Brown Skin, White Dreams:

Pigmentocracy in India

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ABSTRACT

Pigmentocracy or colorism refers to the practice of intraracial groups applying a preferential valuation to lighter skin, resulting in a system of contextual privileges and discriminations based on skin color. In India, this phenomenon is informed by numerous factors, including colonialism, the caste system, media, cultural practices, and patriarchy. The fundamental forces contributing to pigmentocracy are explored independently as well as in conjunction with each other in order to elucidate the multifaceted aspects of social organization in India, specifically, the larger effects of imperialism, capitalism, globalization, racism, and sexism as they relate to colorist ideology. Everyday practices and attitudes informed by caste, class, religion, language, region, and customs are also examined in relation to pigmentocracy. Although there are numerous mechanisms that contribute to the complexity of examining pigmentocracy, larger patterns also prevail that allow for a comprehensive understanding of how pigmentocratic notions influence and are influenced by multiple background and demographic conditions. Benefits for those who are on the lighter end of the skin color spectrum are recognized and leveraged in accordance with the systemic logic of being naturally superior. Conversely, often those on the darker end of the spectrum are perceived as inferior, thus perpetuating the superiority of whiteness. Pigmentocracy is detrimental psychologically, physically, and socioeconomically due to the ways in which darker skin is often viewed (by society, media, lighter individuals as well as darker people who subscribe to the belief that white is better) as less attractive, less valuable, less pure, and less clean. For those perceived to be darker, the consequences can include violence, marginalization, and discrimination in areas of employment, education, government, access to resources, psychological trauma, disparities in marital opportunities and conceived notions of beauty, and underrepresentation in media.

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Chapter I

Introduction

a. General Statement of Dissertation

Pigmentocracy or colorism refers to the practice of intraracial groups applying a preferential valuation to lighter skin, resulting in a system of contextual privileges and discriminations based on skin color. In India, this phenomenon is informed by numerous factors, including colonialism, the caste system, imperialism, media, cultural practices, and patriarchy. Pigmentocracy operates in both similar and different ways compared to interracial conflicts and discrimination. The primary similarity is that skin color is hierarchically organized from white to black, with associated privileges and disadvantages assigned accordingly. The primary difference between pigmentocracy and racism is that the former is further informed by shared customs, beliefs, caste, religion, history, geographies, and other in-group characteristics.

Efforts to promote egalitarianism in India often consider subjugation resulting from postcolonial conditions, socioeconomic factors, religious differences, caste dominance, educational inequities, patriarchal traditions, gender, domestic violence, and lack of political representation. However, social hierarchies informed by pigmentocracy must also be interrogated in order to effectively account for the "multidimensionality of marginalized subjects" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 139). The lived experience and identity of darker individuals are informed by a unique set of struggles that cannot be adequately understood using individual platforms.

Racism is often approached from either the perspective of those who are dispossessed (nonwhites) or possessed (whites). Yet, both discourses are indispensable to understanding the intricacies of racial ideologies. The epistemologies of the oppressed provide unique perspectives for examining and considering discrimination, subjugation, microaggressions, and inequalities. Knowledge that is produced in the areas of whiteness studies also contributes to antiracist

scholarship through the problematization of whiteness. More specifically, using a theoretical approach, the genealogy of whiteness can be evaluated as a matrix of domination that relies on the production and circulation of images, values, and organizing principles through such mediums as (neo)colonialism, cultural imperialism, capitalism, and mass media.

Additionally, the fundamental forces contributing to pigmentocracy must also be explored independently as well as in conjunction with each other in order to elucidate the multifaceted aspects of social organization in India, specifically, the larger effects of colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, globalization, racism, and sexism as they relate to colorist ideology. Furthermore, everyday practices and attitudes informed by caste, class, religion, language, region, and customs must also be examined in relation to pigmentocracy.

Beyond color, class and sex further define the lived experiences of darker individuals in India. As previously stated, various dynamics shape the lives of darker Indians and subsequently prevent full integration into society and can include religion, caste, geographical location, and language. At various intersections, these factors contextually influence the effects of pigmentocracy. For example, a light-skinned Indian woman who occupies the lowest strata of Indian society in terms of caste and class may have increased prospects in areas such as employment and marriage than a darker woman of similar status. In short, there are numerous moving parts that contribute to the complexity of examining pigmentocracy. Yet, larger patterns also exist that allow for a comprehensive understanding of how pigmentocratic notions influence and are influenced by multiple background and demographic conditions.

The marginalization of darker Indians serves to further fragment efforts towards equality and solidarity. For example, colorism disproportionately impacts women in India, yet there is a lack of feminist scholarship that problematizes its oppressiveness. As such, pigmentocracy calls

for feminists to "reiterate the need to re-theorise the fundamental causes of women's oppression in post-independent India" (Ghosh, 2005, p. 35).

Benefits for those who are on the lighter end of the skin color spectrum are recognized and leveraged in accordance with the systemic logic of being naturally superior. Conversely, often those on the darker end of the spectrum are perceived as inferior (by others as well as themselves), thus perpetuating the superiority of whiteness, and consequently the ramifications contained within the typifications.

The correlative relationship between color, caste, and class is not logical or natural; rather it is a performative construction manifested as a means for dividing and vertically organizing Indian society. Disembodied expressions of whiteness and racism are transmitted through mediums such as the cultural, imperial, lingual, symbolic, historical, discursive, and conceptual. Working in conjunction with these social epistemologies, embodied expressions of whiteness and racism are circulated through the material—particularly the performative, visible, representational, and media. Whiteness, as a social construction, is also fluid and elusive in its constantly shifting points of reference. The idea of whiteness and who is white (categorically) is continuously changing and must also be considered in relation to pigmentocracy.

b. Statement of Problem: Male*v*iolent Effects of Pigmentocracy

The disadvantages of intraracial racism are less recognizable and quantifiable than interracial racism, but nonetheless prevalent in Indian society. Due to the intraracial nature of pigmentocracy, oppressive conditions are often attributed to caste, class, and gender differentiations while discounting color. Furthermore, discrimination resulting from skin color is difficult to identify and address among intraracial groups.

Pigmentocracy is detrimental psychologically, physically, and socioeconomically as it

affects both the individual and the collective who are deemed by others and/or themselves, to be

darker skinned. Darker skin is often viewed (by society, media, lighter individuals as well as

darker people who subscribe to the belief that white is better) as less attractive, less valuable, less

pure, and less clean. For those perceived to be darker, the consequences can include violence,

marginalization, discrimination in areas of employment, education, government, access to

resources, psychological trauma, disparities in marital opportunities and conceived notions of

beauty, underrepresentation in media, and countless others.

Darker Indians face discrimination by other Indians as demonstrated through lower

incomes, less education, and lack of access to coveted government positions. Due largely in part

to the intersection of gender, color, and caste, they have fewer available opportunities. For

example, the outcaste groups of Dalits are racialized as black and have limited access to

occupational sectors. As a result, Dalits are often relegated to unwanted professions including

waste management, toilet cleaning, prostitution, and servants to the middle and upper classes

(Gangoli, 2007). The stratification of Indian society by caste, religion, class, region, gender, and

particularly color are detrimental to Indians as a whole, as individuals, and as an emerging

nation. These taxonomies promote the creeds of colonialism and western imperialism, which

preserves power and wealth in the hands of the elite, who in turn maintain dominance through

continued oppression of the masses.

While it is my contention that cultural forms such as media and aesthetic standards are

the prevailing medium for influencing the masses, the political sphere of life is not left unaltered.

The ongoing discrimination of darker members of society and the material and ideological

subjugation of the (Oriental) Other through neocolonial structures has had profound impact on

areas of government. This includes underrepresentation of darker and/or lower caste Indians in government, which also correlates with unequal representation in media and state employment. These comprise large and highly sought-after sectors of the Indian job market. Furthermore, darker members of society face political obstacles in elections as lighter and higher caste candidates are more likely to triumph due to more available financial resources (a symptom of neocolonialism and capitalism) and/or racial discriminants (Gangoli, 2007).

Those who accept the seemingly natural system of colorism also internalize the essentializing logic of pigmentocracy. The result is a consciousness informed by lack of self-worth stemming from feeling ugly, rejected, unclean, insignificant, and pitiable. As a result of the real material advantages of being lighter-skinned, and the internalized idealization of lighter skinned, those who are identified and/or who self-identify as being dark often seek to assimilate to the dominant culture. Ronald Hall, editor of *The Melanin Millennium: Skin Color as 21st Century International Discourse*, argues that many subjugated groups are aware of the discriminatory practices in place and psychological/physical harm ensues from assimilation. For example, many Indians use skin-bleaching products, despite the fact that many have harmful side effects.

In patriarchal India, women are affected at higher rates by pigmentocratic prejudice. In regards to gendered and racialized exploitations, darker women are more likely to be objectified and dehumanized than their lighter skinned counterparts (though all women suffer this condition to an extent in a patriarchal society). Furthermore, they experience increased incidences of violence, rape, domestic abuse, and prostitution. The view that dark bodies are less significant also contributes to maltreatment and commodification as they are more frequently the victims of

the sex trade (Gangoli, 2007). Additionally, due to the fact that darker women are frequently perceived as less valuable, marital options are limited and dowries are usually higher.

As is often the case in patriarchal cultures, standards of beauty (though subjective) can affect how societies (and women themselves), measure female value. Though colorism is closely linked to beauty standards, it also extends beyond the realm of attractiveness and includes socioeconomic exploitation of dark skinned women as menial workers, less deserving of material comforts, and targets of the skin bleaching market.

To combat the prospect of a female member of a household falling into an undesirable category, many families and communities continue to reproduce the belief that a female's place is in the home. As fairness and virtue are the overwhelmingly feminine ideals, the practice of keeping females indoors is motivated by colorist ideologies as well as fear of mingling with men (thus bringing about *badnam*[1]). Moreover, dark skin is often associated with impurity and hypersexuality. These perils further devalue a girl's worth and thus increase familial burden, particularly those of a financial nature, as dowries for darker and/or immoral brides are higher in order to compensate for their aesthetic inadequacies and lack of piety.

The terms *goreh* and *chitti* are Hindi terms often used by Indians in conjunction with one another in describing skin color. The former is employed when describing white people (such as colonialists), but is also used to refer to lighter skinned Indians. The terms *chitti* literally means white and can refer to color in general (for example: white garments) as well as skin color. Light skinned (or *goreh/chitti*) domesticated Indian women accordingly become the desired exotic Others to the poorer, darker, lower caste, and/or Dalit women. The former represents the essence of femininity, including the notion of being well kept (a reflection on the status of men), delicate (lack of hard labor—again reflecting of a successful father/husband/son), and pure (not exposed

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[1] Hindi (adopted from English) term for bad name or reputation for both the girl and family.

to men as well as religious). Although sharing similar subjugations, depending on their skin color and caste, Indian women are also positioned in very specific ways due to color.

The prevalence of the caste system, bridal dowries[2], and social hierarchies in India are still common and have a profound effect on the oppression of women. The norms and values constructed by this institution and communicated through the vehicle of culture has become equated with reality and truth. The patriarchal culture of India is unique in that multiplicative oppressors are combined to reduce agency for darker Indian women, particularly those of lower caste and class—which often occur concurrently.

The preference for lighter skin is a vehicle for fulfilling male fantasies of the ideal woman (in terms of beauty, morality, and prestige). Males are not subjected to this standard to the same extent in patriarchal societies. As the dominant group, their value is often derived from non-aesthetic factors, such as education and occupation. This is most evident in the emphasis grooms and their families place on fair skin when seeking brides. Lighter women are considered both by themselves as well as others, to be the "haves" rather than the "have nots."

Last, but not least, are the potential health issues resulting from skin bleaching agents. Mercurials and lead-based products are officially banned in India, but many of these products are widely available on the 'black' market. The possible side effects of these ingredients are dangerous and include "kidney damage and neurological symptoms (anxiety, depression, and psychosis)" (Jablonski, 2012, p. 177).

The vast majority of skin bleaching products (or cosmetics as they are often misleadingly referred to by manufacturers) originate from western companies. In response to criticisms of unethical business practices (in the neocolonial sense as well as the implications of their goods), skin bleaching product manufacturers claim it is the demand of the nonwhite market that fosters

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[2] Although bridal dowries are officially illegal, they are still widely practiced.

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their production and sales. The more prominent companies include Vaseline, Dove, Fair &

Lovely (all of which are owned by the Anglo-Dutch parent company, Unilever), L'Oréal,

Garnier, Lancôme (all French companies), Nivea (owned by the German company Beiersdorf),

Oil of Olay, Neutrogena (owned by American company Procter & Gamble and Johnson &

Johnson respectively), and the Body Shop (an Anglo-French company owned in part by

L'Oréal). In addition, the European conglomerate Unilever has an Indian based division called

Hindustan Unilever, which markets Fair & Lovely and Fair & Lovely Menz Active (Russell-

Cole, et. al., 2013), and promotes representation of the manufacturers as a national company to

gain buy-in from consumers. By positioning Fair & Lovely as made *by* Indians and *for* Indians,

Unilever markets itself as serving Indian interests and while maximizing Indian nationalism.

c. Roadmap of Dissertation

The unmarked white body conveys an absence of the problematic principles reserved for

nonwhite races (Garner, 2007). Similarly, the invisibility of whiteness to many whites allows for

the concealment of its advantages (Dyer, 1997). Conversely its visibility to nonwhites

communicates the lack of disadvantages inherent in whiteness. I argue that the racial identities

of nonwhites are informed by whiteness and that the non-raced identities of whites are predicated

on the racialization of nonwhites. In other words, whites derive their whiteness (and absence of

race) through the racialization of all other groups. In Chapter II, using exploratory, historical,

and conceptual research, I argue that whiteness studies can offer a useful perspective in regards

to race, racists, racialization, and racism. Additionally, understanding the why, who, what, how,

and when of whiteness studies can provide valuable insight into pigmentocracy.

The practice of whites inserting ideologies differentiating races in the popular and global imagination has been in place for several centuries. Recognition of the multifaceted manifestations of whiteness achieved through white self-analysis could contribute to the destabilizing of foundational premises and lead to the questioning of white rationale, motivation, and subsequently, superiority. Furthermore, whiteness studies can also contribute to the demystification of white privilege by recognizing and demonstrating how systemic and localized unearned advantages endure. Epistemologies of the oppressors can also contribute to our undestanding of the mutability of whiteness. Specifically, the ways in which who is designated and/or included as white shifts contextually.

In the latter part of Chapter II, I discuss the pigmentocratic effects of colonialism. Colonialism contributes to the perpetuation of whiteness and masculinity as superior not only through domination, but also through the deepening of social stratification of Indian society. The colonial experience left lasting impressions on Indian culture in regards to perceived advantages of lighter skin and masculinity. For example, British colonialists and settlers principally affiliated with upper caste elites, thus further increasing and instituting the legitimacy of power and supremacy over the masses. Race distinctions promulgated by white British colonialists served to refuse sovereign power to Indians, yet authority was bequeathed to non-white elites. Relative to the British, the power elite Indians held was excessively limited, but relative to non-upper caste/class Indians, was imposing. In this way, whiteness and wealth (as exemplified by both whites and their elite Indian allies), constructed hierarchical structures using performative configurations entrenched in racialized aesthetics and affluence.

In Chapter III, I situate myself within theoretical bodies of literature that engage with matters of colonial and cultural relevance to the subject of pigmentocracy. Specifically, I refer to

Edward Said's articulation of cultural imperialism and *Orientalism*; Michel Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge*; Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's discussion of mass culture; Kwame Nkrumah's theory of neocolonialism; Jean Baudrillard's concept of simulations; and Parameswaran and Cardoza's exploration of advertising white beauty. Using a similar methodology as used in Chapter II, specifically exploratory, historical, and conceptual research, I seek to unpack and dismantle the notions of whiteness as a false ideology.

To begin, I critique the superiority of whiteness as having no historical basis in reality or truth. In doing so, I problematize the nature of historical discourse as it pertains to whiteness as products of subjective authors forwarding narratives towards specific ends. Furthermore, I theorize how whiteness has been transformed from the realm of imagined narratives to actual discourse. In a similar vein, I also critique Occidental representation of the Orient. Like the representation of nonwhites, the Orient is framed for the specific purposes of promoting Western superiority through subjugation and simulations[3].

I further argue that racial identities are inherently problematic as they are often used (by whites) against those seeking terms of recognition. In an effort to apply the aforementioned conceptualizations of genealogy, representation, and identity to practical realities, I examine the role of mass culture and consumerism in perpetuating whiteness ideologies. For example, I refer to the skin bleaching products industry in India that has been steadily increasing since the liberalization of the Indian economy in the 1990s. Lastly, I submit methods for challenging truth claims, simulations, cultural imperialism, and mass deception.

In Chapter IV, "Foreign Imperialism of the India and the Caste System", I rely on critical social research to argue that Dalits (also known as "outcastes", "Untouchables") are racialized as

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[3] The term simulation is used in reference to Baudrillard's notion of images substituted for what is real.

black to a greater extent than caste Hindus. Additionally, I argue that Brahmins attempt to approach whiteness (ideologically, physically, etc.) through emulation of Western models introduced through colonialism and imperialism. Using historical research, I provide an in-depth portrayal of the caste system, including the original prescriptions relating occupation and color, as well as modern day interpretations. Dalits comprise the lowest stratum of Indian society in terms of socioeconomic status (occupation, income, education, etc.), perceived religious morality, and disparate treatment. Pigmentocracy has exhibited far reaching adverse effects for Dalits, who often suffer disadvantages that reveal a society still entrenched in hierarchal organization in which greater worth is assigned to the lighter and/or upper castes.

The caste system in India establishes a hierarchy, which perilously subscribes to primordialist thought that grants privilege and superiority to certain groups as birthrights. Though the caste system was in place prior to British colonization of India, many scholars credit colonists for the oversimplification of the system. Accordingly, many subgroups of castes were disregarded in favor of larger classifications that could more easily organize the Indian population for the colonialists. As a result, the complexities of the caste system were lost to an arrangement based on occupation, skin color, and class as conceptualized through the lens of British colonialism.

This constructed ideology proved to be advantageous to British colonizers who recognized the existing caste system and created further divisions to enact repressive strategies. Depending on which theory one subscribes to[4], British colonists either informed and/or worked in tandem with the Brahmin concept of hierarchical organization based on skin color. Moreover, British colonists allied with upper caste/class Indians in the familiar strategy of divide and rule

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[4] The genealogy of whiteness/lightness superiority is disputed among Indian historians, as is the parable of Aryan domination. The following are among the prominent theories: Aryans introduced color hierarchy; ancient Hindu scriptures pontificate the idea; British colonization implemented colorist divisions.

and were dependent on the complicity of elites (Dirks, 2001).   Brahmins were often designated

by English officials to serve in upper level positions of the public sector, including government

and military[5], and were rewarded disproportionate wealth and status. Subsequently, Brahmins

became socio-politically, socioeconomically, geographically, ideologically, and racially

estranged from lower caste Indians.

According to Ghose, religious thought is intimately related to social status (Ghose, 1999).

The implementation of religious customs and beliefs are affirmed by the widely accepted

hierarchical view that Brahmins, the white, priestly caste, are favored most by their creator.

Subsequently, all other lesser castes falling below Brahmin are less favored, while the idea that

Dalits, (the black, "Untouchable" outcastes) deserve punishment for past sins. By crediting

Hindu ideology and consequently God's (also referred to as the Supreme Being) verdict for

validation of caste distinctions and Dalit designations, the dominating castes are able to maintain

a position of moral and racial superiority.

Dalits and caste Hindus who accept the caste system as divine will submit to the natural

order of things as dictated by God and Brahmins. In this way, the will of God and Brahmins

becomes supreme to the will of the Dalits, yet the former is problematically interpreted by upper

caste Hindus. In other words, Dalits are condemned to an undesirable life because of their

religious faith, and their religious faith condemns them to an undesirable life because they are

Dalits. In short, "the worst sufferer of this Aryan myth and Brahmanic supremacy is the "ex-

Untouchable" caste" (Ayyar & Khandare, 2013, p. 84).

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[5] Brahmins and other northern Indians believed to have Aryan blood were considered to be the martial races by
colonists. This was largely due to their "manly independence, in marked contrast to other groups [from the south]
said to be weak and effeminate" (Dirks, 2001).

During colonialism, the British maintained dominance in part through the exploitation of Indians (in terms of labor, resources, consumers, etc.). This model established a hierarchy of power based not only on economic privilege, but whiteness as well. In modern day Indian society, the upper castes are replicating a similar model established through colonialism with themselves as acting imperialists. For the upper castes, Dalits provide an enduring resource of cheap labor. Often, a debt and bondage system of dependency is created and maintained that prevents Dalits from leading financially and/or socially independent lives. Furthermore, by apportioning Dalits to subordinate positions in the form of indentured servitude and slavery, the upper castes can prevent the rise of unwanted competition and protect their privileged status.

The Swadharma paradigm refers to the religiously informed notion of duty as defined by caste delegation. As previously discussed, Dalits are the embodiment of past sins, and due to this fall from grace, have been charged with the duty to serve others (Racine, et al., 1998). As such, any attempt to respond to the subjugation of Dalits through economic approaches, such as Marxian ideology, have been met with resistance amongst Hindus as it contradicts the laws of nature that require Dalits to submit to those favored by God—a quality in part also constructed through their racialization.

The features affecting Dalit racialization as black counterparts to caste Indians, include lack of morality, poverty, and servitude. In addition, Dalits often work outdoors (largely as a function of limited employment opportunities) and commonly have darker complexions as the sun causes darkening of skin color. Coupled with the stereotype of lower caste and/or class members as darker, colorist stratification is further implemented and secured.

In Chapter V, "Media as a Medium for Perpetuating Whiteness and the Role of Bollywood", I argue that media often influence and indicate multidimensional racial, social,

cultural, political, and economic arrangements. Specifically, the Indian film industry promotes the racializing canons of British colonialism and Western cultural imperialism in which lighter skin is more valued and desired. Using conceptual research, I draw on Edward Said, Adorno and Horkheimer, and Kwame Nkrumah to forward my argument that the culture industry is a vehicle for promoting racial configurations informed by Western ideology. I seek to connect ideas related to pigmentocracy, including cultural imperialism, capitalism, (neo)colonialism, Orientalism, color hierarchies, the role of multinational corporations, and consumerism.

Said's discussion of the Western gaze towards the Orient and methodological approach employs a semi-genealogical excavation inclusive of postcolonial discourse, which interdependently traverses disciplines including political science, history, sociology, anthropology, and the humanities. Adorno and Horkheimer (and the Frankfurt School in general), provide an economic and cultural framework for assessing media, specifically, how mass culture operates as an apparatus to capitalist systems in the homogenizing project that encourages consumption. Drawing on Nkrumah's theory of neocolonialism, I explore the ways in which colonial legacies are sustained through a system of dependency as well as cultural imperialism.

In the media, lighter skin serves not only as an aesthetic ideal, but also as representational of dominance wielded through the correlating forces of economic and political power, modernity, wealth, prestige, and beauty. Bollywood exemplifies whiteness as morally, economically, and aesthetically superior, which in turn reinforces and reproduces the discourse set forth through colonialism, caste designations, and social taxonomies, thus further dividing society using raced, classed, and gendered bodies.

Capitalism and the liberalizing of the Indian economy at the end of the twentieth century has led to a great influx of skin bleaching products on the market that seek to exploit darker women's situation (Karan, 2008). The primary representatives for these products are mostly Bollywood actresses, who are highly influential due to the popularity of films. For example, Padma Lakshmi is an influential light-skinned Indian model, actress, and television show hostess (Parameswaran, 2008). Notable cultural studies scholar R. Parasmeswaran states:

> …this light-skinned, hybrid female figure's embodiment of global India aligns her with the sorority of women whose postcolonial whiteness in India's media and advertising discourse of the nineties 'opened up new spaces of desire and commodification, forming a culturally seductive logic for market liberalization' (Zacharias, 2003, p. 396). Zacharia (2003) argues that these signifiers of feminine shades of whiteness in the postliberalized nation's public sphere formed 'intertextual links with existing social hierarchies of caste and community in India, where propertied classes and more privileged communities could aspire for social mobility through consumption (as cited in Parameswaran, 2008, p. 424).

Lakshmi symbolizes the ideal Indian woman in the face of globalization. Her light skin serves as an aesthetic marker of India's progress as well as an increased likelihood of being recognized by Western racial terms.

Both films and advertisements often emphasize the notion that social acceptance and benefits can be achieved by becoming whiter, while simultaneously leveraging the social shames of being dark. To illustrate, I provide content analysis of two Indian films, *Long Da Lishkara* and *Jah Tak Hai Jaan,* as they relate to pigmentocracy and Western values. For example, *Long Da Lishkara*'s heroine, Peeto, is able to transcend her lowly social status through her beauty and light skin. In both films as well as other popular media, Western values, including whiteness, are

depicted as ideal, civilized, modern, and attractive. Conversely, darker bodies are often

represented in media as threatening and an indication of social deterioration (Bhabha, 1994).

In order to adequately understand and interrogate pigmentocratic relations as they relate

to gendered power imbalances, we must first have a paradigm that provides starting and

reference points. The problem of pigmentocracy requires feminist illumination and attention in

order to examine the lived experiences of darker and/or Dalit women in postcolonial India.

Chapter VI, "Theories for Interrogating Pigmentocracy: Postcolonial Intersectionality",

undertakes the multidimensional obstacles that relate to Indian women, specifically the

intersection of color, caste, class, religion, geography, and other demarcating aspects. In

addition, the implications of colonialism must also be considered in their effects on darker

women's lives.

Using critical social research and conceptual research, I consider the merits and

weaknesses of feminist intersectionality theory and postcolonial theories. The theory of

intersectionality shaped by African American women expounds specific racial, gender, and class

experiences by recognizing differences across space and time. The theory of intersectionality is

effective in addressing the longstanding issue of standardizing and dichotomizing women's

identities and experiences.

By acknowledging women's specific locations and situations, intersectional feminism can

help shift the focus toward local socioeconomic, sociocultural, and sociopolitical analysis.

Moreover, in trying to produce knowledge of the Indian woman's experience, relatedness of

matters must be considered. For example, the lived experience of lighter skinned, upper caste

Indian women is markedly distinct from that of her darker, lower caste counterpart. Likewise,

the experience of lighter skinned women in a low class and/or caste varies from that of dark

skinned women of high status. Although they may share a common struggle against

postcolonialism and patriarchy, darker, low caste/class women are often relegated to one of the

lowest positions in Indian society. Chandra Mohanty contends colonialism necessarily implies a

relation of structural domination and suppression—often violent—of the heterogeneity of the

subject (Mohanty, 2003). As such, postcolonial conditions must also be accounted for in Indian

women's lives. Thus, a combined focus of postcolonial intersectionality seeks to give women

who are oppressed by the governing logic of pigmentocracy and caste/class designations a voice

that expresses their unique lived experiences.

In Chapter VII, "Pigmentocratic Materialities: Social, Political, Economical,

Psychological, and Embodied Implications", I apply postcolonial intersectionality theories to

real-life beliefs and practices relating to how skin color affects Indian women. For example, the

marital preferences of would-be grooms in India indicate an emphasis for lighter skin for brides.

As a large aspect of Indian society and culture, it is important to consider how light skin serves

as a valuable form of symbolic currency in marital arrangements; and conversely how dark skin

is commonly perceived by society as a flaw that should be compensated by other valued qualities

(such as income, caste, education, etc.).

As articulated in "Mapping Color and Caste Discrimination in Indian Society", "lighter

skin color is the most defining feature of female beauty, feminine identity, health and moral

conduct. The prescriptions of beauty and femininity are coded in racial-caste connotations"

(Ayyar & Khandare, 2013, p. 86). Following the principles of hierarchal and patriarchal social

order, there is much credence to the idea that women's roles reflect and influence the status of

men. Due to the symbolic supremacy of light skin, fairer brides are commonly sought in marital

arrangements. In this way, men of all castes/classes can improve their status (and the status of

their future descendants) by marrying light(er) women, as they are frequently viewed as social capital that denotes high caste, class, and beauty (Russell-Cole, et. al. 2013).

Due to the immense significance placed on skin color in matrimonial matters, many prospective brides turn to skin bleaching products in order to secure a better match. In short, lighter skin color can be exchanged for a more successful groom (in terms of employment, education, caste, wealth, etc.), which in turn contributes to the growth of the skin bleaching industry in India. In this way, "the semiotics of fairness and femininity in advertisements for skin lightening products thus intersects with the cultural politics of beauty and skin color in a larger system of representations in India's popular domain" (Parameswaran & Cardoza, 2009, p. 217).

It is my contention that this domain is increasingly comprised of women (and men, but to a lesser extent) of a marriageable age. This is evidenced in the content analyses of two skin-bleaching commercials I examine in the chapter. Both commercials offer similar storylines in which young women are faced with the challenges of securing employment and romance. The use of bleaching cream not only helps the women with job attainment, but also fosters parental pride, interest from males, and the air of modernity. In their article, "Melanin on the Margins: Advertising and the Cultural Politics of Fair/Light/White Beauty in India", Parameswaran and Cardoza posit:

> Advertising, a commercial genre whose persuasive rhetoric does not merely sell goods, but also educates citizens in emerging markets to embrace consumerism's "aspirational space" of upward mobility, offers a compelling archive for our analysis of the narratives of gender, class, and nation through which light-skinned beauty emerges as a visible, accessible, and seductive marker of social status (Parameswaran & Cardoza, 2009, p. 215).

