increasingly wrought havoc with the American Indian sense of nationhood (and often the individual sense of self) over the past century. (p. 280)

A CDIB is needed prior to enrollment into a federally recognized tribe. Treaty benefits are controlled by the government and still require a 1/4 blood degree to be eligible. This form of identification is not used to identify any other race; its only use is to control those who are considered Native American, so the federal government can abide by treaty agreements. Its only purpose is to take control over the number of Native Americans so the resources required by treaty be reduced. It cannot even be used for any other type of identification, such as a passport.

The question many people who are unfamiliar with this process have is, "why do tribes use the skin color/blood quantum system?" The most general answer is that oppression works. It impacts large numbers of people and their individual identities. It impacts everyone and, as Native Americans have been disadvantaged by this system, white people have benefited from this system in many ways. Many tribes using the 1/4 blood requirement were and are attempting to protect themselves from "outsiders," which is not unwarranted given the historical relationship with outsiders. This process is a continuation of genocide as is demonstrated by a clear understanding of the Native American population.

The Real Native American Population Versus the Federal Government List

There are important misunderstandings about what is happening with the Native American population (Durham 1991; Ericksen 1997; Willetto et al. 2004). For example, many people believe the population of Native Americans is increasing. It is true that according to the Census Bureau (Joseph et al. 1999; Thornton 1997), there has been a relatively recent increase of people who claim Native ancestry. Unfortunately, at the same time, the future decline of tribally enrolled members due to lower blood quantum is being neglected. The reason for the contradiction regarding the Native American population issue has been discussed by a number of researchers.

Alvin Joseph and colleagues (1999) include a number of researchers who discuss the reasoning for the increase in the numbers of people who claim to be Indian, while, at the same time, future tribal membership is in jeopardy. Patricia Nelson Limerick states the following (Joseph et al. 1999): "Set the blood quantum at one-quarter, hold to it as a rigid standard definition of Indians, let intermarriage proceed as it had for centuries, and eventually Indians will be defined out of existence. When that happens, the federal government will be freed of its persistent 'Indian problem'."

While tribal membership numbers are on the verge of serious decline, more people claim Native American ancestry on the census. Some scholars (Cornell 1984; Nagel 1995) demonstrate that the increase in Native Americans is a complex process linked to political activism. For Stephen Cornell (1984) this link is also the reason

radical natives have been silenced. Joane Nagel (1995) claims the Native population increase is due to “ethnic switching” brought on by “ethnic renewal,” stating “. . . ethnic renewal among the American Indian population has been brought about by three political forces: (1) Federal Indian policy, (2) American ethnic politics, and (3) American Indian political activism. Federal Indian policies have contributed to the creation of an urban, intermarried, bicultural American Indian population that lives outside traditional American Indian geographic and cultural regions. . . . [The] ‘Red Power’ Indian political activist movement of the 1960s and 1970s started a tidal wave of ethnic renewal that surged across reservation and urban Indian communities, instilling ethnic pride and encouraging individuals to claim and assert their ‘Indianness’.”

Russell Thornton (1997) articulates this as well, stating

The twentieth-century increase in Native American population reflected in successive US Censuses can also be attributed to changes in the identification of individuals as ‘Native American’. Since 1960, the US Census has relied on self-identification to ascertain an individual’s race. Much of the increase in the American Indian population . . . from 523,591 in 1960 to 792,730 in 1970 to 1.37 million in 1980 to over 1.8 million in 1990 resulted from individuals not identifying themselves as American Indian in an earlier census, but doing so in a later one . . . Why did this occur? The political mobilization of Native Americans in the 1960s and 1970s, along with other ethnic pride movements, may have removed some of the stigma attached to a Native American racial identity. (pp. 34–35)

Thornton (1997) goes on to explain the more important point related to Native American identity and the literal survival of tribes:

Taking into account the high rates of intermarriage (Thornton 1997), it has been projected that within the next century, the proportion of those with a one-half or more blood quantum will decline to only 8 percent of the American Indian population, whereas the proportion with less than a one-fourth blood quantum will increase to around 60 percent. Moreover, these individuals will be increasingly unlikely to be enrolled as tribal members. Even if they are tribal members, a traditional cultural distinctiveness may be replaced by mere social membership if language and other important cultural features of American Indian tribes are lost . . . However, for the US Government, decreasing blood quanta of the total Native American population may be perceived as meaning that the numbers of Native Americans to whom it is obligated have declined.

The fairly recent increase in the number of people claiming a Native American label is a positive change. The ideas that people feel less stigmatized and more politically powerful are certainly important gains in Native American communities and identities. Unfortunately, the coinciding decline in tribal membership is something that needs to be addressed if the systems of oppression are to be broken completely.

Liberation

In November of 2011, the first Tribal Cultural Competency Training, sponsored by the Upper Mississippi Mental Health Center (UMMHC) (2011), was held in Bemidji, Minnesota. The keynote address, by Dr. John Gonzalez, is “Liberation

Psychology: Helping Clients by Healing Ourselves.” Dr. Gonzalez began his presentation by quoting Stephen Biko (1972): “The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed.” It gets to the real impact of oppression. The oppression of Native Americans did not stop with physical genocide and obvious acts of cultural genocide. It continues today and has been so effective that Native Americans oppress themselves and other Native Americans. To combat it, we must understand the impact it has had on the minds of the oppressed. Eduardo Duran and colleagues (2008) identify the complex issues associated with historical trauma and offer ways psychologists and other mental health professionals can help Native Americans to heal: “All people have gone through some form of historical trauma that continues to cause confusion and suffering in the present. If the historical soul wounding is not effectively dealt with, each person, as well as their descendants, will be doomed to experience and perpetuate various forms of psychic and spiritual suffering in the future. For these reasons, it is important that counselors understand . . . how history affects the present mental well-being of persons from marginalized racial/cultural groups in general and Native communities in particular . . .” (p. 288).

This is true of the Anishinaabe community as well. Some important changes must occur in order for healing to take place. Understanding the impact of historical trauma and grief are vital to the recovery process. Anishinaabe tribal government and enrollment should evolve from Anishinaabe values and beliefs, the most important being to consider our actions in the past seven generations and do what will benefit the next seven generations. Do it with honesty, truth, love, courage, wisdom, humbleness, and respect. Tribal enrollment or membership through skin color/blood quantum has been forced on Native Americans through colonization and is an attempt at racial genocide. Many tribal members know the history behind the skin color/blood quantum requirement and the tribal constitution. The tribal constitution is a business plan developed by the government for tribes and has nothing to do with Native American values or beliefs. Now the question is why tribes continue to use it as a tool for establishing tribal membership and benefits.

There are serious concerns among members of the Anishinaabe tribe, concerns that intermarriage with other tribes as well as with other races means the tribe will soon be without membership if 1/4 Indian blood quantum continues to be the requirement for membership. There are also concerns about the declining tribal language, beliefs, community, and values. Many believe that having these should be a requirement for enrollment.

There are expressed sentiments that real Indians will not be getting what is rightfully theirs, including financial distributions, land settlements, health care, education, and housing. Economically this may put a strain on the tribe and the government. The Cherokee have lineal enrollment, with an enormous enrollment through lineage. The Cherokee have worked with lineal enrollment for years, and they could serve as an example.

There are also sentiments regarding oppressing our own people. There are those who are enrolled and those who are not. Are Indians using the same genocidal tactics, which were used on them, toward their own children and grandchildren?

Do you disown your family and friends because they eat too much or need medical care and housing? Would you let them die without lifting a finger? Do you disown them because they are crippled, diseased, broke, or of a different color? Do you starve them because they don't do as they are told? Do you separate them or send them to their room so they don't act out? Do you disown them because they don't look like you or act like you? Is selfishness what your parents taught you? Do you ask to see someone's enrollment card before they enter your house? If your answer to these questions is yes, then you have become the oppressor. These individuals are Native American children and grandchildren. We have been separated from them because, through the centuries, Native Americans have been told what to do, where to go, how to act, and who is an Indian. This is part of a much larger system of oppression that happens on a global scale. Many Native Americans understand this relationship because colonization has the same impact no matter where it happens.

Colonialism continues today through policy enactment; this is called "development" in Third World countries, with a precedent for countries to look and act the way America and other technology-advanced countries act. This is a colonialist view of civilizing those that do not look or act like the dominant society. It is implying that they are less than acceptable and unequal to the dominant society. Development, colonization, and hegemonic curriculum do not take into account the views, beliefs, or needs and wants of the "uncivilized." The dominant culture continues to enforce their will and desires on the less powerful for their gain; this is the reason for class and race. This is what capitalistic colonialism has given society: a racist, classist, and egocentric attitude toward others. Albert Memmi (1965) states "There is an irony to this: those among the oppressed who do the oppressor's dirty work frequently find themselves at war with their own consciences. They may be at war with their own consciences, but the lure and security associated with the status quo usually prevail."

Colonization affects all of society; social institutions enforce and reinforce selfishness, inequality, and greed. Individuals are educated to work hard to reach the American Dream, when in reality this is virtually impossible. Very few people ever achieve the American Dream. Those who have are not going to let it go without a fight. There is reinforcement of conformity for capitalistic behavior in education, health care, advertising, television, and so forth. Capitalism is based on white male superiority staying at the top. Colonization is justification for unwarranted deviant behavior toward another in the pursuit of influence, power, and greed. Colonization behavior has become socially acceptable. Americans have been trained to do the dirty work of the oppressor.

Colonization and capitalism perpetuate prejudices through displaced blame on others for our problems by (1) categorizing individuals into groups, by thinking of others as being less to make ourselves look better to others or feel better about ourselves, (2) identifying groups as good or bad giving reason to treat them worse than equals, and (3) by accepting privileges for being in a certain group. An individual does this all day long without even thinking about it.

How do we change what we cannot see? It is only through recognition of one's own actions and finding the truth behind them. Why do we do what we do? It is

looking inside and finding the truth to recognize Native American cultural values and to listen to the sound of your heart. These values are contrary to capitalist values, which focus on the individual; the importance does not lie in the individual self, but extreme attention is given to the other and to the generations to follow.

It is our hope that the great tribes of this nation will free themselves from the racism and oppression that is inherent in the concept of skin color/blood quantum. We must always be reminded that people are not to be researched for the help they can be given but for the lessons we can learn from a group who has survived so much and forever walks with the blood of ancestors, one drop being enough. We can learn to heal on a global level by being part of the healing of Native Americans. To see an example of the story of survival see Peacock and Wisuri's (2002) *Ojibwe saasa inaabidaa: We Look in all Directions*. Also Deloria (1998) and Deloria and Wildcat (2001) discussion of culture and education. It is the strength of the Native American people that we need to understand. That is the real impact of oppression. It causes us to focus on issues like skin color/blood quantum while pushing the positive story to the side. It is with this intent that we share some Anishinaabe values with you. Carry them home.

The following Anishinaabe Values and Traditional Code of Ethics are from White Earth Tribal and Community College (Gaawaabaabiganikaag Gabegikendaa-sowigamig), in Mahnomen, Minnesota (WETCC 2006):

WETCC Anishinaabe Values

- *Debwewin*. The literal translation of this word is the sound of your heart. Each of us holds the truth in our heart, and when we live the value of debwewin, we express that truth in everything we do.
- *Zoongide'ewin*. The literal translation of the word is strong heart. When we have a strong heart, we are able to face challenges with courage and integrity. A person living the value of zoongide'ewin acknowledges her own weaknesses and faces them with a strong heart.
- *Manaaji'idiwin*. When we live the value of manaaji'idiwin we give respect to each other. In the Anishinaabe worldview, everything has a spirit and therefore deserves respect. This concept is included in this word.
- *Gwayakwaadiziwin*. The literal translation of this word is to be correct or straight in everything that we do. If an individual lives the value of gwayakwaadiziwin, she must do what is right for the group and hold herself and others to high standards of integrity.
- *Zaagi'idiwin*. If we act out of love for each other and ourselves in everything we do, we are living the value of zaagi'idiwin.
- *Nibwaakaawin*. The literal translation of this word is an abundance of wisdom. When we live the value of nibwaakaawin, we seek to learn all that we can in a respectful manner and take the time to reflect upon our teachings.

- *Dabasendizowin*. When we live the values of debwewin, zoongide’ewin, manaaji’idiwin, gwayakwaadiziwin, zaagi’idiwin, and nibwaakaawin, we can hold ourselves in low regard as this word indicates without having low self-esteem. We understand that we are humble beings and conduct ourselves accordingly.

Traditional Code of Ethics

As we live the seven teachings the way our ancestors did, gibimiwidoomin gidinwewininaan (we are carrying along the way that we were given to sound).

We further express these values through the following traditional code of ethics:

1. Each morning upon rising and each evening before sleeping, give thanks for the life within you and for all life, for good things the Creator has given you and others, and for the opportunity to grow a little more each day. Consider your thoughts and actions of the past day and seek for the courage and to be a better person. Seek for the things that will benefit everyone. Nibwaakaadiziwin. Zoongide’eiwin. Manaaji’idiwin. Dabasendizowin. Gwayakwaadiziwin. Debwewin.
2. Respect means “to feel or show honor or esteem for someone or something” understanding that we are all on the circle of life and everyone and everything is important. Showing respect is the basic law of life. Manaaji’idiwin. Zaagi’idiwin. Gwayakwaadiziwin.
 - Treat every person, from the tiniest child to the oldest elder, with respect at all times.
 - Special respect should be given to elders, parents, teachers, and community leaders.
 - No person should be made to feel “put down” by you: Avoid hurting others’ hearts as you would a deadly poison.
 - Touch nothing that belongs to someone else (especially sacred objects) without permission, or an understanding between you.
 - Respect the privacy of every person. Never intrude in a person’s quiet moments or personal space.
 - Never walk between or interrupt people who are conversing.
 - Speak in a soft voice, especially when you are in the presence of elders, strangers, or others to whom special respect is due.
 - Do not speak unless invited to do so at gatherings where elders are present (except to ask what is expected of you, should you be in doubt).
 - Never speak about others in a negative way, whether they are present or not.
 - Treat the earth and all her aspects as your mother. Show deep respect to the mineral plant and the animal worlds. Do nothing to pollute the air or the soil. If others would destroy our mother, rise up with wisdom to defend her.

- Show deep respect for the beliefs and religions of others.
 - Listen with courtesy to what others say, even if you feel what they are saying is worthless. Listen with your heart.
3. Respect the wisdom of people in council. Once you give an idea to the council or a meeting, it no longer belongs to you. It belongs to the people. Respect demands that you listen intently to the ideas of others in council and that you should not insist that your ideas prevail. Indeed, you should freely support the ideas of others if they are true and good, even if those ideas are quite different from the ones you contributed. The clash of the ideas brings forth the spark of truth.
 4. Always treat your guests with honor and consideration. Give your best food, your best blankets, the best part of your house, and your best service to your guests. Zaagi'idiwin. Manaaji'idiwin. Gwayakwaadiziwin.
 5. The hurt of one is the hurt of all; the honor of one is the honor of all. Zaagi'idiwin. Dabasendizowin. Debwewin.
 6. Receive strangers and outsiders with a loving heart and as members of the human family. Zaagi'idiwin. Manaaji'idiwin.
 7. All the races and nations in the world are like the different colored flowers of one meadow. All are beautiful children of the Creator and must be respected. Manaaji'idiwin. Zaagi'idiwin. Dabasendizowin. Debwewin.
 8. To serve others, to be of use to family, community, nation, or the world is one of the purposes for which human beings have been created. Do not fill yourself with your own affairs and forget your most important task. True happiness comes only to those who dedicate their lives to the service of others. Dabasendizowin. Zaagi'idiwin. Zoongide'eiwin. Nibwaakaawin.
 9. Observe moderation and balance in all things. Nibwaakaawin. Manaaji'idiwin. Zaagi'idiwin. Gwayakwaadiziwin. Dabasendizowin.
 10. Know those things that lead to your well-being and those things that lead to your destruction. Nibwaakaawin.
 11. Listen to and follow the guidance given to your heart. Expect guidance to come in many forms: in prayer, in dreams, in times of quiet solitude, and the words and deeds of wise elders and friends. Debwewin.

Do these things and the human gulfs that are perpetrated by skin color and blood quantum will be closed.

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Chapter 14

The Impact of Skin Color on Mental and Behavioral Health in African American and Latina Adolescent Girls: A Review of the Literature

Alfiee M. Breland-Noble

Literature regarding the significance of skin color and its impact on diverse populations of color dates back many years and includes a primary focus within group life course stratifications (Christina 2000; Glenn 2009; Hall 2008; Hughes and Hertel 1990). In particular, historical research highlighted the intersection of the institutions of slavery and interracial relationships (coerced and voluntary) on multiple facets of life including employment, familial and interpersonal relationships, self-concept, and socioeconomic status (SES) (Russell et al. 1993). More recent research suggests the many ways beyond family and intra-racial interactions that skin color impacts life trajectories and outcomes for various ethnic groups. In particular, research has reported that skin color affects life outcomes in physical health (Luisa et al. 2006), mental health, interpersonal interactions (Eric et al. 2002; Wade and Sara 2005), career prospects (Morales 2009), socioeconomic status (Gomez 2000; Hill 2000), perceived and experienced discrimination (Klonoff and Landrine 2000), and availability and type of romantic partners (Hunter 1998; Qian and Cobas 2004; Ross 2004).

While the majority of research on skin color and colorism (internalized, intra-racial skin-tone bias) has focused on African descended people, including African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans, more research has emerged exploring issues of colorism among Latinos, people of Arab descent, Asians, South Asians, Asian Americans, and multiracial people (Glenn 2009; Grewal 2009; Hall 1997, 2011; Herring et al. 2004; Rondilla and Spickard 2007; Sarita and Niva 1997). Overall, colorism research paints a clear picture of the impacts that variance in skin color can have on life course and life outcomes. Researchers have extensively examined the impact of colorism on the adult life course with a special focus on women. In particular, research points to the manners in which colorism among African

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American women and Latinas impacts self-concept, mate choice, social mobility, and employment status. Popular media directed toward women regularly explores this issue via annual stories on how colorism is manifested among women of color. As an example, I note two recent stories written for Latina and African American readers. In the first, the publishers of *Latina* magazine devote a series of pages to identify and examine famous “Afro-Latinas”: Zoë Saldaña, Gina Torres, and Rosario Dawson (Rosario 2009). In a second story, from *The Washington Post*, Marita Golden, author of a widely read personal account of growing up with and overcoming colorism entitled *Don’t Play in the Sun* (2004), recalled the following feelings about the first time she saw the soon-to-be First Lady, Michelle Obama, “We were holding our breath, literally. Then when we saw his wife, my friends of all hues felt enormously proud that he was married to a woman that looked like Michelle Obama. The fact we had to hold our breath and the fact we had to be proud spoke volumes about where colorism is today” (Brown 2009, p. 4). While research examines colorism issues among adult women of African and Latina descent, very little focuses on adolescent girls of these two ethnic groups. Of the research that does exist regarding skin color issues among African American and Latino youth, much of it reinforces the greater value placed on examining interracial racism instead of intra-racial colorism. Given the varied outcomes attributed to colorism (most of which implicate skin color bias in differential life chances for African descended and Latino people across the life span), it seems apparent that an examination of how colorism impacts young people early on would have significant implications for their long-term life course. Ostensibly, the literature regarding colorism in youth is treated as many other bodies of work regarding youth problems, interpreting them as facts that can be derived from downward extrapolations of data from adults rather than exploring these issues in youth outright (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 1999).

Why then focus on adolescent girls and colorism? A number of reasons come to mind. First, limited research exists in this area, highlighting a significant gap in the literature. Second, recent calls regarding the health and well-being of the youth population point to the significance of understanding outcomes and trajectories of health and illness in youth to provide context for preventive interventions, particularly in the areas of behavioral health and psychological well-being (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, P.H.S. 2001). Third, youth inhabit a unique developmental space likely filled with the greatest number of gains, changes, and areas of malleability of any of the life stages. With this in mind, this chapter seeks to add to the literature in a significantly understudied area, colorism, skin color, and their impact on the lives of African and Latina adolescent girls. Given census data identifying African Americans and Latinos as the two largest non-White racial and ethnic groups in the USA (Ennis et al. 2011; U.S. Bureau of the Census/Population Division 2010), and given the limited research based on the mental health of adolescent girls in general, an exploration into the lives of African American girls and Latinas seems particularly warranted.

In this chapter, I explore the socialization process of colorism and its subsequent impact on the mental and behavioral health of African American and Latina

adolescent girls, paying particular attention to health outcomes and psychological well-being. Mental disorders including anxiety, depression, and behavioral problems—as well as the protective factors associated with socialization in response to colorism and issues related to skin color—are explored and discussed via a review of the current and historical literature. It is important to note the limited literature in the area of colorism and youth. This may be in part a result of the great emotion and pain associated with the topic by people of color, including youth. Therefore this chapter incorporates the larger body of research in the thesis and dissertation literature with recent empirical studies from seasoned researchers to provide the fullest picture of current research on colorism and adolescent girls of color.

Socialization to Colorism Among Latina and African American Adolescent Girls

Colorism is a highly sensitive issue among African American girls and Latinas (Davis 2005). Since female adolescence involves such great focus on physical appearance and interpersonal relationships, girls may be particularly susceptible to phenomena focused on their phenotypes. JeffriAnne Wilder and Colleen Cain's (2011) qualitative exploration of the transmission and resulting impact of colorism on African American young women and girls points to the deep-seated and often subconscious ways in which colorism seeped into the young study participants' consciousness and impacted how they viewed themselves and the world. Specifically, the authors describe the powerful transmission of colorism as it was spread almost exclusively through matrilineal avenues. Of interest is the discussion of how "powerful maternal influences can be in shaping self-perception and intimate relationship choices . . ." and how even brief exchanges between mothers and daughters "speaks volumes to the ways in which mothers can promote the negative ideals of colorism" (Wilder and Cain 2011, p. 589). In example after example, the authors describe how mothers, grandmothers, aunts, and other women encouraged young girls to select men of certain skin tones as partners, refrain from engaging in activities that might darken their skin, regard other African American women based on their skin tones, and to be aware of the ways in which African Americans of different skin tones were distinct from each other based primarily on the color of their skin. These ideas are echoed in popular culture literature like Marita Golden's memoir *Don't Play in the Sun* (2004) and Lawrence Otis Graham's *Our Kind of People* (1999). In particular, Golden describes the painful experience of her mother telling her to come out of the sun when she was just a young child because, in her mother's eyes, it would be difficult enough for Golden (who is dark skinned) to find a suitable light-skinned mate let alone if she allowed herself to become even darker by "playing in the sun" (Golden 2004). These types of stories abound in the literature on African American women and have begun to emerge from Latina adolescents and young women as well (Molinary 2007).

In *Race, Gender, and the Politics of Skin Tone* (2005), Margaret L. Hunter explores Mexican American women's experiences with colorism. Her work is supported by her published empirical work and research from E.H. Telzer and H. A. V. Garcia (2009), all of which suggest the multiple complexities faced by Mexican American and other Latinas regarding colorism. Telzer and Garcia (2009) point out the multiple names used to describe skin colors among Latinos, including *morena* for dark skinned, more African-featured women; *blanca* for women with very light skin and more European features; and *india* for women with more indigenous features and medium-toned skin (Telzer and Garcia 2009; Uhlmann et al. 2002). Additionally, a significant body of research points to the different socioeconomic trajectories experienced by Latinas based on colorism. This work includes anecdotal stories in which Latinas recount negative experiences associated with the lightness or darkness of their skin. I experienced this first hand as a counselor in an alternative school for at-risk students in New York City in the early 1990s. My caseload of students was comprised of approximately ten African American and Latino older adolescents or young adults (ages 15–21), with significant reading deficits—reading at least four to five grade levels below their same-age peers. In particular, two girls from the class stood out as they were two of only a few girls in the class and as they were the two Latinas of the group. One young woman, Dara (her name has been changed), identified as Puertorriqueña, classified herself as having medium-brown skin color, indigenous facial features, and black hair. The other young woman in the class, Christy, identified as Dominicana, and had very Scandinavian features—including very light skin, blue eyes, and dark blonde hair. Over the course of the academic year, the two bonded over a shared language (Spanish), the cultural similarities they possessed, and the cultural differences of their ancestors. Dara was also very outspoken and an extrovert, while Christy was extremely soft-spoken and generally shy. Prior to my interactions with these two adolescent Latinas, I personally had been unaware that colorism existed in among people other than African Americans. Dara in particular decided to educate me about the historical factors impacting the relationship between people from Puerto Rico and those from the Dominican Republic, and, of direct relevance to our topic, she introduced me to the concept of colorism among Latinos.

Dara was vociferous in her explanations regarding how she and Christy were treated differently outside the confines of our classroom and in their home communities. She also pointed out how the microcosm of our school reflected her larger world outside, given her experience of male Latino peers responding more favorably to Christy than to her. While Dara often joked about her experiences with colorism during my year as her counselor, it was evident to me that her jokes served as her coping mechanism for the pain she experienced in being with her good friend Christy. Toward the end of our school year, Dara openly shared her thoughts and feelings with me during the weekly one-on-one mentoring time set aside for the students in our class; she illuminated instances of colorism (from her perspective) when she observed them in our classroom.

I vividly recalled my experiences with Dara and Christy when, in 2000, I presented my work on African American colorism at a Ronald McNair scholarship conference and poster session for undergraduate students as a large in Midwestern University (Breland and Hyliard 2000). At the time, there was a large group of students from Universidad de Puerto Rico participating in the summer program. I recall two older adolescent girls stopping to review my poster, which contains the famous portrait *Black is Black—Female* by Larry Poncho Brown (2007), and indicating (ironically) that they were unaware that colorism existed within cultural groups outside Latinos. They subsequently educated me about their personal experiences with colorism in their home country. Both girls were of medium to light skin tones and identified as Black Latinas. They spoke vividly of dating relationships, familial treatment, and even female friendships as all being impacted negatively by colorism. They also spoke of how colorism is rarely discussed openly among Latinos and how difficult it could be (as young girls) to navigate the terrain associated with colorism without social support. Overall, both experiences were powerful for me and highlighted the significance of colorism and the real impact it exerts on young women of diverse backgrounds.

These anecdotal experiences offer a sound backdrop to an exploration of the literature on colorism, mental health, and behavioral outcomes and provide a foundation on which to build a case for future research directions related to understanding the impact of colorism on Latinas and African American adolescent girls.

Colorism and Mental Health

Depression is a mood disorder causing significant disability worldwide with primary symptoms including sadness, hopelessness, low self-worth, low energy, and fatigue. It has been described as “the silent killer” because of its associations with suicide and self-harm activities (Breland-Noble and Poole 2009). In 2011, Wilder illuminated the relationship between skin color and mental health in youth by examining the impact of skin color on the life experiences of African American women across the life span. She argues that colorism was perpetuated more frequently by women than men and that colorism caused significant negative impacts during childhood and adolescence (Wilder and Cain 2011). Her view echoes a recurrent theme in popular African American literature and films as exhibited by books like *Don’t Play in the Sun* (Golden 2004) and *The Bluest Eye* (Morrison 1970), and films like *School Daze* (Lee 1988), each of which speaks directly to or alludes to the mental health impacts encountered by the protagonists, including anxiety and depression. A more recent short film by Nayani Thiyagarajah (2010), *Shadeism*, directly addresses the issue of colorism among racially diverse groups of older adolescent and young adult women. In the film, Thiyagarajah and her colleagues discuss the significant, though insidious, manners in which colorism is passed down via the culture of people of color and the detrimental mental health impacts this phenomenon exerts, including lowered self-concept and depression (Thiyagarajah 2010).

D.P. Stephens and A.L. Few (2007) also examine skin color in relation to adolescent perceptions of sexual attractiveness in women via music videos and find that, for African American boys, skin color (in this case, light skin) is a significant driver of the beauty ideal. Although the girls in the study identify satisfaction with their own skin colors, they also acknowledge that a lighter-skinned ideal is the preferred standard by their male peers. While Stephens and Few examine boys' and girls' perceptions of female attractiveness, Buchanan and colleagues (2008) examine African Americans college-aged women's self-perceptions of skin tone and its relationship to body satisfaction. Using path analysis, these researchers find that, among African American college women (including girls aged 18 and 19), regular monitoring of skin tone (i.e., consistent self-evaluating) is associated with lower body satisfaction overall.

Regarding Latina adolescents, even less research examines colorism and mental health, though the existent literature points to an important relationship between the two (Fegley et al. 2008). Recently, Erynn Masi de Casanova (2004) completed a colorism and self-esteem study on a significantly under researched population of adolescent girls, Ecuadorian Latinas. Using mixed methods, she determined that, like their African American counterparts, Ecuadorian girls describe the beauty ideal as "tall, thin, long yellow hair, and light eyes" (p. 296). Interestingly, when asked to self-identify an individual racial group (Black, White, or Mestizo), a subsample of the girls opt to skip the question altogether. This resistance to identifying skin color in Latinas is echoed by my own research from 2002, in which 33% of a sample of 12- to 14-year-old African American adolescents neglect to categorize their individual skin tones (Breland et al. 2002). The subset of the darker-skinned girls in de Casanova's study cohort demonstrates lower body image and self-esteem than their lighter-skinned peers. Further, it was noted that the female participants' skin colors appear to be confounded with socioeconomic status (SES) such that there was a direct correlation between lighter skin tone, higher SES, and living in a resource rich community (de Casanova 2004).

Although research on African American adolescent girls' and Latinas' perceptions of skin color and its subsequent impacts on mental health are sparse (with few if any direct links made between colorism and mental health), the emerging body of literature appears to suggest that the experience of navigating colorism can have negative mental health impacts for girls from both ethnic groups.

Colorism and Behavioral Health

A second facet of the impact of colorism on adolescent experiences is related to behavioral health and behavioral outcomes. I next explore outcomes related to incarceration rates, pregnancy, and racial or ethnic identity among adolescent Latina and African American girls. One of the most striking aspects of behavioral outcomes related to skin color and colorism is presented through recent research on incarceration rates and trajectories for African American women, including

adolescent girls. In 2011, researchers examined the relationship between African American women's skin tone (light or dark), the imposed prison sentence, and the length of incarceration for women in the North Carolina correctional system (Vigliano et al. 2011). Their findings suggest that light-skinned women (including a significant population of adolescent girls under the age of 20) receive lighter prison sentences and have shorter lengths of stay in North Carolina prisons. While the authors admit that the skin-tone variable—based on untrained correctional officer observation—as measured by the North Carolina Department of Corrections was susceptible to error, their findings remain striking and well aligned with similar findings regarding justice system outcomes based on colorism impacting African American men and boys nationwide (Eberhardt et al. 2006; Gyimah-Brempong and Price 2006).

Among Latinas, the issue of colorism impacts various aspects of their behavioral and physical health, from ethnic identity to childbirth weight. In some respects, this is unsurprising given the established literature indicating the significance of skin color on Latino adult life experiences. In fact, it is possible that the psychological, emotional, and socioeconomic impact of skin color on adult Latinos' lives trickles down to their children both directly and indirectly. Unfortunately, very little research explores this transmission of colorism and its subsequent impact on Latino youth within families. Of the limited literature that does exist regarding adolescent Latinas and colorism, Nancy S. Landale and R.S. Oropesa (2005) implemented a unique and innovative methodology to examine the birth weight of Puerto Rican infants born to mothers from both the island of Puerto Rico and multiple regions of the US mainland (including New York and five other geographic areas), using data from the Puerto Rican Maternal and Infant Health Study (PRMIHS). One-fourth of the sample was comprised of teen mothers (young women under the age of 20) and, unsurprisingly, the researchers discovered several behavioral health disadvantages associated with dark skin. Specifically, they determined that “mean birth weight of the infants declines regularly with the darkness of the mother's skin” and that these birth weight differences could not be explained by differences in the skin tone by SES interaction—darker-skinned women are more likely to come from lower SES families (Landale and Oropesa 2005, p. 383). Additionally, the researchers discovered that, compared to their lighter-skinned counterparts, darker-skinned women report less adequate prenatal care and higher rates of smoking during pregnancy.