Advertisements offer a unique insight into popular attitudes by demonstrating how the intersections of skin color, gender, socioeconomic status, and caste inform preferences and values in India.

In addition to mercury, hydroquinone is an ingredient more commonly found in the legal skin bleaching market (including in the United States up to 2%), though it is not without negative side effects. These include "dermatitis, hyperpigmentation, redness, stretch marks, ochronosis (darkening and thickening of skin), [and] squamous-cell carcinoma" (Jablonkski, 2012, p. 177). The adverse effects of hydroquinone are widely known as evident in the European Union' banning of it in over-the-counter products. However, the desire to improve the quality of one's life through perceived and real advantages of lighter skin color are often outweighed by the harms. According to the Journal of the American College of Toxicology,

> "hydroquinone is a potent cytotoxic agent that causes mutations and alterations to DNA, and that it should not be used in any leave-on type of product." When this was published, many cosmetic manufacturers opted to discontinue their hydroquinone lighteners and some countries went so far as to ban hydroquinone from skin-whiteners. (as quoted in Howard, 2009, no page).

The fact that the European Union bans the sale of hydroquinone in products in European markets, but still allows for manufacturing of the product to be exported to many Asian, African, and Latino markets illustrates the exploitative nature of western capitalism. The physical and ideological detriments of skin bleaching products is simultaneously recognized and denied by companies. In other words, the harmfulness of hydroquinone is acknowledged and accordingly prohibited in western markets, but is nevertheless promoted among groups that have reduced sovereignty—namely nonwhites in postcolonial states.

In Chapter VIII, "Universalized Localities of Intraracism: Parallels of Indian Pigmentocracy in the Global Context", I use historical and comparative research to compare

pigmentocratic implications in India to globalized manifestations of colorism. Premising my

arguments in colonialism, I argue that similar manifestations of pigmentocracy occur globally,

specifically, in the form of religious underpinnings, caste differentiations, mimicry,

representations of indigeneity, gender discrimination, and socioeconomic inequities. In short, I

demonstrate that despite efforts to approach whiteness, nonwhite bodies are on the whole, not

accepted by whites—rather that whites merely "tolerate differences they are able to culturally

assimilate into their own singular terms" (Jean-Paul Sartre, as quoted in Fanon, 2005, p. xiii).

Chapter II

Stark vs. Dark:

the Construction of Whiteness and Blackness in Reciprocal Imaginations

"I wondered if whiteness were contagious. If it were, then surely I had caught it. I imagined this "condition" affected the way I walked, talked, dressed, danced, and at its most advanced stage, the way I looked at the world and at other people."

~Danzy Senna, *Caucasia*

Introduction

In the context of pigmentocracy, the focus is often on the exploration of how, why, when, and where nonwhites are racialized. I posit that the study of whiteness is also important for improving our understanding of colorism. That is to say, pigmentocracy cannot be sufficiently considered without examining the ideological and material factors contributing to racialized social constructs. This chapter seeks to demonstrate why and how the inclusion of whiteness studies in the dialogue on pigmentocracy is essential. The majority of the chapter engages with larger, global issues of racism, pigmentocracy, and whiteness in the present day to illustrate the pervasiveness of whiteness ideology. Additionally, I draw from historical examples (with an emphasis on postcolonialism) and refer to specific places to demonstrate the mutability of whiteness.

I provide a brief discussion of the prominent scholars in the field as well as prevailing arguments found in the literature. Furthermore, I offer several critiques relating to whiteness studies, including the general exclusion of women, nonwhites, and nonwestern spaces. Despite the limitations of whiteness studies, they are helpful in elucidating how whites produce and maintain superiority. For example, the invisibility of whiteness is an important feature that serves to normalize white bodies while simultaneously abnormalizing nonwhites.

The interdependent and interrelated nature of whiteness and blackness prompts an interrogation. The former informs our understanding of the latter as blackness is defined

according to the terms of recognition forwarded by whites. If we are to address multiple dimensions of racism and colorism, we cannot look at only the symptoms, but also the cause. By evaluating the origin, we are not only better equipped to identify and implement solutions, but we are also able to better understand the symptoms.

Pigmentocratic values represent not only a distancing from blackness, but also an aspiration to whiteness. Though these notions sound the same, they are in fact different. The former refers to treating of symptoms, whereas the latter refers to the finding the cure. The disadvantages (i.e., symptoms) of blackness are often a primary focus in discussions on racism, whereas the privileges of whiteness (i.e., the root cause) are less commonly scrutinized. Pigmentocratic practices such as skin bleaching and discrimination against darker individuals are impetuses resulting from the desire to approach whiteness. As such, why whites are advantaged is directly related to not only why nonwhites are disadvantaged, but also why some nonwhites want to be white (literally, ideologically, materially, or otherwise).

a. The *Why* of Whiteness Studies

Scholars of whiteness studies, particularly in the Unites States, England and other western European states in the past twenty years or so, often include a discussion in the preface or introduction regarding the objectives and limitations of conducting work on whiteness. This serves multiple purposes, including to dispel preconceived notions of what whiteness studies entail as well as to explain how the field is instrumental to the dismantling of racism. Steve Garner, who literally wrote the book on whiteness (*Whiteness: an Introduction,* 2007*)*, claims that whiteness must be integrated with race studies as it interjects its own unique system of power relationships into the organizing principles of humanity and racial discourse. To support

this assertion, I refer to Fanon's statement "that white Europeans *made him a negro,* in other words, the identity of a black person is derived from the construction of a white identity" (as cited in Garner, 2007, p. 19). I contend that the inversion of this argument—the identity of a white person is derived from the construction of black identity—is also a motivating rationale for studying whiteness as whites "construct the world in their own image" (Dyer, 1997, p. 9). Yet, it always functions in conjunction with racialized nonwhite identities, rather than independently.

According to many prominent whiteness scholars, including Dyer and Garner, the common implicit understanding among many white and nonwhite groups is that whiteness is *the* non-race, or absence of race. As such, whiteness is made invisible to many—particularly white people in the post-civil rights era of the 1950s and 1960s--hence wherein lies one of the primary limitations of race studies as well as one of the main values of whiteness studies. By racing whites, we are better able to displace them as the normal/standard against which all other races are measured and subsequently arranged into hierarchies. According to Dyer, by "making whiteness strange," we are better able to interrogate racial relations (Dyer, 1997).

The invisibility of whiteness is also attentively theorized by Garner, who conceptualizes whiteness as an absence. This absence, according to Garner, is a function of the normalization of whiteness in social relations, thus creating a "white blind spot" (DuBois, 1999). Dyer observes that absence is conducive for whiteness' approximation to non-particularity (i.e., the universal). hooks similarly argues that "In white supremacist society, white people can "safely" imagine that they are invisible to black people since the power they have historically asserted, and even now collectively assert over black people, accorded them the right to control the black gaze" (hooks 2005, p. 21).

Yet, I am not entirely convinced that rendering whiteness more visible is sufficient for dislocating whites from their dominant position. Whiteness studies can be useful and valuable, but must work in tandem with race studies. The ideology of whiteness is continuously changing in response to new negotiations and processes in social relations as enacted by both whites and nowhites. Due to the historical and modern ability of whites and whiteness (as an ideology) to successfully adapt to an ever-changing political, social, cultural and ethical climate, whiteness as a discourse will require more than naming and recognition of its existence to dislodge white supremacy.

In regards to whiteness-centered discourse, I have several reservations as to the plausibility of whites being able to fully recognize their own invisibility. In this case, naming it does not make it less so. In other words, many of the aforementioned whiteness scholars argue that whiteness is invisible/universal/non-raced, and its ideologies are carefully concealed, normalized and circulated (intentionally or not) by whites as indisputable truths. As such, it becomes exceedingly difficult for those who unaware of their privilege to comprehend or undermine its scope. Certainly, there are elements of structural and systemic racism that can be identified by whites conducting whiteness studies. But understanding the everyday microaggressions of racism and white supremacy by those who never experience it becomes one of the primary challenge of whiteness studies. In a similar vein, Naomi Zack, a white feminist philosopher, takes a critical stance on the ability of scholars of whiteness studies to enact change and what it must entail in order to be effective:

> Because white racism against blacks remains a serious matter, I would remain skeptical
> until these people [whiteness scholars] explained to me how exactly, in their understanding,
> ordinary white folk do form an everyday conspiracy against the well-being and dignity of
> nonwhites. I would want evidence of some clearly understood and well-documented prosaic facts

about ongoing American racism. I would want to hear more than that white people enjoy

privileges on the grounds of race, for example (Zack,1999, p. 79).

While I commend the relatively recent efforts of whiteness studies to encourage white

self-examination, I am also of the belief that whiteness studies is not a new field and it is

problematic to conceptualize it as such. Whiteness studies is generally characterized as an

emerging field, which is dismissive of the contributions of black intellectuals like DuBois,

Morrison, hooks and Ellison (among many others) who have been talking about whiteness in the

black imagination and otherwise for decades. What has changed (and perceived as markedly

distinct from the epistemologies produced by black writers) is that *whites* recently started talking

about the construction of whiteness and its representation in the imagination of Others and

whites. This self-reflection on the part of whites is garnering increasing attention and credibility,

which is another attestation of the power of whiteness. *White* whiteness studies may be a recent

phenomenon, but whiteness studies using the framework of problematizing whiteness—more

specifically its role in the spatial-temporal production, utility, exploitation and management of

social relations and cultural inquiry—is not. Thus, I call for the mutual integration of pre-white

whiteness studies, race studies (including feminist studies) and existing whiteness studies.

Yet, the conscientiousness that many white[6] whiteness scholars employ in their endeavors

to ensure their work is a constructive dismantling project can be helpful in putting to rest some

anxieties related to intentions. Moreover, many are aware of the presence of limitations, if not

the limitations themselves. These contributions to whiteness studies can be beneficial, especially

in light of Garner's assertion that "the analysis of whiteness contributes to anti-racist scholarship

by emphasizing the social relationships referred to as racism rather than slipping into an identity-

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[6] The self-claimed racial/ethnic identity of white whiteness scholars is commonly disclosed to the reader in the preface or introduction.

based paradigm" (Barraclough, 2008, p. 716). In spite of this, in my view whiteness studies needs to be represented by a multitude of voices, including whites, nonwhites, feminists, historians, and postcolonial scholars. Unfortunately, there has previously been "very little expressed interest in representations of whiteness in the black imagination" (hooks, 2005, p. 20) on the part of white scholars, though this is slowly shifting with scholars such as Roediger and Dyer. Similarly, there has also been relatively little examination of the role of women in relation to whiteness.

Investigating the complex methods in which whiteness, both as an ideology and as a materiality functions as a site of power, allows scholars to better understand its effects. The material manifestations of racist ideology are best understood and articulated by those that experience it firsthand. That is not to say that the dominant group should not participate in the discussion, rather that the "master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (Lorde, 1984, p. 1). Yet, knowing what tools the master has at his disposal should not be discounted as this knowledge could be valuable in solidarity and strategy formation in terms of resistance efforts, as well as challenging the power of whiteness. Amalgamation of this information with the tools and knowledge of that of marginalized groups will enhance efforts to dislodge whiteness from its position of power. An in-depth understanding of the source and transmitters of racism as well as the effects of oppression and its recipients (i.e., the transmittees) is necessary for dismantling whiteness.

Examining the complex apparatuses and nature of whiteness as viewed through a white lens deepens and expands our ability to recognize the negotiations, manipulations, and regulations that whiteness enacts. In other words, the master's recognition and acknowledgement of his/her role in facilitating subjugation, as well as identifying which tools

are used and how they are used in order to maintain dominance, are essential for challenging

white supremacy. In order to acquire, produce, and maintain power, authority, and wealth,

dominating whites must consistently engage (consciously or otherwise) in perpetuating their own

superiority. In calling for long overdue white self-reflection, whiteness studies contributes to the

illumination of many organizing principles of institutional racism, as Toni Morrison asserts,

"scholarly concentrations on the targets of racism manages to avoid any study of the impact

racism has on its perpetrators" (as cited in Roediger, 2007, p. xix).   Furthermore, given that

nearly every aspect of humanity has encountered whiteness in some imperial form or another,

whiteness studies are essential to our understanding of our own collective histories, cultures, and

racialization (both white and nonwhite). Moreover, whiteness studies can be especially

expedient in enhancing our understanding of the circumstances which promote emulation of

whiteness by the oppressed. Attempts to access the privileges of whiteness through racialized

means (for example, mimicry, skin lightening, etc.) are highly problematic. These means to

privileged ends should be disconcerting to anti-racist whites and nonwhites alike as the

phenomenon only reinforces the idea of white supremacy. Simultaneously, the value of

nonwhite ethnicities are rejected in part, if not wholly, which contributes to subjugation,

exploitation, and disenfranchisment.

b. The *Who* and *What* of Whiteness Studies

As a field, whiteness studies by whites comprise an extensive array of epistemologies

related to white privilege. Topics in whiteness studies range from white representation in media,

to the historical exclusion of Irish and Jews from white membership in the US and England, to

the Enlightenment era's production of white values and the racial tensions of the antebellum U.S.

South. A collective theme emerges from these works, including the varying degrees of white

consciousness when it comes to white privilege; complencency of unearned benefits; and

whiteness as an invisible nonrace.

The lack of feminist issues raised in whiteness studies prevents the field from coalescing

with women's studies, which inevitably hinders progress in racial matters. Rather than simply

mentioning women's issues in passing or in a lesser section of text like Dyer does, whiteness

discourse would be more constructive including women's roles proportionately to men as their

roles do not function separately. For example, Indira Ghose in *Women Travellers in Colonial*

India allocates much time and effort refuting the contention that colonial wives had little

influence on substantive matters (Ghose, 1999). Ghose's work attempts to demonstrate the

significance of women settlers in India, who are often overlooked due to their presumably

insignificant status. Similarly, whiteness studies often neglects to convey the significance of

women's bodies as a cite for promoting white (and universalized) ideals of beauty as well as

proper, ladylike behavior.

Dyer, in *White,* engages with the role of women more so than many of his contemporaries

in the field, but the discussion is mainly relegated to women being studied as objects and

embodied transmitters of whiteness, rather than subjects. In general, whiteness studies which

engage with concepts related to women focus predominantly on how whiteness is conscripted

onto the bodies of white women. That is to say, many scholars make mention of women as

instrumental conduits in the literal and ideological reproduction of whiteness, but generally

disallow the voice of women to intervene on the matter. Justifications for centering white

masculinity in a discipline can lead to not only the detriment of Others, but also to the detriment

of the discipline as it provides an incomplete representation of the discourse. Since the

Enlightenment and persisting to present day, specific channels in which whiteness is transmitted through males and females represent gender-respective Western standards and values. For white males, attributes such as chirvalry, stoicism, protectiveness, dominance and even cleanliness are romanticized. For women, it is purity, grace, delicateness, and cleanliness. Traits such as these are inscribed onto white bodies and positioned as natural characteristics inherent in the race. An inclusion of women's voices could not only contribute to the challenging of patriarchal whiteness, but whiteness as a whole as it cannot subsist without females accomplices.

In recent times, *white* whiteness scholars, in addition to many race and feminist studies scholars such as bell hooks, Morrison, DuBois, Chandra Mohanty, and Peggy McIntosh, often posit that whites are largely unaware of their advantaged position. This insight can offer much needed critical analysis in conceptualizing the performativity of whiteness. In other words, whiteness as a social construct is in part formed through the normalizing of whites and abnormalizing of nonwhite identities and bodies. Whiteness extends beyond the ideological and includes material manifestations, such as linguistics and acts performed subconsciously, unintentionally, or otherwise. As a partial rationale for how white privilege operates indiscernibly for many whites, McIntosh writes that whites are 'conditioned into oblivion about its existence.' She further asserts a useful analogy of an invisible knapsack:

> I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but what about which I was "meant" to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks (McIntoch, 2005, p. 109).

Conversely, nonwhites carry the axiomatic "saddlebag" (referred to as such as it is often carried by work animals [dehumanized nonwhites] for human [white] purposes) and are weighed down with the heavy load whiteness imposes upon us to our detriment but for white benefit.

As Roediger surmises, and Dyer and Garner concur, whites often think that their interests and needs represent the common interest of humanity (Roediger, 2007). He further formulates how whites are perceived by themselves and others (as a result of contrived racist ideology) as not a particular race, but as the human race. If the white race (variable b) equates to the human race (variable a), and nonwhites (variable c) cannot be whites, therefore nonwhites cannot be human (If $a=b$ and $b \neq c$, then $c \neq a$). Dyer effectively addresses the basis for normalizing and controlling this reiterative, seemingly logical racist ideology when he postulates that the claim to power is equal to the claim to speak for all of humanity (Dyer, 1997). This is essentially how the dehumanization of the Other is seamlessly contrived and implanted by whites (regardless of intentionality or cogniscience). A lack of white self-reflection and nonwhite consciousness is required in order for whiteness to exist in its advantaged state.

c. **The *How* of Whiteness**

The position of "white man as the universal man" solidifies whiteness as the stark (i.e., absolute and natural) standard to which all Others are (pre)judged against (Garner, 2007, p. 4). Paradoxically, Garner also attributes visibility (as opposed to the previously discussed concept of invisible whiteness) to whiteness an as operative feature of unqualified power that is by and large, palpable. In my assessment of his analysis, it would seem that the invisibility and unconsciousness of whiteness is largely applied to whites' perceptions of themselves, whereas nonwhites have no difficulty seeing white privilege.

Robert Jensen further expands our understanding of white privilege by stipulating that "the ultimate white privilege [is] the privilege to acknowledge that you have privilege but to ignore what it means" (Jensen, 2005, p. 115). In other words, awareness of unearned advantages

and inequities without being compelled to alter behavior or ideas is the epitomy of white privilege. Another perspective on the conceptualization of white privilege is unawareness of one's privilege is a privilege in and of itself. Functioning on the premises forwarded by whiteness studies and discussed earlier in this chapter, nonwhites possess a higher awareness of their denigrated state in comparison to white awareness of their advantaged state, which is a deficiency that whiteness studies seeks to address.

The everyday, material realities and experiences of many nonwhites preclude the ability to forget or ignore their subordinate and/or underprivileged status. Social consciousness resulting from self-reflection (in either capacity of recognizing privilege, oppression or both) can often induce negative feelings such as anxiety, guilt, worry, sadness, anger, shame and so forth. Yet, it cannot be said that nonwhites are always fully cognizant of all the intricate mechanisms of racism or that whites cannot be conscious of their advantages. Some nonwhites are unaware of systemic racism while some whites are aware of their privileges.

Consequently, whites who are unaware of their unearned privileged status do not have to shoulder responsibility (complicit or otherwise) for racism, and therefore cannot be held accountable. Moreover, common perceptions among whites and nonwhites alike often relegate responsibility and culpability to the denigrated group for their oppressed state. For example, raced Others who do not succeed in western societies are often presumed at fault for not working hard enough or lacking motivation and therefore not deserving of earning privileges. These inadequate perceptions can be internalized by groups as shortcomings inherent in their respective races and consequently detract emphasis from the project of dismantling institutional racism. Currently in the West, safety is also a privilege that is largely exclusive to the white male and entails security in his privileges, positions of advantage as subjects rather than objects and even

institutional safety (free from workplace, legal, social, economic discrimination). Additionally, power is embedded in the normal rather than the superior (Dyer, 1997) allowing for white privilege to be secure in its nescience.

d. The Myths of Sameness & Meritocracy

A common misconception among whites is that white struggles and challenges are representative of all people (i.e., universal) without regard to race; rather inequities are attributable to one's own choices. The "myth of sameness" fashioned by bell hooks refers to white perceptions of shared lived experiences (exclusive of historical trauma) with nonwhites (hooks, 2005). Beyond the embedded white supremacist rhetoric previously discussed, there are additional means in which ideological distance between nonwhites and whites is minimized in the white imagination. The lack of white consciousness can be attributed further to the sociocultural and socioeconomic organization of capitalistic Western states, particularly the United States, in which the individual is valued over the collective. Harlon Dalton reflects in "Failing to See",

> For a significant chunk, the inability to "get" race, and to understand why it figures so prominently in the lives of most people of color, stems from a deep affliction—the curse of rugged individualism. All of us, to some degree, suffer from this peculiarly American delusion that we are individuals first and foremost, captains of our own ships, solely responsible for our own fates. When taken to extremes, this ideal is antagonistic to the very idea of community. Even families cease to be vibrant social organisms; instead they are viewed as mere incubators and support systems for the individuals who happen to be born into them (Dalton, 2005, p.15).

Individualistic ideals promote the notion of meritocracy, which can lead to assumptions that status is earned and therefore not due to undeserving privileges. This can also lead to horizontal

hostility, such as biasism among privileged groups, such as "model minorities" in the United States who may also support the premise of meritocracy rather than acknowledging the implications of widespread racism.

Another aspect of culture that fosters individualistic values is the manner in which it seamlessly inserts whiteness into the binary of individual versus collective. In short, whites are individuals while Others are a collective (Garner, 2007), which is a concept that works to detrimentally universalize nonwhites as sharing common inferior qualities. According to Barraclough, "as whites express racialized anxieties about others, they are also constructing idealized identities for themselves" (Barraclough, 2008, p. 716-717). Myths of sameness as well as the aforementioned racial dichotomies contribute not only to the invisibility of whiteness, but also to racist and even colorblind whites' disavowal of the effects of systemic racial discrimination. In turn, they foster the idea that whiteness does not in and of itself grant privileges, rather that they are earned. Yet, those who are not on the receiving end of unearned privileges are often able to recognize the racial differentiations of the haves and the have nots. In the (common) event meritocracy is insufficient for securing advantages and privileges, then resorting to other measures, such as skin bleaching, marrying light/white spouses, performing whiteness, etc. remain often as the only practical alternatives.

However, what is missing from this analysis is a discussion of nonwhites' views towards whites in the context of this binary. In her essay "Representations of Whiteness in the Black Imagination", bell hooks draws on her own experience and encounters with whites and maintains whites [they] used economic exploitation to terrorize (hooks, 2005). hooks' expression conveys that not only does the black imagination exist, but it also participates in the construction of white imagery. Furthermore, "they" is a sweeping pronoun she commonly employs to refer to all

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whites. As such, it is conceivable that the individual/collective binary is not unidirectional in which whites are not always the transmitters (subjects) and nonwhites the recipients (objects) of representational discourse.

e. Patrolling Moving Borders

Whiteness studies also endeavors to include class in the discussion of race. Todd Kuchta, a race scholar writes "that white studies must work in tandem with other forms of critique—racial as well as gender and class—to disengage that which inhibits equality from that which advances it" (Kuchta, 1998, p. 13). Kuchta commends Dyer's efforts to expand whiteness studies beyond race in his article "The Dyer Straits of Whiteness":

> Dyer also complicates monolithic understandings of whiteness which focus solely on race by providing nuanced readings of its articulation through gender and class. He frames these readings within insightful analyses of the historical, cultural and technological conditions that have made whiteness the ostensible standard of power, reason and beauty within Western codes of representation (Kuchta, 1998, p. 2).

Though Dyer grounds much of his analysis of whiteness in class issues, his discussion relating to the fluidity of whiteness was ineffectually linked to matters of class. Like numerous other whiteness scholars (both white and nonwhite), Dyer engages with the theme of nonwhites traversing white lines through racial and associated socioeconomic practices. Yet, achieving upper/middle, upper class as a means for transcending the confines of race is largely uncritiqued in his investigation of fluidity. Though I agree with his evaluation of whiteness as a "coalition with a border and an internal hierarchy," (Dyer, 1997, p. 51), his viewpoints would be more salient if he demonstrated how class predominantly factors in the elasticity of whiteness identity.

Class functions largely as a marker for not only success (or lack thereof), but also as a channel for nonwhites to achieve model minority status rather than just minority status. Whites are the most likely to be of upper/upper-middle class by design of whiteness ideology. Nonwhites who are are able to access these privileges prove themselves to be dissimilar to poor nonwhites—i.e., the undesirably minority and are perceived as less black, brown, red, etc. This is illustrative of the point that skin color does not always determine the fluidity of racial categorization.

One of Roediger's undertaking in *Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* is to explore how race factors in socioeconomic considerations of who gets what and how they get it. His Marxian informed efforts to analyze the designs of upward mobility using racism are especially noteworthy. Specifically, Roediger is interested in why, despite shared economic interests, African Americans and whites of the laboring class failed to create a unified political movement. Roediger's launching point concerning the development of racial identities out of in-class competition is a salient one. He offers an important and comprehensive historical and nearly genealogical study of the whitening of Irish Americans.

According to Roediger, the transitioning of Irish from nonwhite to not-quite-white to white occurred in large part through their leveraging of color consciousness stemming from their ideological distancing from the black working class (Roediger, 2007). The considerable inequalities of the lived experiences that linked the poor Irish Americans to poor African Americans were substantial and visible, yet were not sufficient for the forging of alliances.

Roediger suggests that "symbolic wage" served to placate the disgruntled Irish Americans. In short, the granting of symbolic status operated to improve the psychological well-being of this formerly marginalized group. It is somewhat unexpected that the choice

(consciously, subsconsciously, or otherwise) was made on the part of the Irish Americans in which symbolic wages were valued over material wages. Yet, it is not completely surprising either. The symbolic wage granted to Irish Americans included the very real status as free white citizens (with material implications resulting from the contents of the invisible knapsack). Temporal dynamics should also be considered in context of the distancing between Irish Americans and African Americans. The entrenched and flourishing enticements of capitalism and meritocracy in an emerging era of industrialization coupled with the "complex mixture of hate, sadness, and longing in the racist thought of white workers" (Roediger, 2007, p. 5), prevented development of solidarity between the two groups. Lastly, but certainly not least, are the ways in which skin color serves as the most determining characteristic allowing for Irish Americans' to transition into whiteness.   It could be argued that the true lacking feature that initially prevented Irish American full membership into the elite club of whiteness was much more about status and less to do with skin.

As previously stated, whiteness is not exclusively established through skin color. There are numerous factors (discussed in greater detail later in the chapter) that can contribute as well as detract from the status of whiteness. As such, it is useful to distinguish whites from whiteness. In the context of this project, white(s) primarily refers to an individual(s) who meets at least one of the following criteria: ethnically authentic[7] whites; comparatively light skin (intra or interracially); those who perform whiteness adequately (for example, achieving high class status facilitates entry into whiteness regardless of color); those who benefit from largely unearned privileges; and/or those who, generally are included in the category of whiteness by both whites and nonwhites.

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[7] It should also be noted that the concept of authenticity is fraught with problems as it denotes a pure (i.e. unpolluted by other races) origin, thus belying the idea of race as a social construction. However, this is precisely the context in which I am using it due to the fact that racial superiority is often justified through such means as authentic, pure, etc.

The taxonomies of whiteness shift temporally and spatially, thus contributing to its porous nature. Futhermore, the category of whiteness is largely contested by whites and nonwhites alike. The former strives to preserve its exclusive, privileged status while the latter endeavors to access the same privileges. Numerous groups have attempted and continue to claim whiteness, while being denied (temporarily or otherwise) membership by authentic whites. For example, in the early nineteenth century, Irish Americans were not considered white and were likened to black slaves (Roediger, 2007). However, towards the latter part of the 1800's, Irish Americans had negotiated their membership into whiteness. Another example of a group that has teetered between whiteness and non-quite-white are Jews. The most prominent illustration of Jews' exclusion from whiteness occurred during Hitler's reign, which demarcated pure whites as those of the Aryan race. Both the inclusion or exclusion of Jews to whiteness still persists today, depending on context.

Membership into whiteness requires acknowledgment from the hegemonic group and cannot be obtained simply through self-proclamation. Though the borders of whiteness are porous, that does not equate to easily traversable. The benefits that come with membership (or even provisional membership as is the case with those attempting to approximate whiteness) are most often granted by the group in power.

Some groups and individuals are allowed within the borders of whiteness, while others are allowed to approach and remain at the border (not-quite-white), and then there are those who are completely excluded (nonwhites). The system of institutional and social racism predicated on exclusivity often results in the vying for claims to whiteness. Mimicry of whites by nonwhites, not-quite-whites, and even "never-can-be whites" occurs in numerous ways, the most obvious of which is upward mobility. Wealth affords nonwhites (some, not but typically not all)

previously denied privileges. That is not to say that wealth alone can overcome racial

hierarchies, rather that it can grant access to select areas (material and ideological) of whiteness

by creating distance between the dispossessed Others.

The "successful" navigation into the policed borders of whiteness by nonwhites is

believed to be achievable (or approximated) through numerous strategic factors—the terms of

which are dictated by authentic whites and constantly shifting. The border is often represented

by authentic whites as exclusive, yet controllably penetrable through meritocracy, assimilation,

and/or subscription. Acquisition of wealth is one of the most obvious channels, though not

necessarily easy, quick or feasible as racism ensures the prevalence of challenges to upward

mobility. Consumerism, accumulation and property possession are ethos associated with

whiteness and thus generally regarded highly by both whites and nonwhites alike. Some

nonwhites can never be authentically white but they can hope to approach, and at times, procure

whiteness.

f. Salient Traits and Mimicry

Additional possibilities for membership into whiteness include passing, miscegenation,

spatial proximity, religious conversion, language, aesthetic alterations, and skin bleaching.

These conditions vary in usefulness and applicability depending on geographical location. For

example, passing occurs most often in nations with a large population of whites and nonwhites.

Despite contextual variations, I refer to the following channels used to approach whiteness from

a global perspective and more specifically among nonwhite cultures and societies. I will use the

opportunity here to discuss each of these in more detail as I think they are often passed over or

mentioned only in passing in whiteness studies. It is my contention that the performativity of

whiteness by not-quite-whites and nonwhites illustrate the ways in which white identity can be reified by the Other.