Ethnic identity and socialization are two additional areas of interest in the study of skin color among Latino adolescents, including girls. In 2011, researchers examined the relationship between skin color, ethnic identity, and familial ethnic socialization in a sample of Latino adolescents, a majority of whom were older adolescent girls (51.5 % of the sample of 157 youth) (Gonzales-Backen and Umaña-Taylor 2011). Interestingly, they found a positive relationship between darker-skinned Latino youth, reported ethnic identity, and familial ethnic socialization such that the darker the skin color of the youth, the greater the number of messages she or he received regarding pride in Latino heritage and positive messages about being Latino or Latina. The same relationship was statistically insignificant among lighter-

skinned Puerto Rican youth. Thus, while Latino youth, including adolescent girls, are not impacted in exactly the same ways as African American youth and girls (based on the available literature), it is certainly the case that both groups of young women experience negative emotional and behavioral health impacts (along with some positive buffering in relation to racial socialization) associated with colorism.

Discussion and Future Directions

The purpose of this review of the literature is to examine the manners in which colorism impacts African American and Latina adolescent girls. I focus on this group given my individual experiences as a practicing psychologist who regularly hears messages regarding the import of skin color on the lives of young girls of color. The scarcity of literature on African American and Latina adolescent girls and colorism may result in part from the general scarcity of research on this topic and may be exacerbated by the general difficulty involved in attempting to both collect data in this area and encourage individuals to discuss their personal experiences in this area. Indeed, I encountered one of these barriers in my own research with adolescents and young adults in attempting to explore colorism among African Americans. Ostensibly, many African Americans are more comfortable discussing racism experienced from Whites than they are discussing colorism experienced within the ethnic group (Breland-Noble et al. 2003).

I initially anticipated a much more substantial body of literature related to African American and Latina adolescent girls, colorism, and mental health than I found in my review of the literature. I assumed that, given the significant anecdotal evidence to this effect encountered in my own research and clinical practice, surely there was an emerging literature in this area. The painful scars that many young women of color face related to the societal and familial messages they receive about their skin (across the skin color spectrum) warrant a larger body of research inquiry. It seems clear that Latinas and African American girls grapple with the issue of colorism, on multiple levels in the microcosms of their families and in the larger outside world. Based on this, it is important for researchers to begin to record and examine information on skin color when designing new studies that seek to understand mental health disparities, particularly for youth. The National Survey of American Life (Jackson et al. 2004) includes this type of information, and it is anticipated that, as research emerges regarding the subsample of adolescents included in the study, a greater body of knowledge will emerge regarding the impact of colorism on youth. While not limited to the two ethnic groups described in this chapter, research on colorism has been studied far more in these groups than in the multitude of other ethnic groups impacted by the phenomenon. I anticipate that future research, including my own, will begin to explore the topic of colorism and mental health among not only Latinas and African American girls but girls of various ethnic and racial backgrounds.

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Chapter 15

Characteristics of Color Discrimination Charges Filed with the EEOC

Joni Hersch

Introduction

There is substantial evidence of skin color discrimination in society as well as in the employment context.¹ A large and growing literature documents preferential treatment of those with lighter skin color in the USA and in many other cultures and countries. Studies of earnings show that African Americans (Hersch 2006; Goldsmith et al. 2006, 2007) and immigrants to the USA with legal status (Hersch 2008, 2011) with darker skin color have lower pay than their counterparts with lighter skin color.

One would expect this differential treatment on the basis of color to generate substantial discrimination litigation. Lawsuits on the basis of race and sex discrimination are frequent and highly visible. Despite considerable evidence of discrimination on the basis of skin color, there has been relatively little litigation on the basis of color discrimination. Consequently, we have little knowledge about the characteristics of color discrimination charges, the individuals who file charges, and the workplaces where the alleged discrimination occurs.

This chapter provides unique and extensive information about the legal environment of color discrimination in employment by examining the full set of color discrimination charges filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in a 10-year period, which I obtained under the Freedom of Information Act. From October 1, 1999 to February 28, 2010, there were 18,311 individual charges of color discrimination filed with the EEOC. I provide detailed information

¹Excellent introductions to this literature are provided by the books edited by Hall (2008) and Glenn (2009).

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on the characteristics of the color discrimination charges, such as whether the charges of color discrimination are in combination with discrimination on the basis of race, sex, national origin, or religion. I also provide information on the demographic characteristics of the individuals filing color discrimination charges and on the characteristics of the workplaces.

Understanding the nature of color discrimination charges is important because color discrimination is likely to be an increasingly important form of employment discrimination in the future for at least three reasons.

First, the number of color discrimination charges filed with the EEOC has increased dramatically since 1992. In recognition of ongoing concerns about race and color discrimination, in 2007 the EEOC launched the E-RACE (Eradicating Racism and Colorism from Employment) Initiative. The E-RACE Initiative seems to have raised awareness about color as a potential source of discriminatory treatment. As shown in this chapter, the number of color charges filed with the EEOC more than doubled between 2006 and 2008, and by 2009, there were almost as many charges of color discrimination as there were charges of religious discrimination (EEOC 2011a).

Second, the number of children born to parents of different races has risen, and accordingly, race is increasingly hard to categorize as many individuals report multiple races and mixed ancestry.² Mixed race adds to the range of skin colors observed in the USA and consequently increases the potential for discrimination on the basis of color.

Third, immigration leads to greater variety in the population's skin color and also adds a potential source of color discrimination. Many countries have well-recognized color hierarchies and discriminatory patterns established in the originating country that may persist after migration to the USA. As shown in this chapter, a large share of charges of color discrimination also includes national origin as an additional basis for the discrimination charge.

Background on Color Discrimination

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of color as well as on the basis of race, religion, sex, and national origin. The EEOC was established in 1965 and is the main federal agency charged with enforcing laws prohibiting discrimination in employment. Individuals who feel they have been discriminated against in employment must file a Charge of Discrimination with the EEOC or with the corresponding state or local Fair Employment Practices Agency (FEPA) in order to be eligible to file a private lawsuit against the employer. The EEOC investigates these charges and attempts to resolve the charge through

²An interesting side note is that in forecasting population trends the Census no longer assumes that the race of a child follows the race of the mother (US Census Bureau 2008).

mediation or informal methods. If the EEOC is not able to successfully resolve the case, the agency may bring suit in federal court. In most cases, the EEOC does not sue and will issue a “right to sue” notice giving the individual the right to pursue litigation.

The total number of individual charge filings per year since 1997 has been between 75,428 (in FY 2005) and 99,922 (in FY 2010) (EEOC 2010). Race discrimination claims are the most frequent, followed by sex discrimination claims.

Title VII does not define race or color. However, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) defines five racial categories that are used by the federal government for data collection (e.g., the Census): *American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and White*. These racial categories form the basis for race discrimination lawsuits. In traditional race discrimination cases, plaintiffs and defendants are of different races.

Skin color is closely related to race and often used interchangeably with race. For instance, the term “people of color” is frequently used to refer to those who are not racially identified as White. But there is no definition of skin color that has been promulgated by the federal government that can be used to classify individuals into groups based on skin color. Color claims can be made by individuals of any race as well as between individuals of the same race. The EEOC explains how color and race are distinct but related concepts as follows: *Color Discrimination: Even though race and color clearly overlap, they are not synonymous. Thus, color discrimination can occur between persons of different races or ethnicities, or between persons of the same race or ethnicity. Although Title VII does not define “color,” the courts and the Commission read “color” to have its commonly understood meaning – pigmentation, complexion, or skin shade or tone. Thus, color discrimination occurs when a person is discriminated against based on the lightness, darkness, or other color characteristic of the person. Title VII prohibits race/color discrimination against all persons, including Caucasians* (EEOC 2011b).

Often, what we know about discrimination in the legal context comes from tried cases and in particular cases for which there is a published decision or judicial opinion. So what little we know about how courts treat litigation on the basis of color discrimination comes from a handful of trials and publicized settlements. The vast majority of lawsuits of all types are resolved without trial, and very few cases involving color discrimination have been tried in court. In part, color discrimination is only a very small part of cases of employment discrimination—so small, in fact, that the EEOC website did not report a separate tally of the number of color discrimination charges filed with the EEOC.

Legal scholars have provided detailed analyses of the legal issues involved in proving color discrimination and analyses of the influential legal cases (Banks 2000; Jones 2000, 2010; Nance 2005). In the most visible cases of skin color discrimination, the parties are often of the same identified race but have different skin colors.

Notably, the usually observed preferential treatment of those with lighter skin color does not always hold in color discrimination cases involving individuals of the same race. Lawsuits have been brought by employees with light skin color who

claim adverse treatment by their darker colored supervisor, as well as by employees with darker color who claim adverse treatment by their lighter colored supervisor. For example, Tracy Walker, an African American clerk-typist with the IRS, sued for employment discrimination in 1989, claiming her dark-skinned Black supervisor was biased against lighter-skinned Blacks (*Walker v. Secretary of Treasury of IRS 1989*).³ In the other direction, Dwight Burch, a dark-skinned Black waiter at an Applebee's restaurant received \$40,000 in 2003 to settle a claim that his light-skinned Black supervisor was discriminating against him (EEOC 2003).

Charge Data Filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

As discussed earlier, individuals who believe they have been discriminated against in employment must file a Charge of Discrimination with the EEOC or FEPA in order to bring a private lawsuit. These individual charges provide the data analyzed in this chapter. The information available in the charge filings is reported by the individual making the complaint, by the employer, and by EEOC staff. Although federal sector employees are covered by Title VII, they have a different complaint process. Federal sector employees file complaints with their own agencies, which are required to investigate and attempt to resolve the complaints. If the resolution process is unsuccessful, then the employee can request a hearing before an EEOC administrative judge. Consequently, there are few charges reported for federal government employers.

The charge filings provide information about the statute under which the claim is filed, the basis for the claim (e.g., race, color, national origin), and the issue involved (e.g., terms/conditions, retaliation). All color discrimination charges are filed under Title VII, but many charges are also filed under additional statutes. Many claims report multiple bases and/or multiple issues.

The charge records also include some demographic information about the charging party (also called the complainant or appellant) and about the respondent (i.e., the party accused of responsibility for the claimed discrimination). Specifically, the records usually include information about the race, sex, national origin, and date of birth of the charging party. Information about the respondent includes institution type (e.g., private employer, educational institution, employment agency), location (city, county, state), firm size reported in categories, and industry code. The records also include filing and closing dates (for closed charges), the location of the office that received the claim (e.g., Nashville Area Office), whether the claim was reported to the EEOC or FEPA, and an indicator of strength of the claim based on the initial assessment of the claim (from "definitely litigate" to "dismiss").

³Although Walker lost this case on the merits, this case is widely cited as support for the legal validity of within-race colorism claims.

In order to examine color discrimination charges, I extract from the full set of charges in the EEOC data records claims that include “color” as at least one of the bases. Within this set of color discrimination charges, I examine whether the charge includes discrimination on the basis of race, religion, sex, and national origin in addition to discrimination on the basis of color. Below, I discuss the information available in the charge filings and describe how I code the variables examined in this chapter.

The EEOC charge filings provide detailed information on the specific nature of discrimination on the basis of race, religion, sex, and national origin. Specifically, if the charging party reports race discrimination, the charge record reports whether the race basis for the claim is American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Biracial/Multiracial, Asian, Black/African American, White, or other.⁴ More than one race basis may be indicated in the charge. If any race basis is recorded, I categorize the charge as including race as a basis. Note that the race basis for discrimination does not necessarily correspond to the race of the charging party. For instance, the EEOC resolved a 2006 race discrimination case that involved a White female employee who was terminated after her manager saw her biracial children (EEOC 2006).

Detailed information is similarly available for discrimination on the basis of national origin and religion. The charge record reports whether the national origin basis for the claim is East Indian; Hispanic; Mexican; Arab, Afghani or Middle Eastern; or other. More than one national origin basis can be indicated in the charge. As with claims with race as a basis, if any national origin basis is recorded, I categorize the charge as including national origin as a basis.

Religion as a basis for discrimination is recorded in seven categories: Catholic, Protestant, Sikh, Seventh Day Adventist, Jewish, Muslim, and other. Discrimination on the basis of more than one religion can be indicated in the charge, and if any of the listed bases for religion are recorded, I categorize the charge as including religion as a basis. The records do not record the religion of the charging party.

Sex as a basis for discrimination is reported in three categories: male, female, and pregnancy. I categorize the charge as including sex as a basis if any of these bases are recorded.

Characteristics of Charges

This section provides descriptive information about color discrimination charges filed with either the EEOC or the state or local FEPA. I examine the time period from FY 2000–FY 2009 (October 1, 1999–September 30, 2009), plus charges filed in the first 5 months of FY 2010. I refer to this period as “FY 2000–FY 2010 (5 months).”⁵

⁴The category “race basis – other” is now obsolete but was still in use in the period analyzed here.

⁵The data extract covers the period October 1, 1999–February 28, 2010. Any changes to the charge data after this time period will not be reflected in my statistical analysis.

Table 15.1 Color discrimination charges FY 2000–FY 2010^a

FY	Number of charges EEOC and FEPA
2000	1,424
2001	1,255
2002	1,505
2003	1,656
2004	1,062
2005	1,233
2006	1,353
2007	1,817
2008	2,827
2009	3,063
2010 (5 months)	1,116
Total charges	18,311

^aAuthor's calculations from EEOC Charge Data, October 1, 1999–February 28, 2010. This table reports the number of individuals who filed a charge with the EEOC or FEPA that includes color discrimination as a basis. Individuals may file charges claiming multiple types of discrimination

The EEOC reports on their website the number of charges they receive annually on the basis of race, sex, national origin, religion, retaliation, age, and disability (EEOC 2010, 2011a). However, the EEOC did not report separately the number of color discrimination charges in their tallies of other types of discrimination charges. Table 15.1 fills this gap by reporting the number of claims including color discrimination as at least one basis filed annually with the EEOC or FEPA, from FY 2000–FY 2010 (5 months).

As indicated in Table 15.1, there are 18,311 individual charges including color discrimination in this period filed with EEOC or FEPA.⁶ The number of charges more than doubled between FY 2000 and FY 2009, from 1,424 in FY 2000 to 3,063 in FY 2009. For comparison, there were only 374 charges reported to the EEOC in 1992 (EEOC 2007).

While the number of charges including color clearly increased over this time period, there is substantial variability from year to year. For example, almost 600 fewer color charges were filed in 2004 (1,062 charges) than in 2003 (1,656 charges). Most notable is the large increase between 2006 (1,353 charges) and

⁶There are 18,429 individual charges including color discrimination in this period, but 118 records are duplicates in every way except that the race of the charging party is recorded differently in different records (e.g., Black and Asian). I count these claims only once and assign an indicator for more than one race reported.

Table 15.2 Charge statistics by type of discrimination, all charges and color discrimination charges, FY 2009^a

Basis for discrimination charge	All charges ^b		Color discrimination charges ^c	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Race	33,579	36.0	2,593	84.7
Sex	28,028	30.0	771	25.2
National origin	11,134	11.9	961	31.4
Religion	3,386	3.6	282	9.2
Retaliation—all statutes	33,613	36.0	1,481	48.4
Total charges	93,277		3,063	

^aBecause individuals may file charges claiming multiple types of discrimination, the total number of charges can be less than the sum of the five types of discrimination listed. Not all possible types of discrimination are listed in this table

^bSource: EEOC Charge Statistics. Available at <http://eeoc.gov/eeoc/statistics/enforcement/charges.cfm>

^cAuthor's calculations from EEOC Charge Data

2008 (2,827 charges). The EEOC launched the E-RACE Initiative in 2007 (EEOC 2007), indicating that this initiative may have increased awareness of color discrimination.

To provide information on how color discrimination claims compare to the full set of employment discrimination charges received by the EEOC, Table 15.2 reports information for one fiscal year, FY 2009. The first two columns of numbers are reproduced from EEOC Charge Statistics (EEOC 2010). The last two columns of numbers are based on the color discrimination charges.

In FY 2009, the EEOC or FEPA received 93,277 individual charges of discrimination. Many individuals report more than one basis for discrimination; therefore, the total number of individual charges (reported in the last row) is less than the sum of charges reporting specific types of discrimination. Of the 93,277 charges filed in FY 2009, 36% include race discrimination as a basis, 30% include sex discrimination as a basis, and 36% include retaliation. Discrimination on the basis of national origin and religion was relatively infrequent, with 12% including national origin and 4% including religion. Referring to the charge statistics reported on the EEOC website for the period FY 2000–FY 2010, there is a fairly similar share of race and sex discrimination charges in each year, with no evidence of a trend. The share of charges that include national origin, religion, and retaliation has increased fairly steadily over the FY 2000–FY 2010 period (EEOC 2010).

Within the set of color discrimination charges filed in FY 2009, 85% also include race discrimination as a basis. What is perhaps most noteworthy is that 15% of charges of color discrimination does not include race. The share of color discrimination charges also reporting sex discrimination, at 25%, is nearly as high as the share reporting sex discrimination in the full set of charges. Since the full set of charges includes those with sex discrimination as the primary basis for discrimination, this is a surprisingly high share of color claims in which sex

Table 15.3 Color discrimination charges in combination with race, sex, religion, and national origin discrimination^a

Basis for discrimination charge	Number of charges	Percent of charges
<i>Including race as a basis</i>		
Color + race	8,180	44.67
Color + race + sex	2,732	14.92
Color + race + national origin	2,642	14.43
Color + race + sex + national origin	694	3.79
Color + race + religion + national origin	425	2.32
Color + race + religion	288	1.57
Color + race + religion + sex	215	1.17
Color + race + religion + sex + national origin	214	1.17
<i>Subtotal including race</i>	15,390	84.05
<i>Excluding race as a basis</i>		
Color + national origin	1,057	5.77
Color only	917	5.01
Color + sex + national origin	324	1.77
Color + sex	315	1.72
Color + religion + national origin	165	0.90
Color + religion	64	0.35
Color + religion + sex + national origin	51	0.28
Color + religion + sex	28	0.15
<i>Subtotal excluding race</i>	2,921	15.95
Total charges	18,311	100.00

^aAuthor's calculations from EEOC Charge Data, October 1, 1999–February 28, 2010. This table reports charges filed with the EEOC that include color discrimination as one basis plus additional bases as indicated. The total of individual percentages do not sum to 100% because of rounding

discrimination is also present. In contrast to the full set of charges, discrimination on the basis of national origin and religion is reported in a large share of color discrimination charges, with 31% of the color discrimination charges also reporting discrimination on the basis of national origin and 9% also reporting discrimination on the basis of religion. In addition, reports of retaliation are more frequent within color discrimination charges than within the full set of charges, with nearly half of the color claims reporting retaliation.

Clearly, discrimination on the basis of national origin and religion is more frequent in color discrimination claims than in discrimination claims generally. The prominence of national origin in color discrimination claims may be related to the pay penalty to darker skin color among immigrants found by Hersch (2008, 2011).

Table 15.3 provides more detailed information by considering the specific combinations of bases that are cited in color discrimination charges. In Table 15.3, I stratify the 18,311 claims into 16 categories reflecting the combinations of bases included in each of these claims. All of these claims include color discrimination

Table 15.4 Detailed race basis for color and race discrimination charges^a

	Number of charges	Percent of charges
American Indian/Alaska Native	153	0.99
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	40	0.26
Biracial/multiracial	154	1.00
Asian	237	1.54
Black/African American	12,347	80.23
White	1,249	8.12
Race—other	1,300	8.45
Total charges	15,390	

^aAuthor's calculations from EEOC Charge Data, October 1, 1999–February 28, 2010. All charges listed in this table include both color discrimination and race discrimination as bases and may also include other bases (e.g., national origin, sex, religion). Because individuals may file charges on the basis of multiple races, the total number of charges can be less than the sum of the races listed. The race of the charging party is not necessarily the same as the basis for race discrimination

as one basis, and I consider the combinations of bases indicated in Title VII, specifically race, religion, sex, and national origin. Since the majority of color discrimination claims also include race, the table first lists the combinations of claims that include color and race plus possibly other bases, followed by claims that do not include race but may include other bases.

As Table 15.3 shows, during the period FY 2000–FY 2010 (5 months), 84% of the color claims also include race as a basis. The combination “color + race” represents the largest single combination of bases, cited in nearly 45% of all color claims. Many of the claims based on color and race also include sex and/or national origin as a basis. The second most frequent combination is “color + race + sex,” which includes 15% of the claims, followed by “color + race + national origin,” which includes 14% of the claims. Overall, 21% of the color claims include race and sex, possibly with national origin and/or religion as well, and 22% of the color claims include race and national origin, possibly with sex and/or religion as well (noting that these tallies double count claims in which both sex and national origin appear).

The lower part of Table 15.3 groups color discrimination claims that do not include race as a basis. Five percent of all claims are color discrimination only. The majority of the claims that do not include race do include national origin, with 9% of the claims overall on the basis of color and national origin (possibly with sex and/or religion as well).

Tables 15.4, 15.5, and 15.6 provide additional information on the specific race, national origin, or religion basis for charges that include any of these bases in addition to color.

Table 15.4 provides the specific race basis for color discrimination charges also claiming race discrimination. The race basis Black/African American accounts for 80% of the charges, with White accounting for another 8% of the charges. Another 8% report the race basis as “other” (which is a category no longer used). A review

Table 15.5 Detailed national origin basis for color and national origin discrimination charges^a

National origin basis	Number of charges	Percent of charges
East Indian	321	5.76
Hispanic	1,087	19.51
Mexican	298	5.35
Arab, Afghani, or Middle Eastern	239	4.29
National origin—other	3,666	65.79
Total charges	5,572	

^aAuthor's calculations from EEOC Charge Data, October 1, 1999–February 28, 2010. All charges listed in this table include both color discrimination and national origin discrimination as bases and may also include other bases (e.g., race, sex, religion). Because individuals may file charges on the basis of multiple national origins, the total number of charges can be less than the sum of the national origins listed. The national origin of the charging party is not necessarily the same as the basis for national origin discrimination

Table 15.6 Detailed religion basis for color and religion discrimination charges^a

Religion basis	Number of charges	Percent of charges
Catholic	65	4.48
Protestant	83	5.72
Sikh	3	0.21
Seventh Day Adventist	18	1.24
Jewish	56	3.86
Muslim	460	31.72
Other	781	53.86
Total charges	1,450	

^aAuthor's calculations from EEOC Charge Data, October 1, 1999–February 28, 2010. All charges listed in this table include both color discrimination and religion discrimination as bases and may also include other bases (e.g., race, sex, national origin). Because individuals may file charges on the basis of multiple religions, the total number of charges can be less than the sum of the religions listed. The religion of the charging party is not recorded in the Charge Data

of the data shows that the category “biracial/multiracial” had no observations within the set of color discrimination charges until 2008. It is therefore possible that “other” was reported for at least some complainants whose basis for race discrimination fell into the category “biracial/multiracial” in earlier years.

Table 15.5 reports the specific national origin basis for color discrimination claims that also include national origin. Clearly, there are many potential national origins that could form the basis for discrimination on the basis of national origin. The charge records provide only five categories, and the majority—66%—is recorded as “other.” The largest specific category is Hispanic national origin,

Table 15.7 Color discrimination charges: potential litigation^a

Potential litigation	Percent of charges		
	All charges	Including race as a basis	Excluding race as a basis
Potential cause cases	6.18	6.06	6.81
Potential cause—district plans to litigate	3.69	3.80	3.12
Potential cause—district does not plan to litigate	8.59	8.86	7.19
Strategic enforcement and litigation program	1.25	1.34	0.75
Charges requiring additional investigation	62.41	62.11	63.98
Charges suitable for dismissal	16.94	16.82	17.53
Potential litigation missing	0.95	1.01	0.62
Total charges	18,311	15,390	2,921

^aAuthor’s calculations from EEOC Charge Data, October 1, 1999–February 28, 2010. All charges listed in this table include color discrimination as a basis. This table reports percent in each category. The total of individual percentages may not sum to 100% because of rounding

with 20% of the color charges that are also based on national origin. The separate category of Mexican national origin adds another 5% to the broader group of Hispanic or Latino. For comparison to the US population, 16.3% are Hispanic or Latino (US Census Bureau 2010).

Table 15.6 reports the specific religion basis for color discrimination claims that also include religion as a basis. Once again, the majority of the charges are recorded as “other.” Notably, the single largest specific religion is Muslim, cited in nearly one-third of the charges.

To get a sense of the overall validity of claims that include an allegation of color discrimination, Table 15.7 reports the distribution of the EEOC code that indicates the expected strength of the claim, both overall and stratified by whether race is included as an additional basis. The EEOC initial assessment of the claim strength refers to the entire claim, and since race claims have been successful while color claims rarely are, it is possible that the strength of color claims that did not also include race would be assessed as weaker than those that also include race. However, as Table 15.7 shows, the distribution of the strength of the claim is quite similar regardless of whether race is included as a basis in addition to color. Slightly more claims are coded as “potential cause” and “strategic enforcement and litigation program” charges if race is an additional basis (20%) than if race is not included as a basis (18%). Only about 17% of the claims are rated as “suitable for dismissal,” regardless of whether race is included as an additional basis. The remaining claims are recorded as requiring additional investigation.

Characteristics of Individuals

Table 15.8 reports information on the race, age, and sex of the charging party. The table reports the distribution of claims both overall and stratified by whether the claim includes race as an additional basis.

Table 15.8 Demographic characteristics of charging party^a

Characteristic of charging party	Percent of charges		
	All charges	Including race as a basis	Excluding race as a basis
<i>Race</i>			
Black/African American	67.31	73.14	38.56
White	9.17	8.15	14.55
Asian	4.09	1.69	16.74
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.93	0.88	1.20
Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander	0.17	0.18	0.10
Other/more than one race reported	8.47	7.42	14.00
Race missing	9.85	8.53	16.84
<i>Age group</i>			
Age 15–24	3.81	3.68	4.52
Age 25–34	19.17	19.35	18.21
Age 35–44	27.76	27.66	28.31
Age 45–54	24.41	24.51	23.90
Age 55–64	10.06	9.90	10.92
Age 65 and older	1.74	1.57	2.64
Age missing	13.04	13.33	11.50
<i>Sex</i>			
Male	52.94	53.33	50.87
Female	43.22	42.74	45.77
Sex missing	3.84	3.94	3.36
Total charges	18,311	15,390	2,921

^aAuthor's calculations from EEOC Charge Data, October 1, 1999–February 28, 2010. All charges listed in this table include color discrimination as a basis. The total of individual percentages may not sum to 100% because of rounding

Starting with race, first note that the race of the charging party is not reported for 10% of the claims.⁷ It is more frequently missing or reported as “other” for claims that do not include race as a basis. Considering claims in which race is an additional basis, 73% of these charging parties are Black and another 8% are White. There are relatively few individuals of other races filing charges that include race in addition to color. There is far more racial variation among claimants who do not also include race as a basis. Thirty-nine percent are Black, 15% are White, and 17% are Asian.

⁷As noted earlier, I assign an indicator for more than one race for charges that are duplicates except for different races reported. The share of individuals recorded as more than one race is doubtlessly below the actual number of individuals who would report more than one race had that option been available. For comparison, 3% of the US population reported more than one race in the 2010 Census (US Census Bureau 2011). Also worth noting is that although the EEOC records allow for reporting of national origin including Hispanic, Hispanic ethnicity is not recorded in the charge records. National origin is frequently missing, so there is no reliable way to identify if color discrimination is related to Hispanic/Latino ethnicity.

Table 15.9 Characteristics of respondent^a

Characteristics of respondent	Percent of charges		
	All charges	Including race as a basis	Excluding race as a basis
<i>Number of employees</i>			
Less than 15	0.32	0.31	0.41
15–100	29.95	30.05	29.41
101–200	8.71	8.54	9.59
201–500	9.95	9.97	9.83
501 or more	40.12	40.34	38.96
Number of employees missing	10.96	10.79	11.81
<i>Institution type</i>			
Private employer	79.42	79.45	79.29
Educational employer	4.68	4.55	5.34
Federal government employer	0.03	0.03	0.03
State/local government employer	12.14	12.18	11.91
Other	3.71	3.77	3.42
Institution type missing	0.02	0.02	0.00
Total charges	18,311	15,390	2,921

^aAuthor's calculations from EEOC Charge Data, October 1, 1999–February 28, 2010. All charges listed in this table include color discrimination as a basis. The total of individual percentages may not sum to 100% because of rounding

Table 15.8 also reports the age distribution and sex of the charging party, again both overall and stratified by whether race is included as a basis. There is little difference in the age and sex distribution between claims with and without race as a basis in addition to color, and there are also fewer claims with missing information. The age distribution shows that more than half of the charges are filed by individuals in the age range of 35–54, and 71% are filed by individuals in the age range of 25–54. This is somewhat larger than the civilian labor force share of this age group, which is 67%, and this share actually may be larger if claims in which age is not reported fall disproportionately in this age range (US Department of Labor 2011). The share of claims filed by men, 53%, is the same as the share of men in the labor force. But, since sex is not reported in 4% of the claims, men are probably somewhat more likely to file a charge that includes color discrimination relative to their representation in the labor force.

Characteristics of the Workplace

Table 15.9 provides information about the firm size and institution type of the respondent. As we have seen for potential litigation, charging party age, and charging party sex, there is little difference in the size and institution type distribution between claims with and without race as a basis in addition to color.

The size of firms that are covered under laws enforced by the EEOC differs based on the type of discrimination (e.g., Title VII, Age Discrimination in Employment Act) and type of business (e.g., private sector, employment agency). Coverage under Title VII generally extends to employers with 15 or more employees, so there are a small number of charges for firms with fewer than 15 employees. The small firms represented may include those filing charges under additional statutes such as the Equal Pay Act, which covers virtually all employees.

To make a comparison to the distribution of employment by firm size, I use Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) (US Department of Labor 2010b) figures on the distribution of private sector employment by firm size,⁸ rescaling the overall figures by truncating the distribution at 20 employees (the BLS employment figures are not reported for fewer than 15 employees). Conditional on firm size of at least 20 employees, 56% of employees are in firms with more than 500 employees. About 40% of the charges are from employees in firms with over 500 employees. The lower share of charges in the largest firms suggests that larger firms may have internal controls to reduce their exposure to employment discrimination charges. Firms with between 100 and 500 employees have almost the same share of charges as their employment share, with 21% of employees in firms of this size and 19% of the charges. Firms with 100 employees or fewer have a higher share of charges than their employment share, with 30% of the charges compared to 23% of the employment.

Turning to institution type, 79% of the charges are filed against private employers. State government employers account for 12%, and educational employers account for 5%. Consistent with federal employees following a separate complaint process, few charges are filed against federal government employers. The industry distribution of nonfarm employment categorized to correspond to the institution types reported in Table 15.9 is as follows (US Department of Labor 2010a): private sector and noneducational employment is 80% of employment, education (public and private) is 10% of employment, and state and local government is 7% of employment.⁹ This distribution suggests that charges are underrepresented in educational employment and overrepresented in state and local government.

Conclusion

Charges of color discrimination filed with the EEOC have risen dramatically in the past two decades. The number of charges escalated after the EEOC launched the E-RACE Initiative in 2007. By 2009, color discrimination charges were nearly as common as charges of discrimination on the basis of religion. Color claims disproportionately include national origin and religion as additional bases. Most

⁸The calculations reported here are based on data for 2010 Q1, not seasonally adjusted.

⁹The calculations reported here are based on data for June 2010.

color discrimination charges also involve race, but—perhaps surprisingly—about one-sixth of these charges do not involve race. Color discrimination charges that include race as a basis are similar to those that exclude race in the EEOC initial assessment of the strength of the charge, the age and sex distribution of the charging party, and the size and institution type of the workplace. Color claims are filed by individuals of all races. Among color charges that do not include race as a basis, 15% are reported by Whites and 17% are reported by Asians.

These EEOC statistics suggest that color-based discrimination is a real societal phenomenon. Increased awareness of color discrimination as a legal basis together with changing US demographics suggests that color discrimination charges will continue to rise in prominence in the near future.

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Chapter 16

The Consequences of Colorism

Margaret Hunter

Colorism is a social process that privileges light-skinned people of color over dark-skinned people of color in areas such as income, education, criminal justice sentencing, housing, and the marriage market. Research across racial and ethnic groups, inside and outside of the USA, demonstrates that light-skinned people of color are advantaged over darker-skinned people of color in these areas, even when controlling for other background variables such as parental education and socioeconomic status (Hall 2008). Colorism is directly related to the larger system of institutional racism in the USA and would not exist without it. The US system of slavery and European colonialism created the foundation of colorism in the USA, but there is also a contemporary system of race and color-based discrimination fueled by current practices of racial discrimination (Hunter 2005). Knowledge about colorism in the African American community is widespread, but colorism is also a significant issue among Latinos and Asian Americans. This chapter will discuss the history of colorism in the USA, the current forms of color-based discrimination in the USA, and the unique experiences of colorism for women.

Colorism is a form of discrimination based on skin tone that routinely privileges light-skinned people of color and penalizes darker-skinned people of color. Colorism is built on a foundation of institutional racism and white privilege (Bonilla-Silva 2006). Systems of racial discrimination operate on at least two levels: race and skin color. Racial discrimination against African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, or American Indians occurs regardless of phenotype. People of color of all skin tones are subject to certain kinds of discrimination, denigration, and second-class citizenship, simply because they are members of an oppressed racial or ethnic group. Colorism, the second system of discrimination, operates at the level of skin tone. Although all people of color experience discrimination, the intensity of that discrimination, the frequency, and the outcomes of that

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discrimination will differ dramatically by skin tone (Hunter 2007). For example, dark-skinned African Americans earn less money, on average, than light-skinned African Americans, although both earn less than comparable whites. These two systems of discrimination (race-based and color-based) work in concert. The two systems are distinct but inextricably connected.

People of color are often reluctant to discuss colorism because of feelings of shame or embarrassment. This fear comes, in part, from the belief that colorism is strictly an African American or Latino phenomenon. In fact, colorism is actually practiced by whites and people of color alike (Breland-Noble et al. 2008). Anyone living in a society with institutional racism will make judgments about others according to skin tone, hair texture, and facial features. The racialized features of the body are embedded with racial meaning and cues about civility, modernity, virtue, and beauty. It is clear that whites, too, respond to people of color differently, according to phenotype, because significant income, education, and occupational gaps exist between darker and lighter people of each racial/ethnic group. Inequalities based on skin tone are not created by people of color alone. Many more whites are in positions to hire employees, grant promotions, and admit students to universities than are people of color (Hunter 2011b).

Historical Context of Skin Tone Stratification

Slavery in the USA and the Americas and European colonialism around the globe help explain the historical roots of colorism in the USA (Hall 1994, 1995, 1997). During slavery, whites constructed elaborate status hierarchies among blacks, often giving light-skinned enslaved people a few privileges within the slavery system, such as the opportunity to read, work in the house instead of the fields, and occasional chance at manumission, especially if the person's light skin was a result of being related to the white master of the house (Hunter 2005). In addition, a substantial class of free, often light-skinned, African Americans existed throughout slavery and later led the African American community in civic and business life.

Europe's colonization of the Americas resulted in a skin color hierarchy with white Europeans at the top, mestizos in the middle, and indigenous people at the bottom. In most Latin American countries, overt race-based identity movements did not develop; race was viewed as a continuum instead of discrete, mutually exclusive categories (Villarreal 2010). The European colonial project attempted to replace indigenous cultures with European ones by denigrating indigenous people, religions, and aesthetics. The cultural meanings now associated with skin tone and facial features are based on historical colonial ideologies about civility, modernity, sophistication, backwardness, beauty, and virtue. In Western culture, light skin and European facial features have been equated with the positive characteristics mentioned above. Immigration from Latin America has increased dramatically over the past 40 years, and the color hierarchies of Latin America have merged with the

racial hierarchies of the USA (Alba et al. 2000). For Latinos in the USA, light skin is privileged and dark skin is often denigrated, both inside and outside of the Latino American community.

Skin color stratification is also very powerful in many Asian American communities. Some Asian Americans, such as Indians and Filipinos, have a history of centuries of European colonization. European colonialism left social structures and ideologies that privilege light skin and European facial features. For other Asian American groups, skin tone has historically been more connected to social class, where dark skin was a sign of being a peasant or working outside in the fields (Rondilla and Spickard 2007). While many nations have since industrialized, the ideologies of race, color, and class have persisted. Although skin tone hierarchies have many different origins, their strength in the contemporary USA is hard to deny.

Contemporary Skin Tone Inequality

Although the historical roots of colorism are deep, there are also contemporary practices that keep skin tone stratification in place. Colorism, like racism, consists of both overt and covert actions. Discrimination may be obvious or subtle, but the economic outcomes are the same. In employment settings, interviews or promotions may be affected by colorism. How much a new employee is “worth” or how well he or she might “fit in” are judgments easily affected by the lightness of or darkness of skin tone. Whites report feeling “more comfortable” with lighter-skinned African Americans. Similarly, criminal justice system judgments are also affected by the offender’s skin color. Darker-skinned offenders receive, on average, longer sentences and harsher penalties at each stage of the criminal justice process (Blair et al. 2004). Which faces seem more “dangerous or threatening” and which faces seem “angelic” is highly influenced by historical racial ideologies and European aesthetics.

Research on skin tone stratification demonstrates that, with few exceptions, light skin tone is privileged and rewarded in many different social settings. Light-skinned African Americans and Latinos earn more money (Allen et al. 2000; Arce et al. 1987; Fears 2003; Hill 2000; Keith and Herring 1991; Telles and Murguía 1990), complete more years of schooling (Hughes and Hertel 1990; Montalvo and Codina 2001; Murguía and Telles 1996), work in higher-status occupations (Espino and Franz 2002; Gómez 2000; Morales 2008), live in more racially integrated neighborhoods (Alba et al. 2000; South et al. 2005), receive lighter prison sentences (Blair et al. 2004), win more political elections (Caliendo and McIlwain 2006; Terkildsen 1993), and struggle less often with depression (Thompson and Keith 2001) than their darker-skinned counterparts who are similar to them in other ways. And for African American women, marital status is related to skin tone. Light-skinned African American women are more likely to marry high-status spouses than are dark-skinned African American women (Hunter 1998; Udry et al. 1971). Aaron Gullickson (2005) found some evidence that colorism is waning in the postcivil

rights era, even while institutional racism persists. Researchers have yet to find additional evidence to support this trend.

The majority of research on skin tone stratification in the USA has been conducted in the African American and Latino communities. However, Asian Americans also experience skin tone stratification, especially in the marriage market. Light skin tone is a highly regarded trait for women in many Asian American communities, though that effect diminishes with time in the USA. The importance of skin tone in marriage markets is another indicator that skin tone plays a unique role in women's lives, as their beauty is regarded as capital, in and of itself (Hunter 2002). For example, Joanne L. Rondilla and Paul Spickard (2007) report that in many Asian American families, mothers and grandmothers direct their daughters to stay out of the sun and use skin-lightening creams in order to attain light skin and marriage marketability.

Research on physical attractiveness demonstrates that people who are considered more attractive are also viewed as smarter and friendlier (Wade and Bielitz 2005). "Attractiveness" is a cultural construct influenced by racial aesthetics, among other things, so lighter-skinned job applicants will likely benefit from a halo effect of physical attractiveness (Wade 2008). The relationship between skin color and perceptions of attractiveness may be particularly important for women on the job (Hill 2002). Many feminist scholars have argued that beauty matters for women in employment, education, and other outcomes beyond any actual purpose it might serve in that setting (Wolf 1991). Beauty has become an additional, unspoken job requirement for women in many professions. However, there are "front office appearance" jobs, like restaurant hostess or office receptionist, where beauty may enhance job performance. In these employment settings, skin color is likely to matter even more (Hunter 2002).

The Skin Color Paradox

Researchers suggest that a "skin color paradox" exists among African Americans (Hochschild and Weaver 2007). The significant social and economic inequality based on skin tone within the African American and Latino communities is evidence of systematic discrimination against darker-skinned blacks and Latinos. However, despite these inequalities, African Americans do not seem to hold political attitudes that vary substantially by skin tone. Darker-skinned African Americans do not feel significantly more connected to the black community, nor do they feel more politically marginalized, than lighter-skinned African Americans. In short, their political attitudes are largely unaffected by skin tone (Hochschild and Weaver 2007). Political attitudes typically vary according to social dimensions such as gender, class, and education. Given this trend, it is reasonable to assume that differences in skin tone would also lead to differences in political opinions, but this is not the case for African Americans. Jennifer Hochschild and Vesla Weaver (2007) found that research published from a number of different data sources all found no substantial

difference in the political attitudes of darker-skinned and lighter-skinned African Americans. This finding is the basis of what Hochschild and Weaver call the “skin color paradox.” They argue that race-based identity remains strong enough that collective racial interests supersede interests based on skin tone differences.

James Faught and Margaret Hunter (2011) investigated this issue in the Latino community and found similar results. While skin tone is a salient status characteristic in the Latino community and contributes to inequality on a number of social and economic dimensions, skin tone does not seem to affect variation in political attitudes. Skin tone does not predict levels of political engagement nor how politically marginalized people feel (Faught and Hunter 2011). Given these findings, it seems that a skin color paradox may also exist for Latinos in the USA. New theories on the shifting racialization patterns in the USA may help explain why skin tone operates in terms of economic outcomes but does not seem to shape political attitudes.

Skin Color and the Latin Americanization Thesis

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2004) argues that the US racial order has shifted and is changing to look more like that of Latin America. His argument is that skin tone, not just racial identity, plays an increasing role in determining social and economic status. According to his Latin Americanization thesis, the USA is moving from a biracial to a triracial model of race relations with only three emerging categories: “whites,” “honorary whites,” and “the collective black” (Bonilla-Silva 2004). Bonilla-Silva (2004) suggests that several factors account for placement in each of the three categories: skin tone, socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, and experiences with discrimination. In this theory, economic outcomes and structural discrimination determine group position in the triracial system. His theory suggests that skin tone is increasingly important in the US stratification system, as it is in Latin America. As evidence for this claim, he points out that light-skinned Cubans resemble whites in terms of their socioeconomic status and are thus in the honorary white category in his rubric, while dark-skinned Dominicans resemble African Americans in terms of socioeconomic status and are, therefore, designated as part of “the collective black.” The Latin Americanization thesis suggests that while racial categories still matter in the USA, skin tone matters more and more, making the US race/color system increasingly resemble that of Latin America.

Bonilla-Silva’s theory has generated a line of research among social scientists that investigates the shifting importance of race, skin tone, and socioeconomic status. Tyrone Forman et al. (2004) contend that the national origin of Latinos influences where they think they fit within the tripartite model of ethnicity. Cubans are more likely to see themselves as white, while Mexicans are more likely to view themselves as “some other race.” Tanya Golash-Boza and William Darity’s (2008) findings are similar. They conclude that both skin tone and national origin predict how Latinos will racially identify and consequently offer support for Bonilla-Silva’s

Latin Americanization thesis. In contrast, Jennifer Lee and Frank Bean (2007) suggest that ethnic boundaries are more flexible for Latinos and Asian Americans, which they interpret as evidence for eventual assimilation into the larger white population. G. Yancey (2003) also finds support for significant Latino assimilation into the white Anglo majority and not into an “honorary white” intermediate group. Yancey (2003) also predicts that antiblack discrimination will persist, creating a new form of a biracial society with a black/nonblack divide. Golash-Boza and Darity (2008) offer the term “racialized assimilation” to understand how Latinos of different national origin groups, different skin tones, and different socioeconomic statuses come to have varying political attitudes and racial identities. Racialized assimilation processes help explain why some Latinos may view themselves as “white” and perceive very little discrimination, while others may view themselves as “some other race” and perceive higher levels of discrimination. All of this research points to the increasing sociological importance of skin tone in the US stratification system.

Purchasing Racial Capital

More permeable racial boundaries and increased opportunities for assimilation have created new markets in “racial capital.” I use the term “racial capital” to describe the way that light skin and Anglo bodies operate as a form of capital. The growing markets in ethnic cosmetic surgery and skin-lightening products provide myriad opportunities for people of color to alter their bodies in the pursuit of light skin and Anglo body types. From inexpensive creams at small local shops to designer nose jobs by the world’s best cosmetic surgeons, there are opportunities to purchase racial capital, that is, lighter skin or Anglicized body parts, at all price ranges. In an increasingly global economy, access to racial capital is important for people of color competing for employment in a global job market (Hunter 2011a).

The globalization of media, technologies of body modification, and persistent power of race and gender hierarchies around the globe make the pursuit of racial capital an important strategy for economic success. Multinational cosmetics companies market skin-whitening products around the world and especially to women (and men) of the Global South (Rondilla and Spickard 2007). Urban, educated women in Africa, Asia, and Latin America represent the fastest growing segment of the population purchasing skin-whitening creams as they anticipate competing in a global job market often dominated by the West (Glenn 2008). But men and women in the developing world are not the only ones purchasing these products and services. People of color in the West and the USA in particular are increasing their investment in cosmetic surgery purchases and various skin-lightening creams.

The rapid development of technologies of the body and the huge growth in the cosmetics industry have led more people to view light skin tone and Anglo features as traits that can be purchased for the right price. The beauty industry, dominated by celebrities, encourages individual empowerment through the purchase of cosmetics.

Beauty advertisements suggest that whiteness, and all the positive attributes associated with it, can be attained with the right cream, gel, or serum. Print advertisements, the Internet, social networking, and other communication technologies disseminate images of white beauty, expanding the demand for products and procedures that can help build racial capital.

Advertisers have dismembered and marketed women's bodies in advertising for several decades (Cortese 1999). But the merging of technologies of the body, the 24-h multimedia cycle, the increased importance of beauty for women, and the explosion of pornography culture (where women's bodies are routinely commodified and manipulated for a viewing audience) have created a perfect storm, resulting in an explosion of cosmetic procedures for women's bodies. Cosmetic procedures are no longer only for celebrities or the wealthy. Middle-class women and men of all races in the USA participate in the cosmetic surgery industry and every group's surgery rate is on the rise.

Sales of skin-lightening products are on the rise, too, and their global demand has never been higher (Perry 2006). What accounts for the increased use of skin-whitening creams and cosmetic surgery in our postcolonial, and perhaps even postracial, era? The global beauty industry has reinvented itself in recent years in the image of multiculturalism (Hunter 2005). Many cosmetics companies that once exclusively featured white women and images of white beauty have added light-skinned women of color to their advertisements and as spokespersons for their products. I call this maneuver the "illusion of inclusion" (Hunter 2005). The illusion of inclusion is a seductive marketing strategy to draw in women of color who might otherwise feel alienated from products marketed exclusively with images of white beauty. By including a few light-skinned, Anglo-looking women of color, cosmetics companies appear to be inclusive of people of color, without disrupting their message that white bodies are beautiful.

As advertisements have purportedly become more inclusive, there has simultaneously been a boom of products offered that all claim to lighten, brighten, or whiten the skin. Skin-lightening products are readily available from major cosmetics companies, from local mom-and-pop stores, and widely over the Internet (Mire 2005). The most lucrative skin-lightening products are also likely to have celebrity endorsements. Celebrity endorsements serve two important purposes: (1) When celebrities endorse a particular product, the public is more likely to believe in its effectiveness and purchase the product, and (2) when celebrities endorse skin-lightening products, they also endorse the act of skin-lightening itself, suggesting that their own beauty is attainable and that skin lightening is a mainstream, culturally acceptable act (Hunter 2011a). Celebrity endorsement can be very effective in reducing the sense of shame about lightening that exists in some cultural groups. Whitening is shameful in some cultures either because one should "naturally" have light skin, not chemically derived light skin, or because lightening the skin implies a shame of one's race or ethnic identity (Charles 2003). I believe it is for this reason that no African American celebrity is currently endorsing a skin-whitening cream. Overcoming these powerful narratives of "natural beauty" and "racial pride" are crucial for the success of cosmetics companies.

Major cosmetics corporations are using a contradictory discourse of beauty and race. Similar to Dove's "Real Beauty Campaign," which launched ads that critiqued beauty standards while selling beauty products, now cosmetics companies use language that critiques the domination of white beauty standards in order to sell new products to women of color. A powerful example is Proctor and Gamble's media campaign titled, "My Black is Beautiful" (Hunter 2011a). Proctor and Gamble (a billion-dollar multinational company with a substantial cosmetics line) launched its latest marketing strategy and labeled it a "movement" on the company website. It is described as a "movement" with "grassroots" involvement. The movement also has a "manifesto" available to the public on their website. What is most notable about this ad campaign is its willingness to borrow the antiracist language of black liberation movements of the past in order to sell more cosmetics products to black women around the globe, including partner brand, "Relaxed and Natural Hair Products." The contradictions of these discourses will likely continue as cosmetics corporations invent evermore ways to convince women of color that "their black is beautiful" while reminding them that "white is right."

The US media are increasingly multicultural in their depictions of people and celebrities, yet the dominant message that light skin and Anglo facial features are high status has not gone away. In fact, with increased access to racial capital, it is not unreasonable to suggest that skin tone is more important than ever. As the other chapters in this book indicate, skin tone has serious consequences for the life outcomes of people around the globe and that is certainly also true for the USA.

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Chapter 17

Navigating the Color Complex: How Multiracial Individuals Narrate the Elements of Appearance and Dynamics of Color in Twenty-First-Century America

Sara McDonough and David L. Brunnsma

Introduction

Contemporary discussions of race in the USA fall somewhere along a spectrum anchored, on the one end, by ideologies rooted in notions of color blindness/postraciality and adherence to the ideology of identity politics, on the other. Meanwhile, the racialized social structure, dividing the resources, opportunities, and experiences along racial lines, grounded as it is in an interactional order mapped along a color complex, continues quite unabated. It is in this context that multiracial individuals navigate color in the twenty-first century. Where do various groups of multiracial individuals fall along this tenuously balanced social schema? How do they narrate the roles of skin color, phenotype, and appearance in their daily lives? This chapter presents data on three groups of multiracial individuals in an attempt to understand these and related questions.

The recent decade of research on multiracials indicates some degree of social and cultural acceptance of the idea and reality of multiraciality while multiracial individuals still face deep-rooted interactional, social, and cultural structures that require them to racially navigate certain spaces, relationships, and institutions. We are interested in how these processes occur, particularly the nuanced understandings of the lives and experiences of multiracials, the role of skin color, and the *meanings* attributed to race. Meanings arise from the dynamic interactions of microcontexts and the macrolevel social, political, and historical grammars and grooves that characterize and organize American society. Despite talk of a postracial society, it is perhaps through a critical analysis of the experiences narrated by multiracial individuals that we can understand how individual appearance and microcontexts are shaped by *the larger underlying macroprocesses* that have historically and perhaps continue to organize and inform or impart meaning to “race” in American society.

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Literature Review

Research on multiracials has grown exponentially over the past 10 years. Having its beginnings in the therapeutic and counseling literature in the 1980s with assumptions of what a “healthy” identity development would look like (Poston 1990; Kich 1992), since the late 1990s until current day, the research has shown the complexity of identity formation, development, maintenance, and change for multiracials (Root 1992; Twine 1996; Wijesinghe 1992, 2001; Clancy 1995; Root 1996; Rockquemore and Brunσμα 2002; Roth 2005; Brunσμα 2005). The research has described several key factors involved in the process of identity for multiracials (see Brunσμα and Delgado 2008; Rockquemore et al. 2009). While sets of research questions have grown, overall, the focus has still remained spotlighting the experiences of Black-White multiracial individuals—echoing the historical realities of interracial relations between American Whites and Blacks.

As the other chapters in this book have shown, there has been a long tradition of discussing skin color, phenotype, and racialized appearances in the social science literature (see Herring et al. 2004). Indeed, skin tone and appearance have been shown to affect a wide variety of outcomes of interest to scholars (see Hersch 2010; Hochschild 2007; Villarreal 2010). The study of skin color has suffered from measurement issues, but this has also been exacerbated by the difficulty in finding federal funding agencies willing to award grants to scholars who are interested in studying, quantitatively, skin tone. While some quantitative patterns emerge from this research, we can also learn a great deal from the stories, narratives, and experiences of embodied appearance and lived phenotype in qualitative research. These qualitative interview and ethnographic studies expanded the populations under scrutiny, since, like much of American social science research, the focus has been on the Black-White binary (see Hunter 2005).

As both of these strands of research have grown, they have also found themselves intertwined within the work on multiracial experience. Indeed, skin tone plays a particularly complicated and important role in the lives of multiracial men and women. Color and phenotype are pivotal axes for multiracial individuals, and it affects their friendships, their dating experiences, and their very sense of who they are. All of these are contextual and are deeply affected by the ways others respond to multiracials’ appearance and also how multiracials understand how others see them (Ali 2003; Rockquemore and Brunσμα 2001). As such, it seems reasonable to expect that multiracials have developed intriguing ways to navigate and narrate the role of skin tone in their social lives.

The scripts and discourse about the role and importance of skin tone in American life have been developed for hundreds of years, and the political, cultural, social, historical, emplaced, and embodied institutional grooves have been set. It behooves us to continue to ask how such scripts are utilized or challenged in the twenty-first century and what, if any, new grammars are deployed by continually racialized beings such as multiracial individuals in the USA. Bringing together interview data of three groups of multiracial individuals, we are interested, in this chapter, in the

ways that Black-White, Asian-White, and Hispanic-White multiracials use, resist, and reinvent these scripts as they discuss the role of color or appearance in their daily experiences.

Methods and Analytic Techniques

For this chapter, we draw on research conducted for an exploratory study on the racial identity development of multiracial individuals (McDonough 2005). The data consist of in-depth interviews with three groups of self-identified, multiracial respondents who reported having one White parent and one non-White parent, specifically a non-White parent who was claimed either (1) African American/Black, (2) Asian, or (3) Hispanic/Latino ancestry. This chapter focuses on the experiences and narratives drawn from a nonrandom, snowball sample collected in the fall of 2005 consisting of twenty (20) multiracial college students from a predominantly White, public university in the state of Virginia.

The larger study explored the ability of monoracial theories of identity development to explain the racial identity development of multiracial individuals. Our focus hones in on a different aspect of the data: how these multiracial respondents talked about the ways in which their appearance or phenotype affected the interactions with and expectations of others. Although respondents were not specifically asked about the role of phenotype or skin color in the original interviews, many, if not all of the 20 multiracial individuals, made some mention or allusion to the various ways in which their appearance affected their daily lives—primarily via interactions with single-race peers and/or strangers who tended to misidentify these respondents as single race as well.

Using this particular college population, subjects were selected based on a number of criteria. By requiring that all subjects attend the college, we can assume that the social class of the respondents would be more or less similar. Though a large number of subjects were recruited primarily through a snowball sample, others responded to advertisements posted on campus as well as email advertisements sent to various ethnic, minority, and Greek organizations on campus. Such a process yielded 20 respondents total across the three groups: seven (7) Black-White, six (6) Asian-White, and seven (7) Hispanic-White individuals, and despite attempts to gather a sample that was evenly distributed by gender, in the end, there were twelve (12) women and eight (8) men interviewed. After an initial reading of the data, the interviews were recoded based on the patterns that emerged concerning (1) instances or patterns of racial misidentification by others and (2) others' expectations of multiracial respondents. For each group of multiracial individuals, we focus on how the elements of appearance and dynamics of color had been discussed by respondents, and, in turn, how each individual's self-described experiences fit within or were (un)representative of the overall racial grooves and/or grammars present in their narratives.

While appearance is typically limited to discussions about one's phenotype—skin color, hair texture, and facial features such as eye or nose shape—the narratives of these multiracial individuals also reveal the use of a variety of cultural markers, such as clothing, language, or music, to accentuate, and sometimes facilitate, one's perceived race or ethnicity by others in context. The color of the context, as we will see, is also very important. Thus, as this chapter discusses, it is within this dynamic interplay between ascripted and ascribed racial classification and identification that the narratives of multiracial individuals can help us understand the role of appearance and, more importantly, the meanings associated with particular appearances in contemporary American society.

In the next section, we first present a rough sketch of the various findings that come out of the interviews with these multiracial respondents. While the literature has given us a fairly solid understanding of the role of appearance in Black-White multiracials, this is a first of its kind comparative study that includes data from three groups of multiracial respondents: Black-White, Asian-White, and Hispanic-White. In doing so, we achieve a better understanding of the complex web of skin color and features that make us—if not *who* we are—who we appear to be (like) to others. What appearance scripts do these multiracial individuals use? Do these vary across the three groups?

Results

The ways multiracial individuals talk about appearance and phenotype and the effects on how they have come to think of themselves in relation to both mono-racial peers and counterparts, as well as to larger (racialized) communities, might allow researchers certain insight to the interworking (racial) dynamics structuring American society. Findings suggest that the importance, meanings, and prescribed expectations associated with one's race might be able to be read from the self-told narratives of multiracial individuals, whose experiences of appearance (and skin color) not only matter but invariably change as they navigate their daily interactions, and attempt to manage the fluidity of their ascribed racial identities as informed by their experiences with monoracial others within and between spaces of colors and public spheres. From all three groups, it is clear that the salience of the Black-White polarity still exists. While the Black-White color line may afford a little more spaces of gray, it still operates in relation to the poles—whether or not they are perceived, visible, or invisible.

While the narratives of these three groups of multiracial respondents yield interesting findings, for this chapter, we focus on several key conceptual themes that link the experiences of the 20 multiracial respondents, both in their similarities as well as their differences. Due to space limitations, we will focus on (1) misidentification by others and (2) expectations of others.

We first present the Black-White findings. We do this not only because of the overrepresentation of Black-White discourse in the existing literature but also

because of the overarching patterns that emerged from the data from all three groups. This led us to believe that not only does a Black-White polarity continue to organize American society but that the meanings ascribed to blackness and whiteness continue to inform race at a broader sociocultural level—informing the experience, behaviors, and meanings for multiracial individuals.

Black-White Multiracials

From the interviews conducted with seven Black-White multiracial individuals, it is clear that skin color, appearance, and phenotype still matter in twenty-first-century American society, whether through misidentification in interactions or through the weight of racialized expectations based upon those interactional labels. In this section, we will first discuss the ways in which multiracial Black-White respondents reported being misidentified by both Blacks and Whites; we will then tie the dynamics of racial misidentification to the expectations that exist within mainstream American society and culture regarding the attitudes, behavior, and characteristics attributed to different groups—both by Whites and by African Americans.

Misidentifying Black-White Multiracials

While none of these respondents talk of passing or being mistaken as singularly White, all report that most people—strangers or friends—typically misidentify them as singularly Black. This type of “misidentification” occurs in both “black” and “white” spaces and is not inconsistent with previous findings (Twine 1996; Wijeyesinghe 1992, 2001; Rockquemore and Brunnsma 2002). During their interviews, these multiracial respondents spoke of misidentification in two primary ways: (1) as singularly Black/African American only and (2) as being assumed to have been adopted when in the presence of his or her White parent.

For the most part, respondents seem to accept the fact that the majority of mainstream America is going to identify them as “Black” only. Most Black-White multiracials express a tenuous tolerance of this misidentification, which sometimes borders on discomfort, ambivalent resignation, or maybe even indignation, like when Allison discusses an encounter with a White southern store owner who treats her like she was going to rob the place and her delight in proving people wrong. Conversely, another respondent, Jenn, when asked if there were ever times that she wished she was not multiracial—either just White or Black, responds, “I have at times I guess so I wouldn’t stick out so much. Like at this school it would be easier to be White and blend in with everybody else.” Throughout the interviews, not only are Black-White multiracial individuals aware of the tendency to be misidentified as Black only, but they realize that these interactions vary from place to place, space to space, and on an individual basis. Carolyn, echoing this acknowledgement of

context and the color of space, states “I think because I looked Black when I was around a lot of White people.”

Although this tendency on the part of mainstream Americans to identify people as either Black or White is consistent with the underlying patterns of racialized spaces and interactions that characterize American society, as Chris explains, this inability on the part of Americans to grasp the possibility of multiple racial or ethnic heritages can be tiring at times. Facing so much resistance on the part of Whites to wrap their head around his mixed-race ancestry, Chris eventually began to only acknowledge being Black when asked, more so to simplify the interactions for others, than choosing to identify as only Black rather than multiracial. As he says:

Chris: Yeah, it’s happened a lot. Just in dealing with people, I guess to make it easier for people to understand, I’ve said, “I’m Black.” Especially as like a little kid [both *as* a little kid and *to* little kids], because they don’t, they can’t understand those concepts really well. I just said, “Yeah I’m Black.”

SMD¹: Would you say throughout your life you’ve been in situations where you’ve . . . have you’ve always, if you felt forced, have you always chosen your Black side?

Chris: Yeah, if I was forced, I would always choose my Black side.

SMD: And would that be in situations where it was easier to be just one race?

Chris: Yeah, I mean I always knew I was multiracial and I always considered myself multiracial, but in just talking to people.

This disparity between how some Black-White multiracial individuals publicly identify and how they would like to identify demonstrates the continuing salience of race as an organizing metanarrative in American society. According to Jenn, “My dad would always tell me that people were always going to look at me like I was a Black person and not see mixed or anything, because the first thing people would see would be my color and that I’m different than other people.” Jenn describes this imbalance between how she appears to others versus who she feels herself to be.

I feel more White or more Italian than I do Black but I don’t look White . . . Sometimes I’m walking around and I say I don’t look like everybody else, and I wonder if other people don’t see me as White, and they think they can’t get to know me because they have other stereotype stuff. So they don’t think I’m approachable. That’s why I get frustrated because after all I can identify with you because I feel very White.

Being identified one way but identifying another—especially wanting to identify as what seems more comfortable, or as “just me”—reflects the importance that American society puts on the meaning of race and, concurrently, the importance of surface-level/visual manifestations of it via phenotype and skin color. While the prescribed grammars and grooves that characterize the Black-White color line may not be as stringently policed as in past times, they do continue to guide the

¹In the chapter text, the interviewer is Sara McDonough, identified by the initials SMD.

balance between the ascribed and ascripted identities of contemporary Black-White multiracial individuals.

In addition to interactional misidentification, our respondents also indicate past instances of others misidentifying their relationship to their White parent—most commonly, being asked by their (White) peers if they were adopted. Although there is not enough data to generalize to the larger populations of Black-White multiracials, typically, “Are/were you adopted?” was usually directed to female, Black-White multiracials, especially those with White mothers (see Katz Rothman 2006). As Carolyn recollects:

One time when I was in seventh grade—it was a drop off/pick up camp and my mom dropped me off and I went to play, and someone told me she was looking for me again. Some of my White friends were like “where is your mom?” I was like “her,” and they were like “oh.” I was like “yeah the White lady,” and they say “oh she’s your step mom?” I was like “no, she’s my mom.” “Are you adopted?” “No, she’s my mom.” Is that your mom’s friend? “No, she’s my mom.” Your neighbor? “No, she’s my mom.” . . .

Although perhaps somewhat excusable at younger ages, it is interesting that, even by middle school, Carolyn’s peers were unable to believe that a White woman was Carolyn’s mother, instead guessing every single other possible familial relationship to explain what they considered an aberration from normal families/parents. Three respondents, Allison, Brittney, and Diana, mentioned experiences they had in college; instances when acquaintances, or sometimes even friends who previously had not known that the respondent was mixed, would come across pictures of the respondent with her family or with her White parent and vocally express their surprise (or disbelief, for one respondent) even when presented with photographic evidence.