Pigmentocracy as an ideology fosters aspirations to gain closer proximity to whiteness through disassociation from blackness, browness, etc. Sociocultural performativity plays a role in the attainment of whiteness and is exercised through a variety of channels, including those mentioned in the previous paragraph. Yet, these channels all share a common impetus: the desire to secure the advantages of whiteness. Pigmentocracy serves to promote the tenets of whiteness, including the superiority of whites while simultaneously denigrating nonwhites.

The attempts to perform whiteness by nonwhites elucidates the distinction between whites and whiteness. By avoiding the conflation of whites and whiteness, we are able to discuss whiteness as a sociocultural construction rather than vilify all whites as racists. In her work titled *Living Color: the Biological and Social Meaning of Skin Color,* Jablonski forwards the idea:

> ...that specific traits can quickly become salient in defining group distinctions, which can then be readily converted into stereotypes. Salient traits are often physical characteristics like skin color, eye color, and hair color, but they also can be entirely socially constructed characteristics, such as religious affiliation. The concept of human "races" developed when skin color became attached to sets of other physical, behavioral, and cultural traits, which were then considered an immutable package; this package subsequently became associated with the idea of inherent social rank (Jablonski, 2012, p. 95-97).

The salient traits conscripted into whiteness are packaged, but not necessarily immutable, which is what I attempt to unpack in the passages below. Emulation, assimilation[8] or impersonation of racial traits renders them alterable, at times granting provisional and permanent membership. At

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[8] Assimilation refers to a phenomenon in which an individual or group adopt the sociocultural practices of another group. "Successful" assimilation often entails partial (if not almost complete) abandonment of one's own culture.

other times, these behaviors can also contribute to dismissal, denunciation or alienation by the associated group as it can be perceived as an attempt to increase social distance.

Racial Passing

Passing is the phenomenon in which someone of nonwhite lineage commonly referred to in the context of African Americans of mixed race, attempts to pass as white in order avoid racial discrimination and/or acquire privileges reserved for whites. The concept of passing emerged in the context of blacks seeking to be free citizens rather than slaves in the Antebellum South in the United States. Recognition of this ability to cross into whiteness and its perceived and real advantages prompted some slaves to understandably seek freedom based on their lighter-color skin (Jablonski, 2012).

Variations in skin pigment within any socially-defined group is a naturally occurring phenomenon. However, white slaveholders raping female slaves often resulted in light-skinned African American children. The mixed offspring of these often violent unions often had whiter complexions, eyes and hair and some could even pass as white in certain contexts, though not in others. Lighter African Americans in their own communities would find it much more difficult to pass as white as their families (and mothers in particular) were known to be black. Furthermore, African Americans attempting to pass as white outside of their communities would not only need to look white, but also act white according to the cultural standards of whiteness. Effectively passing as white could also require the denouncement, distancing or denial of one's black origins, including family and background.

At present day, passing still refers to a mainly black phenomenon in the United States, but it can be extended to any nonwhite who appears to be white to authentic whites, not-quite-

whites, and nonwhites who prefer that assessment. Unsurprisingly, it became heavily

problematized in the Antebellum South, both pre-civil war and post civil-war by whites who felt

threatened by the "illegal" crossing of their border. As a result, legislation like Jim Crow laws

led to the development of more "scientific" and "objective" means of measuring and

categorizing race (Nakayama & Martin, 1999), such as the one drop rule[9] (Conrad, 2010),

craniometry[10] (as referred to by Linda T. Smith, 1999), the comb/pencil test[11], the blue

vein/brown bag tests[12] and others. Passing often requires a disassociation from one's ethnicity,

family and culture if full membership of whiteness is desired.

Miscegenation

For some nonwhites who subscribe to the tenets of white supremacy, interracial coupling

can potentially also provide a means for approaching whiteness. However, this requires not only

marrying whites, but subscribing to the ideologies of whiteness and performing them as well in

order to attain partial membership through association. Miscegenation predicates on the

assumption that race is biological rather than socially constructed. Based on fear and resentment

of the dilution of "white purity," anti-miscegenation laws were established initially by colonial

settlers in the 17th century United States, but also expanded to Nazi Germany and South Africa

during Apartheid to prevent the coupling (marriage or sexual intercourse) of alleged inferior

races with superior ones (Barnett, 1963).

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[9] The one-drop rule refers to the 19th century belief (that was later put into law in the early part of the 20th century) that anyone who is of "Sub-Saharan-African ancestry" (even minimally, as is indicated by the reference to the one drop of blood rule) is considered black (Conrad, 2010).

[10] Craniometry is the studying and measuring of skull size and shape. This "science" was used as a way to classify and differentiate humans by race.

[11] The comb or pencil test refers to the practice used most commonly during the 19th and 20th century in the U.S. and during apartheid in South Africa in which a comb or pencil was placed in an individual's hair to determine texture and whether s/he had African hair (and therefore African ancestry) (Conrad, 2010).

[12] A method in which one's lightness/blackness was measured by comparing his/her skin color to a brown paper bag and/or the (in)ability to see one's veins.

Though anti-miscegenation laws in the above-mentioned states have all been repealed (some as recently as the end of the 20th century as in the case of South Africa), judgment and aversion of miscegentation still exists today. For example, interracial coupling can also potentially work to exile both the white and nonwhite parties from the literal and ideological vicinity of their respective races. They may be accused by their corresponding groups of disloyalty to their own race and/or ethnic group. Whites can also receive blame for failing to perform whiteness adequately as marrying/coupling with a nonwhite is dishonorable to white superiority. Furthermore, it contributes to whites' confusion in reference to their (in)ability to demarcate the couple's collective racial identity (and those of their offspring), and/or the perceived threat interracial couples pose to the white matrix of domination (Nakayama & Martin, 1999).

Proximity to Whiteness

Spatial and ideological proximity to whites can also contribute to the "whitening" of a nonwhite race. In modern day America, residing in white areas (i.e., middle, middle/upper class suburban spaces), attending the "good" schools, going to college, being a productive member of the community, and securing white collar employment all approach the privileges available to whites.   Though the nature of many of these performances of so-called whiteness correlates with class and money, others can be achieved through careful mimicry. One example is marrying or coupling with lighter partners within the same race in hopes of bettering one's own social status or that of future generations.

Christianity

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Religious conversion of Others to Christianity has been a long-standing project that at times worked in conjunction with colonialism (and still works in conjunction with cultural imperialism). Missionary efforts to save nonwhites operate vis-à-vis with the idea of salvaging the savage. Godlessness (i.e., not embracing Christianity) was/is a characterizing trait used to differentiate civilized whites from Others. Native Americans, colonial subjects and immigrants were all targeted for conversion by white Christians. Christian missionaries from Europe and the United States still carry out their mission of civilizing the Other in many parts of the nonwhite world.

Conversion to Christianity through missionary efforts during colonial eras and even today in the Global South does little to improve the image and treatment of nonwhites as Christianity has limited social capital (other than projecting the capacity to become allegedly semi-civilized through assimilation). However, Christianity does project symbolic capital as it represents the religion of whites and therefore morality. "P.J. Heather, drawing on the Bible and Greek and Latin classics, speaks of the 'tendency to associate whiteness with honour, holiness and innocence'" (as cited in Dyer, 1997, p. 73). Lastly, it is worth mentioning that religion does have relative social currency (the presidents of the United States have always been Christian for example), though not enough to afford a nonwhite with an all-access pass to the coalition of whiteness.

English

English is the universal language that globally symbolizes progress and modernity (as a result of colonialism and imperialism) and most importantly (and not incidentally) is the languages of whites as well as former British and American colonies. Knowing "proper"

English is a prerequisite for admission into whiteness and accents other than European can be disqualifiers. Ethnicity and nationality are often inferred from dialects, but English often has the benefit of non-particularity as it has been constructed by Americans and the British as the standard language. Like whiteness, western-originating English implies an absence of Other identity.

White Aesthetics

The last area I include in my discussion of whiteness as performative (though in no way constitutes a comprehensive list) is aesthetic alterations, resulting in genetically modified Others. The more common methods used for "improving" appearances to conform to white Western ideals of beauty include hair lightening and straightening, extensions, and weaves. Lenses to lighten brown eyes to more desirable green or blue eyes are also used by some in nonwhite cultures. More permanent procedures involving cosmetic surgery include blepharoplasty (the sculpting of [most commonly] Asian eyes to appear more Western by creating a double eyelid) and facial surgery to minimize "ethnic" lips, noses, and other racialized physical features.

Bleaching is another controversial and dangerous method undertaken in hopes of altering skin color. The material aspirations to not only perform whiteness but to be white are often produced from the desire to reap benefits generally reserved for whites and/or from seeds of shame, doubt, self-loathing, and a desire to be "normal". In this way, racist ideology contributes to an internalized self-hatred of one's racial identity and can impair psychological well-being to varying degrees.

The fluidity of whiteness as well as those within the taxonomy are demonstrated by the ways in which it can be threatened, compromised, and penetrated by nonwhites. On the other

hand, whites have also demonstrated resiliency, negotiability, and the ability to define and regulate the borders of whiteness. These features of whites are only achievable through successful widespread circulation (omnipresence) and indoctrination (omnipotence) of whiteness ideals and claims. Nonetheless, the transient nature of whiteness as constructed by whites is perhaps its Achilles heel and indicates a potential for destabilization and dismantling.

g. Whiteness in the West and Beyond

As previously mentioned, my largest critique of whiteness studies is the deficiency of nonwhite views of whiteness. As such, I attempt to expand the field by arguing for the more hospitable inclusion of black, feminist, and postcolonial thought. The vast majority of literature pertaining to whiteness is situated in the United States and Europe. Yet, there are judicious works that go beyond the West and explore whiteness from the perspective of the nonwhite, nonmale to offer advantageous and intriguing standpoints.

A few notable scholars, including Homi Bhabha, Gyanendra Pandey, Radhika Mohanram, Melissa Steyn, Alfred J. López and Jerry Dávila examine whiteness from unique and valuable standpoints. Many of these scholars build their work using similar foundations as *white* whiteness studies. *History of Prejudice: Race, Caste and Difference in India and the United States,* Gyanendra Pandey argues that:

> In the case of dominant as well as oppositional discourses, the proclamation of difference (in the former case, usually also a declaration of otherness) flows from a certain political position and perspective. Plainly, the difference articulated in the Dalit, black, or women's movement is not that of an already available culture or identity—the culture or identity of women, ex-Untouchables, or people of African descent. What is involved rather is the enunciation of difference, as Homi Bhabha has it, "a process of signification through which statements of culture

or on culture differentiate, discriminate and authorize the production of fields of force, reference,

applicability and capacity (from *The Location of Culture,* 1994)*,*" (Pandey, 2013, p. 56).

Pandey's view of difference as projected onto Others by the hegemonic group serves as the basis

for whiteness identity formation. This understanding of racial arrangements and relationships

also figures prominently in discourse generated by the more mainstream whiteness scholars such

as Dyer, Garner, Roediger, Wray, Steyn, and Jensen, among others. For example, Garner's

discussion of boundaries also elucidates the constructed differences between whites and

nonwhites.

To illustrate, I turn to commonly recognized and familiar symbols of whiteness that are

constructed and implanted in the imagination of both whites and Others as inherent and therefore

indisputable. Cleanliness is defined much like whiteness as an absence of negative traits—in this

case, dirt (Dyer, 1997). Dirt is extended, most importantly, to corporal representation and bodily

impurities such as sweat and feces (Dyer, 1997). Furthermore, cleanliness has been socially

designed to serve as a marker of civility and respectability through its association with

whiteness. The link to whiteness was established based on whites' emphasis on cleanliness as a

precursor for an advanced society. Additionally, in many nonwhite contexts, such as the

Orakaiva culture in Papua New Guinea, cleanliness came to epitomize ideological lightness as

demonstrated in their lack of burdens (especially in relation to those saddled with saddlebags)

and the ability to travel (using privileges in the knapsack) (Bashkow, 2001). Healthfulness is

another virtue that goes hand in hand with cleanliness as it is indicates a lack of sickness—which

also accompanies biological superiority.

    h. **Post-colonialism and Pigmentocracy**

Homi Bhabha's "definition of colonial mimicry is the 'desire for…*the subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite..almost the same but not white.*'" (Bhabha as cited by López, 2005, p. 18). Additionally, Garner argues "cultural imperialism rests on the power to universalize particularisms related to a specific historic tradition by making them (mis)understood as universally true" (Garner, 2007, p. 6). An example of cultural imperialism artifacts is how internationally circulated and viewed "western media (books, films, ads, press) whites are overwhelmingly and disproportionately predominant, have the central and elaborated roles" (Dyer, 1997, p. 3). Similarly, Bollywood, the hub of south Asia's media, deploys tactics modeled after Western media in which whiter Indians and white non-Indians generally occupy the principal roles. The universal truth that has been established is that white is beautiful, though this is not completely accepted by all and challenges/critiques/rejections of this notion subsist. Dyer makes the point that "nineteenth century racialist thought repeatedly intertwined science and aesthetics, defining Aryans or Caucasians as the pinnacle of the human race in every respect, and therefore including beauty" (Dyer, 1997, p. 71).

In India, a prevalent, though adamantly disputed belief is of the historical invasion of Aryans in northern part of India. Regardless of its validity, many upper caste Brahmins maintain their superiority is inherited from the Ayans. Beyond being the heirs of Aryan lineage, it is of popular opinion that Brahmins possess superior aesthetic features, including fairer skin (as opposed to "wheatish" or "dusky" like the lower castes), thinner, more pronounced noses (thus more closely resembling Western appearances), and taller bodies. In addition, the Hindu religious ideology also supports the inherent superiority of the caste of Brahmins as a birth right (or a birth curse as is the case for lower castes and outcastes) and thus a declaration made by the gods (who are the highest authority). These modern representations of Brahmins are dangerously

close to how whiteness is represented whites. This is by no means incidental or unintentional, but rather a legacy imparted to some extent by colonialism and imperialism.

As there are subdivisions present in whiteness, there are similar hierarchies found within the caste system—namely based on the correlation to class. Garner posits that working class whites are often constructed by authentic whites as "unreasonable, irrational…superstitious (not religious, criminal…excessively sexual, filthy" (Garner, 2007, p.73). Nearly the exact same qualities are used to describe Dalits or ex-"Untouchables" (referred to as such due to their impure and dirty nature). Dailit women also comprise the largest percentage of prostitutes in India (Levine, 2003)—partially as an outcome of stereotypes of of hypersexuality and lower social worth. Learning from the colonial system of Othering through differentiation, the Brahmin emerges to replace the colonial white body as the unmarked Indian body.

In contrast, the marked body of the Dalit is likened to slaves in the pre-civil rights era of the United States, and, as such, is recognized by the state as an oppressed group. In regards to spatial configurations, Dalits, like African Americans have "socially segregated communities" (Pandey, 2013). For those excluded from the highest caste of priestly Brahmins, a common option available is emulation in the form of converting to Christianity, name changing, class transcendence, marriage, and so forth. Skin bleaching is presented by the media itself as the most economical and effective way to attain privileges. By becoming lighter, darker Dalits believe they can transcend their state of suffering.

The striking parallels between whiteness and pigmentocracy in India allow for the applicability of mutually reciprocal discourse. Though pigmentocracy, by definition, occurs intraracially, the ramifications of racism apply in nearly every way to Indian social relations as they do in interracial relations.

As López argues, "postcolonial studies has to date produced relatively little scholarship exploring the relations between race and power and specifically between whiteness and the consolidation and maintenance of colonial power" (López, 2005, p. 3). Discourse on pigmentocracy could expand the focus of both whiteness and postcolonial studies in unique, albeit pertinent ways. Discounting or exclusion of intraracial racism is a precarious oversight as it signifies the breadth and depth of whiteness' reach into seemingly racially homogenous areas sites and illustrates the resulting factions and in-fighting.

i. Conclusion

Abundant scholarship attests to the mutability of whiteness. Paradoxically, it is worth noting that whiteness is fluid in fixed ways. That is to say, whiteness appears to be more fluid than it is in actuality. For example, whites may become more white through upward mobility, but with the exception of those who can pass as white or are included as white through shifting definitions, the colored races can never obtain whiteness, ideologically or epidermally. The suggestion that whiteness is fluid beyond spatial and temporal contexts is intentional and occurs through multiple channels: capitalism and its leviathan, consumerism; mass media and especially advertising; military and political interventions (in the name of the civilizing project, spreading democracy, and free markets); missionary work in the sense that the project of Christianity can save the savages of the world from their superstitions, ungodliness and religious oppression; technology that promises consumers that they will be equated with modernity and advanced cultures rather than backwardness; bleaching creams and cosmetic procedures that communicate the hidden meaning that if you look like white, you will be like white; and the list goes on.

All of these phenomena of whiteness operate in order to convey ideas of natural superiority that should be emulated if one is to better his/her life. These manifestations of whiteness are glamorized, glorified, romanticized, exalted in humanity's imagination—all while seeming obtainable, neutral and universal. Worse still is the way in which whiteness rarely betrays its exploitative and disparate nature, its dark side if you will. These underlying forces often lead to the disenfranchisement of Others. Yet, many nonwhites view their less fortunate situation without serious consideration to the external driving forces of whiteness and instead look inwards (or to himself/herself and abilities in regards to skin/aesthetics) to locate a solution.

Chapter III

Fictional Whiteness:

False Genealogy, Representation, Identity and Mass Deception

"Whiteness is not a culture. There is Irish culture and Italian culture and American culture - the latter, as Albert Murray pointed out, a mixture of the Yankee, the Indian, and the Negro (with a pinch of ethnic salt); there is youth culture and drug culture and queer culture; but there is no such thing as white culture. Whiteness has nothing to do with culture and everything to do with social position. It is nothing but a reflection of privilege, and exists for no reason other than to defend it. Without the privileges attached to it, the white race would not exist, and the white skin would have no more social significance than big feet."

~Noel Ignatiev, *Race Traitor*

Introduction

The legacy of whiteness as a means by which all other races are measured endures as a seemingly governing logic of the Western, postcolonial, and/or imperialized world. As a result, nonwhites are essentially designated by means of racialized systems to subordinate positions in which access to power and knowledge are denied, withheld, or limited by the organizing principles of hegemonic groups. Within the macrocosmic hierarchy of whites and nonwhites exist further differentiations that create microcosmic taxonomies. One example of this is intraracial discernment of skin color or pigmentocracy, which commonly results in inequitable treatment. Those excluded from the dominant racial model attempt to access real and perceived privileges by approximating whiteness while simultaneously disassociating themselves from Otherness. Emulation of whiteness can occur through performativities such as language, behavior, and aesthetics.

In this chapter, I argue that whiteness is baselessly represented as the source of power, influence, and prestige. This is accomplished through multiple means, including historical and

modern discourse, as viewed from the subjective lens of colonialism, imperialism, and globalization.

Furthermore, I seek to dismantle universalized notions of race through the theorizing of false genealogies informed by the ideas of Michel Foucault, Chandra Mohanty, and Hayden White.

In the second section, I discuss the representations of the Orient and nonwhites in the image of white Westerners. I employ a metaphor of a person and his/her shadow to illustrate the subject/object relational dynamics of whites/nonwhites. I ground my arguments in the theories forwarded by Edward Said, Jean Baudrillard, and Guy Debord, arguing that racialized representations are not rooted in truth, but rather claims to truth. In the following section, I interrogate identity politics as they encounter and interact with whiteness and other hegemonic canons. I argue that the formation and preservation of nonwhite identities can be compromised by dominant ideologies as whites seek to maintain privileges and nonwhites seek to access them. I compare Judith Butler's discussion of gender identity to the politics of racial identity in an effort to problematize notions of biological race.

The latter part of the chapter entails a discussion of capitalism and the effects of consumerism as it relates to pigmentocracy, race, and class. To this end, I refer to the theories of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer relating to mass culture and deception. I examine the manufacturing industries and markets for skin bleaching products and interrogate the concept of consumer agency in such contexts. Lastly, I focus on the ways in which the subjectivities of racism, capitalism, consumerism, and western standards can be destabilized.

a. **Whiteness Is Not a Source of Power**

The privileges of whiteness that motivate imitative behaviors are rooted in a universal assertion of power. The foremost benefits include preferential treatment in institutions affecting socioeconomic status, including universities, corporations, government, and others. The production of knowledge and discourse constructing whiteness as an inherent source of power informs modern day systems of racial organization. In order to adapt to ever-shifting modes of thought and behavior, whites continuously adjust whiteness in accordance with spatial and temporal contexts. In doing so, whiteness is able to maintain substantial authority within racial ideology. In the process, a conversion from claims to truths takes place, thus making oppression more difficult to identify and subsequently more difficult to dismantle due to the deceptively attestable nature of realities.

Grounding my arguments in Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge,* Mohanty's *Feminism Without Borders* and White's *The Content of the Form,* I problematize the conceptions of historical analysis as established sequences of events. Often, the validity of events and outcomes are based on certain assumptions imbedded in the notion of continuity. That is, particular interpretations of history informed by enduring/previous understanding of events and experiences reinforce subjective discourses. Foucault posits that history can lead to false or illogical assumptions that subscribe to external, irrelevant factors (Foucault, 1972, p.135). As such, contexts that should have no bearing on discourse are considered objective by undiscerning audiences, leading to unsupported conclusions.

The historical claims by dominant groups implants (in subscribing white and nonwhite groups) a contrived genealogy establishing whiteness as inherently superior. As such, this universal 'truth' pertaining to whiteness is extended through history and the logic of continuity.

Consequently, we are frequently provided with specific, selective, and shaped aspects of discourse that are disproportionately beneficial to those producing it.

Colonialism, imperialism and capitalism as instigators of discourses are contributing factors to how whiteness has been constructed as the source of power, authority and wealth. Correspondingly, I draw on Mohanty's work to illustrate how colonialism promotes the coalescing of whiteness and power:

> Institutionally, colonial rule operated by setting up visible, rigid, and hierarchal distinctions between the colonizers and the colonized. The physical and symbolic separation of the races was deemed necessary to maintain social distance and authority over subject peoples. In effect, the physical details (e.g., racial and sexual separation) of colonial settings were transmuted to a moral plane: the ideal imperial agent embodied authority, discipline, fidelity, devotion, fortitude, and self-sacrifice. This definition of white men as "naturally" born to rule is grounded in a discourse of race and sexuality that necessarily defined colonized peoples, men and women, as incapable of self-government (Mohanty, 2003, p. 59).

It is my contention that the connections between whiteness and the claim to intrinsically higher values collapse under an in-depth analysis, as they are dependent upon assumptions predicated upon other assumptions. As social constructs, whiteness and race are founded on ideological discourses originating from prevaricate epistemologies that contribute to the formation of hierarchies.

For example, during colonization of India, the British imparted the colonial tenet of divide and rule. British colonialists and settlers primarily affiliated with upper caste elites. This association further legitimized the notion that power and wealth are found in whites and elite Indians. British racial and colonial ideology kept sovereign power out of Indian hands, yet bequeathed (a limited) authority to non-white elites. Dirks articulates, "caste did replace the

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crown that came before" (Dirks, 2001. p. 16). In this way, whiteness (as embodied by

colonialists) and wealth (as exemplified by both whites and their elite caste Indian allies),

constructed hierarchical structures using performative configurations entrenched in white

racialized aesthetics and affluence. In postcolonial India, elites are reproducing a hegemonic

paradigm modeled by colonizers and informed by whiteness, with skin pigment deeply

entrenched in casteist and classist systems.

Through domination, the white British colonizers, came to symbolize power and

superiority on the world stage (in competing with other white colonial projects). Conversely,

native Indians emerged as the weaker, inferior masses in relation to colonialists and pre-colonial

projects. As such, whiteness projects itself as a source of power. "The binary structures [of]

possessing power versus being powerless" based on whiteness is problematic in that it produces

a false genealogy (Mohanty, 2003, p. 38-39). In other words, many colonial subjects

injudiciously view whiteness as a normative and natural source of power.

Claims emerge from the forceful and contrived ordering of race, as they are the product

of human subjectivity as opposed to natural or biological laws. Moreover, the manner in which

knowledge is organized contributes to the development of certain discourses that are privileged

over others as a result of competing systems of power. The emergence of claims masquerading

as truths deters contending or alternate discourses to circulate saliently. As Foucault explains:

> But all the possible alternatives are not in fact realized: there are a good many partial groups,
>
> regional compatibilities, and coherent architectures that might have emerged, yet did not do so.
>
> In order to account for the choices that were made out of all those that could have been made (and
>
> those alone), one must describe the specific authorities that guided one's choice. Well to the fore
>
> is the role played by the discourse being studied in relation to those that are contemporary with it

or related to it. One must study therefore the *economy of the discursive constellation* to which it belongs (Foucault, 1972, p. 66).

Claims participate in our understanding of the world and when particular ones are valued above others, social and racial constructs prevail. In short, claims passed as truths inform vertical arrangements imposed by dominant constructs. Unexamined history as presented (by scholars, political/military leaders, media, etc.) to the masses, is an apparently linear and logical progression of discursive formations that reduce the surfacing of competing ideas (Foucault, 1972, p.136-138). That is not to say that historic rhetoric is always indiscriminately accepted. Rather, grand narratives often prevail that largely inform sociocultural, sociopolitical, and socioeconomic principles. In this way, the tenets of whiteness reinforced through colonialism and imperialism (including neocolonialism), are not only able to maintain a position of dominance, but also continuously evolve in order to relegate all other races to a lower status.

Drawing on Hayden White's *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*, I advance the notion that historical events are informed by subjective modes of thinking, including moral justifications and beliefs. These partialities often serve to reinforce certain perspectives while deemphasizing others. When history is erroneously viewed by undiscerning masses (including both oppressed and privileged groups) as a neutral discourse, subsequent prevailing narratives (as inevitable outcomes of interpretation) are more likely to create hierarchies, misinformation, and inequitable principles.

For many, dominant modes of thinking are attributed meaning and value and can lead to detrimental effects, including, but not limited to, the marginalization of nonwhites. History can never communicate a complete account, rather only the fragments forwarded for a particular purpose. This is not to say that all versions of history are harmfully distorted. Rather that

epistemologies related to human nature are intrinsically relative to subjectivities, including

spatial, temporal, cultural, racial, and political considerations as well as personal worldviews.

This occurrence is not necessarily detrimental in and of itself to our perceptions of the

world and indeed can be beneficial in offering dissimilar and useful, if not contentious points of

views. For White, the point at which the depiction of history becomes potentially problematic is

when it is transformed from the realm of narrative into discourse (White, 1987, p.3).

Distinguishing between the two is difficult as the former is often portrayed as having the

qualities of the latter. However, I contend that the primary distinction lies in the motivations,

purposes, and outcomes of the doctrines. It is at the site of contingency that the latter claims

validity as truth and "it is here that our desire for the imaginary, the possible, must contest with

the imperatives of the real, the actual" (White, 1987, p. 4).

When the real replaces the imaginary, representations such as race can be disseminated as

biological differences rather than social constructions. Using science as a rational discourse to

demarcate race further perpetuates hegemonic ideologies that are normalized through the canons

of Western logic (and internalized logic in India) and imperialism. Accordingly, whiteness as a

symbol rooted in "truths" becomes central to power and affluence, while concurrently advancing

the representation of nonwhites as relatively inferior.

  b. **There is No Such Place as the Orient: A Critique of Representation**

The concept of whiteness as a basis of power has come to be widely perceived by both

dominant and nondominant groups as reality instead of speculative imagining. Though historical

events—most noteworthy of which are colonialism and imperialism—have largely informed the

formulation of this ideology, whiteness further perpetuates the binaries representing the West

and "the rest." Prior to colonialism and persisting to present day, the East has been essentialized by imperial whites of the West through historical representation and imagery that intentionally arranges the East according to Western standards and purposes. Doing so fortifies the positive virtues positioned as innate to the West, while simultaneously juxtaposing the East as dispossessing of these characteristics.

To forward my ideas, I situate myself in Edward Said's *Orientalism,* Jean Baudrillard's *Simulations*, Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* and further build upon the philosophies of Foucault and White. According to Said, the Orient is an imaginary product of the West for purposes of justifying hierarchical configurations that subjugate nonwhites (Said, 1978, p. 247-249). As an artificial construct, the Orient serves as an end to Western means by establishing divisive dichotomies that can then be manipulated through racialization, among other methods. According to Said, the Orient and Occident as discourses are framed *by* the Occident and *for* the Occident (Said, 1978, p. 245). The Othering of the Orient is achieved through the spectacle in which gross generalizations and representations of behavioral, cultural, linguistic, religious, political, military, and economic inferiority are expressed. As Debord writes:

> The spectacle inherits all the *weaknesses* of the Western philosophical project which undertook to comprehend activity in terms of the categories of seeing; furthermore, it is based on the incessant spread of the precise technical rationality which grew out of this thought. The spectacle does not realize philosophy, it philosophizes reality. The concrete life of everyone has been degraded into a *speculative* universe (Debord, 1983, p. 19).

Undeniably, these taxonomies of the Other have profound consequences in the continuous power struggle between Occident and the Orient. The hierarchal system that privileges white, elite patriarchal society (as dictated by the Occident) is transmitted through the spectacle of globalized images and representations. The imperialistic nature of this proselytization is so

operative in its function that the Orient also subscribes to its ideologies to an extent, as evident in the performative emulations of whiteness.