Black-White Multiracials and the Expectation Regime

While the misidentification of Black-White multiracial individuals may reflect the continuing racial legacy of American culture to categorize people into mutually exclusive boxes of Black or White, the expectations of others, as experienced by these respondents, reflect the *meaning/s* of race in American culture. For Black-White multiracial individuals, these racial expectations are fundamentally tied to appearance. The ease or ability of multiracial respondents to navigate such expectations not only will vary from individual to individual but also will depend on the interactional context as well as the *color* of the context. The similarities between the narratives of all seven respondents suggest the existence of a prescribed set of racial grammars or grooves, depending on one’s racial or ethnic group membership, that are supposed to guide or at least inform one’s behavior, tastes, lifestyle, and movement through spaces of color, institutions, and other such arenas of American society. Underlying the importance that phenotype and skin color still play in American society and who multiracial respondents appear to be to monoracial others and how this process filters through a complex matrix of individualized subjective, as well as underlying objective, racial(ized) interpretations is problematic. It results

in what is expected of the multiracial respondent and how they are supposed to act absent input from the multiracial individual.

Despite most of their White peers' tendency to misidentify them as being "Black" only, a couple of respondents seemed to be more comfortable trying to meet the expectations of White peers rather than Black ones. Allison explains that she did not feel uncomfortable around or in large groups of White people, saying that she thinks "the difference was . . . that I looked Black, so that automatically made them expect I guess, certain behaviors of me. And so if I didn't act that way, I was different . . . they already saw me as different so there weren't any expected attitudes or characteristics or anything so I could just be whoever I was." Whereas a racial misidentification of a respondent's phenotype might be responsible for Whites' attitudes toward them, any deviation from stereotypical norms expected of Black people (or those thought to be Black) on the part of the multiracial respondent was then interpreted by White peers as the exception to these racialized expectations. As multiracial respondents expressed, acting White could typically be reduced to certain sets of activities or behaviors, like taking AP classes in high school, speaking properly, and participating in band instead of step team, whereas acting Black was much more of an anomalous space, defined in part by "not acting (too) White" but also in the use or interest in certain cultural markers, such as music, clothing, hair, and speech patterns. As Eric reflects, "That was always tough because it didn't seem like, I wasn't very . . . my race was probably a bigger deal with the White people. But my, for the Black people, it wasn't just the color of my skin, it was more of a, it was tough for me, the way I behaved I guess. I didn't embrace the culture, so it's kinda in limbo, you know?" Carolyn also struggled to explain:

I can't remember if they told me directly, but they say "you think you're better than us because you don't talk like this" . . . I know I was mixed, but I was Black . . . it was a struggle between appearances and stereotypes or what Black people normally act like and how I acted. I guess I acted White because I didn't talk like this or that or whatever. I thought of myself as Black—like I was cool with Black people, but then if you don't talk a certain way and do certain things then you're really not Black.

Therefore, when multiracial Black-White respondents talk about the differences in how either group of their monoracial peers accepts them or, in a sense, rejects them, by and large synthesizing how their perceived race as cued by their phenotype is read by monoracial others; this is then matched to the expectations that preexist in American culture and society and the behavior, attitudes, or ability/willingness for multiracials to meet these expectations.

Asian-White Multiracials

The literature has largely focused on the experiences of Black-White multiracials; therefore, much of our understanding, theorizing, and interpretation of multiracial experience has indeed emerged from their experiences. It is important to look

at the variations as well as the similarities that exist across different multiracial groups in order to have a better understanding of how appearances affect multiracial experiences and how different groups understand and narrate that experience. To this end, six Asian-White multiracial respondents were interviewed: three men and three women of various Asian ethnic ancestries, including Filipino, Korean, and Japanese. All but one respondent, Steve, had Asian mothers and White fathers.

Misidentifying Asian-White Multiracials

The Asian-White multiracial respondents who were interviewed did not explicitly discuss or refer to aspects of their phenotype, such as eyelid folds or the shape of their noses. However, the role of phenotype is implicitly invoked when discussing instances of racial misidentification in public spaces by both single-raced Asians and Whites. These respondents comment on being misidentified by both Whites and other Asians (not necessarily of their same ethnic heritage), and these misidentifications and the following interactions vary depending on whether the other individual is White or Asian. Whites tend to see multiracial Asian-White individuals and categorize them within and according to the mutually exclusive categories characterizing the cognitive and racial schemas of American society regardless of the racial makeup of the groups or spaces in which this interaction occurs. Although two respondents, Elizabeth and Steve, refer to a certain chameleon or racially ambiguous component to their appearance, for the most part, the narratives of Asian-White multiracial respondents include references to “looking” or “appearing” more Asian than White.

While in some cases, when relevant, Whites might pick up on the respondents’ more American(ized) surname; more often than not, White peers overlook their multiraciality. Two female multiracial respondents relay anecdotes of indirect instances of racial misidentification by Whites and their failure to connect a multiracial Asian/child(ren) with their White parent. As Elizabeth recalls, “Well there’s this one time he [her father] has a picture of us at work, and this guy came into his office and asked him “whose children are those?” [hahaha] so I mean, he thinks . . . he thought that was hilarious.” Similarly, Angelita recounts:

... my dad especially like when we were on the cruise—like in Disney World, we had our passes —six of them. We handed them to the guy and like my dad would be at the end . . . he’d say “I’m with my family”. It got to the point that by the end we had him stand in between us so that they would think we were all together. It’s just constantly like going to a restaurant and he would be parking the car after dropping us off, and then he’d come up to the front and be like how many, and he’s say “I’m with them”. I just wonder how he deals with it.

Like Black-White multiracials, the experience of being “outed” by Whites for not “fitting” with their family is disconcerting.

Although Asian-White, multiracial respondents are often misidentified by their single-race peers, typically these misidentifications are quickly reassessed by single-race Asian peers by testing the individual’s familiarity (or lack thereof) with certain

cultural markers, including the ability (or inability) to speak a/the (ethnic) language of their Asian parent. Despite how these multiracial individuals appear to others, for Asian others, language tends to be a critical marker of identity or at least of cultural belonging between full-Asian and Asian-White multiracials. For multiracial Asians who speak English only, language barriers manifest in two primary ways. First, multiracial Asians express difficulty in being accepted into monoracial social groups and circles because of their inability to speak the language of their Asian parent. Second, but not as frequently discussed, are the difficulties that some multiracial Asian-White individuals face regarding the nature of their relationship with their Asian parent. As Julianne explains:

And language barriers. If I wanted to joke around with my mom or something, she wouldn't get my joke. Because of the different culture. And sometimes when I'm talking to her, I have to repeat myself 50,000 times because she's like "I don't understand, I don't understand." And I'm like . . . you've been here for 30—however many years and you still don't get it? What's going on? It's kinda frustrating. It's almost like I can't get to the relationship I have with my dad, with my mom just because she's Filipino . . . [and] was born in the Philippines and was raised there her whole life until she met my dad.

Often manifesting itself when multiracial children are unable to speak in the language of their Asian parent or when the Asian parent, for whom English may be a second language, has not mastered a level of fluency in English, such an experience can make it difficult for Asian-White multiracials to relate.

Asian-White Multiracials and the Expectation Regime

The racialized expectations facing Asian-White multiracials are not as striking as those faced by Black-White or Hispanic-White multiracials and, where persistent, seem to come more consistently from their full-Asian counterparts. Several respondents speak to the ways in which language tied them or conversely disassociated them from Asian social circles and how their failure to meet the expectations of their full-Asian counterparts, especially with language, made it difficult for them to claim their Asian ancestry as fully as they would like, especially in interactions or spaces comprised of predominantly Asian people. However, when "outed" by their full-Asian counterparts as being mixed, especially when this reidentification stems from the inability to speak any Asian language, multiracial Asian-White respondents report a (social/psychological/racial/cultural) distancing initiated by full Asians. Maybe this distancing results in part from an Asian disapproval of not being able to speak an Asian language or in part from their personal or even larger cultural feelings about racial and/or ethnic mixing between Asians and non-Asians. Multiracial Asian individuals feel as though they are "expected" by their full-Asian counterparts not only to be familiar with aspects of their Asian culture and heritage but to also be at least familiar, if not fluent, in the language of their Asian parent.

For some multiracial Asians, being unfamiliar with the language and/or culture of their Asian parent is frustrating when the language barrier prevents them from trying to "discover" more about their Asian ancestry later on in life. Many Asian-White

multiracial individuals may not be as concerned about the distinctly Asian elements of their background and upbringing when they are younger. However, as they get older and realize the sort of “no-man’s-land” that Asian-White multiracials inhabit—because of their Asian appearance yet inability to speak an Asian language—some respondents mention their (failed) attempts to go back, reclaim, and become more familiar with these aspects of their Asian parent’s culture. What they describe is an effort to reconcile the external ascription of a monoracial Asian identity by others, with their own personal cultural orientation, which is typically more American in nature than derived from their Asian ancestry. While eating rice, using chopsticks, and other such cultural markers may not be markers of racial identity or spaces, they do serve to accessorize and/or remind multiracial Asian individuals of the non-American/non-White components of their lives that may not be immediately evident to them until they enter spaces, places, or interactions outside of the immediate influences/environment of the family and home.

Hispanic-White Multiracials

For multiracial individuals of White and Hispanic/Latino ancestry, the dynamic of appearance and perceived phenotype operate differently than for both Asian-White and Black-White multiracial respondents. Seven multiracial Hispanic- or Latino-White multiracial individuals were interviewed: four women and three men. Except for Mary, whose father is Puerto Rican (and whose mother is White), all other respondents have White fathers and Hispanic/Latina mothers.

Misidentifying Hispanic-White Multiracials

Whereas both Black-White and Asian-White multiracial respondents express being misidentified as singularly non-White, for the most part, Hispanic-White multiracial respondents have different narratives and experiences with misidentification in that most people mistake them for White only. Based on appearance alone, only one respondent, Anna, discusses how aspects of her phenotype—her curly, dark hair and having a darker, olive complexion—has led others to identify her as non-White only. By contrast, unlike Anna, the other six respondents are rarely mistaken for being part Hispanic and, instead, are consistently perceived as White by others. While there are variations among the different narratives of Hispanic-White multiracial respondents, the fluidity of their perceived racial identity is grounded largely upon what spaces they are in, their mastery of the Spanish language, and the color of the context or space itself.

What emerges from the interviews with these multiracial respondents is that there is an expectation that “Hispanics” or “Latinos” look a certain way. That is to say, that the stereotypical image that most Americans conjure in their minds when prompted is that of someone “with dark skin . . . speaks fluent Spanish and who has grown up

in some sort of very traditional Hispanic household,” according to Eddie. Perhaps because of those racialized expectations, rarely are Hispanic-White multiracials identified as anything other than White. And, as Eddie adds, “that’s not me by any stretch of the imagination,” as he describes the slight difficulty he has had sometimes in claiming his Cuban ancestry, especially when it concerns applying or receiving fellowships, scholarships, or membership into honor societies, as these academic awards have the potential to elicit the stereotypical image of a poor, dark-skinned, Hispanic individual.

Several respondents speak to the ways in which the darkness of one’s skin influences the ways in which others respond or racially identify them. Whether directly, as in the case of Anna, or indirectly, through experiences of Sean’s mother, the darkness of one’s skin or features is assumed to be Hispanic. In the cases of their parents, discriminated against for being Mexican and so forth, there is a difference between “visible” minorities or “visible” mixes versus those who might typify their mixture as multiethnic instead of multiracial.

It was like I’d run and say I’m Mexican. I was just a regular kid, probably because since I don’t really look Hispanic, like I really didn’t have to struggle through anything like my mom does. She’s very dark skinned. So I never had to struggle through hardships of being a minority and so it wasn’t like I was minority all the time like she did. (Sean)

Moreover, several respondents comment that perhaps if they were “darker,” then maybe they’d be identified as Hispanic more often instead of generally being seen as White only by others.

For the five Hispanic-White respondents misidentified as White, Mary’s experience is quite representative. Mary reports that she had never had anyone ask her if she was mixed and later says that she typically only identified as “half” Puerto Rican because the White is assumed. Other respondents also reference not having to add or mention that they were “half White” if or when situations arise that would cause them to have to racially identify. Or, as Martin discusses, only mentioning his Mexican ancestry when he felt like it, and having the choice to bring it up or not because based on his appearance, it was not obvious. Or as Emily jokes, her White friends often say “I’m White on top and Hispanic on the bottom. If you could SEE my bottom you’d understand why they’d say that. They say I’m half and half, but I’m split horizontally.” Similarly, non-White friends would also be more likely to identify and describe Emily as White, “They tell me I’m White. They’re like ‘oh whatever, if you didn’t have that booty you’d be White.’ My friends would say, ‘She’s . . . as far as racial background, she’s really light skinned, dark hair,’ I don’t think they’d say I was Hispanic.” From Emily’s narrative, we can see the role of skin color or tone and the part it plays in both White and non-White others’ ability and decisions in how peoples’ race or ethnicity is determined.

For Hispanic-White multiracials (Anna) who feel as though being darker and looking more “stereotypically” Hispanic, therefore less phenotypically White, the ways in which she shares spaces with either monoracial Whites or monoracial Hispanics are navigated are different than the ways used by phenotypically White Hispanic multiracials. As Eddie says, when asked how he would describe his

acceptance by Whites in elementary school, “I don’t think anyone even blinked because I’m basically looking white because I basically am White.” By contrast, Anna describes several experiences with White peers, both as a teenager and in college, that have made her increasingly aware of having dark skin and dark curly hair. Talking about a (White) friend from her hometown, Anna says, “When she calls me pretty I always feel like it’s because I’m ethnic. I feel like she makes that a point because I have dark skin and curly hair . . . I don’t think she would necessarily say, oh she’s Hispanic because it’s pretty obvious, but when . . . she was trying to describe me physically, she would definitely emphasize my skin and qualities physically.” Similarly, Anna comments on some of the more positive attention she thinks she receives being multiracial, “Some physical stuff. People are always saying you’re so pretty, you have nice skin, I like your olive complexion, your hair is so pretty and curly. I can’t think of any time when it wasn’t physical. It’s very much superficial when they compliment me. Of course people say oh you’re smart, but it has nothing to do with being Hispanic.”

Hispanic-White Multiracials and the Expectation Regime

In some respects, the preexisting racial grooves delineated along the Black-White binary might also be present in the narratives of Hispanic-White multiracials; however, this might also depend on the racial dynamics that organize interactions within public spheres. In some ways, Whites did not recognize these respondents’ mixed ancestry either because of the nondarkness of their phenotype or perhaps because of the larger racial dynamics in a given locale. As Martin explains, living in Gloucester, Virginia, meant that, simply, if you were not Black, then it was more likely that you would be accepted by Whites in the area. Conversely, sometimes in these same spaces, being identified as not White meant that you were more likely to be accepted by minorities. As Martin also explains that the darkening of his skin often led to a better general acceptance by non-White individuals or groups in this same area. An African American teacher who worked at his high school, who Martin describes as “not lik[ing] White people”:

. . . she kinda picked on them in class and stuff. And so she never really talked to me until spring came along and I started to tan, and I got darker and darker; and one day she was just like “you’re tanning beautifully [Martin]” and I went “okay . . .” And then after that she treated me really nice . . . yeah because she saw that I was slightly darker, so like she treated me better. It was really weird. It kinda threw me off.

However, returning again to the darkness of one’s skin, Anna, when asked about Whites’ general acceptance of her in college [at the present], comments,

At this school, White people assume that if you’re dark skinned you hang out with the minorities . . . The typical minority hangs out with minorities because that’s how every—that’s how all minorities are at [this school]. I feel they stick to their own minority group. And now it’s more accepting, and my boyfriend is Black, say African, and my best friend and roommate is African too, and I have a close White friend and she is dating a mixed, Black and White guy . . . I think you have to work really hard to be friends with White

people. My Black roommate told me that the way Black people are on campus is that when you're new you smile at any Black person; it doesn't matter if you know them or not. I notice that White people don't do that, and I really don't agree with that. I wouldn't smile to a stranger. I thought it was really weird. So you just smile at whomever is Black even if you don't know them—yeah pretty much. I said ok. But I do think minorities are more willing to welcome you but you have to work really hard for Whites to be friends.

As we can see, not only do the spaces matter but also the color matters, or racial/demographic makeup of the spaces matters in determining how others or strangers will see a multiracial respondent's phenotype and appearance. In trying to attend a Spanish mass at a Catholic church, one respondent says that he felt like he "maybe didn't look Hispanic enough. I went once with my mother, but it felt like I was not Hispanic enough. I could not identify with that" (Sean). Furthermore, the additional interactive component of language is important in determining whether or not multiracial respondents were identified as part Hispanic by other Hispanics. Similar to the dynamics of language observed among multiracial Asian-White respondents, being able to speak Spanish, and the degree or level of fluency and accuracy of accent in certain spaces, determines whether or not the multiracial respondent felt comfortable and accepted within these sorts of spaces. As Anna describes her attendance and interactions at church, "I still go [to church] but when I was younger I used to speak Spanish pretty fluently, but as I grew older I noticed that people at church they knew I was half-American, so they would automatically—if I tried to speak Spanish and speak something wrong, they would say, oh no honey, you speak English. You know you speak English . . . At the Hispanic church I fit in more physically and I keep my mouth shut and I don't let them know I'm American, I fit in more." (Anna)

Conclusion

We set out to investigate the ways that multiracial individuals narrate their existence in the color complex. In this chapter, we looked at the voices of Black-White, Asian-White, and Hispanic-White multiracials as they grapple with the role of their appearances, how these appearances are received by others in various racialized spaces, and with a variety of expectations tied to these interactions. Ultimately, we located processes of misidentification—which may be more appropriately understood as misrecognition. Processes of how these three groups of multiracials navigated the expectation regimes in their interactional spheres were also discussed and evidenced. Ultimately, context matters quite a bit in the ways that multiracials understand, give meaning to, and narrate the role of skin color, appearance, and phenotype in their lives among others in the still highly racially charged American context.

As the data show, it is not only the context of the spaces that multiracial individuals have to be aware of and gauge as they move through various public and private spaces but also they need to be aware of the *color of the context* that affects the ways in which multiracials can and do navigate their day-to-day lives.

Although multiracial individuals may personally identify one way, they bring with them an understanding of the ways in which their single-race peers or strangers often misclassify/misrecognize them as one race or the other, instead of recognizing them as multiracial. As such, our multiracial respondents, due to the role of appearances and the assumptions of others, can never fully engage in social and cultural lives in dignity and self-determination. This suggests that previous assumptions regarding the “choice/s” multiracial individuals have in regard to “what” or “how” they racially identify—assumptions that hint at the dawning of a postracial era in the USA—may not be critical enough in their assessments or ability to recognize the continued limitations that the sociopolitical context of history pose for the racialized culture of American society.

Perhaps, as Jennifer Clancy (in Zack 1995, 214) calls for, future research on multiracial individuals and identities should be more framed as sociopolitical inquiries focused on the reciprocal macro–micro level processes that reveal the *meaning/s* of race, rather than on the seemingly benign individual-level models presented by psychosocial research. Simply chalking up complicatedness and complexity to fluidity and individual variation may deflect much-needed conversations about race and color in American society, which in turn runs the risk of reducing racial identity to a mere question of personal choice. In doing so, whether this is intentional or not, race then becomes relegated to the realm of the abstract and ideological, the now seemingly inconsequential matter of racial identity held as proof of America’s progress and transcendence from its past. Rather than lending credence to the contemporary attempts to deracialize policies and politics, we urge future research to address the inequalities informed by the underlying race-based structures of American society and believe that, guided by these slight theoretical and analytical shifts, researchers might be better able to get at the problems encoded within and perpetuated by the existing race systems.

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Chapter 18

The Fade-Out of Shirley, a Once-Ultimate Norm: Colour Balance, Image Technologies, and Cognitive Equity*

Lorna Roth

“Skin-colour balance” in still photography printing refers historically to a process in which a norm reference card showing a “Caucasian” woman¹ wearing a colourful, high-contrast dress is used as a basis for measuring and calibrating the skin tones on the photograph being printed. The light skin tones of these women—commonly named “Shirley” by male industry users after the name of the first colour test-strip-card model—have been the recognized ideal industry standard for skin tones in most North American analogue photo labs since the early part of the twentieth century, and they continue to symbolically function as the dominant norm.²

Relatively few scholarly studies have examined the technological apparatus, institutional structures, and mechanisms that manufacture representation itself,

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¹The term “Caucasian,” referring to the “White race” and coined in 1795 by Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752–1840), an influential German scholar at the time, is a contested, troubling, and obsolete term of racial classification that is no longer recognized as having scientific validity (Painter 2003). However, in the industries of visual representation, “White” people continue to be called “Caucasian.” I apologize in advance to those who might be offended by the term, but I am using it to be consistent with the language still in active use in the industry. As an acknowledgment of the problematic aspect of this word, it (as well as the term non-“Caucasian”) is used within quotation marks throughout this chapter.

²For examples, search Google “images” using the following keywords: Kodak, Shirley, color balance cards. Look at page 1 of the results. In the second row down, second from the left, is the most typical card used in labs in North America: <http://www.revellphotography.com/blog/2011/04/confessions-of-a-colorblind-photographer/>

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particularly with regard to the reproduction of skin tones. Nor, until very recently, have many mainstream North American-based manufacturers of ordinary consumer items even attempted to replicate the colours of skin for non-“Caucasians” in their product lines. Current, more inclusive arrays of skin hues in products of colour, including bandages such as Band-Aid, mannequins, dolls, practice heads for hairdressers, nylon stockings, make-up, crayons, film stocks, and television screens, have been the result of multiple historical factors, including (though not always) demands from the civil rights movement for more colour-appropriate products. Other factors include regional, national, and global industrial responses to consumer demands for transracial mainstreaming of ethnic and racially coded products; negative consumer reactions to the division of product lines into those available for the “White”³ population and those available for the “ethnic or racialized” market; reduced profits for manufacturers using the strategy of “add-on” multicultural and multiracial product versions; and a market-reactive reading of the burgeoning field of “Whiteness” and other skin-colour studies in the last few decades (Delgado and Stefancic 2001; Fanon 1967; Griffin 1962; Hale 1998; Hill 1997; Russell et al. 1992; Hall 1994, 1995). As target-market shifts have taken place in industry, they have been documented quietly within the manufacturers’ company-research corpus, but few have been the subjects of anything more than internal market studies, the aim of which has been to expand sales. Most have been ignored by scholarly researchers.

On the other hand, in the academic world, the political, social, and cultural recognition of Whiteness as “but one skin colour among many” has been acknowledged by popular scholars in numerous disciplines, including sociology, ethnic studies, fine arts, film studies, and design arts (Griffin 1962; Hall 1990, 1992; hooks 1989, 1990, 1992). Their research has informed their analyses of the experience of living in skins of many colours and of the history of race relations and configurations of racialized power, and it has enabled them to rewrite histories, sociology, politics, and global relations from multiple racial and cultural perspectives.

While the available academic literature in critical race studies is wide-ranging, it is surprising that so little of it is related to the skin-tone biases within the actual apparatuses of visual reproduction. The few scholars who have focused on this include Jean-Louis Comolli (1977, 1986) and Comolli with Paul Narboni (1971a, b), who have recognized and elaborated an ideological bias within the cinematic apparatus; Brian Winston (1985, 1996), who has noted the White skin-colour biases within the chemistry of film processing; and Richard Dyer, who, in his book *White* (1997), has focused on the norm of Whiteness within gendered, artistic, and filmic technologies and practices and its implications in terms of power relations. Russell et al. (1992) have critiqued what they call “the colour complex”, that is, the negative psychological impacts and personal psychic scars of intraracial discrimination on people with darker skin colours, attributed to the consequences of the prevalent belief that power and privilege should be ascribed to those with lighter

³Kodak and Fuji are being used here as examples. I do not wish to imply that alternative film emulsion companies, such as Ilford and Agfa, among others, did anything differently in this regard.

skin. They, too, have pointed out discriminatory practices within society and the media, not only from the perspective of who is present on screens and in texts but also in the context of how African Americans have been expected either to fulfill the minstrel stereotype or to appear as close as possible to the White aesthetic of beauty.

Not widely circulated outside of the university sphere, these and other studies are worthy contributions to a deconstructive analysis of the privileged role that Whiteness has played in history, social and power relations, knowledge production and dissemination, and some aesthetic practices. However, none of the aforementioned scholars have extended their critique of privilege to examine the degree to which industries of visual representation, including alternative media (TV, video, film, photography), are responding to or ignoring public and economic pressures to colour-modify their technologies. Their theoretical focus tends to remain on representational codes constructed with[in] existing technologies.

Although I have researched multiple adjustments to flesh tone-based colour products and technologies in the last decade, the core of my argument for this chapter stems from the experience of chemical- and digital-based photographers and their subjects' critiques. Central to this chapter is a series of Shirley images that can be seen as emblematic of the state of race relations or aesthetics in the industries of visual representation and the gradual shifts in photographic technology targeted at improving the sensitivity of film emulsions and dynamic ranges (the difference between the lightest and the darkest of colours) in the digital media sphere.

I am interested in two levels of historical analysis in the domain of colour balancing imagery. The first is that of the technical challenges presented by the limitations within imaging technologies and the ways in which an ensemble of practices emerged to address these deficiencies with reference to human skin-tone reproduction quality. These deficiencies include the difficulty of imaging high contrasts in skin tones within the same screen shot—for example, a very dark-skinned person sitting next to a very pale-skinned person—and the lack of establishment and design of appropriate lighting and make-up for peoples of darker skin colours.

The lighting and make-up challenges have been tackled with a series of compensatory practices, which have addressed the issues with some level of success. The difficulty of colour balancing two extremely different skin tones in the same screen or on paper has been less successful. As you shall see from the material I have gathered for this chapter, the process of recognizing this challenge in 1959 and of informing a major film producer, Kodak, of the difficulty of achieving high-quality photo prints with multiracial content precipitated a lengthy socio-technical journey, which is not yet fully completed.

The second level of analysis is cultural and racial in origin. Between 1959 and the present, there have been innumerable versions of Shirley as she has crossed the decades, continents, and skin-colour lines. In this chapter, images of North American and Japanese Shirleys are seen as transforming to reflect the prevailing norms of skin-colour beauty in the period in which the labs were using them. I shall argue here that the anthropological and sociological content of these images has always been emblematic of the period in which they were circulating. They reflect

and reveal an order of domination and have had a social and psychological impact (Le Brun, Independent Cinematographer and Sociologist. Montreal, QC, Canada, personal interview, January 7, 2009).

The relationship between the social and the technical in this story—how each randomly drove the other to redefine its object of interest—has been serendipitous. As a scholar, I would have preferred to have seen a patterned, ongoing attempt to improve skin rendition technologies by the various research labs; however, what history reveals instead is a random and messy search, based on ad hoc feedback from surprising publics. Peoples of colour, whose embodied imagery would have benefited from a more sensitive chemical emulsion in the case of still photography and a more dynamic range in the case of digital technology, were not the constituency group leading the visual engineers and scientists to further explore the dynamic range of their company's film products. In the second part of this chapter, the randomness of this effort will be revealed.

On a broader level, my reflections respond to the following key questions: What kinds of knowledge about human skin colour in the form of racialized imagery have manufacturers constructed and defended through the marketing of their “presumed innocent” products? What has been the corporate stake in investing in or changing a colour aesthetic of Whiteness? What have been the precipitating factors that inspired companies to make recent skin colour modifications? Where have skin colour adjustments in chemical and digital photography taken place? How have colour balance procedures evolved since the 1970s in the techniques and social practices of photo cultures in North America and Japan? What are the larger sociopolitical and economic implications of colour balancing products and procedures?

The Disappearance of the “Technological Unconscious” (Vaccari 1981)

In the early histories of photo and other visual technologies, it was possible to consider their design and the ensemble of production techniques and methods surrounding them as ideologically neutral. Until about the mid-1960s, it was probably assumed by most users that visual media was designed to “naturally” reproduce all skin tones equally well. As experience with the use of these photo technologies expanded to international markets, non-“Caucasian” communities identified shortcomings and became more critical and questioning of their visual quality. Problems for the African American community, for example, have included reproduction of facial images without details, lighting challenges, and ashen-looking facial skin colours contrasted strikingly with the whites of eyes and teeth.

From a more technical perspective, evidence has been accumulating that the reason for these deficiencies is that film chemistry, photo lab procedures, and digital cameras in general were originally developed with a global assumption of Whiteness embedded within their architectures and expected ensemble of practices. What had become a White-biased international standard for the ideal flesh tone had been used

as a barometer against which the flesh tones of Blacks, Asians, First Peoples, and other peoples of colour had been read negatively as an aggravation—a deviation from this invisible norm. This, along with cross-cultural, skin-colour preference tests conducted by film manufacturers such as Kodak and Fuji, had confirmed an international preference for light complexions within global consumer photo markets. The virtual public silence in Kodak's and Fuji's institutional discourses and professional literature on alternatives to traditional ways of colour balancing analogue prints is the most concrete evidence we have of this institutional oversight and resistance to change.

It was from within the broader social context of professional visual technology users that new practices emerged. These included special lighting methods for Black skin, as well as trial-and-error colour balance techniques to compensate for the challenges of shooting and printing contrasting skin colours from within the same screen frame. Photographers of African American and Asian subjects, who had developed methods independently for dealing with these “problems”, began to share knowledge with each other and with the public some time around the late 1950s—about the same time Kodak was experiencing some criticism of its photo emulsions regarding this very issue.

In what follows, I shall focus on the [inter]national driving forces that provoked Kodak, in particular, to rethink and redesign the range of its chemical representation of brown tones and to later multiracialize its Shirley card as a gesture of inclusiveness to its broadening consumer photo markets.

The Colour Adjustment Process in Still Photography

Colour photography is not bound to be “faithful” to the natural world. Choices are made in the development and production of photographic materials. (Winston 1996)

It has become clear to those who currently seek out this information that the chemistry for stock colour film for still cameras was designed originally with a positive bias toward “Caucasian” skin tones because of its high level of reflectivity (Connor, Curator: George Eastman Collection. Rochester, New York, personal interview, August 16, 1995; Kage, Former Head: Kodak Camera Research Studios. Rochester, New York, personal interview, August 21, 1995; Rice, Former Technical Sales Representative and Marketing Manager: Kodak; McGee Endowed Professor, Rochester Institute of Technology. Rochester, New York, personal interview, August 18, 1995; Wien, Manager R & D, Manager Strategic Business Development: Eastman Kodak. Rochester, New York, personal interview, August 18, 1995; Winston 1985, 1996). This is not surprising given that the dominant market in the early days of photography was perceived to be that of “Caucasians” by Kodak, the main film manufacturer in North America. This did not have to be the case, as Brian Harris (1997, July 3, Lighting Director: Black Entertainment Television. Washington, DC., personal interview), lighting technician at the Black Entertainment Television

(BET) network, pointed out to me. Had NASA, the US intelligence service, or meteorological scientists already completed their research on photography of low-light areas at the time of the popular development of still photography, the evolution of film chemistry might have unfolded quite differently.

Film emulsions could have been designed initially with more sensitivity to the continuum of yellow, brown, and reddish skin tones, but the design process would have had to be motivated by a recognition of the need for an extended dynamic range. At the time film emulsions were developing, the target consumer market would have been “Caucasians” in a segregated political scene; their skin tones would have been less likely to be the basis for thinking about dynamic range because most subjects in a photograph would either have been all light-skinned or all darker-skinned. Thus, this was not an element of social consideration for film chemists. It was also believed at the time that physics was physics, chemistry was chemistry, and science was based on reasoned decisions without consideration of cultural or racial subtleties. It is now becoming acknowledged more widely within the industry that refinements to the chemistry of film emulsions have never been issues of physics or chemistry exclusively but have been the result of cultural choices as well.

Several key issues were responsible for raising the level of awareness of Kodak research scientists and image technology developers with regard to skin-colour reproduction. The first had to do with the identification of problems in the 1950s, when their film was being used for school graduation and class photos. According to Jim Rice (Former Technical Sales Representative and Marketing Manager: Kodak; McGee Endowed Professor, Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, New York, personal interview, August 18, 1995), the challenge became apparent only when students with contrasting skin colours were to be photographed in the same image frame. When each student was photographed alone, differences in skin tones were easily accommodated through compensatory lighting and a range of technical adjustments learned through experience, but when a group portrait was set up and subjects of all races and ethnicities were photographed together, these techniques could not resolve the problem of the film bias in favour of “Caucasian” skin. Consequently, the picture results showed details on the White faces but erased the contours and particularities of the faces with darker skin, except for the whites of their eyes and teeth. Parents complained about this situation and demanded a wider continuum of darker skin tones (Fig. 18.1).

Kodak’s drive to increase the dynamic range of its film products was motivated by two other (seemingly irrelevant) issues, which had to do with the photography of brown objects. Kathy Connor’s description (Curator: George Eastman Collection, Rochester, New York, personal interview, August 16, 1995) follows, regarding the experience of Earl Kage (Former Head: Kodak Camera Research Studios, Rochester, New York, personal interview, August 21, 1995), former head of the Color Photo Studio at Kodak Park in the 1960s and 1970s and former manager of Kodak Research studios:

Well, he said that it was interesting, that in the mid-sixties and seventies there was a coincidental problem that the company was facing. Two of their biggest professional accounts were, he didn’t name the company, but somebody said that they made chocolate candies . . .

Fig. 18.1 Taken with a Canon camera and using Kodak 125 ASA film, this 1973 photo of two children in Senegal demonstrates that, even years after complaints of uneven qualities apparent in images of dark and light skins, the issue remained uncorrected (Photograph courtesy of Olivier Le Brun, Paris, France)



Apparently, in reproducing chocolate candies, Kodak was receiving complaints that they weren't getting the right brown tones on the chocolates. Also, furniture manufacturers were complaining that stains and wood grains in their advertisement photos were not true to life, and that they weren't appropriate, so the chemists did some work on that. Earl also said to a certain extent, that research to improve those professional markets and addressing their questions helped them to do a little bit better with ethnic skin colours. I was amazed.

In his own words, Earl Kage (Former Head: Kodak Camera Research Studios, Rochester, New York, personal interview, August 21, 1995) remarked to me:

In the 4 x 5, 5 x 7, or even 8 x 10 colour transparency area that manufacturers of furniture were using to display their wares and to advertise their furniture for catalogues, they were having a good deal of difficulty in demonstrating the subtle differences of certain woods. Now, whether it was maple versus oak versus a couple of dark woods, this couldn't be distinguished in the photographs. This was also about the same time that we got some interesting observations from chocolate manufacturers who, in displaying Whitman's chocolate or whatever the names were in any case, the subtle variations between the dark and bittersweet and milk chocolates weren't as discernible and so some modifications were tried and consequently my little department became quite fat with chocolate, because what was in the front of the camera was consumed at the end of the shoot.

It is indeed interesting that the improvement of dark-skin colour reproduction came about quite incidentally in this context, and Kage (Former Head: Kodak Camera Research Studios, Rochester, New York, personal interview, August 21, 1995) later admitted his own surprise at this submerged historical point. "Yes", he noted, "it is fascinating that this has never been said before, because it was never Black flesh that was addressed as a serious problem that I knew of at the time". Other than parents complaining about graduation photos, Kage did not recall pressures from the Black community to improve the image quality of Kodak's product. This is surprising in many ways. One would have thought that during the height of the civil rights movement in the 1960s and 1970s, attention might have been turned to Kodak to demand better recognition of the communities' skin specificities. There were some economic conflicts between Kodak and its labourers in the 1960s, many of whom were African Americans, but the quality of photo products was not contested in an organized manner by the Black communities, as far as I could discover. It is

more likely that, at the time, it was assumed by the public that such things were based on science and could not be changed, and so battles were fought on other fronts about issues of economics, poverty, and civil rights matters that were of higher priority to the African American and African Canadian communities.

The fourth and fifth factors motivating Kodak were the obvious desires to make some impact on the Japanese film stock market, which was strongly linked to Fuji films, and to extend its market to the global community. By the mid-1990s, the Japanese had used data from their own colour preference tests to redesign the look of their Shirleys for their still photography labs. The new reference card look for analogue and digital photography contained images of Japanese women with light-yellow skin; although for their current television work, they also still use the original BBC (2009) flesh tone card.⁴

Even though most of Fuji's current Shirley images have been facially ethnicized with the skin tone still remaining on the lighter end of the spectrum, the act of changing the cards showed their will to culturalize or indigenize their visual standards to match the dominant aesthetic of the widest population they serve: the Japanese and Asian markets.⁵

Ongoing international skin-colour preference tests conducted by specialists in the field also generated much data useful in informing Kodak film chemists and "designers" of the skin-colour biases preferred in different parts of the world. This information acted to shape Kodak's geography of emulsions, which conformed to these preferences rather than to considerations of exact reproduction. The industry term used for this business choice is "optimum reproduction" (Winston 1996). To implement this accommodation, film inventory was batched by region and distributed in accordance with these researched preferences. Although there were no explicit signs on Kodak's film boxes of where each target market was located geographically, the film was coded numerically to indicate specific destination countries or regions.

The Nuancing of Shirley

Skin-tone rendition was further clarified with Kodak's VeriColor portrait film series, which continued to expand its range of brownness and Black tones. VeriColor III, a professional portrait film developed in the early 1980s by Richard Wien (Manager R & D, Manager Strategic Business Development: Eastman Kodak. Rochester, New York, personal interview, August 18, 1995) and his team at Kodak Park, was particularly notable for its flexible accommodation of a range of skin colours. Gold Max, a very popular consumer film, was also a leap forward in this regard from

⁴For more information and to see BBC calibration cards: http://www.videointerchange.com/color_correction1.htm

⁵See my original article for colour photo examples of Japanese Shirleys.

most previous films on the market: it was referred to at Kodak initially as being able “to photograph the details of a dark horse in low light” (Wien, Manager R & D, Manager Strategic Business Development: Eastman Kodak, Rochester, New York, personal interview, August 18, 1995). With my interest in the filming techniques applicable to darker skins, I take this to have been a coded message, informing the public that this was “the right film for photographing ‘peoples of colour.’”

Finally, over time, there have been some cultural changes to the Shirley norm reference cards to make them more inclusive. From the single Caucasian woman surrounded by the necessary colour balancing information codes, Kodak’s Shirley has evolved into an image of three women with different skin colours, dressed fashionably in brightly contrasted clothing. The women are visibly of Caucasian, Asian, and African descent, though each of them has a fairly light complexion. The use of these multiracial, flesh tone reference cards by some of the major photochemical labs became a concrete recognition that they were invested financially and intellectually in addressing a diverse clientele and were no longer willing to use trial-and-error techniques on a case-by-case basis to find the appropriate colour balancing methods for processing images of non-Caucasians. Some resistance to adopting a multiracial reference image is evident in the fact that, although designed in 1995, it sold at a rather high premium well into the 2000s, and it took many years to become available to the retail sector through major photo lab suppliers. Even today, many professional laboratories have still not switched cards. Nor have the new reference cards fully penetrated the global market.

Instead, individual labs sought parallel alternatives when it became obvious that it was possible to design their own norm reference images digitally. Interestingly, this came about at the same time as the multinational film stock companies began to recognize the diversity of skin tones within their Shirley imagery. Consequently, in the digital media sphere of the Internet, there are many Shirley cards circulating. A Google “image” search will lead you to multiple results using the following keywords: Kodak, colour balance cards, Shirley, colour test strip cards. A particularly good site to visit to see the range of cards available is North Light Images, where you can see test cards from the Getty Images collection (2011).⁶ These are useful signposts for the new digital norms, which are replacing the traditional Shirley imagery. An important widely circulated one at this site contains several charts and images of people of “Caucasian”, Asian, and African descent, as well as a kangaroo and a variety of bright-coloured household items. What makes this reference image distinctive is both its sociocultural inclusivity and its vast skin colour range: it has by far the best dynamic range technically of the colour balance photos in circulation that I have researched. Furthermore, it is freely distributed over the Web and requires only an informal user agreement with its copyright owner.

Has the expansion of racial imagery and discourses into the cyber-world confounded questions of race relations as it transposes them from the political to the virtually personal, from imagery coded by others to that which can be coded

⁶North Light Images: http://www.northlight-images.co.uk/article_pages/test_images.html

more democratically, by all of us? The trend of custom-designing individual Shirleys based on the specific needs of the photographer and subjects will no doubt expand as computer software for digital image manipulation becomes more affordable and popular. This will make a significant difference to independent photographers. That said, I would argue strongly that, as more skin-tone-range choices open up and as colour standards for digital monitors and printing evolve, there will likely be little difference in the actual content of skin-tone colour balance cards in the still-circulating analogue and in the new frontier of digital printing sectors. In both cases, despite the recognition of ethnic subjects, lighter skins will likely prevail on most of the reference cards for social and normative reasons. This is yet another way in which the “colour complex” manifests itself in the realm of the technological. It is, therefore, in these sociocultural domains that we need to focus our attention to understand more effectively the relationship between social cognition, the technologies we use, and the practices that emerge from this linkage.

Whiteness Challenged

As is apparent from these examples, my empirical case study research confirms strongly that in photographic industries of visual representation, a White, gendered reference point has been central in the evolution of thinking and decision-making about film design and practice. The evidence I have accumulated indicates that how our everyday technologies and products function, and what they favour and ignore, has been coloured by the reference points, assumptions, and invisible norms of the cultural intermediaries involved in their design and marketing, most of whom have been Caucasian men.⁷ This “flesh tone imperialism” (Le Brun,

⁷In December 2009, a *YouTube* video entitled: *HP Computers are Racist* went viral (2009). It was soon followed by HP’s response to the explicit assertion of the first video’s producers, *HP Hewlett Packard Responds to Racist Webcam Computer Lap Top Allegations Against Black People* (YouTube 2009). In *HP Computers are Racist*, “White Wanda” and “Black Dezy” demonstrate the use of HP’s webcam on its then new “smart” computer showing that, despite all promises of performance, it is unable to fulfill its claims of face tracking and face recognition software on black-skinned users. It only works for those with lighter skin colours. The first video was compelling and raised a series of questions about the quality control testing infrastructure at HP’s Research and Development Centre. Why was this product not tested on potential consumers with a range of skin tones? Wouldn’t this have made impeccable sense in the context of HP’s global marketing strategy? What was the business context for this decision in HP’s testing centre?

In their response video (YouTube 2009), HP representatives argue that this oversight is not a matter of conscious racism but is based on a technological limitation (which, by the way, they could have easily addressed had they noticed it before the technology was launched). With additional lighting, they argue, the software would work as effectively on black skin as on fairer skins. To convince the viewer of their point, they demonstrate this on the response video using rather bright spotlights directed at a black man’s bald head.

Despite HP’s explanation for this obvious gap in their market testing process, I wonder why, in the twenty-first century—in which so much technological savvy exists—a product with this built-

Independent Cinematographer and Sociologist. Montreal, QC, Canada, personal interview, November 27, 2006) typifies an aspect of the technological unconscious (Vaccari 1981)—an apparent lack of awareness of the dominance of Whiteness in the cognitive patterns of those key people framing the tools of visual reproduction by decision and design. It informs us significantly of the need to recognize how deeply embedded in our cognitive processes the naturalization of Whiteness and sexism remains.

Beyond Shirley: Toward a Theory of Cognitive Equity

It is clear that skin colour continues to matter universally. It matters in identity formation; it matters in politics; it matters in the everyday negotiations of institutional and social life. It is my contention that simply acknowledging racial minorities through multicultural legislation, policies, and practices is not enough to instigate shifts in the sociocultural perceptions of the majority of people. What I am talking about here is a way of beginning to undo the psychological damage of exclusion (Fanon 1967) at a very fundamental level and constructing a new or alternative sets of body skin-colour norms to represent images of success, belonging, and inclusivity.

Conceptually, I would like to introduce the notion of “cognitive equity”—that is, a new way of understanding racial equity issues that does not only revolve around statistics, legislation, or access to institutions but rather inscribes directly a vision of multicultural and multiracial equity into technologies, products, and emergent practices in their usage. This is a concept in progress, which I am exploring more deeply by examining the decision discourses around organizational skin-colour adjustments, industry policies, and racial minority-initiated visual decolonization processes. Is there some sense of a drive toward cognitive equity that is behind the

in deficiency and which ended up being quite embarrassing to its producers was able to go to the global market and stay there. Why was it that the default was designed to work automatically with lighter skins and that for darker skins there had to be an outside technical adjustment to the lighting (at the user’s additional expense) that should have been built into the mechanism or functionality of the instrument itself in the first instance? What kind of problematic algorithm was embedded in this technology? This case is definitely more than a trivial matter. It is visible evidence that, within image technologies, paying close attention to culturally and racially inflected design details (that may initially appear to be insignificant) will give us a good barometer reading of the racial aesthetic and level of insight of its manufacturer. It also acts as a pedagogical intervention into the marketplace not only of technologies but also of sociocultural ideas within the manufacturing and business sectors. If the lesson to be learned from HP’s face recognition/tracking technology was that only white skin was worthy of public attention, then this webcam was a distorted tool delivering a rather skewed message. If the marketing unit inside HP intended to address consumers of all skin tones, the webcam embarrassingly showed a lack of insight and consciousness by its designers. Beyond this, there is a moral issue at stake here as well. It is not just a question of good or bad marketing strategy. Everyone’s skin tone, regardless of color, is worthy of good rendition.

colour adjustment process or are corporations engaging in the exercise for the sake of appearing to be politically correct, on which so much of the media coverage on these issues tends to focus?

The target of cognitive equity goes beyond political correctness and the repair mode of design, which encompasses “fitting or camouflaging” minorities into already existing values of Whiteness, such as painting Caucasian-featured mannequins black or yellow to symbolically appear ethnic. Furthermore, unlike affirmative action and legislative tools, cognitive equity cannot be measured and circumscribed in social science or statistical terms, because it cannot yet make comparable claims for social justice.

Rather, I am conceiving of it as an enabling socialization process that first aims to open narrow and distorted cognitive associations around skin colour to close scrutiny. Second, the cognitive equity strategy would broaden and publicly recognize the range and subtleties of all skin colours by normalizing them within the context of an antiracist commonsense knowledge framework reflected within technologies, ordinary products, education curriculum, and the media. I would suggest that this important cognitive shift has the potential to establish facilitative conditions for the development of a more democratically and chromatically pluralistic society.

I believe that the potential building blocks of cognitive equity will be located in small and subtle changes in our taken-for-granted perceptions and behaviours, resulting from an active demand for a wider range of socially imagined possibilities for inclusiveness. In the still photography case study presented here, visually distinguishing male and female models with a range of skin tones as a revised international norm in the colour balance process might provoke a new way of looking at and appreciating the beauty of flesh tone variations. In other words, I am arguing that the range of skin tones should become the new international norm both inside and outside of imaging technologies. At a deeper cognitive level, this change would encourage the ideological repositioning of the beauty, power, and privilege linkage that is biased toward Whiteness and “Caucasian-ness” to occupy only one space within the continuum of many skin-colour and ethno-cultural norms. The goal of cognitive equity might also stimulate our thinking about the [re]design process for technologies and products of colour. It could support the creation of an infinite array of visual possibilities for the purposes of identification, self-representation, and participation in the production of a “colour-balanced” world in which all skin colours could matter in more just and equitable terms.

It is at this foundational, conceptual level that I am focusing my thinking because I believe it is here that we can begin to challenge the vestiges of our neocolonial approach to visual representation and chip away at the remaining resistances to normative, institutional, and economic changes in the social and political apparatus. Legislated principles of equality rights, complemented by cognitive equity-based visual tools and products, could act as intelligent—but subtle—interventions in the sociocultural, educational, and economic spheres. Not only could cognitive equity-based visual tools support new conditions of possibility, guiding the [re]construction of a more equitable, colour-balanced society but they could also claim the defining feature of “quality” as equal to diversity and adaptability. It seems to me that in our

current sociocultural and political environment, in which diversity discourses are so predominant and in which flexibility of thinking is so necessary, the production and marketing of visual tools that could provide us with a continuum of norms, and which in themselves promote an equitable vision of racial and ethnic relations, would be a smart strategy of social intervention that we cannot afford to bypass at this time.

Anthropologist Margaret Visser (1986) once noted, “The extent to which we take everyday objects for granted is the precise extent to which they govern and inform our lives”. I would like to suggest that the more open we become to new possibilities for racial inclusiveness in commonplace objects and technologies, the closer we will likely get to building a next generation whose social and cultural cognitive processes will be multiracial in scope and practice. Acknowledgment and explicit discussion about the ethno-cultural and racial choices we embed within our technologies, products, and practices will, I hope, serve the purpose of raising our consciousness about how important it is to transform the way we think about, engage with, and act upon the “historical fixtures of our existence” (Kearney 1994, p. 153).

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Chapter 19

What Color Is Red? Exploring the Implications of Phenotype for Native Americans

Hilary N. Weaver

When asked to reflect on how a Native American looks, most people have a particular image in their minds. That image typically includes someone with light to medium brown skin; long, dark, straight hair; and dark eyes. The image might also include “props” assumed to accompany an “Indian” identity, such as horses, tepees, and—of course—feathers. This stereotypical image is fed by Hollywood movie depictions and is rarely challenged because most Americans have little contact with Native Americans; most Americans rarely think of them as contemporary people who might live next door or work in the same office building.

Perhaps even more dangerous than the stereotypical images of Native Americans held by America at large are the images internalized by Native people themselves. These stereotypical ideas drive internalized oppression and colonized attitudes about identity. They lead some people to discount the authenticity of other Native people whose appearance varies from expectations.

This chapter explores the meaning of skin color in Native American communities from both historical and contemporary perspectives. For Native people, explorations of skin color are intertwined with issues of racial mixing and what that means for maintaining an indigenous identity. So much has been stolen from Native people that when people with skin hues that are lighter or darker than expected claim to be Native American (whether this is part of their heritage or not), it resonates with the pain of one more way in which Native culture has been appropriated. While some scholarly work has been done on racial mixing in Native communities, little work delves into the issue of skin color in any substantial way. This chapter draws on existing literature as well as the author’s experiences as a Lakota woman.

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A History Lesson: What Did Native Americans Look Like?

It is interesting to reflect on how closely our current ideas about the appearance of Native Americans may or may not match historical images. Early paintings and photographs such as those taken by Edward S. Curtis (Cardozo 1996) reveal people with brown skins, somewhat darker than what we think of as typical for Native Americans today. The contemporary book of photographs *Indian Country* (Cates 2001) reveals a broader and somewhat lighter spectrum of color among the subjects although, even within this broader spectrum, the photographer took care to include subjects that “look Indian.” While W. L. Katz asserts, in his classic book, *Black Indians* (1986), that many of the old photographs that depict Native Americans with dark skin are proof of extensive racial mixing, this is not necessarily the case in all instances. Indeed, Cree singer Buffy Sainte-Marie (1964) tells us in her classic song, “My Country ‘Tis of Thy People You’re Dying,” that for contemporary Native Americans, “Our blood runs the redder/Though genes have been paled,” referring to the extensive intermixing between Whites and Native Americans that has left some contemporary Native people substantially lighter in skin tone than their forebearers.

Who Is a Native American?

The question of who is a Native American can be answered in many different ways. As distinct nations, Indian tribes retain the legal authority to determine membership (i.e., criteria for citizenship). In contemporary times, citizenship criterion is often based on blood quantum or a percentage of biological heritage that is traceable to a particular tribe. A common criterion for enrollment (being listed on the rolls or membership records of a particular tribe) is having one-quarter blood quantum (25%, also stated as 1/4). Some tribes require that ancestry be documented through the matrilineal line while others require patrilineal descent; some accept either method. Some tribes require the ability to trace descent from someone listed on the tribal rolls at a particular point in time, such as a census or treaty signing. These varying criteria for tribal membership allow many people of mixed heritage to be tribal members while excluding others who may have exclusively indigenous heritage but who may not be able to document their heritage or may not qualify for citizenship based on descent requirements. An example would be an individual whose mother is from a patrilineal tribe and whose father is from a matrilineal tribe and who may have 100% Native heritage but may not qualify for enrollment in either tribe. While there are varying enrollment requirements, it is clear that being Native American is a social and political identity that does not match well with racial categories.

There are indeed many people who espouse a Native identity but who are not enrolled in any tribe. They may be culturally grounded and active participants in

a Native community. In this sense, they may have community recognition but not the legal documentation needed to access health services, housing, scholarships, or other benefits designated specifically for Native Americans. Additionally, there are many Native tribes that are not recognized by the federal government. These tribes may or may not have state recognition. It is quite possible that someone who is recognized as Native in one context will not be seen as Native in another. As alluded to above, the subject of Native identity can be quite complex, even without considering dimensions related to skin color.

The Legacy of Mixed Heritage

While there are still strong societal attitudes about how a Native American looks (or should appear), the fact is that there are Native Americans with varying skin colors and phenotypic features; they are both enrolled and not enrolled in tribes. As long as people have ventured to North America from other continents, they have intermixed with Native people, thus leading to a wide variety in appearances. People of mixed Native heritage are commonly referred to as “mixed-bloods,” although people of mixed heritage whose skin color and phenotype fit the stereotypical image of a Native American may be assumed to be “full-blood.” Assumptions about one’s level of connection to an indigenous cultural identity should not be based on appearance or whether someone is considered mixed-blood or full-blood.

There are mixed-blood Native Americans with both European and African heritage. It is estimated that by the 1830s, half of the Native people east of the Mississippi River were genetically intermixed with different Native groups, Blacks, and Whites. This led to substantial variation in skin tone. Initially, being of mixed heritage was not an issue, and people of various backgrounds and complexions were incorporated into Native communities. Indigenous societies did not perceive this mixture as peculiar or threatening (Baird-Olson 2003). Regardless of ethnicity, people could be accepted as tribal members as membership was obtained through family lineage, marriage, and adoption. It was only later that ideas about Native identity became racialized and aligned with hierarchical ideas about race that proliferated in American society. Ideas about quantifying a Native identity in racial and biological terms (rather than social and community understandings of identity) gave support to the subsequent rise of blood quantum as a way of measuring “Indianness” (Baird-Olson 2003).

During the 1700s, Native people maintained both political and cultural sovereignty. Indigenous nations “incorporated foreigners into their societies on their own terms and for their own purposes” (Perdue 2003, 2). Substantial contact in the Southeast between Native Americans, Whites, and Blacks in the 1700s made for a rather cosmopolitan world of traders, officials, squatters, criminals, escaped slaves, and captives where foreigners were sometimes adopted into tribes (Perdue 2003).

For example, initially the Creek nation had no concept of race and readily accepted Africans into their society (Perdue 2003). Only later were European attitudes about slavery and African inferiority adopted, especially as bounties were placed on escaped slaves. Among the Creeks there were many captives—both Black and White—who were adopted into the tribe. As the years progressed, Creek captives were increasingly White. In Native American traditions, strong kinship networks define insiders and outsiders rather than race; thus, many people of various backgrounds were defined as Native American.

Just as people of varying backgrounds assimilated into Native societies, it was possible for Native people to assimilate into American society. People of mixed Native and White ancestry have often successfully assimilated into the American mainstream, particularly if they do not maintain much connection to their culture and community. One example is Charles Curtis, who became a US senator and was vice president under President Herbert Hoover. Both of Curtis' parents were mixed-bloods. He was a member of the Kaw tribe but only remotely connected to his indigenous culture (Unrau 1989).

Contemporary Native Americans

High rates of intermarriage, both historically and in contemporary times, undermine any ideas of Native American racial purity (Baird-Olson 2003). In the 2000 Census, 1.6 million of the 4.1 million who self-identified as Native American also identified with another race. The majority of these identified as Native American and White (1,082,683), while 182,494 identified as Native American and Black; 112,207 identified as Native, Black, and White; and 93,842 identified as Native American and another race (Ogunwole 2002). “Historical Black-White-Indian intermarriage patterns have created generations of individuals who are problematic for race-conscious Americans who classify individuals on phenotype, especially skin color, hair texture, and facial features” (McMullen 2002, 268).

For Native mixed-bloods, it has often been more acceptable to claim European heritage than descent from African ancestors. Of the Wampanoag, a tribe that has extensive mixing with both Whites and Blacks, “Many individuals state that they have White parents or grandparents, but few claim Black ancestors, except those who consider themselves descendants of two traditionally subjugated groups. In addition, the literal statement that one's non-Native ancestry is White is an instrumental assertion that it includes no Blacks. Physical traits stereotyped as African American place some constraints on individuals' ability to claim their Indian identity, but Native people who are phenotypically White are less inclined to argue their genealogies: Whiteness generally needs no defense” (McMullen 2002, 275).

While color consciousness is more of a contemporary than an historical phenomenon in Native American communities, it is a long-standing issue in other

communities of color. The historic association between light skin tone and privilege is much stronger among African Americans than Native Americans. Conversely, the association between dark skin and lower social stature also appears stronger for African Americans than Native Americans.

For African Americans, having a lighter complexion and European features is associated with preferable treatment historically and has been internalized by many as preferable, even within African American communities (Herring 2004). The preference for light skin among African Americans and Mexican Americans has its roots in colonization and enslavement but is maintained through internalized racism in these communities (Hunter 2004). In non-Native communities of color, light skin color can be a double-edged sword as increasing cultural pride has promoted the acceptance of darker skin hues. In some situations, bias against light complexions may exist and people with light skin may be considered less authentic and legitimate (Herring 2004; Hunter 2004). This complexity mirrors ideas about skin color in Native communities where historically people of mixed heritage with light skin tones had some political advantages, but that is no longer the case on a large scale. Contemporary Native people with light skin who cannot clearly document their lineage and family ties often come under suspicion. Even those with strong cultural connections may feel the pain of being “the wrong color” and constantly having their legitimacy questioned.

The Politics of Light Skin

Almost all European traders who stayed in tribal territories for any length of time took Native wives (Perdue 2003). In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many European men had children with Native women. These children were referred to as half-breeds by White society. Initially, there was an assumption that people of mixed heritage were superior to other Native people. There was a belief that Native people with White heritage would take on more White characteristics and be more civilized (Perdue 2003).

Among the Southeastern tribes, leadership roles increasingly fell to mixed-blood men (Perdue 2003). Mixed-bloods were favored, were often bilingual, and were targeted for education based on both language skills and presumptions that their White heritage made them superior. They became disproportionately represented in mission and government schools, which subsequently translated to them becoming members of the economic elite in the Southeast (Perdue 2003). This particular mix of cultures gave them an additional economic advantage. Southeastern Native societies were matrilineal; thus, children of Native women inherited from their mothers. If their fathers were White, according to European and American traditions, they inherited from them as well, thus encouraging a mixed-blood economic elite (Perdue 2003). Initially, from an American perspective, mixing between Whites and Native Americans was seen in a positive light. Intermarriage and mixed-blood children

were seen as a method for promoting assimilation (Unrau 1989), a goal espoused by the American government. Physical and cultural assimilation was seen as both possible and desirable, and could be accomplished through intermarriage (Perdue 2003). In this context, intermarriage was promoted for strategic and diplomatic purposes.

In part, this push for assimilation was supported by the belief held by some that skin color was an acquired rather than an inherited condition. “Virginian Robert Beverley maintained that the skin of Native infants was ‘much clearer’ than that of adults, who acquired a darker hue by ‘greasing and sunning themselves.’ By refraining from these practices, Native Americans presumably could become white. And if skin color, the physical feature at which Europeans most often recoiled, was artificial, what was to prevent the transformation of Indians in other ways and, ultimately, their incorporation into colonial society?” (Perdue 2003, 72).

By the mid-1800s, however, the increasingly virulent racism of White Americans began to discourage intermarriage. There was a growing belief that Native Americans were unable to change and assimilate, but at least mixed-blood people were superior to full-blood Natives. Natives who appeared civilized (i.e., took on characteristics of American society) could be explained as mixed-bloods (Perdue 2003). At this time, racial categorization was primarily used by Whites and not by Native Americans. Native people did not use the term mixed-blood and saw no distinction based on race or skin color. It is not surprising that ideas about full-blood, mixed-blood, and blood in general developed in the racially conscious South (Perdue 2003). Although, in the 1800s, some people continued to assert the superiority of Native people with White heritage, there was also a growing perspective that “half-breeds” (mixed-bloods) were particularly devious, heinous, and dangerous (Ingersoll 2005). This belief aligned with historical ideas about the evils of racial mixing.

For Native people interacting with dominant social institutions, differential appearance seemed to lead to differential treatment. Federal policy forced many Native children to attend residential schools, where the curriculum emphasized Christianity, vocational skills, and assimilation, which were often long distances from their families. A study examining the experiences of boarding school survivors found that those who looked more phenotypically indigenous experienced harsher treatment (Weaver and Yellow Horse Brave Heart 1999).

After centuries of intermixing with people of other backgrounds, Native Americans have a wide variety of appearances. It is not uncommon for people from the same family to have different skin tones or hair textures. Given genetic eccentricities, variations in complexion can exist among siblings. It is difficult to tell a so-called full-blood from a so-called mixed-blood (Perdue 2003), yet stereotypical ideas about what a Native American should look like continue to drive expectations. Indeed, strongly held ideas about how a Native American should appear have led to questions of legitimacy for both individuals with light skin and tribal groups applying for federal recognition.

The Politics of Dark Skin

In the Colonial era, efforts were made to maintain the racial divide and to prevent the mixing of Blacks and Native Americans (Ingersoll 2005), but this was not always successful. During the American slave era, the majority of enslaved Africans were men, with the resulting population imbalance leading some African men to marry or have sexual relationships with Native women. The fact that children born to Native women were generally considered tribal members and therefore free from slavery provided an additional incentive for African American men to have relationships with Native women (Forbes 1993).

Many people of mixed African and indigenous heritage assimilated into Native cultures and rose to prominence within their tribes (Ingersoll 2005). The Seminole tribe was well known for its incorporation of many Black Seminoles who actively resisted the advancement of the US military into Seminole territory. Some also became legendary figures in the West (Ingersoll 2005).

The cultural identity of mixed-race people is typically examined on an individual level with little or no attention to issues of mixed-race communities and nations like the Lumbee, Narragansett, Pequot, and Shinnecock. While communities of mixed-race Native Americans have been acknowledged, there is little contemporary exploration of the implications of mixed heritage for cultural identity on a macro or community level or how phenotype affects perceptions of legitimacy when indigenous groups apply for federal recognition.

Like their lighter-skinned counterparts, Native people with African heritage often face questions about their legitimacy and authenticity. People of mixed Native and African heritage who espouse an indigenous identity are often “denied, scrutinized, and neglected within the Native communities with which they identify” (Naylor 2006, 149). They are seen as another example of the appropriation of Native culture. Discrimination based on skin color can exist even within tribal communities. For example, some darker-skinned members of the Mashantucket Pequot tribe note that they have faced discrimination within their own tribe based on their skin color. This discrimination includes not being recognized as tribal members in their own casino and being passed over for higher paying tribal jobs (McMullen 2002).

The issue of skin color can raise great discomfort with tribes of multiracial heritage. For example, “The issue of phenotypic variability and how it came about is seldom addressed publically and is virtually ignored in the exhibits of the tribe’s own Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center. Despite the lack of explicit discussion of racial intermarriage and admixture in the museum’s exhibits, the issue was of such great importance to the tribe that the skin tone of each exhibit mannequin was said to have been reviewed and approved by the tribal members during the museum’s construction” (McMullen 2002, 279).

Racial mixing is also a sensitive issue for the Cherokee people. Historically, the Cherokee were labeled as one of the “Five Civilized Tribes,” thus named for adopting characteristics of American society, including a plantation-based economy fueled by the labor of Black slaves. Like neighboring nations, there was

intermixing between Native Americans and Blacks. For multiracial Cherokee, there has long been differential treatment for those of European and African ancestry (Sturm 2002).