For Foucault, discourse refers to the ascription of meaning through statements (*énoncés*) as conveyed by signs (Foucault, 1972, p. 80-81, 88-89). It is through discursive statements that both subjects and objects are assigned value, which then allows us to organize ideas. The past, present, and future of subjects is informed by statements produced by social orders (Foucault, 1972, p. 91-93). Through their interconnectivity, statements contribute to the valuation of knowledge and our understanding of the world. The premise of these statements is a series of signs that represent deeper meanings. By combining Foucault's "enunciative function" with the theories of Baudrillard and Debord, I seek to theorize how the Western culture industry uses inscribed images and representations to uphold tenets of whiteness to depict the overt (Orient) as subverted through Occidental values and standards.

In the postmodern era, the culture industry originating from the West further obscures the boundaries of claims and truths. Baudrillard conceives of simulations or images as the vehicle for which imperial designs are advanced (Baudrillard, 1983, p. 84-85). Using whiteness to expand upon this concept, I demonstrate how pigmentocracy is a result of nonwhites subscribing to false meanings (that are in turn assigned to statements) referring to representations and images.

The discourse of whiteness equating to supremacy is largely founded upon a model that has no referent in reality beyond historical discourse. Consequently, the representation of whiteness is no more than a simulation with the pretense of being forged from a biological reality. Baudrillard posits that images imbedded in our understanding of society illusorily represent reality to the extent that we are no longer able to decipher between what is real and

what is "substituting signs of the real" (Baudrillard, 1983, p. 4-5). In a similar vein, Debord also theorizes that authentic living (i.e., living rooted in reality and truth) has been supplanted with images of representation or the spectacle (Debord, 1983, p. 33).

To illustrate how simulations, or images as reproductions, are produced in meaningful ways that function as what is real, I refer to a racial metaphor involving a human and her shadow. The human presents herself as central in the context of existence and thus becomes the subject of discourse. In order for a subject to retain her position as such, there must be a relational object. For my purposes, the dark shadow of a white human functions as an object in relation to its subject. Though the shadow mirrors the subject and performs correspondingly, the shadow can only approximate qualities of the human without ever fully realizing them. For that reason, it is my assertion that nonwhites attempting to emulate and/or assimilate to whiteness (without successfully doing so) as portrayed through Western discourse will inexorably be relegated to the posture of objects. As Baudrillard states: "to simulate is to feign to have what one doesn't. One implies a presence, the other an absence" (Baudrillard, 1983, p.5).

As an image of the subject, the shadow serves to confirm the identity of the subject through its value as a referent to what is real. Likewise, as shadows do not have their own shadows as referents, their absent identity is generated through the perception of the subject. The relationship between the human and the shadow is one of dependency in which the shadow's being is perpetually contingent upon the subject. Shadows are simulations of simulations that serve to universally reproduce what is real, yet are distorted and detached representations of humans. In other words, the dominant discourse that produces claims masked as truths imputing whites as subjects and nonwhites as objects are a simulation as they are images without basis in reality. Therefore, shadows are simulated reproductions *of* a simulated subject. As Baudrillard

proffers, images feigning authentic depiction of life cannot be separated from their counterparts (Baudrillard, 1983, p. 25-26). As a result, the discourse pertaining to whiteness has reconfigured reality to the degree that shadows conceive of themselves only in relation to the subject and not as subjects themselves.

However, unlike shadows, nonwhites are not mere projections that can only exist in relation to whites. All groups possess unique histories, traditions, values, cultures, norms, beliefs, etc. that are not necessarily rooted in whiteness. The usefulness of the shadow metaphor lies in its capacity to illustrate the problematic representation of nonwhites as secondary to whites. Nonwhites may not consider themselves as shadows and similarly, whites may not view all nonwhites as such. Despite this, the hegemonic structures of whiteness have excessive influence on the ways in which Others are represented in realms such as media, governmental policies, business, scholarship, socially, and so forth. If the proclivity in favor of whiteness continues, the increased concentration of power and influence will contribute to the saliency of the shadow comparison.

c. Whose Identity Is It Anyway?

Discourses of race and ethnicity largely function on established and seemingly substantiated assumptions (that is—truth claims) regarding the significance of identity formation, recognition, and preservation. Using a similar paradigm as Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble,* I advance the theory that bodies (white or nonwhite) do not require representation in the form of instituted racial identity. The imposition of racial identities based on external social constructs is problematic due to the ways in which individuality is lost to larger taxonomies.

The premise of identity politics is that they are intrinsically intertwined with power differentials affecting individuals. Identity thus is perceived as a central tool subordinated groups have at their disposal for asserting claims and redresses. This leads me to the question: is expression of identity an effective channel for countering oppression? Systems of domination are often depicted through historical conceptualizations, actualized through stereotypes, binaries, and other taxonomic organizations. Yet, regardless of these modes of interpretation, modern racial inequities arise predominantly as a result of subjective falsifications enacted by white men. The ethics surrounding identity construction often refer to the need to dismantle homogenizing projects.

Unquestionably, individuals (part of a suppressed collective) possess complex attitudes about their own sense of self that have been shaped by the realities of their particular political, cultural, and economic situated-ness. It is often through this understanding that the self is defined in relation to the world. Nonetheless, the formation of identities for purposes of reclaiming one's space (physical, metaphysical, and psychological) has resulted in unintended consequences. Identities are often predicated upon the assumption that difference is a productive and integral aspect of holistic societies. Yet, it is often through these distinctions that the dominant groups come to essentialize characteristics belonging to particular identities, to the extent that they collapse into a larger, single identity categorized as the Other. That is not to say whites always dictate the identities *for* the Other, rather *of* the Other. Notwithstanding, racial discourse is effectively circulated through capitalism, globalization, and imperialism to the extent that some whites and nonwhites internalize the syllogism. Regardless of the degree of acceptance or rejection, all identities are impacted. Whiteness as the standard to which all other

groups are compared contributes to challenges in defining one's own identity, especially in the face of pejorative representations.

In a postmodern and capitalist context, acknowledgement of difference as advantageous is not always conducive for maintaining hegemonic schemes or for mobilizing people into ideological spaces (i.e., mental colonization achieved in part through imperialism). This is precisely why dominated groups seek to institute terms of recognition that promulgate distinctions from whiteness as detrimental. Ideally, unification results through the designation and participation of/in shared identities, which in turn allow for more effective means of countering strategies of divide and conquer. This reasoning is problematic on several levels. Most native identities are perceived by whites as primitive in relation to the dominators, despite efforts to reclaim culture, language, land, etc. (Said, 1993, p. 230-231).

The point of issue arises when self-defined identities of the Other are disregarded or viewed as inferior in dominant discourse. The effects of this suppression can displace identity, cultural systems, and beliefs. In short, the collaborated identity of the Other can be compromised at the point in which it encounters whiteness. The threat lies in identities becoming subsumed into preexisting classifications determined by the dominant group. When this occurs, identities are distorted and reflected back as reified racial classifications in which nonwhites are represented (in opposition to whites) as dispossessed of value, power, and affluence.

Beyond its use as a potential tool of exploitation, the conception of identity also has the capacity to provide humans with a sense of agency to counter hegemonic systems. Yet, it is my contention that due to the prejudiced reception by whites, identities are vulnerable to transformation and manipulation that serve the interests of dominators. There are certainly attempts on the part of subjugated groups to retain, reframe, reclaim, and revitalize authentic

identities, but the feasibility and usefulness of doing so may be limited due to embedded discourses and images. It is in the interest of the oppressors to reject identity and rather promote it as a divisive feature through essentialized representations. Despite this, a continued reliance on identity as the sole emancipatory tool suggests an implantation of false consciousness.

Hegemonic systems recognize this mindset and exploit the idea. For example, some subjugated Others believe they are equal participants in an exchange, rather than recipients of primarily one-way messages. As 'consenting' participants, the Others (regardless of actual identities) are more inclined to accept projected classifications. This has the potential to hinder liberation and solidarity goals. In addition, disassociating with one's actual identity and supplanting it with an identity informed by whiteness is perceived by some as a means for transcending their oppressed condition. Moreover, absorption and acquiescence of the hierarchal order is presented as the primary channel for achieving higher status. For example, in India, having light skin, hair, and eyes, being fluent in English, wearing Western-style clothing, and being familiar with Western pop culture (films, music, television, etc.) are valued (by upper caste, upper class, urbanites, etc.) as modern and high status.

Race and color as constructed ideologies are performative in nature and cannot be a strategic instrument for overcoming oppression. Expanding upon Butler's critique of identity, I posit that race is performative as it is defined by historically influenced acts instituted by repetition of stylized performance (Butler, 1990, p. xv-xvi). Though Butler's work theorizes performativity, she cautions scholars to avoid analogizing race and gender. It is not my intention to fold racial performativity into a universal model concerning all meanings ascribed to bodies. However, it is also useful to communicate the contrived aspects of race in order to dismantle the false genealogy pervading discourses on whiteness.

Like Butler, my objective is to critique the biologically conceived raced body by submitting the claim (i.e., not as a truth) that it is socially contrived by oppressive discourse (Butler, 1990, p. 144-145). By establishing an identity using discourse predetermined by the dominant group, those that are suppressed reinforce the validity of said discourse, thus ensuring its continuation as a valuation of knowledge fixed in truth. Hence, due to the inescapable nature of discourse in identity formation, resulting representations are preordained to reflect existing hegemonic systems.

d. Mass Deception Through Commodification

In an effort to synthesize the ideas I have expanded upon thus far including whiteness as a false genealogy, representations of whiteness as an imperialist project and the problematization of identity politics, I turn now to how these concepts manifest into materialities affecting marginalized Others that do not fit within the model of whiteness. To begin, I will focus on how whiteness (through discourse, images, and identity politics) promotes its self-produced logic through the use of capitalism and commodity fetishism while simultaneously instilling a sense of agency within consumers to believe they have absolute freedom of choice. Cultural imperialistic and capitalistic schemes enable the extension of Western ideology to the Orientalized East. The logic of consumerism rests within the assumption that humans have choices. Yet the discourse generated by modern and postmodern imperialists often dictate available selections.

The canons of imperialism form predetermined settings in which acceptable decisions (and conversely unacceptable ones) for consumers are often prescribed. Nonetheless, consumers are presented with a range of choices—albeit limited—that allow for autonomy in buying decisions. Nonetheless, it is in the best interest of capitalist participants to reduce consumer

agency as doing so further promotes the acceptance of the spectacle as real. In this way, the

effective forms of manipulation achieved in part through capitalist media allow for the

homogenizing effects of culture to be understood as a normalized feature of society. As Debord

relates, social life is no longer about living, but acquiring:

> The first phase of the domination of the economy over social life brought into the definition of all
>
> human realization the obvious degradation of *being* into *having*. The present phase of total
>
> occupation of social life by the accumulated results of the economy leads to a generalized sliding
>
> of *having* into *appearing*, from which all actual "having" must draw its immediate prestige and its
>
> ultimate function. At the same time all individual reality has become social reality directly
>
> dependent on social power and shaped by it. It is allowed to appear only to the extent that it *is*
>
> *not* (Debord, 1983, p.17).

Commodities are symbolized through mass media as meaningful not only for the

purposes of procurement, but also for their representation of affluence and superiority. For

example, some of the most currently coveted shoes worldwide are made by the French designer

Christian Louboutin and are priced in order to maximize profit while limiting access to the

affluent. However, the cost of the shoes (though not necessarily corresponding with their value)

is an insufficient marker of elite status as it is not publicly viewable. In order to demarcate those

who have the shoes from those who cannot afford them, they have copyrighted red soles that are

subtly visible.

One of the perils of the culture industry lies in its subtle infiltration into multiple aspects

of life, which then preys on curbed consumer consciousness. Additionally, non-elites

particularly possess limited agency to actively participate in the formation of culture in terms of

enquiry, resistance, and instrumentality. One way in which identities are exploited by Western

imperialists is through the targeting of groups through mainstream media for particular

commodities that reflect specific values relating to whiteness. The attributes of whiteness, (such as power, wealth, and the aesthetic quality of beauty) are often represented (and/or perceived to be by Westerners and non-westerners alike) in many Western commodities. As such, the symbolic value of Western goods is, in part, a material site of whiteness. Furthermore, the consumption of these products furthered through capitalism, also embodies the nature of whiteness.

Moreover, hierarchal representation of images imputed onto objects increases the distance between humans, allowing for racialized fabricated truths to persevere. These so-called truths then operate as validations of constructed racial performativity as the distinction between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' is clearly delegated by those in power. It is through this designation that relations of force among whites and nonwhites become critically involved in the proliferation of the concepts of superior and inferior, respectively. Skin color becomes a site of demarcation that highlights assigned values and meanings assembled through history and perpetuated by popular culture. To elucidate this point, I refer to the growing prominence of skin bleaching products in Asia that depict not only how commodities are used for racializing purposes by privileging whiteness, but also their operational role in progressing existing indoctrinated beliefs.

Capitalism and the neoliberalization of the Indian economy at the end of the twentieth century has led to a great influx of skin bleaching products on the market that seek to exploit darker women's situation (Karan, 2008). Capitalism has changed the lives of Indians as discussed by Mathur and Parameswaran: "the globalization of the economy marked a transition from a primarily agrarian society to a more industrialized, market-driven economy, resulting in a drastic alternation in Indians' attitudes toward consumption" (Mathur & Parameswaran, 2004, p.

164-165). Skin bleaching products gain importance via the spectacle that employs images and representations to convey what consumers want as well as require in order to improve status (i.e., lighter skin).

According to Jenkins et al, "the Frankfurt School…described popular culture as a mechanism of modern capitalism's repressive ideology" (Jenkins, et al., 2003, p.31). Equating authoritarian control with capitalist media, Horkheimer and Adorno argue that mainstream ideologies weaken resistance (Jenkins, et al., 2003, p.31). Standardization delineates the doctrines of capitalism with an objective of mass-producing goods to be delivered to apathetic consumers (Jenkins, et al., 2003, p.31-32). Adorno and Horkheimer state:

> The conspicuous unity of macrocosm and microcosm confronts human beings with a model of their culture: the false identity of universal and particular. All mass culture under monopoly is identical, and the contours of its skeleton, the conceptual armature fabricated by monopoly, are beginning to stand out. Those in charge no longer take much trouble to conceal the structure, the power of which increases the more bluntly its existence is admitted. (Jenkins, et. al., 2003, p. 95).

It is not my intent to collapse the complex aspects of culture into a simple economic explanation, yet in framing the hegemonic systems informing social life, a Marxist model effectively expounds the cycle of production and consumption fundamental to Western industries' operations as well as encompassing simulations and identity performance.

The message and content of skin bleaching products offer an escape through emulation of whiteness from the oppressiveness generated by colonial ideologies and imperialism. Societal divisions are further propagated and normalized through pigmentocratic ideals appropriated from hegemonic systems transmitted by the West. Paradoxically, nonwhite consumers of skin bleaching products continue to promote the racializing of colonization and Western imperialism, specifically in which lighter skin is more valued and desired.

Consumers who believe they have agency contradict assertions of autonomy when participating in consumption of commodities that are predicated on mass deception. Although consumers of skin lightening cosmetics may recognize the meaning whiteness holds (materially and ideologically), the consideration for how and why this came to be is often overlooked in favor of accessing its privileges through racial performativity.

Approaching whiter skin serves not only as an aesthetic ideal, but also as representative of dominance wielded through the synonymous forces of power and wealth. The lingering ideologies of colonialism and imperialism are predominantly embedded in the minds of nonwhites and further cultivated through socioeconomic dynamics such as globalization and capitalism, subsequently allowing for commodities to influence social life. Debord summarizes this notion in the following thesis:

> The spectacle obliterates the boundaries between self and world by crushing the self besieged by the presence-absence of the world and it obliterates the boundaries between true and false by driving all lived truth below the *real presence* of fraud ensured by the organization of appearance. One who passively accepts his alien daily fate is thus pushed toward a madness that reacts in an illusory way to this fate by resorting to magical techniques. The acceptance and consumption of commodities are at the heart of this pseudo-response to a communication without response. The need to imitate which is felt by the consumer is precisely the infantile need conditioned by all the aspects of his fundamental dispossession. In the terms applied by Gabel to completely different pathological level, "the abnormal need for representation here compensates for a tortuous feeling of being on the margin of existence (Debord, 1983, p.219).

Debord's theory can be applied fittingly to images demarcating race, such as those disseminated through media including advertisements for skin bleaching agents. Through these appearances,

truths become lost, distorted and submerged under 'fraud,' in this case the belief (guised as reality) that whiteness is *inherently* more valuable.

In my parallel comparison of Debord's theory and whiteness, "magical techniques" could denote the ways in which marginalized people driven by anxiety stemming from inequalities resort to skin bleaching to magically transform their lived experience to one of advantage. In such cases, emulation is regarded as the primary (and perhaps sole) method of attaining privileges associated with whiteness and subsequently any efforts to resist the dominant discourse will undoubtedly lead to marginalization. However, the argument that nonwhite individuals who prefer light skin are asserting their own form of agency can also be made. Through the repositioning of the boundaries of whiteness, the dichotomized categories of white and nonwhite can be altered. In doing so, the binary of power versus powerlessness can also be affected.

e. **"Emancipate Yourself From Mental Slavery"**[13]

To this point I have argued that discourse, representation, and identity are conjoining forces in which truth claims enacted through statements, images, and performativities are circulated as truths and contribute to the influencing of society. These forces reveal how domination can emerge through seemingly logical systems of knowledge valuation. If discourse is a crucial manifestation of constructed epistemologies, then it could also serve as a preferred site of resistance. Emancipation from the pervasive implications of mass deception calls for a critical analysis and deconstruction of knowledge derived through historical events (such as colonization) and assumptions shaped by context, experience, intellectual predispositions, political economies, and so forth. Here again I locate my theoretical framework within

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[13] Lyric from Bob Marley's "Redemption Song."

Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, which maintains that discourse must be approached skeptically:

> We must question those ready-made syntheses, those groupings that we normally accept before any examination, those links whose validity is recognized from the outset; we must oust those forms and obscure forces by which we usually like the discourse of one man with that of another; they must be driven out from the darkness in which they reign. And instead of according them unqualified, spontaneous value, we must accept, in the name of methodological rigour, that, in the first instance, they concern only a population of dispersed events (Foucault, 1972, p. 22).

To unpack Foucault's ideas, we must first begin by acknowledging the limitations of discourse (as well as the ways in which discourse limits) and endeavor to uncover a will to truth. That is to say, the multifaceted contexts of discourse (including authorship, historical sequence and motivation among others—both determinable and indeterminable) must be recognized and considered through an in-depth archaeology of knowledge (reference to Foucault's title).

The accumulation of ideas normalizing our understanding of the world must be detached or distanced (to the furthest extent possible) from knowledge production in order to identify those contributions that lack relevance to actual events and realities, are injudiciously included and/or are dependent on illogical historical sequences. Suppositions based on continuity of events and ideologies become further removed from true genealogy as particular knowledge gains more meaning while other knowledge is dismissed.

In order to dismantle reigning methodologies, we as consumers, scholars, and recipients of mass communication must conduct an inquiry that examines how and why certain designs prevail over others. This ultimately requires an examination of the history of the present (Foucault, 1972, p.136-139). We must recognize that truth claims have a past that must be investigated in order to uncover the nonlinearity and complexities of discursive formations

(Foucault, 1972, p.141-143). By doing so, we are better able to recognize that truth claims materialize through specific settings, perspectives, memory, and circumstances, which in turn can indicate patterns of human behavior entrenched in power relations.

f. Conclusion

Historical knowledge can be manipulated as a simulation, which interprets and represents events and narratives as absolute truths, which hold far more power than claims. Culture and society are often organized through the dichotomies of expression and repression of power stemming from interpretation of events that are then arranged hierarchically. The projected causal relationship between color, class and power is not logical or natural, rather a performative construction manifested as a means for dividing and vertically organizing races.

Popular cultural forms, as products of capitalist agents and representations involved in promoting consumption, participate and reproduce pigmentocratic notions as an investment in a hegemonic system that is beneficial to their purpose. Due to this phenomenon, nonwhites increasingly attempt to access the socioeconomic privileges associated with whiteness by appearing more Western. This practice is how pigmentocracy is ethically justified through sequences and images that have been laden with subjugating racialized values. The normalization of such values must be interrupted in order to challenge the foundational standpoints from which knowledge is constructed. Disconnecting statements, representations, images and identities from historical discourse will be more conducive for dissenting and ostracized views to emerge and partake in our understanding of humanity.

The symbolic supremacy seemingly inherent in whiter bodies demarcates and perpetuates divisions in class, modernity, and value, allowing for the normalization of pigmentocracy

through recognizable contexts. Using racial paradigms, historical discourse has established standards to which nonwhite masses must adhere in order to be validated. Assimilation to Western standards is depicted as the means for eschewing marginalization. Commanding imperial doctrines informed by discourse dictate the necessary dissociation of Indians from Indianness (i.e., darkness) in favor of whiteness to access socioeconomic and aesthetic advantages.

According to Jenkins et al, Horkheimer and Adorno argue "that mass media in a capitalist democracy manipulates the masses by lulling them into the pleasures of conformity, consumption and consumer ideology" (Jenkins, et. al., 2003, p.31). The result is cultural displacement through the emulation of colonial and imperial structures. Through their business practices (regardless of intentionality), western corporations that promote skin-bleaching are serving as conduits of oppression. In this way, capital and power reproduce, reinforce, and reify the nonwhite body as the Other of dominant discourse. The politics of culture are manipulated through capitalist spheres of power and the relationship of (false) dependency that is constructed between those in power and those attempting to access that power through emulation, much in the same way as shadows depend on their subjects.

In this way, skin-bleaching companies sell the belief that whiteness is fundamentally superior, with reliance on socioeconomic and aesthetics implications rooted in discourse as validation of these claims. Intraracial and interracial inequalities serve as a profitable resource for not only Western cosmetic industries, but also as a method for preserving racialized hierarchies and the privileges that accompany dominant groups. In short, cultural economies rather than military and government regimes become the site of mental colonization and imperialism.

Chapter IV

Foreign Imperialism of India and the Caste System:

Skin Color, Categorization, and Oppression

Introduction

The focus of this chapter is pigmentocracy in India and the ways in which skin color is a unique marker of morality and value that is conveyed across space and time. More specifically, I examine foreign presences in India, including theories of Aryan domination as well as British and Portuguese colonization, and the ensuing effects on caste, religion, class, and color. I discuss the ways in which skin color and caste are intricately intertwined. That is, at times caste and color reinforce one another; while at other times they undermine each other. As such, they are both fixed and malleable. For example, "possibly the most substantial percentage of Asia's Blacks [darker groups] can be identified among India's 160 million "Untouchables" or "Dalits."" (Rashidi, 1998, p.2). Yet, dark skin color is not always a marker of Dalits and/or lower castes in the same way that whiteness is not always indicative of upper castes. There are instances in which "some Untouchables have lighter skin and claim to be descendants of Aryans" (Ayyar & Khandare, 2013, p. 81). In some contexts, light skin can at times afford Dalits with prospects to assert racial equality and can also allow access to previously denied opportunities. Nonetheless, the burden of proof for advocating egalitarianism falls on Dalits, including those with light skin.

The chief aspects of Indian society as they relate to pigmentocracy including the intricacies of the caste system, marriage, Hinduism, Christianity, and occupations are discussed in this chapter in greater detail with an emphasis on their intersection with skin color. I further posit that Dalits, who comprise the lowest strata of the caste system and society, face oppression due to religious and racial ideologies and are consequently reduced to the lowest division of Indian society. I also draw parallels between Dalit lived experiences and that of African Americans in their shared subjugation and efforts to challenge it. My purpose for doing so is to further illustrate that intraracial prejudices often take similar form to those of interracial

prejudices, including institutional discrimination (occupations, education, etc.), ostracization, segregation, and dehumanization.

In discussing racism in India, it is not my intent to portray India as timeless and non-modern. On the contrary, I argue that pigmentocracy is in part an indication of India's attempts to embrace modernity and nationalism by assimilating to Western and global values. This is partially achieved through the ideological distancing of lighter upper castes from darker upper castes, lighter lower castes from darker lower castes, and lighter Dalits from darker Dalits. In addition, some members of the upper castes and classes often stereotype lower castes and "Untouchables" as dark regardless of skin color in order to promulgate further distinctions between castes. The reverse can also be true in which lower castes/classes stereotype upper castes/classes as whiter.

I argue that the legacy of pigmentocracy in India is predominantly attributable to the perpetuation of whiteness ideals as part of a greater, western-informed racial project. "Racial projects are campaigns to establish the meaning and construction of race in any given time period. Racial projects establish what "race" means historically through image, representations, and explanations about racial categories or groups" (Hunter, 2005, p.49). This is not to say that race is a fixed notion that can be comprehended without regards to variable contexts, such as time, space, power relations, and other circumstances. Rather, I attempt to disrupt prevalent conceptualizations of race by examining intraracial nuances that are in a constant state of flux by examining the malleability of caste and color. I also seek to demonstrate how, at times, skin color and caste map onto each other, and at other times, do not.

a. The (In)Validity of the Aryan Myth

There is no consensus on the origins of the caste system. The most prominent theories include the conquering of northern India by Aryans; British and Portuguese colonization and resulting oversimplification of the tribal system; and/or the philology of Hinduism. It is not my goal to provide a genealogy of India's pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial history as it relates to caste. Rather, my objective is to conduct a brief history of the present in examining issues of difference, namely the relationship between colorism and casteism. It is also my intention to draw parallels among the foremost theories as they relate to pigmentocracy, specifically their roles as catalysts in constructing color-based distinctions. Accordingly, I trace the more prominent theories of the historical origins of caste and colonization in India as it relates to modern pigmentocracy.

The caste system of India has had profound implications on its people beyond economic, social, cultural, and religious issues. Caste also comprises a less palpable notion of racial discernment based on skin color, upon which other factors are partially predicated. The disputed origins of the caste system discussed in the following sections are related to designations based on skin color contrived by foreign entities as well as promulgated by Indian culture, religion, and society. Of greater importance than the source of the caste system is the outcome of the caste system as it is a profoundly categorizing method of organizing Indian society.

One of the more common theories dates the caste or *varna* system to the Aryan conquest of Northern India (including what is now Pakistan) in 1500 BCE (Shevde, 2008). According to Dipankar Gupta, "the *varna* system came into being only after the Aryans settled in the vast Indo-Gangetic plains" (Gupta, 2000, p. 198). "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, as cited in Ayyar & Khandare, 2013, p.77). For example,

as early as 150 B.C., the philosopher and writer Patanjali declared that "fair skin, and tawny hair" were the "intrinsic traits marking a Brahmin, and black colour of the skin that of a non-Brahmin" (As quoted in Ghurye, 1969, p.173).

The significance of upper caste claims of being descendants of Aryans lies in part in the association between Aryans and whiteness. A link to Aryans is a claim of elite superiority based on racial purity and exclusivity. Friedrich Max Müller is often credited with the development of the concept of the Aryan race as a pure, white race in the latter half of the 19th century. "That is, the Aryan idea is now [present day] not merely linked to whiteness—that had been so to a degree already in the early Max Müller [~1850s]—but whiteness itself is now narrowed down to some conception of a small, pure, original "white" Aryan race…" (Trautmann, 1997, p. 186). Due to the construction of Aryans as superior, it follows that Indians in the face of racial domination may have laid claims to Aryan roots as doing so served as a form of resistance to colonialists through assertion of inherent value. Furthermore, claiming Aryan blood is also a means for justifying caste orders. As such, lighter skin color serves in part, as proof to the validity of the claim of Aryan lineage. Regardless of the validity of the Aryan theory, the effects of its presumed occurrence are evident in the presence of pigmentocratic and caste practices and beliefs, and thus deserving of examination.

In addition to contestations regarding how color became tied to the caste system, disputes regarding the association (or lack thereof), between caste and skin color are also prevalent among public opinion and scholarship alike. As previously noted, a popular belief amongst many upper castes, lighter Indians, and/or scholars is that Aryans put into practice the notion of castes or *varnas*. However, this is widely challenged by historians, lower castes/darker Indians excluded from Aryan linkage, as well as those who reject attestations to racial superiority. The

origin and validity of the hierarchical ordering favoring Aryans is often evinced by the variations in pigment amongst Indians. According to this view, the differences in skin color are thought to be the result of the intermixing between the whiter Aryans and darker Indians. As such, a theoretical system was devised in order to delineate those of Aryan heritage as well as prevent the intermixing (particularly marriage/relations viewed similarly to miscegenation in the U.S.) of those of higher birth from the rest of society. According to Dirks, "the caste had clearly been invented to 'prevent the admixture of the white and dark races'" (W.R. Cornish [Madras Commissioner] as cited in Dirks, 2001, p. 207).

The way in which color became associated with caste grouping has been theorized in various ways. As previously mentioned, one theory credits Aryan settlement and subsequent establishment of the caste system based on color and occupation in approximately 1500 BCE (Shevde, 2008). Yet, another view holds that one of the four ancient Hindu Vedas, the *Rigveda*[14], estimated to be composed between 1500-1200 BCE is the source (Sharma, 1990). In general, both theories acknowledge the caste and color designations as well as related occupations. However, there is a lack of consensus as to whether the referenced colors refer to skin or to religious purity. Consequently, the original meanings may have been adjusted to support or reject the prominent views. Despite this, I posit that the links with caste and skin color *or* caste and religion are not mutually exclusive. According to racialized modes of thinking and symbolism, white and black are often representative of the religious morals of good and evil, respectively. Those with an interest in preserving caste distinctions, religious scriptures, and/or "racial" purity still subscribe to the tenets of this system. As such, it is worthwhile to revisit and review these links for purposes of examining the relationship between pigmentocracy and caste.