There is a complicated historical legacy related to Cherokee Freedmen, descendants of former Cherokee slaves who, at various times, have or have not been on the tribal rolls as citizens—and do not necessarily have Cherokee blood. In the 1970s, the Cherokee nation became progressively more White, as a lack of blood quantum requirements led to many intermarried Whites applying for enrollment. At the same time, there were heated discussions and tribal votes that sought to exclude Freedmen from tribal membership (Sturm 2002).

The primacy of phenotype and the belief that Native people no longer exist in New England led non-Natives to identify Northeastern Native people as Black or White (McMullen 2002). The propensity of a larger society to judge and categorize people based on phenotype makes it challenging for Native people with mixed African heritage to assert an indigenous or tribal identity. For example, Narragansett and Pequot people are often not distinguished from Blacks. Native Americans who intermarry with Blacks and live in urban areas seldom identify as Native, but those who remain near tribal lands may do so.

“Native people in southeastern New England understood anthropological and lay public ideas about phenotype and how it affected their perception as Indians. While being considered ‘people of color’ might have been acceptable in the early nineteenth century, the later equation of colored and Black was disadvantageous, especially if Indian children could no longer attend White schools” (McMullen 2002, 265). Thus, some Native people have taken great pains to avoid being linked with Blacks in order to avoid assuming a subordinate position in society.

The federal government has a legal process by which a particular group may be “recognized” as an Indian tribe. More than 560 tribes have been federally recognized thus far, making them eligible for a variety of federal programs (SAMHSA 2009). Many other tribes are currently in a queue seeking recognition. As part of the federal recognition process, a group must prove they are an indigenous group that has remained distinct. Racially mixed tribal groups face particular challenges in meeting this criterion. Tribal groups whose members appear too light or too dark may draw particular scrutiny.

The Importance of Being Just the Right Color (According to Whom?)

As illustrated above, American society continues to have particular ideas about what a Native American should look like. Those who fall outside that narrow definition, typically because their skin color is lighter or darker than expected, face ongoing questions of authenticity and legitimacy. This may include extensive scrutiny from other Native Americans who have adopted dominant social or colonized attitudes

about Native Americans. There are clear expectations that Native people at least approximate an expected skin tone. What happens to Native Americans who fall outside these norms yet who assert a Native identity? Two cases illustrate this quandary: one is an example of private pain over being too light, and another is an example of public challenges over being too dark. In Case Example 1, the subject's name has been omitted to protect her privacy. The extraordinary publicity of the second case makes omission of the subject's name impractical.

Case Example 1: "Holes in My Soul"

A gifted speaker from the Mohawk Nation spoke eloquently about cultural traditions. She discussed how the Haudenosaunee (the Confederacy to which the Mohawk belong) belief system both differed from and aligned with the values, beliefs, and traditions of larger Western tribes and pan-Indian cosmologies. She taught about the life cycle and the natural balance between children and elders. The speaker was mesmerizing: a gifted orator, knowledgeable, and obviously living a life immersed in the cultural traditions of which she spoke.

As her presentation took on an autobiographical bent, she spoke of "holes in my soul." It was painful to hear this eloquent woman speak of the ongoing damage inflicted by childhood insults that were hurled at her because of her light hair and skin tone. Memories of the taunting, the teasing, the challenges to her legitimacy as a Mohawk person are ever present in her daily life, despite always living on the reservation, being fluent in her language, and knowledgeable in her traditions. Today she skillfully passes on traditional cultural teachings, yet conflicts between her identity and her phenotype continue to haunt her.

Although it is well known that historically some Mohawk communities intermingled with eighteenth-century Hessian soldiers, leaving a legacy of Mohawk people with light hair and eyes, this historical fact does little to stop accusations that some contemporary Mohawks espouse a fraudulent identity. The accusations are most painful when they come from other Native people. Somehow, you can never be good enough, know enough, speak your language well enough, be immersed enough in your traditions. Today there are many Native people with holes in their souls, with each accusation tearing a new gash.

Case Example 2: "When Is a Navajo Not a Navajo?"

Raised on the Navajo reservation by her maternal grandmother, Radmilla Cody is fluent in Navajo language and culture. Ms. Cody performed many demonstrations of her cultural prowess in the process of competing in and ultimately winning the Miss Navajo Nation competition. "The controversy sparked by Cody's reign as Miss Navajo Nation revolved not around her ability to speak the Navajo Diné language,

her understanding of contemporary Navajo politics, or even her talent in preparing fry bread or butchering sheep. Rather, her perceived inappropriateness centered on her phenotype—specifically the fact that her father was African American and her physical features emphasized this biological reality” (Naylor 2006, 150).

The publicity around Radmilla Cody’s public role reflected long-standing fears held by many Navajo people, fears of losing an indigenous identity to the “melting pot” as well as questions of what it means to be Navajo. This case was controversial among Navajos. While some spoke against her, claiming she was inappropriate to represent the Navajo people, others spoke on her behalf, pointing out historical racial mixing and that Navajos come in many colors. There had been mixed-race Miss Navajos before, but they did not have African features. The issue of phenotype was crucial in this case.

Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell: When It Is Not Safe To Be Native American

There have been times of substantial racism and hatred directed at Native Americans. Indeed, prominent Americans such as L. Frank Baum, creator of the Wizard of Oz books, spoke for many when he called for the extermination of the Sioux Nation (Baum 2011). The violence and racism directed at Native people has often made it unsafe to espouse a Native identity publically. Many people of mixed heritage whose phenotype facilitated their ability to blend into another society have chosen to do so. Many parents have encouraged their children to leave their cultures behind and assimilate wherever they could. Native mixed-bloods who have feared asserting an indigenous identity have blended with White or Black communities as they could, based on their coloring (Baird-Olson 2003). Referring to Native Americans in the Black community, “the color line that constructs the phenomenon of Indians in African America differs markedly from its Black-White counterpart . . . efforts to protect their loved ones by remaining silent about Indianness resulted in their becoming Black by default” (Welburn 2002, 294).

Most of the reasons why Native people sought to blend into White or Black communities no longer exist on a large scale; thus, some now seek to reclaim their indigenous identities. This has been a major factor in the rise of census numbers for Native people. Although many now asserting an indigenous identity strongly feel that this is their right, it does raise numerous questions about their legitimacy and who can validly claim a Native identity. These questions are strengthened by the fact that many of these new claimants do not meet the stereotypical idea of what a Native American should look like.

Asserting Native American identity, for those who do not meet the expected appearance of a Native American, has become more complicated in recent years. With the rise of New Age spirituality, it can be in vogue to claim Native ancestry, a phenomenon that has indeed led to instances of ethnic fraud. Additionally, in some

cases, it can now be lucrative to assert a Native American identity. “Recent growth of stronger tribal communities and tribal economic development have also bred a rise in individual ethnic renewal among those whose ancestors passed into Black and White society and have themselves returned to burgeoning Native communities” (McMullen 2002, 282). While some of these “new Indians” have legitimate claims, the recent rise in Native people “coming out of the closet” casts a shadow of doubt on all those without strong, documented tribal connections that have been maintained continuously for generations.

The question of who has the right to assert a Native American identity has become very political among Native people. Games are played over who is more Indian. Native communities are fraught with internal divisions. While historically Native societies have welcomed and integrated people of many backgrounds into tribal communities, today we have largely adopted exclusive and racialized ideas of who is Native American. This adopted exclusivity leads Native people to become pawns in genocidal practices (Baird-Olson 2003). If we are not careful, in our squabbling we may define ourselves out of existence.

The Relationship Between Skin Color and Cultural Identity: Does It Matter?

Traditionally, skin color was irrelevant in influencing cultural identity or determining tribal membership. Indigenous societies incorporated people from other nations and backgrounds according to cultural rules and customs of adoption and kinship relationships. Phenotype was essentially irrelevant.

As Native nations became engulfed by the USA, they were exposed to and adopted values and beliefs held by the larger society, to a greater or lesser extent, including hierarchical notions of the importance of skin color. In today’s Native communities, skin color is often taken as a marker of legitimacy or illegitimacy. Native people with particularly dark or particularly light skin are likely to have their authenticity questioned and may need to constantly document their “Indianness,” leaving many holes in their souls. Our ideas about skin color and who is a Native American have become colonized as we have taken on some of the worst attributes of our surrounding society. It is the sovereign right of each Native nation to determine criteria for membership, yet Native people who do not “look right” must constantly defend their legitimacy. The idea that skin color is related to identity is essentially foreign to indigenous societies, yet in our contemporary reality beliefs about what a Native American looks like have become so engrained that phenotype is now an essential element of a Native identity.

In revisiting the question of how a Native American should look, it is clear that Native Americans can have a variety of skin tones, hair textures, and eye colors. This reality is rooted in our history and is very much a part of our contemporary identity. Not all Native people, and perhaps the majority of Native people, do not

fit the stereotypical image of someone with light to medium brown skin, long straight dark hair, and dark eyes. The acceptance of external stereotypes of how a Native American looks amounts to internalized oppression and an acceptance of colonized attitudes. Denying the diversity of appearances found in Native people and holding to a very narrow stereotypical view of what a Native person looks like is not only a denial of reality but succeeds in reducing the number of “authentic” Native Americans in ways that support centuries-old goals of assimilation into virtual nonexistence.

It is painful that non-Native people continue to hold stereotypical images of Native people. It is inexcusable when Native people hold these same stereotypes and use them to oppress each other. We know better. There is an extensive variety in the skin tones found among Native people, and this often bears little or no relationship to cultural identity or community connection. Generations past were accepting of diversity within Native communities and those of mixed heritage were integrated into community norms. Let us hope that future generations will take us back along a similar path and away from our current, racially based, internalized oppression.

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Chapter 20

From Fair & Lovely to Banho de Lua: Skin Whitening and Its Implications in the Multiethnic and Multicolored Surinamese Society

Jack Menke

Introduction

This chapter critically examines the meaning and extent of skin whitening in the multiethnic and multicolored Surinamese society on the South American continent. Skin whitening has evolved into a worldwide phenomenon, with its own characteristics in the various regions where it is common—and assumed to be related to historical, cultural, and socioeconomic factors (Menke 2011a). Therefore, the analysis will take into account the national context that is linked with the historical and political contexts of race and their interrelation with white dominance, and the ideological framing into the global system of power. To understand the phenomenon of skin whitening from a cultural and economic perspective, the concepts related to “white” and “nonwhite” will be examined in the context of the historical evolution of conceptualizations on humanity and the framework of colonial power, race, and ethnicity.

Eurocentric Thought on Humanity

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Eurocentric philosophical ideas on humanity by well-known European philosophers, such as G. W. F. Hegel (2001), John Locke (Gwaravanda 2011), and Joseph-Arthur, Comte de Gobineau (1856), constructed the intellectual basis for white supremacy and inferiority of black and indigenous peoples. This provided a principal rationalization to justify colonial

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exploitation of Africa and the Americas. G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831) was not only denigrating toward black and indigenous people; his philosophical racism declared the white race and its skin color to be essential in defining humanity, while nonwhites represented the opposite: “This distinction between himself as an individual and the universality of his essential being, the African in the uniform, undeveloped oneness of his existence has not yet attained; so that the Knowledge of an absolute Being, an Other and a Higher than his individual self, is entirely wanting. The Negro, as already observed, exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state. We must lay aside all thought of reverence and morality—all that we call feeling—if we would rightly comprehend him; there is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found in this type of character” (Hegel 2001, 111). Hegel’s argument in support of the supremacy of the white race and the inferiority of indigenous people becomes even clearer in his justification of the domination and colonial exploitation of South America: “America has always shown itself physically and psychically powerless, and still shows itself so. For the aborigines, after the landing of the Europeans in America, gradually vanished at the breath of European activity . . . The inferiority of these individuals in all respects, even in regard to size, is very manifest” (Hegel 2001, 98–99).

The association between the seventeenth-century Eurocentric conceptualization of humanity and skin color is expressed clearly by John Locke (1632–1704), a philosopher concerned primarily with society and epistemology. He argues, “skin color is a nominally essential property of men.” This “means that skin color is important in the identification and naming of important qualities of human beings. The consequence of Locke’s thinking is that the white skin is equivalent to the essential skin, while the black skin is considered to be less important in defining humanity” (Gwaravanda 2011, 198–199).

The logical implication of the Eurocentric philosophical thought on humanity was the conceptualization of a hierarchy of races in the world. The principal social classifications of race were constructed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in the context of scientific racism, inspired by Carl Linnaeus (1707–1778) and Gobineau (1816–1882). Both men designed a racial hierarchy of major races in the world, with skin color being the principal classification criterion. At the top was the white European (*Homo Europeanus*). Gobineau, a French aristocrat and diplomat, classified the human species into three major races: white, yellow, and black. He claimed to have a universal explanatory system: “that race is the primary force determining world events,” and that “history springs only from contact with the white races.” His principal book *Essai sur l’inégalité des races humaines* (*An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races*), written from 1853 to 1855, was translated into English and published in 1856 as *The Moral and Intellectual Diversity of Races* (Gobineau 1856). Gobineau originally stated that, looking back at the history of European civilizations, miscegenation of the white race was inevitable and would result in the degeneration of the superior race and growing chaos. Gobineau lived some years in Brazil. He influenced the Portuguese colonialism in this society, where the ruling class, in the footsteps of the European scientific racism, considered *mestiçagem* (miscegenation) a way to “wipe away” the races (DaMatta 1984, 38).

Therefore, the colonial rulers attributed a negative appreciation to the *mestiço* and other hybrids, such as the mulatto, who were associated with degeneration. From a political point of view, this was critical because rejecting the mixing of races was a strategy to maintain the colonial system. Mixing of races was considered a great risk as this could result in a significant increase of hybrids, leading to power sharing with these nonwhites, and ultimately to a crisis of the colonial system.

Nowadays, scientific racism and the related race classifications based on skin color are refuted by evolutionary and genetic evidence that confirms the notion of only one human race. The broadly accepted approach is the monogenesis: the “Out of Africa” theory of human origins that assumes a single origin for all human beings and races (Westerhof 2007). Despite the evidence of one human race, the racist conceptualization of white supremacy—with skin color as the central indicator—has remained important in the global power structures. At the same time, hybridism (racial mixing) and cultural miscegenation are being incorporated in new concepts and strategies to maintain the white supremacy.

The Global Context: Power and Race

The white dominance in the twenty-first century, global society is historically rooted in the political and economic systems of exploitation of peoples, communities, and nations, be it colonialism, neocolonialism, or globalization (Quijano 2007). Although through the various eras in history the construction and adaptation of whiteness, blackness, and hybridism may have changed, it is important to notice that the global power system is organized primarily with the purpose of maintaining a system of political and economic power. The continuous (re)construction of racial categories is important insofar as it serves to legitimize unequal race relations in order to maintain this global system of power.

Aníbal Quijano (2007) observes that, until today, the ruling classes in Western Europe and North America together with a few non-European nations—mainly Japan—are the principal beneficiaries in the global power system. This domination is referred to as Euro-centered colonialism, which has been defeated politically in most regions and nations, first in the Americas and later in Asia and Africa. This means that Euro-centered colonialism, as a formal system of political domination by Western European societies, belongs to the past. However, today the adapted system of exploitation is based on an association of interests between the dominant social classes and ethnic groups within postcolonial countries with unequal power, rather than being imposed from the outside. The colonial structure of power produced economic inequalities and specific forms of discrimination labeled as racial, ethnic, or national—depending on the era, the institution, and the society involved. These subjective constructions were presented as so-called objective categories to disguise the history of power. The large majority of people that are being exploited and discriminated against are members of the races, ethnic groups, or nations into which the former colonized populations had been categorized in the course of history.

According to Quijano (2007), European colonizers imposed their own patterns of producing knowledge and cultural meanings in stages. First, these patterns were out of reach of the dominated groups. Later, they taught them partially and selectively, in order to co-opt some of the dominated people into their own power institutions and gave them access to power. This key instrument of power is called seduction: to attract, to corrupt, and lead away from accepted principles. In this way, cultural Europeanization was transformed into an aspiration.

Quijano and Ennis (2000) argue that race is primarily a mental construction that expresses the basic experience of global domination and pervades the more important dimensions of global power, including its specific rationality: Eurocentrism. "Race" is more persistent and stable as a mental construction than the colonial system within which it was constructed. Skin color is the most visible indicator and evolved into the equivalent of race,¹ despite scientific evidence that pigmentation is not a good proxy for genetic ancestry or race.²

In the course of colonial history, whites defined who is white and when to change the definition of whiteness to meet the particular economic, political, and social conditions of that moment. The case of current Egyptians is illustrative who are being categorized now as white, after once having been categorized as Arab, and previously as black (Blay 2011). Another example for the way whiteness was adapted to specific social and economic situations is the concept of Creole in the context of the scientific racism and the related racial hierarchy. The process of adaptation of whites who were born and raised in the Americas and the Caribbean was conceptualized as Creolization. From a European point of view, Creole became an inferior variety of the white Europeans. The white Europeans were considered pure and had the highest rank in the racial hierarchy.³ These examples show that white supremacy is based less on objective racial whiteness than it is on ideological whiteness, driven by political and economic motives.

Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, ruling groups in the post-colonial state have been using hybridization often as an instrument to disguise economic inequalities and discrimination in culturally diverse societies. Ecuador is illustrative for the way new social constructions and identities are being adapted. "*Todos somos mestizos*" ("we are all mestizos") is a popular slogan that reflects

¹Quijano and Ennis state that both "Race" and the category "White" probably have an Anglo-American origin. The Iberian Europeans were by and large more familiar with African people before the colonial conquest of the Americas. "Race" was applied first on indigenous people in South America and was used prior to "Color" in the classification of the world population (Quijano and Ennis 2000, 575).

²Westerhof (2007) argues that we need to be cautious when using pigmentation as a proxy for genetic ancestry or race. "Objective measures of pigmentation fail to correlate with race. The conclusion is that skin color is not the same thing as race."

³Ideological reasons to change the definition of race categories are also common in the postcolonial society. In Suriname, the definition of *Creole* changed, both before and after the Second World War. For instance, the censuses of 1964 and 1971 broadened the concept of *Creole* by adding the Mixed group and Negroes in urban and rural areas.

the national ideology and is used by many leaders (Beck et al. 2011). This can be considered a populist approach to enhance national unity that at the same time disguises the importance of social and ethnic identities in a society with privileged whites and mestizos, while the indigenous and black minorities generally live in poverty and are victims of discrimination.

Suriname: Historical and Cultural Contexts

Suriname, a former Dutch colony that was also ruled by other European nations, acquired political independence in 1975. The country is located on the northern coast of South America and has a multiethnic population with a large linguistic and religious diversity. Of the approximately half a million inhabitants, 40% practice Christianity, 20% practice Hinduism, 14% practice Islam, and the remainder practice African American and other religions. Together with its western and eastern neighbors—Guyana and French Guyana respectively—Suriname is part of the Caribbean region. According to a broad conceptualization, based on a socio-historical criterion of the colonial plantation system in the Americas, “Caribbean” comprises all islands in the Caribbean Sea, all mainland nations, and regions in nations, where a plantation system based on slave labor preceded the present societies (Girvan 2001).⁴

In the early years of Caribbean colonization, skin bleaching practices⁵ of indigenous women were related to white male colonizers: “According to sixteenth century journals the Indian women of Santo Domingo subjected themselves to painful treatments with vegetable mixtures in order to bleach their skin, so as to be more attractive in the eyes of the conquistadores” (Hoetink 1971, 182). Today, chemical bleaching of the skin to obtain a lighter complexion is a worldwide phenomenon (Amamoo 1993; Hall 1995; Blay 2009). The use of skin bleaching cosmetics based on the chemicals hydroquinone, mercury, and corticosteroids seems to be common in societies with people of a variety of darker skin colors. It has been reported that these cosmetics may have undesired systemic and dermatological side effects. Dramatic systemic side effects include damage to the nervous system

⁴Norman Girvan (2001) distinguishes seven definitions of the Caribbean, based on different criteria. These range from a narrow geographical criterion to geopolitical to sociohistorical criteria. This definition includes the three Guianas and both the Deep South in the USA and northeastern Brazil. Some schools of thought, including the “plantation economy” school, often apply this sociohistorical conceptualization of the Caribbean.

⁵In this chapter we use the words bleaching and whitening as synonyms. However, in recent papers and advertisements there is a tendency to make a distinction between skin whitening and skin bleaching. Skin whitening refers to the use of less potent products with fewer side effects. The cosmetic industry consequently refers to skin whiteners. The pharmaceutical industry and physicians mostly speak of skin-bleaching agents, generally indicating more potent products with potentially serious side effects.

and kidneys by mercurials and hormonal disturbances by corticosteroids; serious dermatological side effects are vitiligo-like depigmentation (whitening of the skin) and exogenous ochronosis⁶ (Menke et al. 2001; Mahé et al. 2003, 2005).

Skin bleaching is defined as “the intentional alteration of one’s natural skin color to one relatively, if not substantially lighter in color, through the use of chemical skin lightening agents” (Blay and Charles 2011). Bleaching agents are also used by physicians to treat some hyperpigmentation skin diseases, a subject not discussed in this chapter. Thus, skin bleaching can be considered a cosmetic as well as a medical procedure. However, it can also be regarded as a sociopsychological phenomenon of people of color who have a deep feeling of inferiority and the desire to be light skinned or white. Frantz Fanon, referring to Aime Cesaire, a poet of the French-speaking Caribbean, assessed the problem of colonial oppression and skin color amidst the Caribbean decolonization as follows: “I am talking of millions of men who have been skillfully injected with fear, inferiority complexes, trepidation, servility, despair, abasement” (Fanon 1967). This conceptualization of the psychology of oppressed people of color was assessed during the postwar decolonization movement and in the context of a dichotomy of the white colonizer versus the colonized black. Although the core of Fanon’s analysis may still be valid today, the context of this chapter is different as the point of departure is the multiethnic society of Suriname, which goes beyond the black and white dichotomy. This society, with its great cultural diversity, is often praised for its ethnic harmony as an “ideal world in miniature” (Meel 1998). Part of this diversity is a rainbow of skin colors, a spectrum that begins with dark-skinned Creoles⁷ and Maroons, followed by different shades of mixed people: indigenous American Indians, Indians, Javanese, Chinese, light-skinned Lebanese, Syrians, and whites. Most of the East Indian, Javanese, and Chinese are descendants of indentured immigrant workers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, who together constitute more than 40% of the total population. In the twenty-first century, Suriname’s ethnic diversity is being enriched with new immigrant groups—particularly from Brazil, China, and Holland.

Institutions related to the state contributed to determine the social classification principle and basic categories of the population during colonialism and in the decolonization process. Demographic statistics based on skin color were constructed during slavery in the eighteenth century but also for East Indian, Javanese, and

⁶Ochronosis is a paradoxical effect with the bleached skin becoming darker rather than achieving the desired whitening.

⁷Creoles in Suriname are dark-skinned people of predominant Afro-American [African American] origin in the coastal region, who are generally considered to be descendants of the free slaves. The meaning of “Creole” (Spanish *criollo*) changed over time and has no identical meaning in different multiethnic societies. Originally, *criollo* referred to descendants of Spanish whites or near whites in colonial South America. In Suriname, the meaning of the *creool* (Dutch) resembles the concept of “Creole negroes” by Henry Koster (1816) in Brazil, which refers to “the free negroes who had been born in the country and being of African descent, made no claim to be racially mixed” (Hoetink 1971, 33). However, in present Suriname, many Creole persons claim not to be pure African.

Chinese indentured workers who arrived in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the colonial period, race was an important classification principle in the population censuses until 1950. The 1964 census marked a turning point when the concept of “race” was replaced by “ethnicity” (Menke 2011b). The latter concept, which lays more emphasis on the cultural and historical characteristics of groups, became the new social classification principle in the context of changing social and political relations. Illustrative is the way the definition of Creole was broadened and adapted to the changing demographic, social, and political context in the process of decolonization. Initially the term Creole referred to someone of Spanish or Portuguese descent, born and raised in a South American colony; later it referred to a Negro slave born in South America. Next it comprised the broad range of black, Maroon, and people of color; recently it was applied to urban and rural blacks. In the decolonization process of Suriname, the state played ideologically an important role to influence the representation of the society.

Although both race and ethnicity are considered social constructs, one needs to make a distinction between these concepts for a proper analysis of skin whitening in ethnically or culturally diverse societies.⁸ Ethnicity is a fluid concept that refers to recognition and self-identification as members of a group with a common cultural and historical background. Race is also fluid and refers to a distinct human population distinguished in some way from other human populations, based on skin color, facial features, ancestry, and genetics. Ethnicity, like race, has been adapted historically to political and economic requirements of the moment.

There are important differences with regard to the classification principle and the construction of the national ideology of Suriname and most societies in both Latin America and the Caribbean. A first difference is that ethnic groups are the principal categories in demographic censuses of Suriname, while many other countries, such as Brazil, recognize predominantly color categories—white, black, yellow, or brown. This means that in Suriname, ethnicity is the classification principle, while “race” is used in most of the other countries.

A second difference is that, unlike Suriname, many Latin American and Caribbean societies have one narrative about the nation. For example, in Brazil the narrative is about the Brazilian people; people do not speak in terms of ethnic groups like in Surinamese society. The Brazilian ideology assumes that there is only one nation, one people, one language, and one culture. While in most Latin American societies an assimilationist discourse has been constructed as a national ideology—as in Ecuador’s “*todos somos mestizos*” (“we are all mestizos”)—the process of creating the Surinamese nation emphasizes ethnic diversity. The nation’s ideology refers to the collective efforts of the various social, ethnic, and cultural

⁸The fluidity of ethnicity is also reflected in the variety of (sometimes competing) discourses that may exist within a particular ethnic group. In some of these discourses, there is a thin line between race and ethnicity, when members of a particular ethnic group strongly emphasize the notion of race, which may occur when a growing rivalry is perceived to exist with another important ethnic group.

groups to develop a society based on solidarity, mutual respect, and a harmonic interaction between ethnic groups and their cultures. The imagined ethnic and cultural diversity is expressed in the multiple narratives of the groups that constitute the Surinamese nation, such as the narratives of the East Indian, Creole, Maroon, indigenous peoples, Javanese, and Chinese. This leads to the central question in this chapter: To what extent chemical skin bleaching cosmetics are used in Suriname, how are these practices linked to perceptions of color and related identities in the ethnically diverse society, and how are they framed into the global system of skin bleaching industries?

Research Methodology

The findings in this chapter are based on quantitative and qualitative methods. A sample survey (Menke 2009) on chemical skin bleaching practices of 367 women in Suriname was conducted in September 1999. It was combined with case studies and focus group interviews. To acquire an update of skin bleaching practices in the twenty-first century, an assessment based on a qualitative approach was done in 2011.

The 1999 survey (Menke 2009) addressed some important questions, such as (1) whether respondents use chemical skin bleaching products, (2) for which parts of the skin, and (3) how often and how long they used these products. Furthermore, the reasons for using these creams as well as the results in terms of negative or positive implications were addressed. The population in the survey is comprised of women aged 18 and older in the predominantly urban districts of Paramaribo and Wanica, where approximately 70% of the total population lives. The sampling method was a simple random sample, drawn from the sampling frame of the Electricity Company. Table 20.1 gives an overview of the respondents by ethnicity,⁹ which is considered an important independent variable in the survey. The procentual distribution by ethnicity resembles more or less the national composition of the population, with Creole, East Indian, and Javanese being the major ethnic groups. The “mixed”¹⁰ consists of people of color who claim to be of two or more ethnic descents. The category “other” comprises a broad variety of groups, such as Maroon, indigenous peoples, Chinese, and Lebanese.

In the 1999 survey (Menke 2009), a number of individuals were identified with negative implications of using chemical skin bleaching cosmetics. In 2001, qualitative interviews were taken of some of these individuals to obtain an understanding of their sociopsychological characteristics and perceptions.

⁹Ethnicity was assessed by the respondent’s perception of the ethnic group to which she belongs.

¹⁰The mixed group comprises those who subjectively perceive that they are “mixed,” as they do not consider themselves to be a member of one particular and recognized ethnic group.

Table 20.1 Respondents by ethnicity

Ethnicity	Absolute	Percent (%)
Creole	114	31.1
East Indian	114	31.0
Javanese	71	19.4
Mixed	56	15.3
Other	13	3.2
Total	367	100.0

Survey Results

The survey (Menke 2009) shows that 18% of women aged 18 and older have used or still use bleaching cosmetics. Most respondents had purchased the cosmetics in a supermarket or drugstore, without medical prescription. The Fair & Lovely brand has the highest frequency and is used by half of these women. The Ambi brand ranks second by 20%, and Symba ranks third by 10%. These creams contain the chemical hydroquinone. The proportion using traditional bleaching products—*oso dresi* in Surinamese Creole—including the ginger-type root, “hardi,” is negligible (1%).

On which parts of the skin are the chemicals are used? The vast majority of the users (93%) apply the cosmetics on their face. The other skin parts (legs, arms) are of no or less importance.

Demographic and Socioeconomic Influences

The survey (Menke 2009) findings indicate that the use of bleaching cosmetics increases with the younger ages: 41% of those aged 18–25 use cosmetics, 18% of those between 26 and 40 years, and only 15% of those older than 40 use cosmetics. The difference is statistically significant (Fig. 20.1) (Chi-Square = 18.698533, Df = 2, Probability = 0.000087).

Of the various ethnic groups, East Indian stands out by the highest proportion of persons using chemical skin bleaching cosmetics. Of this ethnic group, 37% are users, while of the Creole and Javanese groups the percentages are far lower. The differences between East Indian and the other groups are statistically significant (Fig. 20.2) (Chi-Square = 31.192, Df = 3, Probability = 0.000001).

So far, we have found two statistically significant relationships: age by using bleaching cosmetics and ethnicity by using bleaching cosmetics. The question is whether there is an indirect causal relationship between ethnicity and the use of bleaching cosmetics. Therefore, we need to compare East Indian with the remaining ethnic groups to know if there is a statistically significant difference. In other words, we need to determine whether the relationship between ethnicity and the use of bleaching cosmetics goes via the intervening variable age. This can be done by

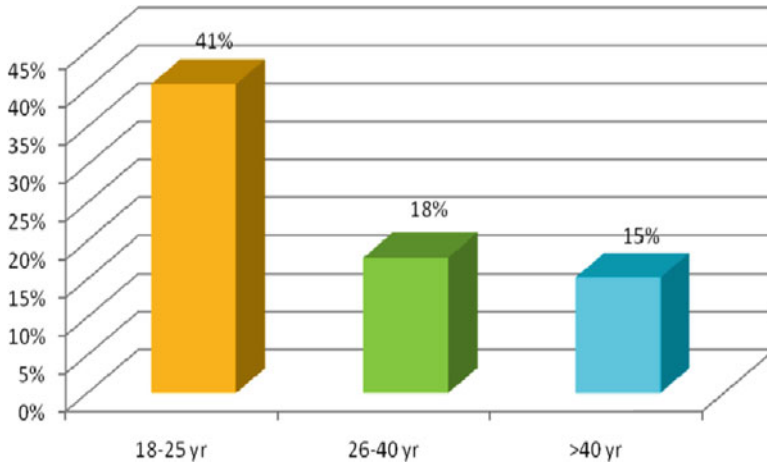


Fig. 20.1 Percentage of users of skin bleaching cosmetics by age group

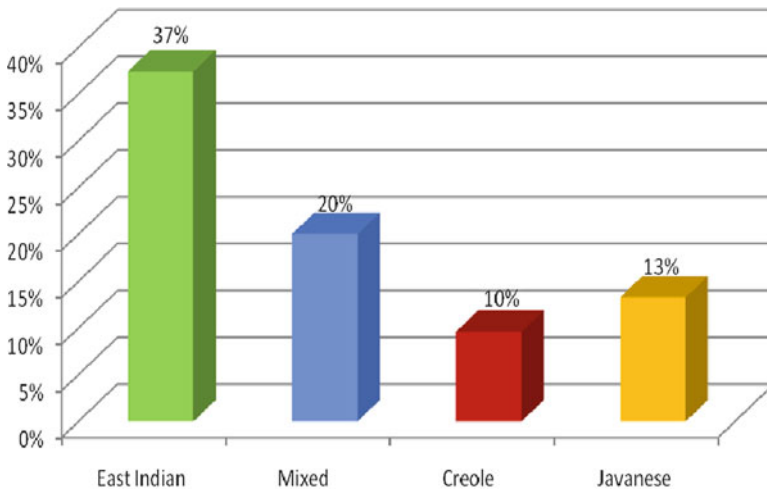


Fig. 20.2 Proportion of ethnic groups using skin bleaching cosmetics

introducing “age” as a test variable. The results are presented in Fig. 20.3. For the East Indian group, a strong statistically significant relationship was found with age (Chi-Square = 16.63384, Df = 2, Probability = 0.00024).