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[14] There is also debate as to whether the *Rigveda* is an Aryan text.

According to claims of Aryan influence and ideology, the highest delegated caste is the Brahmins, who are associated with the color white and purity (Shevde, 2008). This group includes priests and scholars as they are considered to enjoy close proximity to God or the Supreme Being as well as intellectual and spiritual enlightenment. In a discussion of caste and color, occupation is also taken into account as the amount of time working outdoors affects one's skin tone. According to Jablonski, Brahmins did not work outside and were/are lighter in color because "they were forbidden to harm living creatures, [and] they were discouraged from active agricultural pursuits" (Jablonkski, 2012, p. 165). This division of labor according to caste also reinforces associations with color.

The second caste ranking is Kshatriyas, who generally includes warriors and soldiers and is related to the color red (Shevde, 2008). This hue is symbolic of bloodshed as well as a degree of slightly deeper skin pigmentation acquired during military training (Jablonkski, 2012). Though not as white as Brahmins, red is lighter than other castes including yellow, brown, and black and has the propensity for taking on a pinkish hue (i.e., blushing, sunburns, etc.). The third caste level is Vaishyas and is comprised of farmers (landowners) and merchants working mostly outdoors with yellow serving as the representative color (Shevde, 2008).

The last echelon of the *varnas* is that of Shudras, who are made up of artisans, laborers, and craftspeople who stereotypically work outside and are identified with the color brown, which is the darkest pigment within the caste system (Shevde, 2008). Jablonski states that Shudras are "considered [by the higher castes] periphery [from affluent and mainstream society] and dark by birth" (Jablonski, 2012, p.165). Excluded from this system are Dalits or "Untouchables" (derogatory), who are unsurprisingly signified by the color black. The Dalits often perform the most undesirable services such as sweeping, undertaking of dead bodies, and cleaning waste

(Ghose, 2003). The color labels applied to the caste hierarchy are generalizations that cannot account for all individuals. Despite this fact, correlations between castes and color (regardless of validity) are prevalent. Pauline Kolenda supports a similar understanding of caste and color and posits:

> The four classes, called *varnas,* seem to have existed in the Aryan society in ancient northern India. The members of the three higher *varnas* were probably mostly Aryans, while the Shudras were probably mostly darker-skinned, conquered peoples. Later, there developed a so-called "fifth" *varna* who were the Untouchables (Kolenda, 1978, p. 32).

In the same vein, according to Jablonski, Aryans imparted social categories based on religious devotion and color to the indigenous people of India as a dividing strategy:

> With increasing contact and mixing between the populations, pressure mounted within the upper classes of the Aryans to distinguish themselves from the remaining indigenous people and from the Aryans who had intermarried with them. In the late Vedic period, about 2,500 years ago, society had become divided into four classes that were religiously sanctioned and considered fundamental: the three Aryan classes of priests, warriors, and peasants and a fourth class of serfs, which included Harappans[15] and the offspring of mixed unions. At this time the term *varna* came to be used to describe the cultural development of each class. The highest class of priests was associated with white (and purity), warriors with red, peasants with yellow, and serfs with black. The classification also came to have some association with skin color (especially of the face) because many serfs were descended from the darkly pigmented Harappans (Jablonkski, 2012, p.107-108).

The validity of whether skin color actually followed the organization of caste is secondary for the purposes of this research. Rather, my focus is primarily on the real or perceived legacies of Aryan domination as it relates modern caste and color associations.

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[15] Refers to the Harappan civilization (2500-2000 BCE) of the Indus Basin (Jablonski, 2012).

In addition to occupational distinctions, each of the four castes denotes a part of the Hindu creator's body, with hierarchal importance following sequentially from the system itself. As outcastes excluded from the caste system, Dalits are not born of the creator, and thus relegated to a different "species" altogether (Ghose, 2003). In this way, Aryans and/or Hindus not only established a separate category for Dalits, but also effectively dehumanized them in the process. In an effort to refute the denigrated status of Dalits, Gandhi embraced the term *harijan*, to mean children born from the creator, and thus inclusive of the creator's body and the caste system. Furthermore, Gandhi sought to deconstruct the binary of pure/white and impure/black that had become so central to not only the caste system, but also to Hinduism. Regrettably, the term *harijan* still transmits a negative connotation that is a direct function of the performative and contextualized identity of the "Untouchables" as infantilized, fatherless (i.e., bastard) people.

b. The 3 C's: Colonialism, Caste, and Color

Another popular view regarding the development of the relationship between caste and color relates to British and/or Portuguese colonization of India. This theory links caste and color designations to misinterpretation of the complex *jāti* system by colonial officials. This resulted in the modern day articulation of caste as contrived through Western paradigms of race and skin color, yet similar to the Aryan implementation of caste. *Jāti* is a pan-Indian term for birth group, tribe, and/or clan that includes thousands of different groups (Mines, 2009). These group distinctions can be ethnic, linguistic, religious, geographic, or occupational.

Varna is a Sanskrit word that appears in the ancient Hindu text, the *Rigveda,* in the context of appearances used to categorize groups of people (Monier-Williams, 2014). In the literal sense, *varna* can mean color, physique, and other physical characteristics. It is also used

in the *Rigveda* more allegorically to refer to race, caste, tribe, etc. (Monier-Williams, 2014). The theory posits that European colonizers equated *varnas* with *jātis* resulting in the re-organization of the four *varnas* and outcastes based on lightest to darkest skin as it relates to status. According to this assertion, thousands of *jātis* or tribes were (and some argue still are) present in India prior to European colonization but were categorically reduced to only the major sects based on color and notions of religious purity.

Correspondingly, Jablonski argues that *varna* initially did not necessarily organize Indian society by color. She states "only much later in Indian history, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, with the hardening of the Hindu caste system and the installation of more commercial ties with Europe, did the *varna* line become a color line" (Jablonski, 2012, p. 108).

Using skin color and profession as a marker for distinguishing *varnas*, British colonizers condensed the complex *jātis* in order to streamline the census process (Cox, 1948). In the process, *jātis* that overlapped with multiple *varnas* or were divergent were disregarded and classified based on simplified interpretations. Diane P. Miles, author of *Caste of India,* writes:

> Great Britain colonized India officially in 1858 but had a significant presence there, through the British East Indian Company, from the early 1600s. Caste as it operated in India today bears a heavy British legacy. The British, influenced by their own cultural categories and understandings of class, attempted to identify and fix caste orders to create rational social categories they could count, characterize and create policies about. They effectively turned fluid and locally disparate *jatis* into fixed all-India categories and as a result created new social identities that Indians, in turn, shaped further (Mines, 2009, p. 37-38).

Similarly, Mohanram argues that through colonialism in India, "notions of whiteness got linked to the bourgeoisie. Working-class people were darker; they belonged to the public sphere. Thus, a link was made between comprehensions of race and class" (Mohanram, 2007, p. 33). Yet,

those with occupations that were outside were inevitably darker, but could also have been of higher caste. Due to the misconstruing of the complexities of the *jātis* by colonial officials*,* these members were automatically relegated to the lower echelons of the caste system based on skin color and occupation. On the other hand, lighter-skinned individuals who may not have been upper caste could have been assumed as such. The inquiry of whether caste served as a marker for skin color or the inverse (skin color served as a marker of caste) for colonialists is difficult to discern. Irrespective of the causative direction of color and caste, the apparent association between the two and how they interrelate, inform, and/or undermine the other is of greater significance in the discussion of pigmentocracy.

In order to preserve racial hierarchies that privilege whiteness, caste was reconstructed (which is not to say that the British created caste) in the image of British ideology with a general ascending order of light to dark. As a colonial project predisposed to racial taxonomies, the altered caste system resulted in induced vulnerability through the construction of racial differences among the Indian population. Jablonski supports this view in writing:

> External influences over the past five hundred years have reinforced existing skin-color
> preferences in India. Christian associations of light skin with virtue and godliness, and of dark
> skin with evil and baseness, for example, were transported to India with British and Portuguese
> colonizers and strengthened long-standing associations based on *varna* (Jablonski, 2012, p. 165).

Other theories contend that the caste system is a result of a conglomeration of factors, including foreign imperialism and religious beliefs. Regardless of which historical occurrence one subscribes too, many scholars agree that for the indigenous population, the various degrees of physical and/or ideological domination by Westerners (Aryans, British, Portuguese, or otherwise) marked the instituting of racial identification and subsequently segregation not only

between the nonnatives and natives, but also among the natives themselves. The end result is a

society divided along the dichotomies of white/black, global/indigenous, and pure/impure.

Foreign powers in India produce(d) and disseminate(d) values of whiteness as a source of

inherent power, which are maintained through cultural imperialism enacted through the currents

of globalization. Colonialists (including the Portuguese and British) established and

implemented the notion of whites as dominant (economically, militarily, technologically, etc.)

and nonwhites as subsequently inferior. In addition, foreign powers perpetuated notions of

cultural, socioeconomic, and political hierarchies based on race, color, and social value to

Indians as a means of organizing society based on power relations (Raju, et. al., 2006).

Colonialists allied with upper caste Indians, allowing for the hierarchy to be effectively

sanctioned in society. Opposition to this ordering of society emerged especially among lower

castes and classes but often lacked the resources (especially financially and politically) to

prevent implementation. Furthermore, the indoctrination of whiteness promoted the belief

individuals with white blood solely have the capacity to lead (Hunter, 2005).

In addition, the imperialistic characteristics of the British colonial efforts included the

white man's burden to deliver progress in the form of Christianity, technology, democracy,

capitalism, and civilization to Indians. However, upon arrival to India, the British found that

Indians were advanced in many ways, including the sciences, which defied the assumptions that

dark races and modernity are mutually exclusive (Trautmann, 1997).

> In British eyes India presented the spectacle of a dark-skinned people who were evidently
>
> civilized, and as such it constituted the central problem for Victorian anthropology, whose project
>
> it was to achieve classifications of human variety consistent with the master idea of the
>
> opposition of the dark-skinned savage and the fair-skinned civilized European. To this project
>
> India was an enigma, and the intensity of the enigma deepened in the course of the nineteenth

century, bursting into scholarly warfare over the competing claims of language and complexion

as the foundation of ethnological classification…By century's end a deep and lasting consensus

was reached respecting India, which I call the racial theory of Indian civilization: that India's

civilization was produced by the clash and subsequent mixture of light-skinned civilizing

invaders (the Aryans) and dark-skinned barbarian aborigines (often identified as Dravidians)

(Trautmann, 1997, p. 3-4).

In order to maintain the superiority of white Europeans while simultaneously denigrating Indians

in light of India's progress, the British emphasized differences in morality not only through skin

color, but also through religion. Trautmann further posits that Hindus were "lacking in truth,

honesty, and good faith to a degree not found in European society" (Trautmann, 1997, p. 103).

Religious differences were also delineated in which Christian ethics were favored over native

spiritualities, rituals, and traditions. Lastly, ensuing racial lines were also used for differentiating

the superiority of the West and inferiority of the Global South. As such, Christianity and

whiteness were deliberately presented as the essential doctrine of supremacy, power, and

virtuousness. In short, the determining factors that distinguish civilized and uncivilized became

ethno-racial and religious.

The white colonizers through domination and racial symbolism represented power and

superiority, while the native Indians were designated as the weaker, inferior masses (Shevde,

2008). In this way, whiteness was presented as a source of power, while nonwhite Indians were

consigned to power-deficient positions (Mohanty, 2008). This binary of whites possessing

power versus the powerlessness of Indians based on race is problematic in that it produces a false

genealogy of power (Mohanty, 2008). Yet, this binary is difficult to dismantle as race often

determines who is granted and denied power. However, race is a social construct and as such the

origins of power related to whites are falsely predicated. Wealth, political representation,

military and police resources, technology, media influence, etc. are largely concentrated among whites and upper castes/classes. Though there were exceptions, power, prestige, and coveted occupations were still delegated to the elite. One such exception is that Sikhs and Gurkhas were often recruited by the British to serve in the military due to their designation as martial races (Dirks, 2001). However, their function largely served colonial needs and interests rather than non-elite Indians.

Neither the term nor the concept of caste is unique to India and many scholars, including Jablonski, believe that it in fact originated elsewhere and was spread through colonialism. Beyond the theory of Aryan occupation and its effects on caste lays another consideration that strengthens the correlation between caste and color. Jablonski remarks:

> Caste is derived from a Portuguese term meaning "color." The phrase "sistemas de castas" was widely used in the Spanish colonies of the Americas to refer to different categories of people under colonial government and their rankings relative to ideas of nobility: Spaniards, those of mixed descent, indigenous peoples, and those of African descent (Jablonski, 2012, p. 14-15).

According to Jablonski, the notion of castes based on racial "purity," color, and social status occurred in other cultures with similar organizing principles. Also of noteworthiness is the fact that colonialists applied the differentiating labels to colonized subjects, inferring the caste system was not native to the colonies.

The perception of higher castes as whiter has been further reinforced by seemingly scientific studies that claim a genetic difference is present in higher and lower castes that signifies a "West Eurasian ancestry" (Basu et al., 2003). According to Basu, et al.,

> In a recent study conducted on ranked caste populations sampled from one southern Indian State (Andhra Pradesh), it has been found that the genomic affinity to Europeans is proportionate to caste rank—the upper castes being most similar to Europeans, particularly East Europeans,

whereas the lower castes are more similar to Asians. Populations of Central Asia and Pakistan show the lowest (0.017) coefficient of genetic differentiation with the north Indian populations, higher (0.042) with the south Indian populations, and the highest (0.047) with the northeast Indian populations. The Central Asian populations are genetically closer to the upper-caste populations than to the middle- or lower-caste populations (Basu, et. al., 2003, pp. 2277-2278)

This outmoded approach to examining variations in pigmentation amongst Indians approaches the philosophies transmitted through the era of European Enlightenment. The theoretical underpinnings of this study suggest that there exists a mode of inquiry that relies on scientific-based evidence for explicating caste variations. This is problematic as biology can be used as a rationale for justifying (intra)racial hierarchies and is often erroneously viewed by many as irrefutable evidence.

Like the Enlightenment, the genetic research of Dalits and caste members may have begun as a political-philosophical movement with a focus on science and rationality that intended to demystify the religious ideology that informs social stratification. According to Margaret L. Hunter, "scientific racism was a European theory stating that races of people were scientific realties and that the darker the race of people the more ignorant and incapable they were. Whiteness was re-affirmed as a superior race, but this time with the backing of hegemonic European scientific racism" (Hunter, 2005, p. 23). Irrespective of its lack of modern relevance, the theory of scientific racism is proving to have lasting effects on class and caste formations amongst Indians. The questioning and critiquing of Aryan ancestry, castes, and white/black binary has prompted some, particularly those whose self-interests are served by such hierarchies, to resort to science as a method of validation. Genetic research has the potential to provide further justifications for identifying and vertically categorizing people based on differences in skin pigment.

According to Radhika Mohanram, the Enlightenment prompted the British to impose scientific reason on savage spaces in an effort to shed light, instill order, and secure power through outwardly indisputable means. The undertaking was essentially contrived as a liberal value born of the premise that all men are equal, but as Mohanram posits, this premise was undermined by the Enlightenment's emphasis on re-making Indians in the image of Europeans (Mohanram, 2007). In this way, imperialists were able to construct a framework of power relations through the lens of modernity—specifically racial taxonomies. By imposing an ambiguous racial identity onto the Indian through contrasting vehicles such as the mind/body split, disembodiment/embodiment, order/chaos, security/anxiety, rational/irrational, etc., subscribers of the Enlightenment were able to successfully control settler/native dynamics through hierarchical relationships of race, class, caste, and sexuality. This classification of people necessarily situated the white, upper/middle class man at the most ideal and advantageous position within the grid of power relations including religiousness, gentlemanliness, civility, and intellect (Mohanram, 2007).

Conversely, the Other was located as a contrast that embodied "disease, the grotesque, orificial, the penetrable, sexual, physical, appetitious" (Mohanram, 2007, pp. 21-22). As these ideas were increasingly circulated through colonialism and cultural imperialism, many disadvantaged Others attempted to mimic the Christian gentlemen. However, they could not fully attain whiteness, as mimicry is not a result of natural evolution, but rather a copy that does not hold the same value as the original (Mohanram, 2007), in much the same way as shadows. In this way, colonizers were able to produce racial lines between themselves and the colonized through construction of a sociocultural landscape that overinvested in the white, upper/middle class man while signifying distinctions through classification.

The dichotomy of colonizers and colonized is also problematic in that it does not allow for an intermediate to exist. For example, the upper caste, elite Indians who collaborated with colonialists and reaped benefits through the subjugation of the masses do not neatly fall into either category as this select group was not subject to the same racial condemnations as lower castes/classes and Dalits. However, darker skin color was not the only factor contributing to the denunciation of lower castes and outcastes by colonialists and elites alike. I posit that being among the lowest strata of society contributed to their further racialization. In other words, the constructed color differences among castes further reduced the status of lower castes and Dalits, but did not necessary correspond to actual skin color, but rather the symbolism inherent with darkness. In this way, lower castes and outcastes were constructed as the ideologically darker "race" of Indians based on purported dirtiness and sinfulness. In this way, the association with dark skin followed as another contrivance separating castes. Equally, the perception of Brahmins as the superior, whiter castes does not necessarily correlate with skin color. Yet, through religious, racial, colonial, and imperial ideology, the affiliation with caste and color has manifested to apply to skin color. The result is the essentialization of castes by skin color.

The same rationalization used to forward the diaspora of European imperialists is now being perpetrated by the upper castes regarding Dalits. The former has assumed the position of racial superiority through the guise of religious and logical reasoning, while the Dalit has become characterized as the filthy, polluting, black savage Other within the same race. Furthermore, "the traditional grafting of caste networks onto modern state institutions" such as western style schools, continues to strengthen Brahmin domination of Dalits using methods exacerbated by imperialists (Ghose, 2003, page 85).

c. Modern Implications of Caste

I argue that caste is a complex social manifestation associated with status and skin color, but in both fixed and unfixed ways, depending on the context. Caste in its modern day understanding is constructed in part through religious rationale and the logic of colonialism and capitalism. Additionally, color is one of the modalities through which caste operates and thus complicates existing discourse pertaining to the organization of Indian society. The ways in which power is acquired can be better understood by interrogating how caste works through and in conjunction with skin color.

The social manifestations and consequences of this *intra*racial ideology have a stark resemblance to interracial discrimination in terms of political, cultural, and economic oppression of perceived inferior races. Dark skin color amongst Indians fosters conditions of vulnerability that closely model colonizer/colonized relations. This is most representative in the caste structure as it imparts social hierarchies rooted in racism and classism, which in turn inform institutional and social privileges and disadvantages based on ranking. Gyanendra Pandey, in *History of Prejudice,* notes the following comparison of intraracial colonizer/colonized relations:

> Both [Dalits in India and African Americans in the United States] have had to organize
> and fight against the consequences of what could be described as a disguised form of
> internal colonialism. I need hardly note that there are other groups who have been as, if
> not more, seriously affected by the fact of such colonialism in these lands, most notably
> the indigenous communities of the countries. Like Native Americans and the
> Scheduled Tribes (depressed castes and classes who make up the bulk of the *adivasi,* or
> putatively aboriginal, population of India), neither Dalits nor African Americans have
> inherited geopolitical conditions that would allow them to carve out a place themselves
> as "mainstream". (Pandey, 2013, p. 12).

The concept of internal colonialism is applicable to elite Indians exploiting Dalits, lower

caste/class, and darker individuals much like the British and Portuguese colonialists exploited

Indians. In short, ruling and influential Brahmins have "appropriated the weapons" (Pandey,

2013, p. 55) of the colonists in continuing a racial hierarchy. In practice, the caste system as a

cultural system of segregation has not been completely operative in its implementation. There

are hosts of dynamics that contribute to the coalescing of different castes. For example, lighter

skin color and wealth among Indians are the more common motives for intercaste marriage as

both are capable of elevating one's station.

Scholars in the area of Indian history often refer to Herbert H. Risley for his extensive

work on racial classifications in India. Though his findings are largely based on biological

differences among races and are now archaic, his anthropological concepts relating to caste and

race provide insightful leanings regarding patterns that emerged out of the caste system and are

still prevalent today. Dilip Chakrabarti effectively summarizes Risley's anthropological

theories:

> Among his [Risley] theoretical observations one may note the following two points.
> First he asserts that the prevalence of the caste system in India with its emphasis on
> marriage within the caste was a major factor in the maintenance of racial purity. Second,
> he makes easy correlations not merely between race and language but also between race
> and occupation. The concept of racial superiority/inferiority is also very much there, the
> topmost position in the hierarchy being given to the Indo-Aryans (Charkrabarti, 1999, p.37).

Chakrabarti applies a critical lens to Risley's work as well as most anthropometric data in

general. His inclusion of Risley's findings highlight how people like Risley contributed to the

conflation of color and caste in India. Yet, Risley's point concerning intracaste marriage in India

is still germane today. Caste is not permanently fixed in that exceptions can be made in light of

other compensatory factors, such as fairer skin color (disproportionally applicable to brides), class/wealth, and education (and/or potential for status).

Our understanding of the relationship between caste and color is further complicated by the fluidity of color lines, as they are not only based on caste and skin color, but also on privilege. Darker skin can sometimes also be compensated with other attributes, such as a light skinned wife, caste, class, education, and occupation. Similarly, fairer brides, class, education, occupation, and light skin can also offset low caste status. Despite this, by and large those in the upper castes with lighter skin in India are doing better socially, politically and economically. In the next section, I explore the ways in which light skin can be used as a form of symbolic currency.

d. Caste, Color, and Symbolic Currency

Fair skinned wives symbolize value in Indian culture and are often sought-after in marital arrangements for their ability to elevate the status of their husbands. Men's social ranking is often contingent upon contextual factors such as caste, class, education, and occupation. Additionally, lighter (and therefore considered more beautiful) wives embody the reflection of these characteristics. That is, the securing of fairer women as coveted possessions represents a successful acquisition and can have the effect of elevating social status. As Mohanram posits:

> Gender thus becomes a metaphor for class or for race; domestic ideology is a substitute
> signifier of white hegemony, of middle-class dominance; it becomes the code for
> rereading the underpinning of British imperialism. In short, gender is mapped onto race, is
> mapped onto class (Mohanram, 2007, p.35).

Competition on the marriage market often dictates that light-skinned women often have more options regarding the quality of grooms. As such, men with whiter wives have evidently

outcompeted other bachelors and are presumed to have justifiably superior qualities. For men who are not wealthy, high-caste, educated, or light skinned, a fair-skinned wife can help create the impression of being affluent. Thus, lighter wives serve as a vehicle for transmitting prestige and value and are frequently coveted by men who are concerned with maintaining or attaining actual or perceived status. In *Skin Deep*, Edwards, Carter-Tellison and Herring summarize Ronald Hall's view on intercaste marriage:

> Hall (1995) explains that among Indian Hindus there exists a prejudice against darker skinned Indians. Light skinned spouses are preferred. For instance, light skinned wives are so preferred that Hindus from upper levels within a caste system will marry women from lower caste levels, exchanging her skin tone for his caste position. This preference is not as strong for Hindu men. Dark skinned Hindu men, who are of high status, can exchange their wealth for a light skinned wife. This is not as probable for dark skinned women (As quoted by Edwards, Carter-Tellison and Herring, 2004, p. 69).

Another aspect contributing to the intricacies of the caste system is the ways in which caste and class are often falsely equated. Though each informs the other to some extent, they are in fact separate sociocultural systems. Caste designations are generally considered to be as unchangeable as one's parents. However, I posit that caste is not entirely immutable. In the same way that money whitens, money can also trump caste and skin color. In this way, professions, schooling, and wealth all serve as contingencies that can potentially displace the importance placed on caste and/or skin color. Inevitably, there are circumstances in which this is more viable than others. For example, a Brahmin family concerned with maintaining caste and "racial" purity may not be open to intercaste marriage, even if all other factors are favorable (including skin color). On the other hand, a higher caste family with little capital may be more amenable to an arrangement between lower caste and/or darker individuals with money.

These sociocultural, political, institutional, economic, and systemic implications of the caste system resemble racism in the United States in numerous ways. For example, caste discrimination functions in similar ways to racial discrimination in employment, education, government, and other sectors. As previously noted, other than color, one of the initial determinants for caste taxonomies was profession. The subscription to this logic can still be seen today in regards to occupations reserved for the lower castes and outcastes, which include the most undesirable and lowest paid. Some of the most coveted jobs in India are in the government or public sector, which is mostly comprised of higher castes and lighter individuals (the latter is especially pertinent in jobs entailing face-to-face public/customer interactions).

Consequently, lower castes and outcastes, particularly those that are darker, face greater challenges in acquiring status through upward social mobility. A method that has presented itself as more feasible when other avenues are hindered is marrying a lighter skinned spouse (intra or intercaste), who accordingly characterizes a higher rank for both herself and her spouse. To distance oneself from lower caste/outcaste and/or dark-skinned stigmas, one must attempt to procure the lifestyles of the upper castes through a high paying job, education, or a light-skinned wife, or a combination thereof.

Due to the systemic difficulties of transcending caste and color biases through the aforementioned means, other channels for escaping the shames and oppressions of being of lower caste/outcaste and darker have emerged in an effort to promote equality. The denunciation of religion, particularly Hinduism, is believed by some lower castes/outcastes to be an effective means for accessing previously denied or limited socioeconomic resources. Though Hinduism has one of the more formal caste systems in place, other major religions in India have analogous social stratifications in place, including Sikhism and Islam.

Buddhism, Jainism, and Christianity are the faiths to which lower castes/outcastes most commonly convert in hopes of escaping caste and/or color-based prejudices. These efforts are commonly met with less than successful results, as surnames and occupations can also be indicative of caste. For women, these can change with marriage, which presents the potential for improving one's caste, but again they too must possess compensating qualities, most notably light skin. For men, surnames denoting lower caste/outcaste affiliation are more absolute. Beyond religion and surnames, dark skin color also serves as a marker associated with lower caste and status, hence the growing popularity of bleaching agents. Unfortunately, all of these practices seek to escape the ramifications of oppression rather than dismantle them.

e. Dalits: the Un*fair* Outcastes & Racial Spatialization

I now turn to the how conceptualizations of caste and color inform Dalit lives. Specifically, I discuss the material ways in which pigmentocracy disproportionately affects Dalits. Dalits and other "backwards" castes comprise about half of India's population (Ghose, 2003). Many upper/middle castes and even non-Hindus consider these groups to be polluted.   In short, there is a widespread belief that their inherent impurity is infectious to others. In addition, these groups are being punished for the sins of former lives and are therefore deserving of maltreatment. The resulting implications include social and institutional ostracization, such as exclusion from worshipping at certain sites, avoiding eye contact with upper/middle castes, and so forth.

In an effort to oppose oppression, Dalit activists (including non-Dalits) have implemented numerous strategies. One of the responses to subjugation is to emulate the United States is claiming, "equal opportunity for all," yet due to a lack of political power, this goes largely

disregarded (Ghose, 2003, p. 99). Developing marketable skills such as fluency in English are also viewed by Dalits as a means for conveying "intellectual capital" that could aid in their efforts to transcend assigned labor positions and duties (Ghose, 2003). Mimicry of the attributes that whiteness embodies is prevalent in not only the colonizer/colonized dynamic, but also within the upper castes/lower or non-caste condition.

Under the umbrella category of Dalits is a mixture of languages, geographical locations, religions, and skin tones that further segments the population and prevents organization needed for preventing discriminatory practices. As a result of social and economic marginalization, the vast majority of Dalits have been relegated to live in separate spaces from caste members. In rural areas, Dalits are often landless agricultural laborers who are overwhelmingly illiterate (approximately 90%) (Racine, et al.,1998). Economic opportunity is also often limited to the educated and powerful, which is difficult for many Dalits to access due to systemic discrimination. Even Dalits who are educated face more challenges than caste members. Subsequently, many Dalits are exploited for cheap labor. In urban areas, slums largely inhabited by Dalits have been termed "unauthorised colonies," a term fitting of the imperialistic notions that India's population has come to embrace (Rashidi, 1998, para 4).

Racial spatialization is not an unfamiliar concept to areas of colonization and/or white settlement as evidence of its proliferation is found in the United States in the form of black ghettos and nearly all European colonies in Africa, for that matter. Racial spatialization represents another example of upper caste Indians attempting to reproduce imperialistic models that draw social distinctions among people based on color. As rural opportunities continue to diminish for many landless Dalits, many move to urban cities in hopes of improving their financial situation, yet are often met with equally impenetrable circumstances. For the majority

of Dalits, the end result is poor living standards concentrated in overcrowded urban spaces characterized by high crime rates, disease, suicide drug addictions, sex trade, and starvation (Rashidi, 1998).

Unofficial (though often sanctioned) spatial coding of black areas and white areas serves to preserve the hierarchies put into place through caste systems and limits opportunities for equality. By racializing color and then spatializing the branded race, a push and pull dynamic comes into play in which rural settings push Dalits towards cities (with false enticement of better opportunities) and then pull them into slums, thus looping back to reinforce stereotypes that feed into themselves and further sanction socially constructed norms (Rashidi, 1998). It is not enough for the state to take an active role in eradicating caste discrimination. Color lines must also be recognized and factored in the consideration of dismantling efforts.

f. Etymology of "Untouchables", Dalits, Harijans & Scheduled/Backwards Caste

In a discussion of Dalits, an etymological exploration of the evolution of the label assigned to the lowest and often perceived darkest members of Indian society is useful. This section further connects Dalits to blackness in the ideological, moral, and racial sense. Though the link between caste and color is often capricious, the common belief (by both Dalits and non-Dalits) that Dalits have darker skin color is widely discussed in diverse settings. For example, Ayyar and Khandare posit, "Dalit literature is a testimony to the fact that most of the ex-Untouchable communities are dark-skinned and physically distinct from the rest" (Ayyar & Khandare, 2013, p.87). The ways in which Dalits are aesthetically described, whether accurately or otherwise, contribute to our understanding of the philological, religious, and racial underpinnings that transmit the changes and reactions of upper castes, *Untouchables*, national,

and international onlookers. Furthermore, multidimensional sources of oppression are often perpetrated through language.

"Untouchable is clearly an English word, the word British used to refer to outcaste communities considered by so-called caste Hindus to be polluting to touch" (Mines, 2009, p.57). Due to the assumed racial impurity and interrelated dark skin color, the *Untouchables* became known as those that could pollute the purer, and consequently whiter castes with not only their touch, but also their presence. Moreover, as cited in *Living Color: the Biological and Social Meaning of Skin Color,* "great meaning was attached to human blackness because black had consistently negative connotation in Indo-European languages, and darkness—such as the darkness of night—had a long standing association with evil" (Jablonski, 2012, p. 136). In a society in which spiritual beliefs and superstitions factor prominently, the racial segregation of upper caste and lower/outcastes is in part a religious manifestation as well.

Brahmins, in imitating British colonialists, sought to increase both physical and ideological distance between the white/pure and black/impure members of society. In doing so, they emphasized hygiene and cleanliness for themselves, while regarding Dalits as perpetually filthy due to their blackness (Ghose, 2003). Though notions of purity and impurity predate colonization, they became more fundamentally embedded within caste designations during colonization and have subsisted to a large extent since. From ancient to contemporary India, those higher in the caste system are thought to be closer to God not only by themselves, but also by lower castes/outcastes accepting of the religious doctrine. Furthermore, contributing colonial views asserted whiteness as analogous to divinity and conversely, blackness to sinfulness.

As mentioned, Gandhi's employment of the term *harijan* in place of "Untouchable" was intended to challenge the image of Dalits as those who are dirty, black (both ideologically and

physically), and ultimately far removed from God. Additionally, the government of India also implemented a new term that refers to "Untouchables" as scheduled castes in the Constitution (Narayan, 2003). Describing the "Untouchables" as scheduled castes interposes an inclusion within the caste system itself, a status that was previously denied. Yet, doing so does not effectively dismantle the well-established color/caste relationship. Another term for the *Untouchables* applied by the government is the "backwards caste," which infers a counterproductive, primitive role in society as well as a lack of assimilation with the modern, progressive, "forward" castes.

According to Racine, et al., words can contribute to the shifting of worldviews, even when actions do not follow (Racine, et al. 1998), yet I struggle to credit rhetoric with material or social improvement in the lives of the "Untouchables," especially in light of manifested skin color associations.

g. Non-spiritualization and Dehumanization of Dalits

Prior to the alleged Aryan domination of northern India, the Hindu goddess Kali symbolized not only a feminist icon, but also blackness as denoted in the literal translation of her name (Rashidi, 1998). In spite of that, ideas forwarded by Aryans and/or *Rigveda* literature (as previously discussed in context of caste-color assignments), upper caste Hindus began to draw distinctions within society based on purity and the relatedness of skin pigmentation that assigned the most spiritual worth to lighter castes. Equally, British and other European colonialists and missionaries who subscribed to the concept of blacks lacking religion further reinforced this creed. This mentality carried other nuances that were intricately tied to a lack of religion, including but not limited to, immorality, savageness, lawlessness, lack of intelligence and

unsightliness. The upper castes have applied these same principles to Dalits and have effectively justified their relegated position through Hindu ideology (Rashidi, 1998). According to Rashidi, color-oriented, racially based caste systems became the foundation of Hindu religion.

The propensity to incorporate religious beliefs into practical life is evident in the religious beliefs regarding karma and dharma, which are fundamental to Hinduism. Through karma, bad acts or sins, committed in one's past life can lead to a doomed existence in the cycle of rebirth. Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras (and even many Dalits) believe that Dalits are being punished for former sins. According to this logic, racist canons pertaining to Dalits as dark and their ensuing ill treatment cannot be dismantled. In this way, retribution takes on numerous forms, including that which is imposed by the creator and those transmitted by virtuous Hindus. According to this reasoning, the Dalits' inability to escape from their stigmatized black bodies and thus a life of ill treatment is God's choice.

This ontological fallacy has been the precise stimulus for Hindu Dalits' conversion to Buddhism, Christianity and other religions not founded upon caste designations (Racine, et al., 1998) as well as "passing" efforts. In another effort to emancipate themselves from a life of servitude, some Dalits attempt to assimilate to upper caste society through mimicry, also known as Sanskritization. Sanskritization is the term used for emulation of upper and/or dominant castes in India devised by M.N. Srinivas in the 1950s (Dirks, 2001). However, attempts to "pass" as higher caste are difficult. As Pandey posits "given the practical indeterminacy of caste on the basis of skin color, the procedure for passing is very different from that found among Americans of African descent" (Pandey, 2013, p. 204). Moreover, the methods of effectively identifying lower castes are surnames (Pandey, 2013) and skin color (Ghuyre, 1969).

"Lighter skin [has] emerged as a vehicle for shifting one's social status from the side of the oppressed to that of the more powerful oppressor" (Shevde, 2008). Subsequently, some Dalits resort to skin bleaching products in an attempt to "pass" as caste members and/or to disassociate themselves from being viewed as morally impure, dirty, and contaminating. Similarly, darker, upper caste individuals may also endeavor to do so as they experience intracaste marginalization (though to a much lesser extent) and seek to escape racial prejudices.

As previously discussed, Dalits who realize the limited potential of escaping their ill-fated lives as Hindus are turning to more egalitarian-based religions. Interestingly, Christian missionaries challenged caste based discrimination in India in the area of education by establishing schools for Dalits as well as desegregating existing schools (Ghose, 2003). It is somewhat ironic that the religion most correlated with whiteness would be the catalyst for enacting social change in the realm of education amongst the racialized Dalits. However, this can in part be explicated by the fact that missionaries were not faced with religious and racial discrimination or competition in the labor force. That is, missionaries did not have to vie for limited resources that propel upper caste Hindus to hinder the equal treatment of Dalits. Another rationale could be the willingness to accept any and all converts. Consequently, missionaries may not have been concerned with color. On the hand, other viable theories include the targeting of Dalits by missionaries because of recognition of their extensive oppression and/or the belief that darker groups are less pure and in need of Christian evangelism the most in order to be saved.

h. **The Political Economy of Dalits**

Imperialism and colonialism are largely motivated by Western notions of maximizing potential advantages, necessarily through exploitation of subordinated groups and their resources and land. In this case, I am specifically referring to the continued economic benefits of whiteness and the spatialization of races in urban areas. In the United States, this model is actualized and apparent in the disproportionate number of blacks who work in menial labor, which in turn contributes to their lower socioeconomic status in relation to whites and even other minorities (Pandey, 2013).

Additionally, minority communities (a thinly veiled term for slums and ghettos) in India and the United States are often plagued with other social issues. Of these are substandard housing conditions (which have a host of issues, including malnutrition, substance abuse, and mental illnesses), inferior school systems, and lack of employment opportunities. In turn, these perpetuate the unequal distribution of economic, social and political disadvantages—in short "Untouchables" and African Americans are often denied human dignity. "Untouchables" also suffer harassment by caste Indians in public spaces in the form of verbal, sexual and physical abuse (Mines, 2009). Darker Dalits have the highest risk of suffering the abovementioned inequities as they embody the combined problems of outcaste and racial discrimination.

As previously mentioned, during colonization (and even beforehand and afterwards) the British aligned themselves with the Brahmins to maximize influence and control over the masses. As a result, the beneficiaries of professional opportunities and more currently, contemporary globalization, are the upper castes (Ghose, 2003). The Dalits comprise approximately twenty percent of India's population; yet predominantly constitute (at best) a class of proletariats (Ghose, 2003). The caste system incorporates a system of labor division that is imbued with exploitation and ostracization. In other words, Dalits are confined to limited and

specific forms of economic trade that consist of largely stigmatized tasks. However, "division of labor may appear as intrinsic and central, but certainly is not the essence of caste" (Ayyar & Khandare, 2013, p. 76).

The affirmative action enacted through constitutional reservations of occupations for Dalits allows elites to "maintain the façade of a generous patron of Dalits while continuing to deprive them of mass-level education and access to resources," which serves only to impede government representation of the majority of India's population (Omvedt as cited in Ghose, 2003, pp. 98-99). Legally, caste-based discrimination has been abolished, but that serves only as minimal and temporary treatment of a symptom to the greater problem that is racialized casteism. Though caste based discrimination may be recognized as adversely affecting society, colorism (across all castes but disproportionate to Dalits) is considerably less so.

i. **Debt and Bondage: the Dalit Lived Experience**

In patriarchal societies, women endure the greatest degree of marginalization. In India, dark women, particularly Dalits, often suffer the greatest injustices. "It is thus no surprise that perceptions of beauty, femininity, poise, morality, and womanhood are bases on the lines of class position, caste location, and degree of melanin" (Ayyar & Khandare, 2013, p.86). Ayyar and Khandare further argue:

> 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 [by society] due to their
> inferior caste lineage, and supposedly they are unattractive and ugly due to their non-Aryan skins
> tones and facial features. With these standardization of beauty embedded in skin color,
> women of lower castes particularly of darker skin color will never been deemed as
> beautiful, feminine, and chaste (Ayyar & Khandare, 2013, p. 87).

Variations in skin color occur among women of all castes (including the scheduled and "backwards" castes). Beyond intercaste biases, dark women of all castes are subject to intracaste prejudices due to their skin color. That is, their perceived worth is decreased according to their darkness regardless of their caste status. Beyond the consideration to caste, the racialized system of domination in India does not fully allow for the needs and interests of darker citizens to be considered as they are viewed as less significant to society.

j. Conclusion

The phenomenon of pigmentocracy in India is complex and cannot be considered independent of caste, class, geography, gender, religion, and other factors. Caste does not equate to color, but rather, there are undeniable ways in which color exhorts notions of caste and intracaste discrimination. Furthermore, caste affiliation is not always inscripted onto the body and the contextual meaning of caste goes deeper than skin color. Accordingly, color discrimination in India is fluid and cannot be defined according to set parameters; rather it must be examined in conjunction with the relevant beliefs, practices, and norms of a given society, particularly caste and pigmentocracy.

Outsiders often view Indians collectively as a homogenous ethnic and racial group, that is, a people with a shared history, ancestry, culture, geography, traditions, heritage, and so forth. Darker and/or lower caste/outcaste Indians are thought to share the same history as elite Indians, and "thus their identity is supplanted by those in power" (Pandey, 2013, pp. 63-65). As such, the unique interests and lived experiences of darker Indians and/or Dalits are often excluded from political and social narratives and discourse as color distinctions and racism are not widely recognized by Indians as sociopolitical and socioeconomic issues affecting quality of life.

Generalizations regarding caste and pigmentocracy cannot effectively address the many nuances affecting colorism in India. Given the increasingly numerous ways that skin color varies, the belief that caste necessarily equates with color explanation is insufficient. Nonetheless, ethnic, religious, and social pride among many Indians is often predicated upon conviction in the binaries of Aryan/non Aryan, pure/impure, and light/dark divide.

As illustrated, the meanings attached to the hierarchical principles relating to caste, class, religion, etc. are contextual. However, the metanarratives governing skin color and the white ideal are increasingly transmitted through globalization and imperialism. To this end, there is a growing polarization between light Indians and dark Indians that is complicated by caste, class, religion, gender, neo-colonialism, cultural imperialism, globalization, and binaries such as urban/rural, rich/poor, pure/impure, attractive/unsightly, education/ignorant, modern/backward, among others.

Chapter V

Media as a Medium for Perpetuating Whiteness:

the Role of Cultural Imperialism in Bollywood and Indian Culture

Introduction

Up to this point, I have examined the foundational, theoretical, and historical underpinnings informing whiteness, colonialism, and the caste system in India. Now, I shift my focus to the site in which these previously discussed topics, including skin color, representation, class, caste, gender, culture, and commodities relating to pigmentocracy converge. Indian films provide insight into the social, cultural, political, and economic organization of life in India. In order to better understand how whiteness works in conjunction with class, caste, modernity, and beauty ideals, it is useful to examine how cultural artifacts demonstrate these narratives.

Bollywood films contain and allude to multidimensional aspects of Indian society, including social, cultural, and economic arrangements. As one of the largest film producers in the world, the pervasive depth and breadth of Bollywood's products allow for extensive accessibility and viewership among diverse demographics, regardless of class, geography, gender, caste, and religious differences. Despite these hetero-cultural and multiethnic differences among audiences, Bollywood films often employ a distinctive metanarrative using ideologies governing race, class and gender. Bollywood's conceptualizations of skin color, and associated socioeconomic and gender designations, further institutes and propagates the socially embedded phenomenon of pigmentocracy.

In this chapter, I examine how modern beauty standards, especially the role of skin color, have been influenced by popular culture and informed by colonialism and western imperialism. I demonstrate how media, television, Bollywood and Hollywood films, newspapers, magazines, electronic media (including social media), and billboards, create, reflect, magnify, reify, and perpetuate societal and cultural ideals concerning colorism. These ideals are further inscribed onto the bodies of both men and women, though the latter are affected disproportionately.

Included in this discussion is the growing phenomenon of casting lighter as well as light/non-Indian actors and actresses in Bollywood films. In addition, these celebrities often serve as the spokespersons for products that target darker (or less white) Indian consumers. The majority of these products are western manufactured and distributed harmful skin bleaching products that are banned in much of Europe and North America.

The Indian film industry became commonly known as Bollywood after gaining international recognition, notably from the west. As one of the largest film industries in the world, Bollywood has a pervasive reach largely due to its immensely popular song and dance story lines. It produces over eight hundred films a year with an estimated audience of fourteen million Indian moviegoers per day (Rosenberg, n.d.). Top actors reap huge rewards:

> The stars of Bollywood are very popular and highly paid, considering the budget of the films. The lead star in a film often receives as much as 40% of the US $2 million budget for the typical masala film. Stars may be in such high demand that they're working on ten films at once. Photographs of Bollywood stars grace shop windows and homes throughout the country (Rosenberg).

According to Ahish Rajadhyaksha, Bollywood films are primary vehicles for bringing Indians together, a feat print media alone cannot accomplish due to the high rate of illiteracy (estimated at 35%-55%) (Rajadhyaksha, 2007).

Films both transmit existing current cultural values, as well as construct a range of ideals and standards. Despite the degree of subjectivities contained within films, audience reactions also vary. That is to say, viewers do not always unwittingly accept or subscribe to implicit or and/or explicit messages. Reoccurring narratives prevail among many popular Indian films in which racialized discourses are normalized. Furthermore, the film industry extends to other areas of media including television, internet, and advertising through the use of film

actors/actresses as spokespersons (Rajadhyaksha, 2007), thus deepening and broadening

audience base to include not only Indians, but also diaspora Indian communities as well as non-

Indian viewers across the globe. Through globalization, the market for Indian films has

expanded to include Pakistan, Sri Lanka and other neighboring nation-states and increasingly

non-Indian populations.

> The stars of Bollywood films are extremely popular among their targeted audiences and are
>
> highly paid, considering the budgets of the films. Significantly, the influence of Bollywood is so
>
> colossal that movie stars are elected officials, and temples are constructed for some of them
>
> (Venkatesh and Swamy 1994; Rajagopal 2001) (as cited in Takhar, et. al., 2012, p. 267).

It is my contention that in an effort to compete on the world stage and particularly with

Hollywood as well as appeal to international viewers (including diaspora), Bollywood agents are

increasingly employing whiter, lighter, and white actors/actresses as they are perceived as more

universally and nationally appealing in terms of aesthetics, prestige, and influence. "According

to many authors, the preference for "white" is also reflected in the South Asian film industry.

The heroines of films are usually fair and beautiful, the heroes are fair and handsome and the

villains are dark and swarthy" (Shankar & Subish, 2007, p. 101). Furthermore, the enduring

effects of colonialism and ongoing cultural imperialism dictate the terms for industry success in

film, which in turn promotes a model of dominance based on whiteness.

It is common for Bollywood to cast darker bodies in villainous roles (men and women)

and lighter bodies as heroes and heroines. Largely informed by the film industry, audiences'

expectations often stem from visual physiognomies of actors confirmed by the roles in which

they are cast. The Bollywood players that participate in the perpetuation of pigmentocratic

paradigms include writers, producers, directors, casting agents, and actors. Light actors serve as

the primary aesthetic medium for the transmittance of racialized modes of thinking. Film,

beauty, and advertising industries serve as the architects for the assembly, formation and dissemination of social systems within film and mass media. At their intersection, the industries and light/white movie stars represent the transfiguring of the notions governing skin color informed by and subsequently aligned with the tenets of Western ideological imperialism.

In this chapter I explore the ways in which directors, producers, actors and other agents utilize skin color as a means of representing and/or describing particular social arrangements that seek to depict underlying and presumably indisputable, naturalized characteristics. For example, lighter skin actors aesthetically portray qualities such as purity, modernity, sophistication, respectability, attractiveness, virtue, leadership, power, and higher socioeconomic status. Conversely, darker skin conveys impurity, primitivism, lowliness, deceptiveness, repulsiveness, and other undesirable traits. My goal is to realize the praxis of pigmentocratic ideals in film and the convergence with the practical world. To what extent do films define and shape culture? How does Bollywood advocate values based on pigmentation?

Spatial and geographic configurations are also impacted by Bollywood's dissemination of pigmentocratic ideals. Indian diaspora groups are not only connected to their culture and native land, but also to each other through Indian film. Due to the transnational reach of the Bollywood industry, it has become more widely accessible than ever before. The coding of actors' skin with neocolonial principles is attached to cultural values that transcend spatial arrangements, whether dictated by the nation-state or through the dichotomies of urban and rural. As Homi Bhabha states, culture provides a "moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 2).

a. **Bollywood Examples: *Long Da Lishkara* and *Jah Tak Hai Jaan***

In a discussion of Bollywood and India's film industry's fascination with white skin and its symbolic capital, it is useful to include a concrete example of films that engage in transnational conceptions of whiteness communicated through neocolonial framework. *Long Da Lishkara* is an Indian Punjabi movie released in 1986 and directed/produced by Harpal Tiwana (Wadehra, 2004). The story line of the film is a formulaic one that is familiar to millions of Bollywood fans: a boy and girl fall in love, but due to differences usually involving caste, religion, class or other social classification, the relationship is forbidden. The majority of the film's plot focuses on the overcoming of differences by gaining the support of their respective families.

Though *Long Da Lishkara* is over twenty-five years old, it is still very much relevant to a discussion regarding the colorist system of domination. Moreover, by examining an older and a newer film, I seek to demonstrate that the metanarratives related to skin color have been consistent. The implications of dichotomies such as rural/urban, light/dark, modern/primitive, western/eastern, pure/impure, etc. are effectively exhibited in the film. The story begins with the return of the prodigal son Raj (actor Raj Babbar) who is living in Canada. He returns to India to visit his mother, Sardarni Sarup Kaur (played by Nina Tiwana), a titled widow with obvious affluence in the rural town and who owns the most Western style home/estate.

Both mother and son have lighter skin than other supportive roles in the film, including a sizeable group of villagers. In addition, Raj dresses in predominantly Western style clothing, including a sports jacket, button up dress shirt and khakis, a fact that further boosts his position of high status. Raj also uses English words recurrently as yet another marker of class distinction that elevates him to a position of prestige in the village.

Shortly after arriving, he meets his mother's lady in waiting (a charitable phrase) or servant (a more accurately descriptive term), Peeto (Harpreet Deol), the most fair skinned actress/actor in the film. She is appropriately subservient and modest towards Raj, while displaying the same veneration to his mother, her employer. Peeto's seemingly automatic deference is demonstrative of class/caste divisions as well as acceptance of her station displayed through behavioral norms and expectations that accompany one's ranking. Furthermore, she dusts the feet of both, a gesture of high respect and indicative of one's submission.

Raj is enamored by Peeto's beauty, but another character by the name of Ditu (Om Puri), who is also lowly and therefore a more suitable match has already spoken for Peeto, who has little choice in the matter. In fact, Ditu and the Sadarni arrange Peeto's future, which also signifies her station as lower class/caste as she is considered the property of her employer. Ditu becomes immediately jealous of the Raja and suspicious of the dynamics between his betrothed and the Westernized hero. Expectedly, Ditu takes on the role of the villain and antagonist and displays unfavorable traits, including aggressively harassing Peeto. Ditu, consistent with Bollywood and Indian stereotypes, has a darker complexion that immediately signals his class inferiority. Furthermore, he dresses in traditional (if not outdated even for 1986) Indian garb that further corroborates his backwardness and barbarism while simultaneously contrasting the more modernized, gentlemanly, and civilized Raj. In this way, skin color serves as a symbol of caste and class, as well as modernity (or lack thereof).

Peeto's guardian is her aunt, Gulabo Massi (played by Nirmal Rishi) who is also of a lower class/caste, a fact that is indicated through her dress (traditional Indian), her dark skin and her humble dwelling (an earthen hut). Gulabo Massi also does not play a significant role in the marital arrangement of her niece to Ditu. Despite Peeto's lowly familial status and occupational

status, she becomes the object of Raj's affection due to her fairness and beauty, to the dismay of his refined, upper class/caste mother and Ditu. An initial event worth noting in the course of interactions between Raj and Peeto is his bestowing a gift of Western style clothing to her, including a knee-length skirt, blouse and high-heels. In the decade this film was made, it was not customary for women to show their legs, a taboo that still largely persists, especially in rural areas. It is precisely the moment she puts on the Western clothes that Raj's interest in her transforms to love and commitment. Moreover, the greater part of the village's male population also becomes captivated by her beauty (as typified by her skin fairness and contemporary/modern clothing) and form a following.

When Peeto is alone with Raj for the first time, he compliments her beauty and fairness and compares her to a white rose. Despite the fact that Peeto is of a low station in life, the viewer is led to believe that her attractiveness and light skin (as the two cannot exist independently) facilitate her transcendence from a servant to a titled position as his wife. It is perfectly fitting and anticipatory that the two actors with the lightest skin would come together, while the possibility that the dark Ditu could taint the pure Peeto is unconceivable. The 'moral' of the story is all things Western, from clothing to English to whiteness, is highly regarded in terms of perceived aesthetics, modernity, civility, morality, prestige, influence, and class. In short, skin color often works in tandem with other signs of modernity.

Conversely and necessarily through binary oppositions, all things Indian—from clothing to Punjabi language to darkness—is dismissed as poor, uncivilized, unattractive, and immoral. One point of departure from colorist stereotypes is that Peeto's light skin is not congruent with her low caste and class status. This venturing from norms suggests that traditional (i.e., backwards) customs such as intracaste marriage are being displaced by more modern modes of

thinking that allow for love to factor into relationships. Another interpretation of Peeto's low caste status being trumped by her beauty (i.e., light skin) has to do with the value of women in general. In patriarchal societies, women's values are often attributed to their appearances, and in India, skin color plays an essential role in beauty standards (these concepts are discussed in more detail in Chapter VI). Defying class and caste limitations as well as equating beauty and value to skin lightness allow for the film to be considered progressive.

A more contemporary film example that elucidates the embracing of whiteness and western values is *Jah Tak Hai Jaan*, which was released in 2012. The film stars Shahrukh Khan as Samar and Katrina Kaif as Meera. Both actors endorse skin-bleaching creams for 'Fair and Handsome' and 'Oil of Olay' (see Appendixes C and G, respectively). As previously mentioned, Kaif also has a relatively lighter skin complexion, which is attributable to her mixed lineage of a South Asian father and European mother, rather than her use of Oil of Olay's Natural White products.

In a preliminary scene, the viewer is introduced to Meera as she runs into a Christian church in London to pray to Jesus. In the same scene, we see another young white girl praying aloud to marry a white boy because Indian boys are very brown. Within the first few minutes of the film, the audience is made aware of both Samar and Meera's backgrounds. Meera is of an aristocratic Punjabi Indian family living in England, well educated, and to be engaged to a wealthy, white British entrepreneur. She is also at once modern in her Western clothing (and bare skin), fluency in English (and simultaneous lack of fluency in Punjabi), Christianity, and her white friends. On the other hand, while Khan's character Samar is also Punjabi, he has modest roots and is poor as denoted in his job of shoveling snow. He is eventually successful in Western

terms (financially secure and status attainment) through his hard work, a sure nod towards the credence of meritocracy.

Once Samar and Meera meet, a negotiation takes place between the two. The former is to teach Meera Punjabi and Meera is to teach Sumar "good gentleman's English" (*Jab Tak Hai Jaan,* 2012). Meera offers to pay Samar for his help in tutoring her, but he responds by saying "it's a fair and handsome deal, ma'am" (*Jab Tak Hai Jaan*, 2012). This statement is clearly a strategic, yet obvious product placement/reference to the skin bleaching line he endorses for the Indian company 'Fair and Handsome' (owned by Western based Unilever).

Another conversation of noteworthiness between the two characters concerns their perceived appearances:

Samar: "You don't look Indian at all."

Meera: "And you look completely Indian."

Samar : "Why? You don't like Indian men?"

Meera : "They're very boring."

Not only is Samar darker than Meera, but he also does not initially speak English, is uneducated and a member of the working class (and works multiple jobs). I contend that it is a combination of these traits that contribute to his Indianness.

A later scene involves Samar and his roommate, Zain. Samar and Zain are discussing a light-skinned girl they met on the street. Zain expresses his interest in the girl and her apparent beauty in his comment to Samar: "She's a white one, man. Help me hook up with her" (*Jab Tak Hai Jaan,* 2012). Zain eventually marries a white woman later in the movie. Zain's role in the film signifies the emphasis placed on whiteness in standards of beauty. Like the romance between Peeto and Raj, Zain's marriage to a white woman could also be indicative of India's progress (or desire to be progressive) in terms of moving away from arranged marriages towards

love marriages, regardless of interracial, cultural, and religious differences. Lastly, blackness

also factors as a conveyor of value-laden meaning as one of the only Afro-British characters is a

stereotypical servant depicted in a wealthy home. In short, all of the main characters that are

wealthy, educated and/or attractive have light skin, including Meera's upper class father (played

by Anupam Kher) and mother (played by Neetu Singh), and the secondary heroine (named Akira

and played by Anushka Sharma).

Meera depicts the essentializing characteristics of light skin, including beauty, wealth,

upper caste status, progressiveness, and piety. Furthermore, her Punjabi heritage is also in

accordance with her light skin as northern Indians are often considered by themselves as well as

many other Indians to be lighter due to their alleged Aryan lineage.   In many ways, she also

exhibits a break from traditional Indian values. She is engaged to a white Englishman, smokes

cigarettes, is a daughter of divorced parents, and was raised by her father. Conversely, Meera

also demonstrates adherence to some Indian traditions. For example, she is an obedient and

devoted daughter, religious (as well as superstitious), and upholds her virtuosity and loyalty

(important to her reputation) by not dating, even after she breaks up with Samar. In spite of this,

Meera and Peeto share a similar outlook in that they both defy caste and class restrictions as well

as familial obligations in order to pursue love.

Though Samar is darker than Meera, he is still considered to be lighter than many as well

as a handsome movie star. Thus, it would logically follow that Meera and Samar would fall in

love, as they are both attractive, with their attractiveness marked by light skin. Although Samar

is of a lower status (caste, class, and immigrant status), he is able to transcend these areas of

inferiority primarily through his good looks and skin color, and secondarily, learning English and

working hard. The fact that Zain and Samar are both romantically paired with white/light

women is also symptomatic of the emphasis placed on women's beauty in relation to light skin color.

b. Colonialism, Orientalism, and Bollywood

Blockbuster films are among the most influential forms of media in India, not only due to their wide-ranging audience base, but also because of the romanticized and idealistic nature of life depicted in movies. The narratives of Indian films are often full of hope and promise of characters' transcending their socioeconomic positions through the adoption of Western practices while offering audiences a temporary escape from their oppressive realities. "The movie…offers as product the most magical of consumer commodities, namely dreams. It is, therefore, not accidental that the movie has excelled as a medium that offers poor people roles of riches and power beyond the dreams of avarice" (McLuhan, 1964, p. 291).

Bollywood films are marketed extensively using nearly every technological, media, and advertising outlet, thus ensuring the widest viewership of films in the world. McLuhan states, "in terms of media study it is clear that the power of film to store information in accessible form is unrivaled" (McLuhan, 1964, p. 291). Media, and films in particular, play a unique role in India's national and diasporic imagination. As film studies scholars, Larouche and Brunet, note, "rapid developments in information and communication technology have given rise to an increasingly globalized film industry." Worldwide viewership of Indian films allows for a sense of community to be established across seemingly disconnected spaces. However, Bollywood films often foster a collective identity that promotes belonging as well as marginalization. In other words, Bollywood reinforces set parameters that determine the in-groups as well as the out-groups. For example, middle to upper classes (correlated with caste and skin color) are often

revered in films, which mirrors not only the targeted Bollywood audience, but also social practices.