However, for the remaining ethnic groups together no statistically significant relationship was found (Chi-Square = 0.22130, Df = 2, Probability = 0.89525). In other words, when introducing age as an intervening variable, the originally found relationship between ethnicity and using bleaching cosmetics disappears for the remaining ethnic groups but becomes much stronger for the East Indian group. This is expressed by the fact that 61.4% of the East Indians aged 18–25 years are using

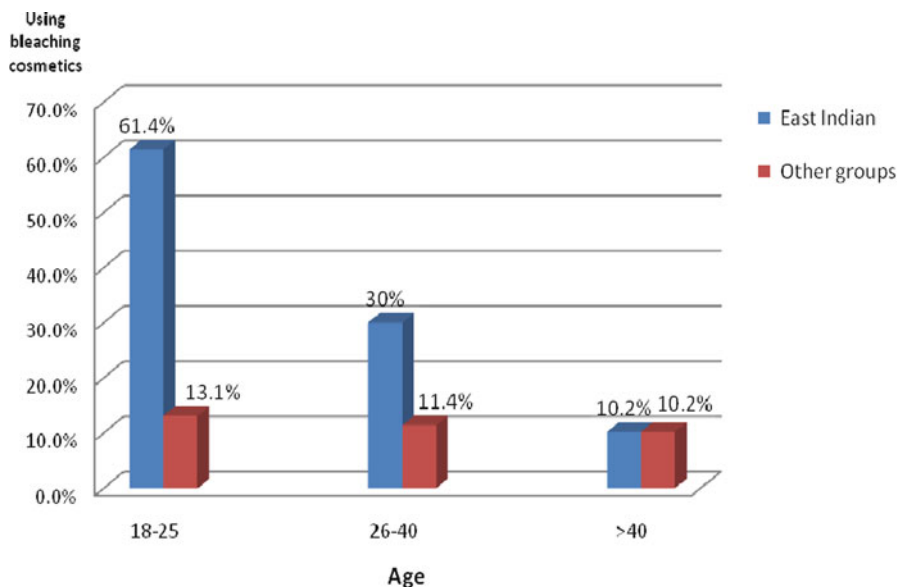


Fig. 20.3 East Indian and other ethnic groups by age and the use of skin bleaching cosmetics

bleaching cosmetics, while of the remaining ethnic groups, only 13.1% of this age group uses bleaching cosmetics (Fig. 20.3).

There is a higher percentage of skin bleaching among married women: Of the total sample, 23% of the married women were using bleaching cosmetics as against 13% of those not married; the same pattern is found for the East Indian women, showing 35% of the married and 27% of unmarried women using bleaching cosmetics. However, no statistically significant relationship was found between the use of bleaching cosmetics and marital status of the whole group, nor does analysis of the subgroup of East Indian women result in a statistically significant relationship. Finally, a distinction of East Indian women by religious affiliation to Muslim and Hindu did not show statistically significant differences. More in-depth research is needed with focus on ethnic differences in the perception of marital status, relationships between partners, and aesthetic norms.

No statistically significant relationship was found between using bleaching cosmetics and income. However, among women with no income (generally unemployed), the percentage who use bleaching cosmetics is highest (21.4%) if compared with middle-income earners (14.2%) and higher-income earners (9%).¹¹

Finally, the relationship between using bleaching cosmetics and education appears not to be statistically significant.

¹¹In 1999, a middle income was less than Sfl 200,000 per month and higher-income earners had over Sfl 200,000 per month. At the time of the survey in September 1999, the exchange rate was 1 US\$ = 1,565 Surinamese guilders (Sfl).

Motives for Using Bleaching Cosmetics

In the above survey (Menke 2009), information was obtained about the reasons for using bleaching cosmetics through an open-ended question. The reason most mentioned is “to eliminate spots” (72.3%). The second most important reason is “to get a fair face” (11.4%). Only one person (0.8%) says unambiguously the reason to use bleaching cosmetics is for whitening of the skin. It is not unlikely that the women who say they use the cosmetics “to get a fair face” are hiding their motives for skin whitening. The case studies and focus groups reveal more in-depth perceptions and deeper motives, which will be dealt with further. It is also possible that some of the women who say they use bleaching cosmetics to eliminate black spots, in fact, use these products to obtain a fair face.

Interestingly, a relatively high percentage (36%) of East Indian women says they use the cosmetics to eliminate black spots, compared to 15% among non-East Indians.

Implications for Users of Bleaching Cosmetics

The majority (62%) of the women used the chemical skin bleaching cosmetics for 6 months or less, 14% used cosmetics between 6 and 12 months, while 24% used the cosmetics longer than 1 year. There are remarkable differences between ethnic groups: Among East Indians, the proportion who used bleaching creams for longer than a year is relatively high (37.2%) if compared with non-East Indians (5.6%). These differences are statistically significant.

Almost half (43%) of the users say the cosmetics did not help to solve their problem. Of this category, 21% believe that the implications are negative. Negative implications include (1) worsening of the problem, including darker spots, often on the face; and (2) irritation of the eyes. As the questionnaire does not inquire in detail on the nature of the negative implications perceived, it is unclear as to what is the precise meaning of the statements made by the respondents—such as “worsening of the problem without further specification.” It is therefore possible that “spots on the face” and “worsening of the problem” could be more or less identical with “darker spots.” It is also unspecified whether a medical doctor or dermatologist was visited for these problems. Based on my case studies as well as other research, it appears that skin bleaching practices often take place in a sphere of secrecy or even taboo (Menke et al. 2001; Gomes and Westerhof 2001). Therefore, regarding the survey (Menke 2009), it is unlikely that medical doctors or dermatologists were consulted for these negative implications.¹² It is also possible that some persons do

¹²Only one of the eight persons in the case studies in the next section of this article consulted a medical doctor.

not recognize the negative implications because they are unfamiliar with the (side) effects of using bleaching cosmetics.

Among East Indians, a much higher proportion (70%) believes that bleaching cosmetics solved their problem compared to non-East Indians (41%). On the question related to negative consequences of bleaching cosmetics, only 8.5% of the East Indians were affirmative compared with 39% of the non-East Indians. An identical response pattern was found regarding the question: What were the implications of using bleaching cosmetics for the immediate social environment or the work situation? Among non-East Indian women, a relatively high percentage of 28% says that the problem became worse compared to only 13% among East Indian women.

Perceptions of Skin Color and Society

A sample survey may provide a first impression of basic characteristics within a certain population. However, this method is not appropriate to get a deeper understanding of the sociopsychological background, motives, and perceptions of people using chemical bleaching cosmetics. This is why other methods—case studies and focus groups—with more explanatory power that can go beyond rationalizations were applied to obtain in-depth insights.

This section deals with the perceptions and deeper motives about color and society. In particular, the positive and negative associations of whiteness and blackness are assessed and the interconnection with perceived opportunities in social, cultural, or economic life. Informants—most of whom are of lower or lower-middle class status—were selected from the database of the sample survey conducted in 1999 (Menke 2009), with a focus on cases with negative implications (generally skin irritation) of using bleaching cosmetics, or with a negative perceptions of their somatic identity. This resulted in the selection of eight persons for whom the findings are presented in Table 20.2.¹³

None of the eight cases reported an overall positive implication for using bleaching cosmetics. On the contrary, five informants say they have negative results, mostly in terms of skin irritation or not obtaining the desired effect. The remaining three cases (two East Indians and one Creole) have serious skin disorders in terms of dark spots on the face. This darkening of the skin might be ochronosis.¹⁴ Only two informants (Subjects 7 and 8) used a bleaching cosmetic

¹³Initially, nine persons were selected purposively with focus on negative implications of bleaching cosmetics. There was a nonresponse of six. This means that three persons remained. By applying a snowball method, two other friends of the informants were identified and who used bleaching cosmetics with the purpose to improve their skin or the skin color. Finally, three persons with skin disorders, using bleaching cosmetics, were identified at a teach-in of a beauty consultant.

¹⁴The diagnosis of ochronosis was backed by the detailed aspect of the hyperpigmentation, as viewed under a magnifying glass. Ochronosis is the bluish black discoloration of certain tissues,

Table 20.2 Characteristics of informants using skin bleaching cosmetics

Informant	Ethnicity	Marital status	Age	Status	Skin bleaching			
					Motives	Product	Period	
1	East Indian	Single	25	Student	Dark spots	Fair & Lovely	3 months	Negative
2	Creole	Single	22	Unemployed	One pimple	Simba	2 weeks	Darkening
3	Creole	Single	21	Student	Dark spots	Ambi	1 week	Negative
						Lemon A3 cream	1 week	Negative
						Benzoyl peroxide 5%	Unknown	Positive
4	East Indian	Single	18	Student	Dark spots and fair face	Vicco Turmeric	2 days	Negative
						Fair & Lovely	1 week	Negative
						Ponds	5 months	
5	East Indian	Married	38	Employed	Fair face	Ambi	>12 months	No desired results
					Whitening			
6	Javanese	Married	54	Housewife	Whitening	Fair & Lovely	12 months	Inferiority complex
7	East Indian	Married	42	Nurse	Uneven color	Medical	5 years	Darkening
					Fair face	prescription with hydroquinone		
8	East Indian	Single	47	Administrative clerk	Dark spots due to razor	Medical	12 months	Darkening
						prescription with hydroquinone		

prescribed by a physician. In both cases, the percentage of hydroquinone used was 4%, a concentration normally used by physicians but a high concentration according to cosmetic standards. The other six informants used hydroquinone containing bleaching products, which they bought without medical prescription in a supermarket or drugstore. The availability of bleaching cosmetics is widespread in the urban center of Paramaribo, where we identified 35 brands in 2001.

The very first motives the informants mention to justify the use of bleaching cosmetics are related to generally accepted skin disorders, mostly dark spots in the face. However, further inquiry into their drives points at the importance of perceptions of somatic norms and opportunities in the intimate social sphere (e.g., marriage) and nonintimate social sphere (such as employment and educational opportunities).

Case studies and focus group interviews learned that most (six) of the informants have a negative aesthetic judgment of dark or black skin, and also of their own skin color. Referring to Table 20.2, this holds for three East Indians (see Table 20.2 nos. 4, 5, and 7), two Creole women (see Table 20.2 nos. 2 and 3), and one Javanese woman (See Table 20.2 no. 6). The negative connotations of blackness and positive associations of whiteness are probably transcending the differences in ethnicity, religion, and color in the society of Suriname.

Of the eight female informants, six believe that, both in the society as a whole and within the different ethnic groups, distinctions based on color are still prevailing and that a dark skin color is associated with inferiority. A Creole woman (see Table 20.2 no. 3) illustrates this with the common expression “a dis blakka” in *Sranan* (Creole language), which is a very negative judgment of a person who is very black and which is socially undesirable. The woman emphasizes that, in the wider society, mostly females make such statements. This might indicate at a specific role for females in expressing and maintaining somatic or aesthetic norms.

The preference for “light skin” or “whitening” is also related to what is perceived to be better behavior, including a better treatment of the women. A Creole informant told how this norm was handed down from the older to the younger generations in her extended family:

“Our grandmother, who was married to a German white, advised her granddaughters to marry a *bakra* (white male) because *bakras* are supposed to respect their wives, which is not the case with Creole males who generally treat their wives very bad.”

White or light skin color is associated with better social, cultural, or economic opportunities in the society. One East Indian informant (see Table 20.2 no. 4), who is a student at a teacher’s college, expresses her preference for a “light skin,” referring to her best female friend who uses Vicco Turmeric cream from India, a famous skin bleaching cosmetic, by saying:

such as the ear cartilage and the ocular tissue, seen with alkaptonuria, a metabolic disorder. Additionally, ochronosis can occasionally occur from exposure to various substances such as hydroquinone. <http://emedicine.medscape.com/article/1104184-overview>.

“Let’s be honest, if you are light skinned you will be accepted. I have experiences with teachers who discriminate dark skinned and prefer light skinned students. And then there are the rich East Indian men who prefer light skinned women, even if they are not educated.” This woman unambiguously admits that this is the reason she uses chemical bleaching cosmetics for a lighter skin. This opinion corresponds with the common perception that unmarried women searching for a partner will have a higher propensity to whiten their skin than married women. However, we reported before that no statistically significant relationship was found between using bleaching cosmetics and marital status, neither for the whole group nor for the subgroup of East Indian women. This is sociologically interesting and calls for more in-depth research.

Twenty-First-Century Skin Whitening Practices

In the twenty-first century, the promotion and use of skin bleaching cosmetics as well as skin whitening practices has evolved into a globally widespread phenomenon that is being adapted to regional or national contexts. The globalization of skin whitening practices should be understood within the implicit or explicit attempt by “global cosmetic centers”¹⁵ to design a world project, based on the Eurocentric ideal of a uniform culture according to a monocultural, assimilationist development model. I have written on this process in once-colonized societies and criticize the concept of nation building based on a monocultural ethnic ideology, using the power of the state (Menke 2011b). This process of nation building does not apply solely to the nation state as a unit of analysis but applies also to regional and international entities. Ronald E. Hall (1995) addresses the specific cultural context by arguing that skin bleaching is not only a symptom of “the bleaching syndrome” but is a manifestation of a complex process that is driven by an attempt to assimilate. Within the global and national inequalities, less powerful groups are “forced” to assimilate into a more powerful one. In the nineteenth century—in the context of scientific racism and colonialism—skin color has been the most persistent indicator of “race” and still has a profound impact on human relations. Multinationals corporations in the cosmetics industry have—to their own benefit—become part of this complex process, driven by an attempt to assimilate and homogenize people of different colors toward the dominant whitening that is not limited to a lighter skin color but that is also related to other (aesthetic) values, culture, and the way of life.

Thus, the assimilation processes in non-European societies toward the Eurocentric ideal as expressed in a lighter skin color are not restricted to chemical practices

¹⁵Global cosmetic centers, located in the North Atlantic and southern metropolises, are industries related to powerful networks of political institutions, businesses, and culture with professional information and research facilities, which are strongly promoting and disseminating a sort of standard Eurocentric global culture.

but are also reflected in other cultural spheres, such as music. An example is a very popular Brazilian song, *Banho de Lua (Moon Bath)* (1960). This is also the name of a popular current Brazilian skin bleaching product and related skin treatment in Paramaribo. The lyrics of the song express the idealization of whiteness and are followed by an English translation¹⁶:

Banho de Lua (1960)

Fui à praia me bronzear, me queimei, escureci

Mamãe bronqueou, nada de sol

Hoje só quero a luz do luar

Tomo um banho de lua, fico branca como a neve

Se o luar é meu amigo, censurar ninguém se atreve

É tão bom sonhar contigo, oh! Luar tão cândido

English Translation:

I went to the beach sunbathing, got burned, darkened

Mom scolded, stay away from the sun

Today I just want the moonlight

I take a moon bath, I become white as snow

If the moonlight is my friend, no one dares criticize

It's so nice to dream about you, oh! Moonlight so candid

In urban Suriname, the promotion and use of new skin bleaching cosmetics goes hand-in-hand with the growing cultural diversity due to the arrival of Brazilians and other new immigrant groups. Currently, more than 10 years since the survey on skin bleaching practices in Suriname, the promotion and use of new bleaching cosmetics with Brazilian origins have become widespread in many Brazilian *Salao de Beleza* (Beauty saloons), under the name Banho de Lua (Moon Bath). This product brand has a variety of body and whitening packages that include a treatment of the whole body or important parts. The Banho de Lua treatment is common among Brazilians and is gradually becoming popular among Surinamese people.

At the same time, twentieth-century skin bleaching practices remain important today. Interviews of Surinamese beauty saloon owners in Paramaribo reveal the sustainability of skin bleaching practices, particularly among East Indians (Menke and Norden 2011). A beautician with a blooming business in Paramaribo noticed

¹⁶These are the first and second verses of the 1960s song *Banho de Lua*. Nowadays, Banho de Lua is the name of a Brazilian whitening package that is sold in many Brazilian beauty salons in Paramaribo, Suriname.

a growing number of consumers of bleaching cosmetics among East Indians in the past 10 years. When East Indians in Suriname referred to a woman with a fair or white skin, they used to say in *Sarnami* (Surinamese Hindi) or *Ketná safá*.¹⁷ This expression can be translated as “What a fair skin color” and thus has a positive association toward people with a light skin color and reflects an important element in the culture of many Indian males who admire white women—preferring a light-skinned Indian wife. According to a beautician, this is part of the cultural heritage of East Indian indentured immigrants who arrived in Suriname in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A characteristic of the caste system in India is the association between caste and skin color: The higher the caste, the lighter the skin. Although today the caste system as an institution is nonexistent or has no strong basis in Suriname, many East Indians attempt to identify with lighter skin Brahmans. A beautician (Menke and Norden 2011) ironically observes, “Can you imagine many Brahmans from India immigrating to Suriname by boat in the nineteenth and early twentieth century? So, there are hardly real Brahmans in Suriname. However, many Indians in Suriname declare themselves to be Brahmans, and want their children to marry other Brahmans. I know a young girl of whom the parents refused to attend her wedding, because she married a dark skinned Indian boy, who was not a Brahman and in addition had Guyanese blood.”

The beautician continues, explaining that people from all walks of life now spend a lot of money on skin bleaching products that vary from cheap to very expensive cosmetics. She points to the negative side effects of various skin bleaching products. Some women bleach their hair three times in a short period of time, which may damage melanin. She comments further that the supposed effects are not achieved, “Illustrative is the Bollywood film *Slumdog Millionaire*, with a poor street boy who saves his money to buy the bleaching cream Fair & Lovely. When he observes a large billboard with an advertisement of Fair & Lovely, he excessively lubricates the crème on his skin. The film shows that it does not work at all. However, many Indians in Suriname ‘swear’ that it works well. But it is taboo to talk about using it. Experiences about skin whitening creams are exchanged freely with sisters, but not with outsiders” (Menke and Norden 2011).

The growing ethnic diversity in Suriname, due to Brazilian and other new immigrant groups, also appears to contribute to the bleaching syndrome among Surinamese women. A few wealthy East Indian businessmen who are married to a dark-skinned East Indian wives, after a rapid upward economic mobility, want their children to marry a partner with a light skin. In many families, girls start to use whitening creams from the age of 14. Some East Indian women, after the age of 40, also start using bleaching creams when they find that their husbands have affairs with Brazilian women, who often have a lighter skin color. This should be considered an attempt to look attractive and fair in order to compete with the Brazilian women.

¹⁷In Surinamese Hindi, *ketná* means “how much” and *safá* means “fair.”

Discussion and Conclusion

Skin whitening practices, an expression of the dominant role of Eurocentric values, evolved in the last decade of the twentieth century and, in the first decade of the twenty-first century grew to a globally widespread phenomenon. In non-European societies, like Suriname, the assimilation process toward the Eurocentric ideal changed in the course of history. In the twentieth century, classical studies on skin color and related issues in the Americas focused on race relations during slavery and its implications for postslavery societies (Hoetink 1971, 1973). The categories of the racial classification were “White,” “Colored” (generally Mulatto, Moreno, or Mestizo), and “Black.” In these societies, social stratification was rooted in patterns of color and class. The economic and sociocultural processes in the intimate (sexual) sphere, and in the wider society, resulted in a color hierarchy with color becoming an index of socioeconomic status; whites were at the top. Generally speaking, those with a darker skin tone were in the lower position in the social hierarchy. Opportunities for upward mobility for dark-skinned people or their offspring were related to the acquisition of attributes of the white somatic norm or related identities: One could acquire the cultural, social, or economic attributes of whiteness, or one could move upward genetically by marrying a white person. It is observed that “color . . . is not something that can be altered in the individuals life but is something that can be put right in the next generation” (Hoetink 1973, 209).

There are two reasons why Harry Hoetink’s conceptual framework is inappropriate for analyzing the color and identity problem in the twenty-first-century, multiethnic Surinamese society. First, skin color can now more or less easily be altered by relatively cheap and widely available chemical bleaching cosmetics. The second reason is that, in the decolonization process of Suriname, the concept of “race” was replaced by “ethnicity” in the mid-1960s (Menke 2011b). The latter concept became the new classification principle for the population in the context of changing social and political relations. These changes were accompanied by adaptation of the ideological positions of ethnic groups, as well as the redefinition of ethnic categories. Today, in the multiethnic society of Suriname, people of Asian descent (East Indians and Javanese), in addition to blacks and colored (mixed), constitute the main ethnic groups, rather than the classical white, colored, or black continuum related to slavery.

This study indicates that there are differences between ethnic groups in their perceptions of skin color and the color continuum. This, in its turn, seems to correlate with the use of chemical skin bleaching cosmetics. Of the various ethnic groups, East Indian women aged 18 or more stand out by a significantly higher proportion for using chemical skin bleaching cosmetics, when compared with other ethnic groups.

When controlling for “age,” a significantly larger proportion of East Indian women in the 18–26 age group appear to use skin bleaching cosmetics compared with the same age group of the other ethnicities. East Indian women also stand

out by a higher percentage for using chemical skin bleaching cosmetics longer than 1 year. Case studies of women in Suriname who use bleaching cosmetics learned that, according to these persons, there is a negative aesthetic judgment of dark-skinned or black persons in the society. A dark skin color is associated with inferiority and also with fewer social or economic opportunities in the society. This is an important justification for some informants to use skin bleaching cosmetics.

In his classical study, Hoetink (1973, 210) stressed the importance of interethnic relations for a better understanding of the aesthetic norms and social stratification in multiethnic societies: “the problems of intergroup relations are serious in all multiracial societies of America. They appear to be more serious where no socioracial continuum exists and where, consequently, the dividing lines between socioracial groups are abruptly drawn.” However, regarding the skin color hierarchy, the Suriname skin bleaching survey (Menke 2009) learned that the problem goes beyond the intergroup relations and that intraethnic relations are as important as the interethnic relations. The assumption is that even if the color continuum could be as large within a particular ethnic group as between the different ethnic groups in the society as a whole, the perception, values, and norms related to skin color might differ between these groups. Here, the complex issue of identity is also of importance.

The findings of this study (Menke 2009) show some similarities with “colorism” (Charles 2011) as a stratifying mechanism. It is defined as “a system of hierarchical perceptions of value and discriminatory treatment based upon skin tone” (Blay 2011, 37). Colorism is a complexion ideology that privileges light-skinned people over dark-skinned people in a white-dominated society. In the USA, it is prevalent in the African American community where there is black-on-black discrimination and where the diversity of shades of dark skin makes a social difference among the African Americans. There are various manifestations of the complexion ideology in the USA, such as the interpersonal relationships among African Americans and their mate selection preferences. Studies reveal that most African American females believe that African American men find light-skinned women most attractive (Charles 2011). A study by Howard E. Freeman and colleagues (1966) shows that men in white-collar occupations are more likely to marry light-colored women than would men in blue-collar occupations. These differences suggest that colorism is a stratification ideology. Skin bleaching with the intent to alter one’s natural skin color is considered one of the responses to what is perceived as the disturbing reality of colorism.

However, the context of colorism in multiethnic Suriname is different from the colorism in the so-called multiculturalist society of the USA. The question remains why significantly more East Indian women use skin bleaching cosmetics in Suriname. It may be because color lines within the East Indian group coincide more or less with the (old) caste system, which results in a fierce competition for social, economic, and cultural opportunities—as these are associated and connected with respective dominant white identities within and outside the own ethnic group. And is this reinforced by the role model encouraged by the dominant “white” identities in the modern Indian cultural industries at national and transnational levels, such as the

media and Bollyhood [Bollywood], which are being intensified in the present Indian Diaspora? It is assumed that the transnational Indian cultural industry is stronger and more influential than transnational cultural industries of the other ethnic groups in Suriname and linked with the positive values associated with a white skin that are rooted in multiple social institutions—including education, religion, mass media, and popular culture. Charles (2011) points to the importance of global cosmetic centers, such as the USA, Japan, and Western Europe, in creating a variety of the global images of white or light-skinned beauty. India should be added to these centers of cosmetic industries that produce the top-selling skin bleaching creams.

Margaret L. Hunter (2011) points to the beauty discourse, based on the mass marketing of cosmetic whitening products by the global cosmetic centers. She describes how the power of marketing is using light-skinned women of color who are celebrities to act as advertising spokespersons for their products. This is called the “illusion of inclusion” (Hunter 2011), as it is a seductive strategy to attract women with darker skin color who might otherwise feel alienated from beauty products, products that are traditionally promoted through representations by persons with a “white” skin color. The inclusion of light-skinned women of color, particularly celebrities like Aishwarya Rai of India (L’Oreal), is meant to persuade colored women into using these skin whitening products, which results in a rising demand of skin lightening products in societies with multicolored skin tones.

Further research in the multiethnic Surinamese society—and eventually other countries or populations with a comparable ethnic composition—should focus on the similarities and dissimilarities in the perceptions of each of the major ethnic groups on skin color, their identities, and association with role models, as well as with perceived social and economic opportunities. Focus should also be on identities within and between ethnic groups. This is considered to be the key to understanding the perceptions of color and related identities in the intraethnic as well as the interethnic relations at the levels of both the national and global society.

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Chapter 21

Affirmative Action and Racial Identity in Brazil: A Study of the First Quota Graduates at the State University of Rio de Janeiro

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In 2001, the Legislative Assembly of Rio de Janeiro approved a project to open slots for Afro-descendants at its state universities, thus expanding opportunities that had appeared in the previous year, with the signing of a law that reserved a percentage of slots for candidates who had graduated from public schools. Combined, the two laws would reserve 50% of the university slots and allow candidates to the 2002 entrance exams to try out under two types of quotas (Santos 2006a). Shrouded in controversy, the negotiation of a quota policy continued and resulted, in September of 2003, in the establishment of the following criteria: “20 percent for students from public schools, 20 percent for Blacks, and 5 percent for persons with physical disabilities and members of ethnic minorities” (Santos 2006a, 119).¹ In 2004, the quota criteria were again revised with the introduction of income, which required that quota candidates come from families with a monthly per capita income of up to R\$300² (Santos 2006a). Thus, in 2003, the State University of Rio de Janeiro (Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro—Uerj), together with the State University of Northern

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¹All translations from the Portuguese are by the author.

²The present currency of Brazil is the real (plural: reais), written as R\$. Portions of this chapter appeared in “Race and Ethnic Identity Formation in Brazil and the U.S.: Three Case Studies” (*Afro-Hispanic Review* 29, 2 (Fall): 251–262).

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Rio de Janeiro (Universidade Estadual do Norte Fluminense—Uenf), pioneered the admission of quota students in Brazil.³ Currently, over 100 universities have some affirmative action admission policy (Educafro 2010).

The proposal to open university doors to non-Whites with the aid of quotas reflects the conviction that because the Brazilian racial inequality cannot be reduced to economic inequality (Guimarães 1999; Telles 2003), there is a need to repair that inequality (Heringer 2004) with a temporary but expedient measure (Munanga 2003). Since getting a college diploma has been shown to increase one's probability of upward mobility (Bowen and Bok 1998; Weisskopf 2004), it is expected that the proportion of Brazilian Blacks in the higher classes will increase in the long run (Pinto 2006). On the other hand, the opponents of quotas allege that they are an imported policy (Fry et al. 2007) that has nothing to do with Brazil's racially egalitarian nature (Kamel 2006). Then, far from being a myth, for them, racial democracy is "an ideal to be fulfilled, a myth in the anthropological sense of the term: a specific way of thinking about a social arrangement in which heredity or the appearance of individuals should be irrelevant for the distribution of civil rights or of the public goods" (Fry 2005, 17). Besides, the quotas are seen as anti-meritocratic for facilitating the entrance of supposedly poorly prepared persons into the privileged space of universities. In other words, that interpretation favors the "merit of arrival," that is, successfully passing the college entrance exam (the *vestibular*) over the "merit of trajectory," that is, overcoming several obstacles in order to get to college (Santos 2003, 114).

Debate aside, there are signs that the adoption of racial quotas is leading to a reevaluation of the meaning of race for the personal identity of Brazilians. Obviously, here I refer to race as a social construct and not as a "biological reality." Although we know that biologists have long abandoned the concept of race (Montague 1964) and that recent studies have demonstrated the predominance of a genetic mixture among Brazilians (Pena et al. 2000), socially human beings continue to interpret phenotypical attributes, especially skin color, hair texture, and facial features, in order to classify one another (Penha-Lopes 1996). We also know that race is a significant criterion in societies with a slavery past, such as those that flourished in the Americas between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. Because that past survives through ancestry or mark, that is, skin color (Nogueira 1955), to this day, people continue to benefit or suffer from the way they look. In Brazil's case, however, that situation is complicated by the fact that, on the one hand, racial classification, which results from the encouragement and recognition of miscegenation (Daniel 2006; Telles 2003), is so fluid and ambiguous that it leads some to conclude that it is irrelevant (e.g., Maggie 2007); on the other hand, our racial classification is rigid enough when we compare the differences in income, occupation, and education and observe how they are all related to race (Silva 1999;

³Outside of Rio de Janeiro, the State University of Bahia (Uneb) also admitted its first quota students in 2003 (Mattos 2004).

Silva and Hasenbalg 1999). Putting it another way, “. . . in Brazil we are not blind to the color/race of individuals, but to racism and its consequences” (Santos 2003, 86).

The possibility of trying out for university via racial quotas leads candidates to fit themselves into a given race. Because this is officially a new activity in Brazil, racial self-declaration becomes an empirical question. In principle, that is no problem if students already saw themselves as members of the categories they had chosen. What happens, however, to those who had heretofore minimized their racial identity? For example, what are the consequences of self-declaration for those who are used to identifying themselves as “White,” due to their looks even when they know that some of their ancestors are “not White”? Would that make their self-classification less “legitimate” (Pinto 2006)? Would this extend to the point of completely transforming their racial identity?

This chapter is based on a case study of quota students who were admitted into Uerj in 2003 and 2004; thus, they are among some of the first university quota students to graduate in Brazil (Penha-Lopes 2007a, 2008). I compare a sample of eight students from the Dental School (DS) and fourteen from social sciences. The interview schedule covers several topics, from the students’ socioeconomic characteristics to their educational trajectories and experiences as university quota students. This chapter focuses on the students’ choices regarding available quotas and their racial identities.

Socioeconomic and Demographic Characteristics

One of the objections to the implementation of university quotas in Brazil is the conviction that they will benefit only the graduates of the best public schools and middle-class Blacks, meaning those who are supposedly better prepared for the *vestibular* (Santos 2006a). Notwithstanding the lack of empirical data, that idea was defended in a manifesto that the self-entitled “113 anti-racist citizens against the racial laws” presented to Minister Gilmar Mendes, president of Brazil’s Supreme Court, on May 1, 2008. Signed by a number of scholars, artists, and activists who, 2 years earlier, had written another manifesto against the Statute of Racial Equality, the more recent petition alleges “the racial quotas grant privileges to a minuscule minority of middle-class students” (Manifesto 2008).