On the individual level, Arjun Appadurai (p. 4) argues that media such as film, allows for "self imagining as an everyday social project (as cited in Takhar, et. al., 2012, p. 267). I argue that films represent and encourage larger attitudes found in Indian culture. The majority of Indian films are not representational of Others, including but not limited to the impoverished, lower castes/outcastes, and darker skin colors. Given its pervasive influence in the lives of Indians, Bollywood exclusion of these "undesirable" groups can have a negative affect. For those deemed to be the in-group, further distinctions can be constructed to maintain status. For example, in many films, upper caste and class differentials are insufficient for differentiating the protagonists. As such, skin color is also used as a marker of superiority. Though this preference for lighter skin is rooted in the reality of Indian society, Bollywood further confirms and perpetuates the notion.

For those who find themselves unrepresented or represented in demeaning ways, the effects can be demoralizing and alienating. To this end, initiatives to include the excluded are also emerging. Furthermore, media also allows for dissonance and critique. For example, many Bollywood stars who endorsed skin-bleaching advertisements have been met with severe criticism (in the form of tweets, blogs, film parodies, etc.) for their role in propagating racialized notions of beauty. As a result, many celebrities are now declining to sanction these products as well as requesting that their images not be lightened through photo shopping, and not be made lighter with make up during filming.

Societal divisions are further propagated and normalized through films while appropriating and promoting hegemonic systems transmitted by the West. India's postcolonial

society is still largely influenced by the lingering ideology of colonialism as well as modern neocolonial forces. In postcolonial India, Bollywood elites and their agents are reproducing a similar hegemonic paradigm informed by whiteness, with skin pigment deeply entrenched in classist, casteist, and gendered systems.

Political hegemony is dependent upon transformation of the social and cultural; Bollywood proves to be an ideal media for both of these coded discourses. In order to be effectively inculcated into material society as well as mindsets, power relations must be asserted into various spheres of influence, including popular culture and media. Bollywood's preoccupation with Western aesthetics has been conducive to the transmutation of whiteness from discourse to material. That is to say, Bollywood's trajectory of skin color as implicit to ocular fetishism secures whiteness as a physical politic of class recognition. In short, Bollywood serves as the site in which stereotypical attributes associated with skin color, such as gender, caste, class, beauty, modernity, and so forth, intersect.

Using Said's theory of Orientalism as a referent, I seek to further the case that socially constructed relationships between color and capital bolster the subjugation of the Other. His work also incorporates the Western understanding of the Orient (in terms of spatial and temporal historical encounters with the Occident):

> Being a White Man was therefore an idea and a reality. It involved a reasoned positions towards both the white and the non-white worlds. It meant—in the colonies—speaking in a certain way, behaving according to a code of regulations, and even feeling certain things and not others. It meant specific judgments, evaluations, gestures. It was a form of authority before which nonwhites, and even whites themselves, were expected to bend…Being a White Man, in short, was a very concrete manner of being-in-the-world, a way of taking hold of reality, language, and thought. It made a specific style possible (Said, 1993, p. 227).

Though no longer colonized, the realities and ideas governing daily code of conduct in India is still largely organized according to skin color. Lighter, upper caste, and/or higher class Indians continue to rule in the image of colonialists. The concentration of power, influence, and wealth among elites has led to the romanticization of these groups in the popular imagination. The promoted ideas are that lighter Indians are not only distinct in skin color, but in every aspect of their lifestyles and being.

Following Foucault's framework as outlined in *The Archaeology of Knowledge,* Said attempts to demonstrate how previously specialized fields can be amalgamated due to their inherent interrelatedness in regards to postcolonial studies. As a result, he is able to provide a more explanatory epistemological foundation from which to examine why and how Orientalism emerged. In the context of Bollywood and the global film industry in general, it is important to consider Orientalism. Eastern media is largely reproducing the racialized manner in which the East is represented by Western media. That is to say, that to an extent, Western values have been culturally internalized and are embedded in film narratives. While many of Said's postcolonial contentions are expedient to my work on pigmentocracy in South Asia, I prefer to use Kwame Nkrumah's alternate term of neocolonial/ism to replace of postcolonial/ism. The former refers to socioeconomic control using globalization and cultural imperialism to promote the economies and cultures of the neo-colonist state (Nkrumah, 1965). Neocolonialism also describes the disproportionate immersion of Western multinational corporations business practices in former colonies as powerful instruments of exploitation. The concept of neocolonialism is appropriate in a discussion of the Indian film industry, globalization, and imperialism.

According to Nkrumah, the term postcolonial/ism suggests (intrinsically or otherwise) that colonizing of the Orient or any other geographical space is incontinuous. Indeed,

postcolonialism can imply a retroactive examination that occurs in a historical vacuum. Conversely, neocolonialism allows for the assertion of postmodern forms of cultural imperialism—mental colonization if you will—that are very much present in the Orient and elsewhere after formal colonization ends. Neocolonialism implies that colonialism never ends, rather that it takes on advanced, subtler shapes. Said effectively explores the phenomenon of cultural imperialism and its consequences in present day society in *Orientalism*, but expands upon the subject in greater detail in *Culture and Imperialism.*

Cultural imperialism, in conjunction with capitalism, are powerful tools of the Occident often used to control, manipulate, and elicit economic, ideological, political, military, cultural, and other forms of submission from the Orient. Popular culture is an example of how this ideology can manifest itself as seemingly innocuous in aspects of social life—one based on entertainment and diversion. Yet, the components of popular culture (including that which originates from the Occident and the Orient) often impact the masses to varying degrees. Said endeavors to deconstruct these assumptions through a crucial exploration of how the Orient came to be the Orient as a Western construction.

Said's theoretical model is useful in scholarly discourse, but an emancipatory objective is somewhat deficient in *Orientalism*, which he acknowledges as a limitation of his work. One way in which to contribute to the addressing of this enormous feat is to consider the sociopolitical, socioeconomic, and political implications of cultural imperialism present in the products of popular culture. Said discusses how the Othering of the Orient is achieved through stereotypes, which does not discount or exclude "positive" stereotypes. In film, literature, media (including news information sources), music, advertisements, arts, etc., in the Occident, the people of the

Orient are often epitomized as untrustworthy, backwards, hypersexual, and inferior to name a few.

The image of the Other through Western lens is also reflective in Bollywood as darker Indians are Othered in relation to lighter Indians. In this way, films that subscribe to this narrative reify the darker Other using values similar to those found in Western paradigms. This is not to say that is unquestioningly transmitted and accepted by audiences, actors/actresses, and the film industry in the East or West. Rather, larger racialized patterns are common and familiar in films and are often viewed as norms. Due to established social, political, and economic arrangements identified with skin color, both Indian and Western films often caste actors to characters accordingly.

Stereotypes are often perpetuated through metanarratives in which the audience has been conditioned to expect these identities as accurate representations of social life. These classifications that comprise the Other (as projected through popular culture) have profound ramifications in the continuous power struggle between the Occident and the Orient. The hierarchical system that privileges white, elite patriarchal society (as dictated by the Occident) is transmitted through globalized popular culture mediums. The imperialistic nature of this proselytization is so operative in its function that the Orient is also largely subscribing to its ideologies. In turn, this is leading to Bollywood's projection of heroes/heroines as embracing of Occidental values, including whiteness, modernity (demarcated through speaking English, wearing Western-style clothing, etc.), and capitalism.

The symbolic supremacy often conveyed in whiter bodies in Indian media demarcates differences in class, caste, and aesthetics, allowing for the normalization of pigmentocracy through recognizable contexts such as film, television, advertisements, magazines, etc. Using

intraracial paradigms, Bollywood has established standards for society to follow in order to

achieve respectability and social privilege. Assimilation to Western ideals is depicted as

essential to gaining and/or demonstrating power. The hegemonic system at work in India is

enacted and institutionalized by upper caste, upper class and lighter Indians. In addition,

imperial doctrines also promote the dissociation of Indians from Indianness (i.e., darkness) in

favor of whiteness in order to access perceived socioeconomic, sociopolitical, and aesthetic

advantages.

c. Mass Culture and Neocolonialism

In the 1990s, India saw a major economic shift from a quasi-socialist program to a more

capitalistic and democratized globalized approach. In 1991, India began liberalizing its economy

and started establishing international networks and permitting foreign investment (Schaefer &

Karan, 2011). Indian films were shifting from narratives of strong cultural attitudes towards that

of cultural displacement:

> As Jain (2005) pointed out, Hindi filmmakers drew heavily upon conventions of Indian calendar
> art to present '''Indian' religion and culture in opposition to a decadent, materialistic 'West''' (p.
> 84). Although such distinctions may have been clearly marked in past decades, David (2008)
> argued that since the 1990s, filmmakers promoted ''affluent characters, surrounded by Western
> status symbols and international designer fashion''(p. 184) that emphasized global lifestyles in
> Hindi films at the expense of local cultural practices (As cited in Schaefer & Karan, 2011, p. 705-
> 706).

Prior to the liberalization of the Indian economy, Bollywood also emphasized nationalism

to a greater degree in an effort to promote the formation of a cohesive political identity,

exemplified through "flags, uniforms, anthems, images of political leaders, and famous

buildings" (Schaefer & Karan, 2011, p. 706). After 1991, "filmmakers began to deliberately target global audiences through "Bollywoodization"" (Schaefer & Karan, 2011, p. 704). Schaefer and Karan also state that "many cultural researchers have repeatedly argued that Hindi cinema has changed greatly in the face of external, global, and Westernized influences and pressures (Gopal & Moorti, 2008; Kaur & Sinha, 2005; Punathambekar & Kavoori, 2008)" (as cited in Schaefer & Karan, 2011, p. 701). In order to appeal to the largest audience base and remain competitive in the global film market, Indian films, in part, attempted to decrease the ideological distance between the East and the West. As such, films became conduits for depicting Western hegemonic values, such as meritocracy and pigmentocracy.

To better elucidate and synthesize the binary conceptualization of the West and the Orient, I again refer to Kwame Nkrumah's theory of neocolonialism and apply it to my positing of cultural imperialism as a principal driving force in Bollywood productions. Nkrumah's discussion of neocolonialism largely centers on the premise that the presence of major transnational Western capitalist corporations in formerly colonized nation-states hold the most power, attained through exploitation of native resources and people for the benefit of their own financial gain (Nkrumah, 1965).

Nkrumah further contends that cultural imperialism is another tool used by neocolonial states to indoctrinate subjugated nonwestern races to the command and utility of white empires. In this way, assimilation to western cultural, social, economic, and political standards is promoted as natural through neocolonial means. These standards influence Others through the process of performativity and representation associated with whiteness. In the colonial era, wealth and power were largely concentrated in the hands of white Westerners, a fact used to advance the notion that whiteness is intrinsically superior. In the neocolonial era, white

Westerners promote symbolic supremacy based on media, politics, economics, etc. As the reigning film industry, Hollywood is the model to which other film industries strive to emulate. In an effort to compete with Hollywood, Bollywood is embracing western cultures and practices in large part to capture a larger market share of the film industry.

The cultural functions and application of the neocolonial model in India is discernibly present in Bollywood's standards governing casting as they closely reflect Western ideals that value whiteness over non-whiteness. This is further evident in the employment of lighter Bollywood actors and models in advertisements promoting skin bleaching products manufactured and marketed by Western companies such as L'Oreal, Vaseline, the Body Shop and Garnier to name a few. Multinational corporations such as these are profiting on the ideologies that reproduce, reinforce and reify the nonwhite body as the Other. "Certain advertisements had tried to project a notion that a fair skin is a necessary prerequisite for success in both the professional and the personal sphere. The natural anxiety of men and women regarding skin colour has been heightened" (Shankar & Subish, 2007, p.102).

d. Racial Metanarratives in Popular Culture

As previously discussed, beauty standards promoted by Bollywood are strongly influenced by colonial/neocolonial systems through Western ideals that privilege whiteness. The universal gaze of the Occident towards the Orient motivates the former to reconfigure cultural norms in oppressive ways that benefit Westerners. Assimilation to neocolonial ideologies is apparent in Bollywood not only due to its increasing operation as a capital apparatus, but also through the aesthetic values deployed in conjunction with class and caste distinctions. These values dictate that those with whiter skin are more likely to be cast in coveted modeling and

acting roles. Bollywood's conformance to Western standards of whiteness in order to differentiate characters in terms of class, caste, and overall appeal accordingly normalizes racial hierarchies. As Bollywood increasingly internalizes whiteness, the accrediting of whiteness standards shifts from the West to India. That is to say, principles of whiteness are no longer only associated with white Westerners, but with Indians as well. Indians have adopted whiteness ideals from the West, but have made them their own.

As previously mentioned, actors who portray heroes, heroines and members of upper class are most often than not fairer than those who fill other roles depicted in films. Conversely, villains, antagonists, and those of lower classes often have darker complexions. Popular cultural forms, such as films, are often products of capitalist agents involved in promoting consumption. As such, it is in their interest to participate in the reproducing of pigmentocratic notions, as it is an investment in the very system that is beneficial to their economic ends. Due to this phenomenon, actors (light and dark) are attempting to access the promised socioeconomic privileges associated with whiteness by appearing more Western. This is readily achieved through skin, hair and even eye lightening (with lenses and a new experimental medical procedure).

In an effort to promote movies as superior than those produced by competitors in an increasingly capitalistic economy, filmmakers are subscribing to racialized organizing principles by looking for whit*er* and white actors to play Indian roles. Discrimination of relatively darker bodies is not uncommon and indeed advertisements often list skin fairness as a desirable quality in candidates auditioning for roles. According to Goldie Osuri, racialized notions of whiteness are embedded in Indian nationalism and proudly exhibited through Hindi cinema (Osuri, 2008, pp. 114-116). Examples of this can be found while considering the 'progress' towards becoming

whiter formerly darker actors have obtained through skin bleaching. The public interest in film stars and models has provided viewers with ample evidence chronicling their transition from distinguishably Indian to ambiguously exotic.

Sonam Kapoor (Appendix A), Deepika Padukone (Appendix B), Shahrukh Khan (Appendix C: Shahrukh Khan Fair and Handsome Advertisement) and Shahid Kapoor (Appendix D: Shahid Kapoor Vaseline Men Facebook Advertisement) are among the model ambassadors of skin bleaching products as depicted in prominent advertisements (Sen, 2012). Bollywood film producers also seek out actors that convey a multicultural aesthetic, one that is not easily identifiable as Indian because the earlier candidates for these prototypes are actors of mixed ethnicity, in short those with whiter roots (i.e., less Indian but still) than their more "authentic" Indian counterparts in the industry. Due to their lighter skin color, these actors and actresses are at once less Indian, but still epitomize the ideal Indian. Famous Bollywood actors that characterize ambiguous exoticness include Diya Mirza (Appendix E: Diya Mirza The Body Shop Moisture White Advertisement), Lisa Ray (Appendix F: Lisa Ray Expert Skincare Photo) and Katrina Kaif (Appendix G: Katrina Kaif Olay Natural White Advertisement) (Efrem, 2012). Mirza's father is white German while her mother is Bengali; Ray's matrilineal roots include Polish while her father is Bengali; Kaif's light skin is attributable to her European mother and her Kashmiri father (Efrem, 2012).

It would seem that despite the entry of actors presenting dissociation from Indianness, Bollywood's film industry is increasingly searching globally for white actors-which are some of the most well known and highest paid. The importing of wholly non-Indian, nonnative actors and models to play Indian roles in Bollywood films is rapidly increasing. Currently, one of the most popular actresses in Bollywood is Amy Jackson, a British model with no known Indian

lineage who has actually been tanned to look more exotic (Appendix H: Amy Jackson Yardley

London Advertisement) (Sen, 2012). Other actors include Bruna Abdullah, a Brazilian-Arabian

model (Appendix I: Bruna Abdullah Photo) and Giselli Monteiro, also Brazilian (Appendix J:

Giselli Monteiro Photo) (Sen, 2012).

While problematic on multiple levels, the use of foreign actors in Bollywood also

underpins the portrayal of the exotic Other as a nonwhite race that is interchangeable with any

other nonwhite race. Essentializing Oriental characteristics using the subjectivities of the

Western gaze marginalizes the Other further as values depicted are dictated by the canons of

whiteness. In the pursuit of the fairest of them all, Bollywood minimizes the importance placed

on authentic[16] Indian ethnicity in favor of non-Indian superiority accredited through racialized

lenses.

Bollywood filmmakers using non-Indians for Indian roles rely on voiceovers to convey

legitimacy through language, as the vast majority of imported actors do not speak Hindi (Efrem,

2012). Additionally, the film industry goes to considerable lengths to promote the perceived

authenticity (and to promote nationalism) of non-Indians from viewers and the public. As

mentioned, these actors are tanned (but still maintain a whiter complexion relative to most

Indians), their hair is darkened (again within the demarcating boundary of exotic and dark) and

adorned in Indian clothing and jewelry.

Informed by neocolonial ideology and celebrity endorsement, lightening of skin color—

or aesthetic engineering if you will—becomes everyday practice for many Indians seeking to

access perceived and real advantages through emulation of whiteness. According to Sreya Mitra,

Bollywood icons "dominate almost all realms of cinematic idiom, from its economic structuring

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[16] The term authentic is problematic in and of itself as it is a claim to an objective reality and can contribute to the essentializing of groups.

to its textual and narrative conventions" (Mitra, 2012). Nkrumah would cite this contextual analysis of Bollywood as illustrative of neocolonialism that imparts socioeconomic control over the masses implemented through cultural and even lingual structures that uphold imperial dominance. To integrate the two ideas, I postulate that Bollywood actors serve as both the 'transmittees' and transmitters of cultural neocolonialism. Specifically, the former concept refers to actors as utilitarian to Western companies pursuing markets and promoting bleaching creams. As transmitters, actors sanction the consumption of skin lightening products and become the vehicle for negotiating neocolonial cultural sites.

e. Cultural and Racial Assimilation

Assimilation to Western norms is falsely presented as the most effective solution to appeasing postcolonial anxieties through commodity acquisition and whiteness. The film industry identifies and exploits the problem of darkness, while the cosmetics industry provides the alleged solution. The demand for skin-bleaching products has soared in part as a result of neocolonial mentality fueled further by Bollywood's embracement of whiteness and India's capitalist globalized economic approach. Product identification achieved through Bollywood representation has allowed for the narratives of race, class, gender and aesthetics to become intrinsically intertwined into a single metanarrative that manages society according to colorist hierarchies. Bollywood provides the perfect medium for the intersection of these socioeconomic and cultural forms and circulates relevant imageries efficiently among the masses.

In spite of this, there is a growing movement led by prominent dark(er) celebrities towards the dismantling of racial ideals in film and popular culture. The actress Freida Pinto (*Slumdog Millionaire)* is often described as having "dusky" skin color and is often excluded by

media and society from being categorically beautiful. Another famous celebrity in India, former Miss World, Priyanka Chopra, has also been criticized for being too dark to be considered beautiful. In response to prejudices they face, both celebrities have joined the "Dark is Beautiful" campaign in India to promote acceptance of darker skin color.

The campaign is illustrative of burgeoning efforts to challenge beauty ideals and advertisements, interviews, and comments supporting it are slowly becoming more widespread, especially on the Internet. Other noteworthy trends include actresses, such as Aishwarya Rai, who previously endorsed skin-bleaching products through paid advertising, but have begun to denounce them. Furthermore, in the United States, a dark skinned Indian American named Nina Davuluri won the Miss America pageant in 2014 to the surprise of many. Despite this, many Americans and Indians criticized the judges' selection on numerous social media platforms. Some Americans thought she was too exotic or foreign looking to be considered the beauty standard for the United States, while some Indians (diaspora included) commented that she would never have won Miss India due to her dusky skin tone and her being "too Indian" (Chaudhry, 2013)

f. Conclusion

Bollywood as a popular medium representative of mainstream culture illustrates the inculcation of neocolonial ideologies in the minds of Indians. Using theoretical frameworks informed by Said, Foucault, Nkrumah, and Radhika Parameswaran & Cardoza, I have investigated the politics of culture and economies as they relate to pigmentocratic notions. Using these paradigms, I have examined the application of hegemonic systems, including capitalism,

cultural imperialism and neocolonialism to the practical application of everyday life for Indians and diaspora communities.

The intersection of racialized materialities with socioeconomic taxonomies and aesthetic values is realized in the metanarrative of Indian films, which subsequently homogenize culture in conjunction with Western advertising and cosmetic industries. The promotion of pigmentocratic cultural forms produced by neocolonial discourse contributes to the marginalization of darker Indians, thus excluding them from social and political dialogues governing internal affairs. In this way, the market, popular culture and the elites invoke hierarchal arrangements that value whiteness. In India, this problem is exacerbated through numerous micro and macro avenues, including media, condoned practices of societal discrimination and economic and political marginalization of darker skinned bodies. This chapter offers a critique of neocolonialism as a lingering oppressor of Indians, specifically in regards to its effect on deepening the divisions of cultural and social life through pigmentocracy and class.

Chapter VI

Theories for Interrogating Pigmentocracy:

Postcolonial Intersectionality

Introduction

This chapter seeks to provide theoretical framework for examining colonialism, patriarchy, and capitalism in the context of pigmentocracy in India. Although the practice of discrimination based on colorism began centuries ago, it has manifested itself in unexpected ways and is currently expanding and infiltrating the standards of beauty and human value (as aesthetically measured). I posit that Indian women are most susceptible to the societal pressures of obtaining perceived and real advantages through lighter skin. The implications of dark(er) women being viewed as intrinsically lower in value is observed in multifaceted settings, including socially (in both the private and public realms), economically (employment discrimination, higher marriage dowries, consumer targets), and political inferiority (unequal representation in government and media).

Beyond color, the experience of Indian women in a patriarchal and capitalist society is further demarcated by sexism and classism. Other dynamics shaping the lives of Indian women and subsequently preventing equality include religion, geographical location, and language. The marginalization of darker women serves to further fragment the Indian feminist movement by preventing a common group identity from developing, organizing, and uniting. Contemporary Indian feminist scholars, such as Sanjukta Ghosh seek to "re-theorize the fundamental causes of women's oppression in post-colonial India" (Ghosh, 2005, p. 37).

Up until now, the focus of feminist literature regarding India has been primarily on socioeconomic factors, religious differences, caste dominance, educational inequities, patriarchal traditions, domestic violence, lack of political prominence and/or other generalized issues of women's subjugation. Feminism has been approached by scholars and activists in India as a postcolonial matter that explores the need for defining a new Indian identity through the

dismantling of the binary of colonizers and colonized. However, social hierarchies based on gender, power relations, caste, and class must also be considered. As Ghosh posits:

> Different geographies and histories are conflated until difference is lost and one 'third world feminism' becomes interchangeable with another, collapsing into one theoretical model of the multiple struggles of very different women under very different conditions (Ghosh, 2005, page 33).

Postcolonial feminist discourses have considered the intersection of sexism and classism, but further development is necessary, as colorism needs to be taken into consideration when examining Indian women's lived experiences. Feminists need to go beyond generalizations such as caste and class and examine unique aspects of oppression, including pigmentocracy.

This chapter seeks to emphasize "the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed" (Crenshaw, 1994, p. 1244). The dark(er) woman's identity demonstrates how different constructs within India intersect and substantiate the argument that dimensions of oppression do not occur independently. By recognizing the diverse identities of darker women in India through feminist scholarship, a new understanding of the organizing principles of community and society can be developed that allows for greater feminist consciousness. Approaches to feminism in India primarily focus on the experiences of Indian women in general, while at times taking into account differentiating factors such as caste, religion, and class. However, these larger generalizations of women do not take into account variances in skin color. Although the standard paradigm for exploring Indian women's lived experiences offers value, it is limited as it does not apply to those whose lives are shaped by a different set of obstacles (Crenshaw, 1989).

The advantage of existing postcolonial discourse is its capacity to advance consideration of broader aspects of female oppression in formerly colonized spaces by identifying major

constraints and presenting opportunities for intervention. However, by and large, Indian feminists have not broached the concept of intersectionality, as it has been perceived as a fundamentally western theory whose application is less relevant to the women of India. However, I contend that the theory of intersectionality is, in part, an appropriate means for fostering dialogue regarding darker women, for the derivations of pigmentocracy is a symptom of Western ideology. As such, intersectionality theories can be useful for interrogating aspects of pigmentocracy as it relates to whiteness. Furthermore, similar issues regarding Western women of color have been analyzed through the lens of intersectionality and therefore present a useful instrument for forwarding an exploration of colorism. Intersectionality is not a uniquely Western conceptualization for nonwhite women's oppression and can be useful to any group that is oppressed by multiple social matters.

I situate myself within existing feminist scholarship of both intersectionality and postcolonial theories. In order to fully understand why these two theories are most expedient when combined, we need to first examine them independently and in their own right as markers of progress towards the manumission of women in both the West and the East. I will be reviewing literature from intersectionality theorists including Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins, specifically using Crenshaw's "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color" and Collins' *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. I will also be grounding my understanding of postcolonial and neocolonial studies using Chandra Mohanty's renowned piece *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*, Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* and *Black Skin, White Masks*, and Baudrillard's *Simulations*.

Combining the two schools of feminist thought, I introduce a contemporary theory based on the aforementioned concepts that more adequately addresses pigmentocracy as it relates to the darker women of India. I focus on gender and the resulting oppressors of darker women, colonial establishment of a "matrix of domination" using the caste system (Collins, 2000), and the subsequent social outcasting of the darker woman as the outsider within her own culture. I combine these constructs to further develop my case that at their intersection, coupled with capitalistic principles, these conditions produce a system of domination that is oppressive to darker Indian women.

Lastly, I focus on the practices of international, western-based corporations in an effort to elucidate the organizing principles of neocolonial capitalism. More specifically, I elaborate how the sales of these products propagate whiteness not only in the colorist sense, but also by concentrating wealth among white westerners and thus strengthening status and power. These companies prey upon and exploit Indian insecurities relating to identity, color, gender, class, and caste that result from colonialist and imperialistic designs. Included in this demoralized and oppressed group are consumers, laborers in the industry, and even advertisement spokespersons. This is a fundamental tenet of neocolonialism in which power, influence, and wealth are converged in the white Westerner. I further examine the economic dependence and psychological enslavement achieved through postcolonial vulnerability.

a. Intersectionality and Western Feminism

Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw first introduced the sociological theory of intersectionality in an effort to elucidate black women's experience in the United States as distinctly different from that of white middle class women. Western feminism had focused principally on gender

differences as a means for identifying women's oppressions and had only secondarily considered multidimensional sociopolitical factors such as race, class, ethnicity, and other elements of identity (Crenshaw, 1994).

Patricia Hill Colllins also contributes to the prominence of intersectionality by utilizing it within her own feminist discourse and writes:

> Intersectionality is an analysis claiming that systems of race, social class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation and age form mutually constructing features of social organization, which shape black women's experiences and in turn, are shaped by black women (Collins, 2000, p. 299).

Collins also presents the notion of the "outsider within" as a paradigm for assessing, framing, and discussing black women's marginality in the context of sociopolitical and socioeconomic relations. She seeks to dismantle the homogeneity of feminist thought, but also provide a forum that fosters a dialogue for women whose experiences differ racially, socioeconomically, geographically, and so forth. Similar to Chandra Mohanty, Collins provides a context for thinking about women's unique lived experiences. She also posits that many scholars— including many black women—are uniformed about black women's standpoints. Collins maintains there is a limited scope of feminist discourse concerning the lives of oppressed women.

Her contributions to the field of black feminist thought are beneficial to our understanding of how pigmentocracy (in a similar manner as race) works in conjunction with the complex dynamics of class and gender. Furthermore, the outsider within model is useful for contextualizing and conceptualizing intraracial racism. Both Crenshaw and Collins argue that women cannot be viewed as a unified homogenous group because all women do not share the same lived experiences and applying a collective perspective is insufficient for understanding black women's unique situation (Crenshaw, 1994).

According to intersectionality scholar Leslie McCall, prior to the introduction of intersectionality, little epistemological work had been conducted within feminist framework that addressed the experiences of women who are dominated by multiple forms of oppression (McCall, 2007). Collins further contends that considering the intersectionality of numerous factors informing lived experiences is a necessary component for achieving equality in both social and political spheres. In short, black feminists such as Crenshaw and Collins believe that the previously normative women's movement is restricted due to the way it is framed in the white middle class women's genealogy. Prior to intersectionality, the feminist movement had become inaccessible to some due to its assumptions that all women share similar oppressions based on gender. In order to expand beyond the narrowness of white feminism, there existed a need to recognize the diversity among the experiences of women and intersectionality theories serves that purpose, thus giving the non-white, non-middle class women a voice.

Crenshaw further analyzes the plight of black women by considering divisions of labor and violence against women as products of racial discrimination and calls for the use of intersectionality to develop a better understanding of these inequalities. Furthermore, applying concepts of intersectionality to identify the multiplicative matrixes of domination is essential for understanding political and social microcosms and macrocosms. Collins introduced the matrix of domination as a model for understanding the dynamics of power structures in a discussion of black women in the United States. My intention is to apply a similar model to the darker women of India in an effort to understand the complex facets of domination in the East.

b. Postcolonial Theories

As discussed in previous chapters, postcolonial theorists' contribution to discourse examining oppression in the lives of formerly colonized groups is useful for investigating pigmentocracy. In considering women of India, it is helpful to also incorporate the effects of colonialism on men as they correspond to pigmentocracy and the subjugation of women. Fanon offers psychological insight of the colonized as well as the challenges of reclaiming identity and dignity in the wake of colonialism. Both Fanon and Mohanty present differing approaches to evaluating postcolonial landscapes. However, both are expedient for the purposes of exploring pigmentocracy and its manifestations in the lives of both Indian men and women.