That is not the case of the freshmen quota students at Uerj in 2003 and 2004. According to PROINICIAR⁴ (2005), a university office, they were “students who came from the popular classes, often the first in their families to have an opportunity

⁴The State University of Rio de Janeiro was a pioneer in adopting the system of reservation of vacancies due to a state bill, now legislated by Law 5346/08, covering the entire state of Rio de Janeiro. The university developed the Initiation Program Academic (PROINICIAR), offering courses, workshops, and cultural activities. <http://www.rj.gov.br/web/mapa/exibeconteudo?article-id=565598>.

to experience higher education. Students who, in the course of their lives, did not have the chance to enjoy educational and cultural goods, and that now, at Uerj, attempt to realize the dream of social mobility through education.”

Almost all my interviewees (Penha-Lopes 2007a) fit that description. Several are the first in their families to go to college: only three, all from the Dental School, have mothers who were college graduates; three of the dental students and only one of the social science students have fathers who finished college. Social science interviewees are more likely to have parents who never even finished grade school; one student was raised by an illiterate uncle. Five of the mothers of the social science students (but only two of the Dental School) are homemakers, and another five either still were or had at one point been maids, custodians, or cooks (only two of the mothers of the future dentists held those occupations). The most common occupations among the fathers of the social science students are mechanic, driver, and handyman. Among the fathers of the dental students, two are in the armed forces, one is in the informal economy, and another is a driver; the most prestigious occupation is systems analyst.

The family income of most interviewees is relatively low. As is historically typical of a large part of Uerj students, that characteristic is more common among the social science respondents, half of whom, but one-third of the dental students, calculated their monthly family income to be between twice and less than four times the national minimum wage. The other half of social science and three Dental School respondents come from families whose income falls between four and less than eight times the minimum wage. Only two interviewees, both from the Dental School, come from families whose monthly income is at least eight times the minimum wage. The students are young (22.5 years old on average), mostly single, and childless; more than 70% are women.

Finally, like most Uerj students up to 2002 (PROINICIAR 2005), my respondents often live in the North and West Zones of Rio de Janeiro, in the Baixada Fluminense, and in the Greater Rio cities of Niterói and São Gonçalo. Only one, who studies social sciences, lives in the South Zone, the most economically privileged area in Rio. However, she lives in one of the *favelas* (slums) in Copacabana.

In sum, for most of my respondents, the university quotas presented themselves as a viable step toward social mobility. In the next section, I discuss their quota options upon applying to university.

Quota Options: Blacks and Public School Students

Uerj accepted 2,971 quota students in 2003; over two-thirds of them declared themselves as Black. In the following year, more than 50% of the quota freshmen opted for quotas for public school students. Similar proportions were observed among the social sciences and the Dental School in the first 2 years of implementation of the policy (PROINICIAR 2005).

Ten of my study respondents (Penha-Lopes 2007a) (eight of whom were social science students) opted for racial quotas; their explanations vary. Curiously, only one points to her own racial identity: “It was very explicit . . . because I am a descendant, my grandparents are Black; although I have a grandmother who is Indian, my three other grandparents are Black,” revealed Mônica, 21 years old, and who started in the social sciences in 2004.⁵ Two other respondents, also from the social sciences, confess that they made their choices “without much reflection.” For example, Leila, who started in 2003, shows a lack of knowledge of the process: “I was sincere. At that time I wasn’t very aware of what was happening. I didn’t know for sure there would really be quotas, you know? For me it was, like, on a questionnaire level, maybe this chance could come up. I wasn’t sure that would happen.” The six other racial *cotistas* (the term used to describe students who entered the university through quotas) tend to opt for that category of quotas by elimination. In other words, because they had studied in private schools at some point, they were not allowed to opt for the public school quotas. Ana, a 26-year-old social science student, confirms that rationale: “I opted for the category for Blacks because I consider myself brown [*parda*]. I could have done it through public school or Afro-descendant, but I was afraid because I had gone to school out of state, in Pernambuco.” Otávio, 23 years old, a dental student who had gone to private schools throughout his life and had enrolled at a prestigious college preparatory course before entering Uerj, opted for racial quotas “because I don’t think I am white . . . It’s not like I lied or anything.” It is noteworthy that Otávio feels the need to affirm that he did not lie about his racial classification rather than admitting that it would have been impossible for him to choose any other type of quota.

Eight respondents (five of whom were from the social sciences) got in through the public school quotas. As expected, among them are the two who consider themselves White and also one who, because he does not consider himself Black, thought it was unfair “to mark black just to secure a slot.” Therefore, all three saw the public school quotas as their only choice.

In contrast, two other interviewees opted for the public school quotas because, though they are not White, they regard them as more viable than the racial quotas. Hereovaldo, 29 years old, from the social sciences, was “not in favor of quotas for Blacks.” Twenty-year-old Olívia, who started in the social sciences in 2004, discarded that option because she fears competition from Blacks: “. . . I talked to a teacher who is a friend of my mother’s and also to a friend of mine whose daughter also got in through the public ones. My friend is blond, and she said, ‘I think you should opt for the public quota because you don’t know which school the black candidates went to. There are many blacks who came from PH [a well-regarded college preparation school], who came from very good schools; are you going to compete with them?’”

The other four interviewees saw that category as their right. Sandra, 21 years old, from the DS, summarizes the opinion of several when she asserts, “I studied

⁵In order to maintain the anonymity of the respondents, all names are fictitious.

in public schools all my life, right? Therefore, I was entitled to this privilege.” It is worth noting that the notions of “right” and “privilege” do not appear in any of the narratives on the racial quotas option.

Finally, four interviewees opted for the double quotas, declaring themselves at once Black and former public school students. Obviously, all were admitted in 2003, before the reform that abolished that option the following year (Santos 2006a). Helena, 23 years old, a dental student, interprets the double option as required by law: “[I picked] ‘public school’ because all my life I went to one and ‘*parda*’ because of my color. And it had to be that way. You couldn’t opt for only one if you fit in the two or the three; you had to check all that applied. It couldn’t be only public school. If you were *pardo* and had a disability, you had to pick those two.”

These testimonies suggest that the students’ decisions regarding quota options result from their considerations of their educational trajectories, their chances of being admitted, their perceptions of the notions of right and privilege, and even the fear of giving the impression that they were committing fraud. Although several candidates considered their racial identity when opting for quotas, that was not automatic: Just as not all of those who see themselves as Black or Brown opted for the racial quotas, not all of those who opted for the racial quotas completely see themselves as Black or Brown. Below, I present the four categories of racial identity that emerged from the interviews: Black (*negra*), Brown (*parda*), unsure (*incerta*), and White (*branca*).

The Black Racial Identity: “I Am Black; Why Should I Say I Am Not?”

When asked about how they classify themselves racially, half of my respondents (nine of whom were from the social sciences) respond “Black” (in Portuguese, *negra* or *negro*). For the majority, that self-classification is obvious and indisputable, be it as a matter of phenotype, of ancestry, or both. The first case, Teresa—a 24-year-old social science student who was raised in the Assembly of God church where African references are regarded as “demonic”—explains: “C’mon, it’s not possible to think much differently! To say that there is only the human race? Ok, in the DNA and everything else there is, but socially there is a race, there are races, period.” Mônica refers to her ancestry to define herself: “I am black, though people insist in pointing to this thing of my skin tone, to say that I’m a bit lighter . . . Yes, many insist in saying, ‘Ah, but you have lighter skin,’ but I prefer to see it through my ascendance, my grandparents.” Alice, 21 years old, a future dentist, combined the two criteria, citing “the mirror, my parents, everybody, my family, who look like me.”

The so-called Negroid characteristics, especially skin tone and hair texture, had a marked presence in the respondents’ construction of racial identity not only because they are references but also because they stigmatize individuals. Dandara, a 22-year-old social science student who strongly identifies with a sense of blackness,

illustrates the negative situations to which she was subjected when growing up due to her phenotype:

No, they tried to say, when I was called “monkey” [*macaca*, in Portuguese], when I was made to feel inferior, because my hair is the kinkiest possible, it’s that one that you comb and pretty soon it turns into dreads

When were you called “monkey”?

All my life at school. I didn’t even like going to school I remember a boy said to me, already in high school, in chemistry class, “In order for you to talk to me, you have to at least rub flour on your body” I was called “Cafu” [after the captain of the Brazilian national team who won the 2002 World Cup], “blue,” “Benedita” [after the ex-governor and senator from Rio de Janeiro] Remember that fad of little hair bands? Remember that Benedita wore two hair bands? At that time my father—my father died when I was 7—my father didn’t let me straighten my hair, so I wore my hair braided When I went out on the street, I was called “Medusa.”

Having Negroid features and being insulted may lead to the opposite reaction, however: the total rejection of a Black identity. That happened to Janice, 24 years old, also a social science student. Born and raised in the south of Brazil, she was also called “monkey” and “ugly” on the streets; she also wished to stop going to school to avoid its discriminatory climate. Unlike Dandara, however, Janice suppressed her blackness, which remained dormant until 2001 when, already living in Rio de Janeiro, she attended a lecture on Black consciousness-raising at the college preparatory course for Blacks and the needy where she studied.⁶ She states, “Ah, one time it was really funny. They brought some people to give talks, right? And one time they brought a teacher to talk about this Black thing, and she was talking there, and I thought, ‘People, I don’t recognize myself as Black.’” Janice’s self-esteem and racial identity started to change only in the 2 years prior to our interview, when she met a Black man who became her boyfriend:

Yes, after I started to date a young guy who is Black, and so is his family, they had a very cool way, you know, of being proud, of taking care of their hair, but all within our means, like, wearing braids, or a cap, or a hair band like the one you see me wearing. So I thought that was cool, and he would say to me, “My, you’re very beautiful, you have a beautiful smile.” And that to me, you know, started working on my self-esteem, and I slowly improved a lot Today, you know, I’m happy, I like myself, I see myself as Black, you know. I look at myself in the mirror, I like to wear make-up, I like my smile, I like my teeth, you know? And in the south it was nothing like that because there the colonization is totally German, you have those farms that a father left for his son, who left it for his own, and in town they still speak German, so much so that you meet someone on the street and they say something like, “She is Black, but she is actually well put together [*é negra, mas até que tá arrumadinha*].”

Dandara’s and Janice’s statements show that, contrary to the argument put forth by those who refute the existence of racism in Brazil, undeniably African traits

⁶Preparatory schools for college entrance exams geared toward Blacks, and the poor first appeared in the 1980s as types of nongovernmental initiatives for the increase in racial inclusion at Brazilian universities (Silva 2002).

debunk our supposed “racial integration.” Black skin and crinkly hair turn the person into a nonperson, as when she is called “monkey” or “Medusa.” If the person’s humanity is maintained, she may still be labeled “ugly” and “unkempt.” Since the preservation of the sense of self is crucial for self-esteem, it is no wonder that some Blacks stop seeing themselves as such.

It is also worth discussing the case of students who privilege their ancestry over their phenotype and end up fighting off those who do not see them as Black. Mônica and Serena, both 23 years old, opt for constructing their identity through ancestry even though they are lighter skinned. Serena, a social science student, describes a genealogical tree with an obvious variety of phenotypes but with a predominance of whitening: her paternal grandmother, who “is not blond, but *parda*, her hair is kind of curly, but that curly that is not extremely coarse,” once called her “little nigger” [*neguinha*] and objected to her son’s marriage to a woman whose skin was not so light; Serena’s mother and aunts encourage her to straighten her own hair and to “get a gringo . . . and get married.” Perhaps as a consequence, Serena rejects White aesthetics and claims that she has always seen herself as Black: “I think my conception is more American than properly Brazilian . . . to me it’s like this: either it’s Black or it’s White.”

Both Mônica and Serena raise the issue of hair. Serena admits that her hair “is super coarse” and that she is fine with processing it as long as the result “comes out as close as possible to what I consider natural-looking.” Mônica admits that she has her hair straightened, but thinks that the result “is too artificial.” For her, getting her hair done is a matter of “comfort,” of being able to comb it through (it goes down her back) and to wear it out. However, that preference caught the attention of members of a group of student activists at Uerj whom she regards as “too radical” because they try to impose a specific Black identity on others and also create a space that favors negritude over diversity. In Mônica’s words:

I don’t know, . . . I think . . . that 99 percent of them are *cotistas*. If the proposal of the quotas is for you to transform the university in a plural space, where everybody you see, all the races, creeds, anyway, a group tries to raise a proposal . . . for Blacks . . . I don’t know, it’s strange, if you have a proposal of diversity but you create a group that is so closed, so much so that a friend of mine and I have been chastised by the guys from the group because of our hair, you know? . . . They say we are denying our roots, our identity . . . A young guy with dreads said that to me. It’s kind of crazy. I can’t take part in their meetings. Of course I talk to many people who are members of their group, but I’m not that interested in learning about their proposal . . .

Dandara also mentioned the group, but in a much more positive way. For her, the group is fundamental for her reaffirmation as a Black woman. Inevitably, instigated by the group, her reaffirmation involves a radically different relation with her own hair: the idea that it represents her link with her African ancestry and the fight against racism in Brazil:

For me, it was positive to have this contact with the Black Movement, to discover negritude, not this thing of “Ah, I have to value myself because I am Black,” but to know that I have a history, to know what my hair represented in African societies—spirituality, power, ethnicity, social status—to know that Lélia Gonzalez [a late-twentieth-century Brazilian

social scientist and activist] and Luísa Mahin [an early-nineteenth-century slave who was prominent in a number of slave uprisings] existed, to start to discover and talk about things, because I always thought there was racism, but if I said that in high school, “You have a chip on your shoulder.” Arguments, I didn’t have them, I didn’t have readings . . . You come to me today, you say anything, I have arguments, not because the university gave them to me, but because there is a movement in here in which we study, we read, there’s a movement of people who will come and say, “Shoot, how much longer are you going to straighten your hair? Shoot, how much longer are you going to pretend that there is no racism?”

In sum, with their sharp style, the members of that group act like “ethnic/racial entrepreneurs” (Pinto 2006, 161); for example, “. . . they try to create symbolic universes that unify the diverse individual experiences in relations to a normative definition of ‘being Black.’” But if, on the one hand, the student-activist group gathers individuals for its cause, on the other hand, it also alienates possible members when it insists on imposing symbols not shared by all. After all, not all *cotistas* consider themselves Black, as I show below.

The *Parda* Racial Identity: “Like the Majority of Brazilians”

According to Petrucelli (2007, 135–136), “starting in 1950 . . . when [race or color] becomes strictly a matter of self-declaration, the *parda* color category was chosen to be permanently included among the options In 1980 the question became part only of the long version of the census questionnaire” The fact that an official governmental agency employs a term does not mean that the term is clear for Brazilians; at the same time, lack of clarity is not a deterrent for the use of *parda* among the quota students. Four interviewees from the Dental School and one from the social sciences saw themselves as *pardos* (Penha-Lopes 2007a). For Ana, a 26-year-old social science student, the meaning of *parda* is simple: “Mixed [*mestiça*], like the majority of Brazilians.” *Parda* can also mean “brunette” (*morena*). Helena says that racial identity is a “good question.” Amid giggles, she reveals that her birth certificate lists her as “White, but everybody says that I am *morena*, that I am *parda*!” When I insist, she tells me she sees herself as *parda*, as *morena*, not as White. She adds, when I insist further on definitions, that *parda* and *morena* mean the same thing: a color “in between” Black and White.

According to my interviewees, *parda* may also mean “pale.” For example, at first, Sandra calls herself “kind of *parda*” (*meio parda*), due to her lack of exposure to the sun at the time of our interview, and then she added, “but I am *parda*; I consider myself *parda*.” When I ask whether she has ever thought of herself otherwise, she confesses that, when she was a child, “I used to ask my mother whether I’d be White.” Because the neighborhood kids would tell Sandra that her mother was White, she wondered whether her skin would lighten when she grew up. Although she does not know for sure whether she really wanted to be White, she comments several times that she is “getting White, in need of sun.” Sandra exemplifies the point that many Brazilians value a sun-tanned color over a color closer to White.

A *suntan* symbolizes “*morenidade*” (having tawny skin), which in turn symbolizes the positive aspect of being Brazilian, that is, “*mestiçagem*” (Mombelli and Goss 2008). In other words, if being Black is stigmatized, so is being too White (Farias 2003).

In addition, *parda* connotes ancestry in Sandra’s discourse. She says her mother is “White” and her father, “kind of *pardo*.” But then she says that her maternal grandmother is “Black” and her grandfather, “White.” I ask how her mother can be White if her own mother is Black. Sandra explains: “It’s because she took after my grandfather, so, in appearance she is ‘white,’ but in her blood . . .” She adds that her father “came out more *pardo*, but my aunts, there are some who are really Black, some are more *pardas*, like, ‘*sarará*’, as people say”.⁷ She ends by volunteering that her own brother “was born, like, really light with Black hair, but now he is a veritable *negão* [i.e., unmistakably Black].” And if they write “White” in the child’s birth certificate, and today the child is “Black,” they are going to say, “What is this?! Did they switch it?” In sum, if on the surface the term *pardo* is restricted to color, more deeply it reveals a Black ancestry, which remains hidden until it is brought to the fore by an insistent interviewer.

There was also the case of Beyoncé, a 21-year-old dental student who indicated that the options available in the self-classifying system that Uerj introduced in 2000 influenced her own racial identification. Beyoncé, who today sees herself as *parda*, used to see herself as *morena* before she took the university entrance exams: “There was ‘White,’ ‘*parda*,’ ‘Black.’ I thought, ‘*parda*’ must be ‘*morena*’ [laughs] . . .” This example demonstrates that the university may also act as an ethnic or racial entrepreneur. By introducing the term *pardo*, Uerj provided a context in which its students could see themselves as such. Once that happens, the identity may remain even after the elimination of the term, as it happened at that university in 2004 (Pinto 2006). Three years later, when I conducted a number of my interviews (Penha-Lopes 2007a), some students continued to identify themselves as *pardos*.

What we notice in these discourses is how complicated the category *parda* is: it requires more terms, more justifications, more definitions. Put together, those terms, justifications, and definitions lead to a genealogical hair texture and epidermal analysis, which even depend on the amount of “color” one “gets” at the beach. Of course that becomes necessary due to the interstitial character of the category *pardo* in a country such as Brazil, where phenotype trumps genotype. By the fact that they are in the middle, *pardos* have the option of fitting as “virtual Whites” (Nascimento 2003), as *moreno(a)s*, or even as Black. If we take into account that over half of the so-called White Brazilian population demonstrably has some Black or indigenous background (Pena et al. 2000), clearly many consider themselves

⁷In Brazilian speech, a *sarará* is someone who exhibits a particular combination of European and Negroid features: White skin and blond or reddish coarse hair, green eyes, and possibly Negroid lips and nose. In the 1970s, singer-composer Gilberto Gil had a hit with *Sara*. A woman’s name, Sara is also a clever play with words in which he exhorts *sararás* to “cure” themselves (*sarar*) of “that Whites’ disease of wanting straight hair, already having blond hair. Hard hair is necessary so that you can be yourself, *crioulo*” (i.e., Black).

White, conscious of the higher prestige of that category in Brazil. But since race is a social construct, it is possible for that to change, especially if the non-White self-classification and identity become advantageous. In the process toward more acceptance of non-Whiteness, which Brazil may be experiencing with the introduction and implementation of affirmative action policies, it is understandable that some individuals may feel confused in regard to their own identity; such is the case of the next category.

The Uncertain Racial Identity: “I’m a Bit Confused”

Four of the 22 interviewees were unsure about how to classify themselves. Otávio confirmed, “I am a bit confused . . . This *pardo* classification is new. I think I’m in the middle. Before [the quotas] I thought I was *moreno*. It’s different only in name, being *moreno* or being *pardo*. My family is very mixed . . . [At school], my nickname was *negão*, maybe because of my skin tone. It never bothered me.” Otávio has dark skin, wavy black hair, deep-set eyes, and European-like nose and lips. In a country such as Brazil, where race is figuratively measured by a “social eyedropper” (Carone and Bento 2002, 182), Otávio could be classified as White, Black, *moreno*, or even *índio* (Brazilian Indian), depending on the social context.

Luís, a 23-year-old social science student, provides another example of contextual race. Believing that it is difficult to classify himself racially, he offers that “normally,” he sees himself as “indigenous” for that is his patrilineage; his mother, on the other hand, is “White,” with many “Black” siblings. However, depending on the context, Luís may see himself as Black: “If I’m in an environment that is White in the majority, . . . it’s easier for me to identify with the other Black persons there, obviously because of my skin tone. I joke with a friend of mine when we go out at night some place with many Whites. I say, ‘Do you see? I’m the only Black here.’”

While the relevance of the social context is palpable, so is the tendency to identify with the less complex part of ascendancy—in this case—the paternal side. Otherwise, why would Luís “normally” see himself as indigenous? Why not classify himself as *pardo* or *mestiço*, which characterizes his maternal side? On the other hand, Luís, who claims that his family has always classified him as neither as Black nor White, but as *moreno*, is capable of identifying with Blacks due to the color of his skin. Where would that identification originate? Luís notes that his majoring in social sciences, which included the rejection of race as a biological category and the interpretations of *mestiçagem* according to Gilberto Freyre, the main articulator of the ideology of racial democracy, has complicated his self-classification: “I’ve once joked that I’d be Gilberto Freyre’s ideal type of *mestiçagem*: not White, but also not Indian, but not Black either. The Brazilian, but of course things don’t work that way.” His discourse suggests that he is aware that the term “Brazilian” only works for persons like him, with interstitial features, not for those who obviously look Black.

Twenty-two-year-old João, who opted for quotas for public school students, agrees that studying social sciences has contributed for a change in the way he classifies himself racially:

Before entering the university I considered myself White, but nowadays I no longer know how to classify myself . . . After I had contact with anthropology, I learned those things about multiethnicity, so I started saying, “I too am multiethnic.” I can’t fit myself in, as far as race.

Before, what made you think of yourself as White?

Before, I don’t know. Everybody would tell me I was White, so I thought I was White. My whole family considers itself White.

But aren’t your parents White?

They’re less White, let’s say, than me. I mean, my father is more or less my color and my mother is a bit darker, but everybody says they’re White.

Once again, the idea of whitening enters the picture. In contrast with the United States, where the segregationist laws at the end of the nineteenth century instituted a binary conception of race, in Brazil, the idea of miscegenation was promoted almost at the same time. As a consequence, while in the United States, a drop of Black blood renders one Black, in Brazil, a drop of White blood may render one non-Black. Under this logic, it makes sense that João, who is very light skinned with soft curly hair, would grow up thinking he is White.

Aside from his formal contact with anthropology, João also credits “Espaços Afirmados” (Affirmed Spaces—Esaf), a project sponsored by the Ford Foundation to help retain the first entering quota students at Uerj, in 2003. The program offered cultural workshops and tutoring to education and humanities students (Santos 2006a). According to João, Esaf served both quota and nonquota students, as its focus was economically needy students. However, João claims that the project changed over time, until it started to discriminate against Whites in that it focused only on Black quota students. Vitória, 23 years old, added that “Espaços Afirmados” had an Americanized view of race:

There was even a questionnaire to evaluate the course. One of the questions was, “In which category do you define yourself?” There were only three options . . . “Black,” “White,” and “others.” . . . That was shocking.

And which one did you pick?

I didn’t pick any. . . . I wrote underneath: “There’s no option for me.” They were the only people who discussed race, but with a completely complicated slant, too directed . . . as if there were only two explanations for what happens: the White point of view and the Black point of view. An imported Black point of view, by the way, right? . . . Imported from the U.S. And everything they said almost always didn’t apply to us.

As an example, Vitória mentioned an end-of-the-year party in which the women students were encouraged to “wear those typical hairdos, little braids and what not There’s gonna be samba, of course, and our food, which is beans, as if

we only ate beans. As if Black food were beans, Indian food, yucca, and the rest is White food. It makes no sense.”

Vitória’s words are noteworthy because she faced Esaf just as she was seriously questioning her racial identity. After having thought of herself as White for most of her life, she was forced to discard that when she concluded that the racist comments made by her boyfriend’s parents, who were of Iberian descent, were directed to her. Later, she confronted racism at Copacabana Beach, when two security guards from a nearby hotel stood side by side with a White tourist when she and her visiting cousin passed by. Vitória noted that both she and her cousin were very casually dressed; her cousin was even shirtless. Stressing that her cousin is Black, she is convinced that their color and attire were the only explanations for that reaction, for they made them look like suspects. In other words, the security guards treated Vitória as non-White even if she at the time did not see herself as such. Already at Uerj, between conversations with fellow students, her classes, and the presence of Black activists, she finally embraced a Black identity. But that only lasted until she heard that she was “too White” (*branquela demais*) to be Black. Again confused, but having abandoned the White identity, she opted for *mestiça*, which did not convince a “student and activist of the Black Movement” who called her a “sellout.” Understandably, that angered Vitória and did nothing to dissipate her doubts, “because you have to assume only one side, as if there were only two categories, either Black or White. There’s nothing else.” Vitória’s indecision is not just a matter of confusion, but a resistance to the radical stance that certain racial entrepreneurs seek to impose. Her opinion is akin to the opinions of those who oppose racial quotas as a measure that attempts to wipe out the variety of racial categories that exist in Brazil.

The White Racial Identity: “Neither Black nor Brown”

In my entire sample, only two students declare themselves White: Sérgio Augusto, 20 years old, a student of social sciences, and 23-year-old Rita, a dental student. Sérgio Augusto tells me that his father is White and his mother “is kind of, I’d say, *parda*.” To me, he seems to have inherited her mother’s features, what with his light skin and very curly, almost crinkly hair; in the recent past, he could have been called *mulato claro* (a light-skinned mulatto), a term none of my interviewees uttered. However, he insists that he and his sister have always been “very White,” so much so they were called *branquelos*. Rita told me she “descended from Portuguese on both sides of the family.” In my eyes, she looks the part: with long, naturally straight brown hair and white skin. In fact, she is the lightest-skinned student in the sample.

As I mentioned before, race in Brazil is often contextual. Therefore, it is possible that growing up among darker-skinned persons led Sérgio Augusto to perceive himself as White, the opposite of Luís’ stance as described above. Then, having entered a major with a large number of non-Whites may have reinforced Sérgio

Augusto's self-identity. In fact, when he answers the attitudinal questions about quotas at the end of our interview, Sérgio Augusto consistently refers to Blacks as "they," thus demarcating his own racial identity.

"White" is the least elaborated category among my respondents. And since the number of interviewees in this category is too small, it is hard to go beyond a simple description. I would venture, however, that perhaps behind the lack of elaboration is the idea that "White" is the "norm," the standard against which all other categories are defined and measured. Just as "man" *qua* man was not a subject of inquiry until at least a decade after women's studies appeared (Kimmel and Messner 1992), studying whiteness is still much more rare than studying non-Whites, although a number of authors have begun to break that mold (e.g., Doane and Bonilla-Silva 2002; Gallagher 1995; Lipsitz 1998).

Conclusion

Most of the quota students I interviewed (Penha-Lopes 2007a) conceive of race as a fluid and malleable system, like most of the Brazilian population. After all, "the myriad of colors and phenotypical aspects (such as light/dark, crinkly/straight) are factors of the language marked by the national culture. They mark 'criteria of purity' relative to the constitution of the ethnic identity, both as it refers to *negritude*, and as it refers to *branquitude*" (Santos 2002, 128). For many, the formation of their racial self-classification started in their own homes; as I have shown, with one exception, all have a typical, highly varied, Brazilian ancestry. For others, their racial self-classification has changed over time, especially after they entered university, by distancing itself from the "White" and "*morena*" categories—the former, the most privileged in Brazil, and the latter is perhaps the most utilized by Brazilians who have an interstitial color. Therefore, quota options and racial identity are not necessarily the products of genetics, but the result of interpretations the students have made of the representations of their ancestries and life histories. The fact that those representations exist in a context of high racial inequality perforce leads to variations in the development of racial identities (Bento 2002).

To argue that a racial identity is built on interpretations relates to the concept of socialization, that is, the process individuals go through in order to assume a social status or role. That process is administered by agents of socialization, those persons and groups who interact with individuals and train them for their roles in diverse social contexts, such as the family, the school, the street, or the university. In the case of racial socialization, the agents act like ethnic or racial entrepreneurs. Thus, children who grew up hearing that their families are "all mixed" even though they are still "White" may assume a White identity. In order for that identity to remain strong, it needs to be reaffirmed beyond family life; a confrontation with racism on the street, the study of social sciences, and four years of college life may affect change in racial identities.

Relying on sociological and anthropological frameworks to understand racial identity is more pronounced among the social science students. That is neither surprising nor particular to this sample. Maria Aparecida Silva Bento (2002, 155–156) cites the work of Beverly Tatum to affirm that “a course about racial relations forces people to enter and/or deepen contact with the condition as Black or White. That contact forces them to review their past and to reflect about their present in racial relations.”

Three factors are associated with identity change: the fact that socialization is an interactive process; the fact that individuals have a say in their own socialization, so that they may accept or reject any part of that process; and the fact that racial relations in Brazil assume different forms depending on the social context, influencing the self-classification of those who feel in-between, such as *pardos*, *mestiços*, and *morenos*.

Gender also plays a significant part in the process of racial socialization. Be they Black or *pardas*, almost all of the women I interviewed—but none of the men—brought up the hair issue. As we know, societies demand more physical beauty from the women than from the men; physical beauty is associated with White features, especially lighter skin tones and naturally straight hair, which creates a “color complex” (Russell et al. 1992). That is why it seems harder for the women students to sustain a healthy black identity (cf. Müller 2006). Contacts with activists, who value *negritude*, facilitate the support of that identity over the ones in between.

We also need to consider the interplay of quota options and racial identity. As racial identity may lead candidates to decide on which type of quota to choose, so may quota options affect their racial identities. For example, darker-skinned candidates who had always gone to private schools may opt for racial quotas to guarantee slots. In turn, the act of declaring themselves Black may lead them to start thinking of themselves differently, even to assume a side of their biographies that they had so far ignored. If that really occurs, self-declaration can be an advantage of the policy rather than a “fraud.”

In that sense, care must be taken to avoid alienating quota students by trying to force them to fit in a category that is considered imported. As Edward Telles has noted (2004, 80–81), currently, there are three racial classification systems vying for hegemony in Brazil: the official, census system, which utilizes the categories “White,” “*pardo*,” and “Black”; the popular system, famous for its numerous terms, including “*moreno*”; and the “Black movement system,” reduced to “Black” and “White.” Historically, the last one is most associated with the binary system of the United States and the least common in Brazil; several interviewees were clearly turned off by it. The challenge is, then, to recognize the socioeconomic oppression of the non-Whites, including Blacks and *pardos*, without trying to force the oppressed to fit into a system with which they may not identify. This would be akin to at once admitting our multiraciality *and* our racism against non-Whites (Santos 2006b), both deeply rooted in Brazil.

“*Pardo*” is a category that is difficult to define because it “causes cognitive anarchy”: in the Southeast, it is associated more to “*mulato*,” while, in the North and Northeast, it also applies to the descendants of Brazilian Indians (César 2008).

In the language of the *cotistas*, *pardo* appeared in between Black and White, similar to *moreno*, and even as a synonym of “Brazilian.” Despite all that malleability, *pardo* is not the same as Black for many of the students. Therefore, they keep the fluidity alive that characterizes the Brazilian racial system while also taking advantage of policies that aim at combating the typical inequalities of that system.

If *parda* appears as a viable category, if “Black” is defined in various ways, and “race” is crucial for the understanding of social relations in Brazil, it is quite possible that the implementation of quota policies in the university is contributing for the reformulation of the idea of nation in Brazil. If that is really the case, then the quota policy is “plurifunctional” (Gonçalves 2007); not only does it allow for the growth of opportunities for the social mobility of those who have so far been largely excluded, but it also promotes the emergence of new individual and group identities.

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