Like intersectionality, postcolonial feminist discourse seeks to create a specific framework for understanding how oppression works in the lives of non-white women, but with a focus on third world women rather than African American women. However, unlike most western feminist theories, postcolonial feminism does not equate development of third world women with economic development (Mohanty, 2003). Chandra Mohanty provides a foundation for the underpinnings of my discussion that are grounded in the postcolonial ideologies of her discourse found in *Feminism Without Borders*. Mohanty's work as an antiracist, anti-capitalist feminist explores the unique ways in which women of color face issues of oppression and inequality. One of Mohanty's major themes throughout her work is examining how education and knowledge can help counter systems of domination, including patriarchy, imperialism, and capitalism through feminist solidarity. Mohanty takes into account women's issues in everyday lived experiences, feminist theories and epistemologies, metanarratives, matters of the state, coalitions, and other contexts. Centering much of her work in India as well as black women in the United States, she provides a historical, material, theoretical, and pedagogical framework in

which to examine issues applicable to women and pigmentocracy. Her text offers a distinctive

transnational feminist analysis that she argues is excluded in related discourses:

> While much of the literature on antiglobalization movements markers the centrality of class and
>
> race and, at times, nation in the critique and fight against global capitalism, racialized gender is
>
> still an unmarked category. Racialized gender is significant in this instance because capitalism
>
> utilized the raced and sexed bodies of women in its search for profit globally, and, as I argue, it is
>
> often the experiences of and struggles of poor women of color that allow the most inclusive
>
> analysis as wells as politics in the antiglobalization, struggles (Mohanty, 2003, page 250).

Feminism Without Borders is a foundational text for understanding third world/postcolonial

feminism and valuable for not only investigating women and race, but also the foremost

contributors of oppression in a global context.

Postcolonial feminist thinkers recognize that development of Third World women entails

a much more complex method of analyzing crosscutting factors beyond economics to include

historical and political institutions. As Mohanty maintains, the experience of women in

postcolonial societies differ from those of western women, therefore requiring a separate

feminist approach that considers how colonialism is amalgamated with the political, cultural,

social, and economic realities of third world women's lives.

Also, like intersectionality theorists, postcolonial theorists often find Western feminist

scholarship, specifically liberal feminism, to be universalizing of women's experience (Narayan,

2000). Postcolonial feminists argue that societies affected by colonialism cannot be considered

in the same context as Western societies as they are not interchangeable. Furthermore,

postcolonial notions incorporate women's experience in regards to race and class as pertinent to

a given society while considering the profoundly expansive and long lasting effects of

colonialism. The colonial experience is a unique one in that it comprises multifaceted axes of

domination, including those imposed by the colonizers as well as those inherently found in the culture (Mohanty, 2003). Postcolonial feminism gives voice to the ideology of histories, culture, and ethnicity and thus creates a standpoint for Third World women to launch a customized movement against unique oppressors using their own specific identity politics, rather than those adopted from the West.

Fanon's distinguished work, *The Wretched of the Earth*, provides an in-depth examination of the relationship between colonizers and the colonized, specifically the exploitation, denigration, and violence that result from white domination. Fanon explores the multifaceted challenges facing postcolonial societies, including the lack of unity among natives resulting from residual colonial strategies of divide and conquer; the traumatizing psychological effects of colonial violence, imposition, and control; and the harmful racial ideologies developed and implanted in the imaginations and material realities of the oppressed. Though all colonized subjects experience a degree of psychological repression, it is the dominant group that dictates the term of societal organization in the absence of colonialists. That is not to say that colonialist ideology ceases to have influence. Rather those in power (affluent men) often internalize colonial projects and reaffirm them according to their own cultural practices. Pigmentocracy is an example of how racialized systems in postcolonial states carry on the colonial legacy.

Fanon's writings contribute to ideas about black consciousness and decolonization. Both of these areas help facilitate theorizing of pigmentocracy in postcolonial India as well as in any nonwhite culture. As a psychiatrist, Fanon's work focuses on the psychology of colonization and decolonization processes and is helpful in examining pigmentocracy. In *Black Skin, White Masks,* he argues that psychiatry plays a part in every level of the colonizing and decolonizing process. For colonialists, implementation of a system of dependency and simultaneous exclusion

was critical for ensuring white domination, though it predicates on collective unconsciousness (Fanon, 2008). This entails propaganda heralding the naturally superior qualities of whiteness while simultaneously denouncing nonwhites. Practices included psychiatric evaluations of Algerians, which often concluded that they lacked a cerebral cortex. This unsubstantiated research forwarded the notion that the absence of the evolved component of the brain inevitably predetermined Algerians to be immoral criminals, at birth nonetheless, and therefore unable to govern themselves.

In addition to the manipulation of biology, colonialists also relied on dispersal of misinformation regarding whiteness as inherently superior in every aspect, including militarily, socially, culturally, politically, technologically, economically, and racially. Algerians were treated accordingly as second-rate in every sphere of life, thus instigating their inferiority, which become widely internalized and accepted as truth.

In perpetuating colonial objectives, the French were able to more easily dehumanize, objectify, and reify Algerians, thus allowing for the justification of their imposition of racist ideology. Psychological warfare is an instrumental tool for establishing rationale and eradicating guilt in order to compel military, police, civil servants, the French people, and even the colonized (to a lesser extent) to support colonization as a civilizing project. Race was the leading factor in the effective implementation of constructed differences between colonizers and the colonized. Anti-colonialist efforts recognized this strategy and attempted to reclaim their ethnicities, values, and identities as equal to that of the colonizers. Fanon argues that the psychologies of the colonized must be repaired and transformed in order to demand (and feel deserving of) the same privileges and freedoms that they had come to envy and often resent.

Similarly, in India, Dalits and/or dark individuals are often confined to a narrow categorization that includes the lowliest members of society, including criminals. The reliance on the Aryan theory for upholding racial differences and subsequently the intrinsic superiority of the lighter, upper caste is premised upon biological determinism and used accordingly to maintain power imbalances. The lowest members of society are treated unfairly based on the colonial legacies of scientific, religious, and ideological rationale. In nearly every sphere of life, pigmentocratic ideals prevail and further instill the belief that darker Indians are substandard. Evidence of pigmentocracy is ubiquitous in the occupational, educational, marital, psychological and religious sectors. As such, the prevalence of inferiority complexes among the oppressed is an unsurprising phenomenon that serves to ostracize Others. The meanings associated with skin color are central for implicating the production of essentializations governing white supremacy and black inferiority. Colonialism, imperialism, and globalization forward the near-universality of symbolic meanings attached to skin color.

c. An Amalgam Feminist Theory for Interrogating Pigmentocracy in India

Pigmentocracy contributes to further societal divisions along intraracial, classist, gendered, and caste lines. Furthermore, Indian beauty ideals are governed by skin color and assimilation to Western standards. For my research, I build upon the feminist intersectionality theory as it focuses on the meeting of gender, class, and race. Yet, the theory of intersectionality does not incorporate colonial and imperial ideologies as they relate to postcolonial states. On the other hand, postcolonial discourses consider the intersection of race and class, but further elaboration is necessary, as colorism must be taken into consideration when examining the Indian woman's lived experience. This research seeks to go beyond the respective limitations of

both discourses in order to examine the multiple forms of oppression prevailing in India. Accordingly, I situate myself within existing scholarship of both feminist intersectionality *and* postcolonial theories.

The usefulness of both intersectionality and postcolonial discourses are evident in their applicability to varying marginalized groups in diverse contexts. Both schools of thought have broadened men and women's movements to include previously excluded components such as race and class. As far as creating a more explicit identity, postcolonial feminist theory attempts to do for Indian women what intersectionality theory does for black women in the United States. In spite of this, I argue that beyond the dynamics of gender and class, postcolonial theories (both feminist and non) do not effectively address further differences within social groups and thus are not sufficient for investigating the problem of pigmentocracy in India.

Intersectionality is limited in its scope as it does not encompass the lives of formerly colonized women, but rather focuses solely on black women in the United States. Nonetheless, intersectionality can be valuable in a transnational application through its analysis of the multiple factors that distinctively affect Indian women, including colorism. Its concept of simultaneity encourages Indian feminist thinkers to consider various dimensions of oppression that function dependently to gain a deeper understanding of Indian women's experiences.

The formulation of postcolonial theories represents an evolution in women's movements in India as it provides a more appropriate framework for discourse and analysis. Unlike intersectionality, postcolonial theories, by definition, consider the people of historically colonized societies. In this way, they provide an invaluable means of explaining experiences of oppression that are diverse and contingent on geography, history, and culture (Mohanty, 2003). One of the major critiques of Western feminist discourse is its exclusivity of non-white women,

non-western women, and non-middle class women. However, unlike other Western feminist scholars, Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality recognizes some of these shortcomings and attempts to address them.

Yet, intersectionality falls short in speaking about non-Western women, but that is precisely where postcolonial theory becomes useful. However, postcolonial theory is not able to postulate the Indian women's experience alone as it still represents a universal concept of Indian women. We cannot view all Indian women as a homogenous group or even Indian women within different hierarchal class structures as the same because darker Indian women are situated within a completely separate arrangement of social and political relations.

Postcolonial feminist thought is also limited in that it encompasses Indian women into metacategories based on gender and class and therefore denies one of the principally differentiated circumstances of their existence—degrees of whiteness and blackness. Likewise, postcolonial theories do not adequately consider Indian women's experience at the intersection of gender, race, class/caste, and pigmentation. In an effort to develop an Indian feminist paradigm that more accurately represents darker Indian women, I propose an amalgamation concept of postcolonial intersectionality, a marriage of two prominent discourses that together maximize the ability to overcome the universal persona of women by offsetting the other's limitations.

d. Neocolonial Simulations

Capitalist agents originating largely from the West, including companies like Nivea, Oil of Olay, Neutrogena and Vaseline, further fuel the consumption of skin bleaching products and treatments. These multinational corporations perpetuate whiteness as a beauty standard with

deeper socioeconomic implications through advertisements featuring Bollywood stars. In essence, Western skin bleaching brands construct their capacity in the lives of Indians as a beneficial one that provides a much-demanded supply of cosmetics that offer a means for escaping oppression and acquiring the glamour of celebrities. Indian and Asian companies also participate in the production and distribution of skin bleaching products, mostly functioning in the capacity of local partners with larger Western companies. The advantages of doing so are multifaceted for the parent companies and include cheaper labor, reduced transportation and shipping costs, marketing as authentic Indian products (in order to further conceal racist underpinnings), and the strategic targeting of viable markets (demographically, geographically, etc.).

It is the very nature of capitalist corporations to foster hegemonic values through cultural channels that are exploitative through racism, classism, casteism, sexism and other socially divisive dynamics.   In this way, aspirations to whiteness in India are contributing to a neocolonial movement towards cultural homogenization through mimicry of the Occident. This is in part achieved through lighter and upper caste Indians reproducing the tenets of colonialism through socioeconomic and political vertical organization of people by color and caste. The ideas and images circulated through media further promote the canons of whiteness and encourage Indians to assimilate to Western norms using internal colonialism. Jean Baudrillard expands on the principles of reproduction and emulation, which is then related back to colonialism and whiteness.

For Baudrillard, the problem with a system that is premised on reproductions and copies is that this deception largely goes unnoticed and therefore without examination by the recipients. Reality is signified through simulations so effectively that the latter replaces the former and

inherits its qualities to the extent that what was once real now appears to be what is imitated. Simulations and simulacra, according to Baudrillard, have become efficiently embedded in society and culture to such an extent that the masses are unable to decipher between these and what is actually real. That is to say, images and signs produced in a modern/postmodern era by various industries, including media, cosmetics, popular culture and others, produce false meanings and values.

To illustrate, Baudrillard refers to a fable about an empire that creates a map as large and detailed as the territory it seeks to represent. As the boundaries of the territory changes, the map ceases to be an accurate rendition of the land yet people continue to refer to it and maintain its value as a placeholder in society. Baudrillard argues even though the map becomes disconnected from reality, the meaning ascribed to it allows for the preservation of the simulacrum (the outdated map). As the original territory no longer exists, the simulacrum becomes ordered in such a way that it precedes reality (the outdated territory) and effectually replaces it (Baudrillard, 1983).

Similarly, I argue that postcolonialism serves as a simulation in the context of Indian pigmentocracy in that it functions as reality rather than an outdated model. Simulations, by definition, displace reality. Indians' subscription to pigmentocratic ideals is based on meanings constructed by the West though colonialism is no longer an impetus for racially based hierarchies. Hyperreality (transposing of simulations with reality) becomes normalized as the means for which we organize the world. Consequently, the possibility of distinguishing between the artificial and the authentic becomes exceedingly difficult. In other words, the Occident presents whiteness as the symbol of intrinsic superiority. This claim is portrayed through colonialism, neocolonialism, capitalism, media and other forces as truth and presented to

post/neocolonial sites. Nevertheless, simulations are not always accepted seamlessly as reality.

For example, Indian nationalism attempts to disrupt contemporary views regarding Western

values. Furthermore, the problem of pigmentocracy is being discussed and critiqued in India by

celebrities, scholars, media, bloggers, and so forth now more than ever.

      The acceptance of this claim as truth is evident in the practices of colorism and casteism.

Simulations contribute to the blurring between reality and representation, in part achieved

through construing meaning in ways that are beneficial to those producing the simulations. In

the case of pigmentocracy, the whiter elites in India maintain their dominance over darker

masses through replication of colonial structures. This stratified system is further promulgated

through media (including the Western film industry and its pupil, Bollywood) and products

(especially whitening and bleaching products) originating in the West.

      According to Baudrillard, the vast amount of images and symbols disseminated by

culture industries contribute to an overpowering of our senses, as we cannot infer meaning from

that which has no referent. That is to say, simulations (such as the map in the fable and

colonialism) that are no longer rooted in reality have no basis (other than from the models

themselves) from which to derive value or significance. As this phenomenon of utilizing

symbols and images, particularly whiteness, to express reality persists, the loss of meaning will

inevitably accompany it. Once real meaning is lost, humanity will fall prey to the forces and

mechanisms that shape and influence our world. Undoubtedly, this process leaves us vulnerable

to imposed doctrines concocted by imperialists comprising of capitalists, white supremacists,

elites, and others.

      Additionally, if simulations and simulacra infiltrate not only our material lives, but also

our metaphysical being, then we lose the ability to decipher between truth claims and truth. To

further elucidate this point, Baudrillard discusses the differences between use-value and exchange-value. Exchange-value is consequently disconnected from reality as it has been contrived to represent a system of trade that supplants needs with desires for the purposes of promoting consumerism. On the other hand, use-value is implanted in the notion that worth should not be determined by external factors and players (for purposes of trying to make money). Rather, I argue worth should be established based on the extent to which something is necessary for (stemming from a relationship with reality and meaning) for life as we deem appropriate. Applying Baudrillard's theories of use-value and exchange-value to pigmentocracy, I posit that the latter applies to the preference for whiteness in India. For example, whiteness is promoted in such a way that some Indians believe it is for sale and they can purchase it in a bottle or clinic.

e. Conclusion

Applying intersectionality theory to Indian women's postcolonial experience further helps to illuminate the problem of pigmentocracy, as this has not been previously addressed in this context. Indian women are most susceptible to the societal pressures of seeking perceived advantages through skin fairness. The implication that darker skinned women are intrinsically lower in value disseminates itself in multifaceted ways. In summary, darker-skinned women are discriminated against in several realms, including social (domestically and communally), economic (employment discrimination, higher marriage dowries, consumer targets), and political (unequal representation in government and media).

Aspects of Indian culture, including social and political institutions such as marriage, family, work, media, and government are excessively indoctrinated with whiteness at its intersection with male dominance and class status, consequently making the unlearning process a

challenging one. The severity of the problem in India justifiably calls for a concurrent

implementation of both a top down and bottom up approach. Feminist efforts minimizing

systemic oppression work at micro and macro levels, including everyday life through casual acts

that comprise women's identities and social communities; at the level of cooperative group

engagement, networks and liberation measures aimed at social changes; and lastly at the

pedagogical level concerned with the production of knowledge (Mohanty, 2003).

Although awareness of the whiteness issue is slowly growing in India, pigmentocracy is

largely unacknowledged as more than an aesthetical problem.   It is my hope that the application

of postcolonial intersectionality to pigmentocracy contributes to the understanding of this

problem across castes, religions, and classes by encompassing the lives of poor and/or

uneducated women. Furthermore, as Indian women are quickly increasing their buying power,

they also begin to wield more power as consumers and can directly impact the market.

Consumer advocacy organizations' purpose then would consist of taking a stance against not

only the unsafe practices of skin bleaching, but also the racial and body image distortion invoked

by manufacturing companies, which can be best achieved by viewing the problem through an

intersectional postcolonial lens.

Applying postcolonial intersectionality theory to the Indian woman's historical, social,

and cultural experience allows for incorporation of specific sources of oppression. Western

intersectionality theory alone falls short of addressing India's special situation and does not

attempt to construct new means of capturing unique experiences. Identifying and accepting

differences *of* women as well as *among* women is the first step in creating solidarity for their

common struggle. As Mohanty argues, "emancipatory education [will help in] the building of an

ethics of crossing cultural, sexual, national, class and racial borders" (Mohanty, 2003, p. 10).

Neocolonialism and capitalism serve as vehicles that transmit the canons of whiteness. Using Baudrillard as a referent, I demonstrate the ways in which mimicry leads to the production of copies. These reproductions become entrenched and normalized in society so that they appear as authentic representations. Though simulations become increasingly detached from reality, they maintain an air of authenticity. Equally, I demonstrate that pigmentocracy in India is a product of emulating colonial ideology and whiteness.

Chapter VII

Pigmentocratic Materialities:

Social, Political, Economic, Psychological, and Embodied Implications

Introduction

In an effort to connect the previously discussed theories with material reality, this chapter provides a detailed analysis of how pigmentocracy disproportionately affects women in their lived experiences. Specifically, perceived attractiveness, privileges, and marital preferences. Also included in this discussion are the ways in which lighter skin can extend privileges to women in particular contexts. As previously discussed, fair skin can compensate for lower caste, class, and education. Conversely, dark skin must be compensated through other means, such as higher degrees of the abovementioned. These complex nuances of pigmentocracy in India are why a contemporary theoretical model is useful as they cannot be effectively acknowledged and addressed separately as they occur conjunctionally.

The other primary focus of this chapter is the ways in which material disadvantages and advantages are emphasized through skin bleaching advertisements. I examine two skin bleaching products commercials that contain the overarching message that beauty and dark skin are mutually exclusive. This reinforcing of the benefits of light skin and beauty via the cosmetics industry is contrasted with a satirical film that seeks to expose the darker side of skin bleaching. This section on advertisements of skin bleaching products is intended to build upon the previous chapter's discussion of the gender-specific nature of pigmentocracy and provide an example that attempts to challenge skin bleaching products and advertisements. Lastly, I include an in-depth examination of the harmful nature of skin bleaching products with a focus on physical detriments and socioeconomic factors.

    a. Marital Preferences

Matchmaking is a long-standing tradition in India in which couples (particularly heterosexual) are arranged by family and/or friends according to suitable characteristics, such as caste, class, religion, age, education, and appearances. For example, many matrimonial ads (in both men seeking women and vice versa) include desirable descriptors such as slim and fair. More specifically, personal ads by brides often include the "fair" to increase perceived value on the marriage market and ads by potential grooms often list "fair" as a sought-after characteristic. Having traits regarded as superior increases women's chances of being selected by "better quality" grooms. A prospective bride who is deemed whiter also often requires a lower dowry:

> Darker individuals – particularly girls – usually have a harder time attracting "suitable proposals" and are often discriminated against…In fact, families sometimes demand a higher dowry if the girl is "kali" (the Hindi term for a "black" or dark female) (Pandey, 2004, p. 413).

In her article "Fair Enough? Color and the Commodification of Self in Indian Matrimonials," Jyotsna Vaid posits that skin complexion plays an enormous role in arranged marriages in India. She argues that skin color has "symbolic capital" and serves as a point of negotiation in the marriage market. Furthermore, Edwards, Carter-Tellison and Herring, authors of "For Richer, for Poorer, Whether Dark or Light: Skin Tone, Marital Status, and Spouse's Earnings," argue that one of the most prevalent and prominent indicators of colorism are differential marital patterns. They argue that lighter skinned individuals are more frequently selected as spouses as evidenced in their surveys and findings. The authors also make the case that women experience a higher rate of selection/non-selection (based on lightness/darkness respectively) in the marriage market as compared to men. Their data also implies that there is a positive relationship between light skin color and spousal income.

A discussion of matrimonial ads is essential when considering pigmentocracy as they represent the commodification of brides to the extent that women are marketed as products that

are worthy of selection by men. Matrimonial ads are found in nearly every print source

(including major newspapers, magazines, and even flyers) as well as matchmaking websites.

Matrimonial ads range in length and detail, but physical attributes, including skin color, are

commonly sited characteristics:

> Previous research showed that in matrimonial advertisements, more women than men announced
>
> skin color, and men indicated a preference for fair-skinned brides (Gist, 1953; Pandey, 2004).
>
> Interestingly, none of the advertisers in Pandey's (2004)sample made any reference to 'dark'
>
> complexion. Being light-skinned (also referred to as 'fair' skin) is so important in the Indian
>
> society that hardly any personal ads mention a female's 'wheatish' complexion (instead almost all
>
> emphasize 'fair'); whereas men's ads mention of wheatish complexion is not uncommon
>
> (Pandey, 2004, as cited in Jain & Ramasubramanian, 2009, p. 258).

According to Jain and Ramasubramanian, these ads provide explicitly illustrated

examples of cultural preferences and practices:

> Matrimonial advertisements are a showcase for researchers: they serve as possible socio-cultural
>
> indicators of what Indians believe to be the qualities that make their daughters/sons ideal choices
>
> to become brides/grooms. The desirable qualities mentioned in matrimonial ads often mark the
>
> beginning of a long and complex process of negotiations in the arranged marriage system (Jain &
>
> Ramasubramanian, 2009, p. 256).

Frequently, these ads will provide characteristics such as beautiful, fair, and Brahmin to depict

value adding merits, which will thus help decrease the dowry given to the groom's family.

> The value of the dowry, a function of the bride's 'marketability', correlates with factors such as
>
> her virginity, physical appearance, domestic skills, and education (i.e., the less marketable the
>
> potential bride, the greater the value the dowry must be to attract a suitable spouse) (Sharma,
>
> 1993 as cited in Jain & Ramasubramanian, 2009, p. 255).

To streamline the results, the self-proclaimed largest matchmaking service in the world, Shaadi.com, offers search options to prospective brides and grooms based on characteristics such as age, occupation, caste, religion, and even skin color (including fair and wheatish[17]).

Marital ads demonstrate how higher caste and/or class candidates prefer whiter partners (specifically men seeking women) as this pigmentocratic ideal implies other social currencies (wealth, modernity, beauty, etc.). Another motivating factor for men seeking light(er) brides as well as women seeking lighter grooms is the desire to have light(er) children. The rationale is at least two-fold. Though contested among scholars, claims to Aryan lineage are still prevalent among lighter and higher caste Indians. As discussed in Chapter IV, due to its association with Aryans, light skin is also linked to racial superiority (regardless of the validity of such claims). Though this connection can occur in varying degrees in the popular imagination as well as subconsciously, it may have an affect on mate selection from a seemingly biological standpoint. That is to say, common perceptions of skin color (including its symbolic value) may influence marital selections for purposes of having "racially superior" offspring. Notions of racial superiority extend beyond socioeconomic, sociocultural, sociopolitical, aesthetical, etc., and include traits such as enhanced intelligence, health, morality and so forth.

The second motivation is similar in that the real and perceived benefits of whiteness are well known among Indians. As such, future parents (as well as other family members) are often concerned with their children's future. Having a light skin mother can potentially increase the likelihood of having similarly colored children, which would increase opportunities for education, occupations, and/or marriage.

The liberalization of India's economy in the 1990s also affects the ways in which pigmentocracy factors in marital arrangements. Women are decreasingly at the mercy of male

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[17] Wheatish refers to skin color that is neither light nor dark.

preferences (and society) and are able to exert their own preferences. These developments

notwithstanding, women who have the luxury of not working are also desirable candidates due to

their privileged status. As such, women do not have to be as reliant on their physical attributes,

particularly skin color, in order to marry well. Having an education and reputable profession

(despite caste designations) allows for women to participate in the negotiation process rather

than being a form of currency. For example, a dark-skinned woman who is well educated with a

respectable job will have leverage in the marriage market and may be able to offset her presumed

"aesthetic limitations" through her socioeconomic status.

As stated, caste and even religious differences can also be compensated with light skin

color in arranged marriages. Similarly, upper caste and/or class status can compensate for dark

skin color. In a culture which often values males over females, darker women are often deemed

by society as burdens, especially in the financial sense (i.e., dowries). Yet, employment beyond

domestic duties is allowing women to increasingly improve their perceived value, independent of

aesthetics, including skin color. However, as previously discussed, dark skin color still serves as

a site of discrimination that can hinder opportunities in the educational, occupational, and marital

sectors. Moreover, Indian culture still largely emphasizes traditional roles for wives as well as

simultaneously embracing working outside of the home.

> Although increasing numbers of women seek and secure employment outside their homes, the
>
> concept of the ideal Indian wife remains someone who exhibits the nurturing qualities of a
>
> domestic caregiver while also embodying masculine agency and independence in the workplace
>
> (Jain & Ramasubramanian, 2009, p. 254).

Women with light skin color are the most likely to fit this ideal based on several contingencies.

To begin, fairer women have more advantages in the job market. Their association with higher

caste and/or class as well as perceived attractiveness also serves as an advantage when searching

for jobs. Additionally, women with lighter complexions are regarded as more feminine, virtuous, and chaste—qualities valued in a wife as well as a mother.

Despite the complexities of marriage negotiations, women who embody the trifecta of idealness—including high caste, class, and light skin—often fare the best in matchmaking agreements. Though love-marriages are on the rise in India, arrangements are still the preferential method (Puri, 2000). Moreover, Indian culture emphasizes marriage as a combining of families. As such, familial (including elders and even extended family) preferences must be taken into consideration during social exchanges. In addition, the status of a bride or groom's family can reflect on the spouse's family, thereby further accentuating symbols of status, such as skin color, wealth, education, and caste.

b. Advertisements for Skin Bleaching Products

Due to the popularity of Bollywood films, stars are frequently employed as models for skin bleaching advertisements and thus increase appeal to potential buyers. Ensuring a continued preference for light skin serves the interests of corporations in many ways. Though corporations are more preoccupied with fostering profits than whiteness, they indirectly participate in the racialization of nonwhites. The aesthetic preference for whiteness is particularly widespread in postcolonial states and is further promulgated through globalization and cultural imperialism. The ensuing disadvantages of dark skin are used as a selling point for skin-bleaching manufacturers. Targeting dark skin is also an extremely advantageous strategy, as skin-bleaching products require long term (if not life long) usage, thus ensuring consumption.

In their article, "Melanin on the Margins: Advertising and the Cultural Politics Fair/Light/White Beauty in India," Parameswaran and Cardoza explore the multinational

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corporations invested in the promotion, distribution, and consumption of skin bleaching creams in India. The authors situate themselves in existing colorist discourse that considers the intersection of caste, class, and gender while expanding scholarship on the effects of the media on consumerism in an emerging market. The medium for which Parameswaran and Condoza examine popular representations include television ad magazines, while their methods primarily consist of phenomenology, critical social research, and visual research.

In the aforementioned article, the authors conduct an analysis of visual imagery, which is expedient for the purposes of considering variations in skin color, especially when related to media representations of beauty.

> This monograph's textual analysis of the symbolic codes of advertising argues that audiences are persuaded to register discourses of beauty as part of a larger system of overlapping statements—global mobility/local authenticity, tradition/modernity, and nationalism/cosmopolitanism—about particular geographies (Parameswaran & Cardoza, 2009, p. 218).

In other words, beauty is a politicized concept that derives from a multitude of shifting forces and dynamics. Often, who is deemed beautiful is a reflection of a conglomerate of overlapping attributes that go beyond the aesthetics and incorporate macrocosmic values (such as modern, urban, advanced, etc.).

Capitalist spheres of power influence the politics of culture. The result is a relationship of dependency that is constructed between those in power and those attempting to access that power through emulation. In this way, skin-bleaching companies, relying on Bollywood celebrities, sell the belief that whiteness is fundamentally superior, with reliance on socioeconomic and aesthetic benefits as validation of these claims. In reality, lighter skin does yield material advantages. However, companies are propagating and intensifying pre-existing stereotypes and socioeconomic realities and exploiting darker Indians. Intraracial inequality

serves as a profitable repository for not only Western cosmetic industries, but also as a method for preserving racialized hierarchies and the privileges that accompany dominant groups. In short, cultural politico economies rather than military and government regimes become the neocolonial site of imperialism.

As previously discussed, the popular attitude regarding beauty standards in India often equate light skin with attractiveness. Skin bleaching companies capitalize on this notion as well as perpetuate it through advertisements for their products. These advertisements reinforce beliefs that beauty (and thus value) can only be achieved through skin whiteness, which is most evident in the company name *Fair & Lovely*. That is to say, advertisements present beauty and whiteness as qualities that are essentially concomitant and cannot occur independently. Conversely, they insinuate that darkness and beauty are mutually exclusive. Companies promoting skin-bleaching creams also focus on the economical disadvantages of darker skinned women such as higher dowries (as previously mentioned), but also lack of employment opportunities.

Companies promoting skin bleaching creams, cleansers, and pills largely focus on the advantages of lighter skin (such as attaining better spouses, jobs, and treatment) and/or the economic disadvantages of darker skin (such as higher dowries and lack of employment opportunities). In one such ad for *Fair & Lovely* skin cream depicted by Karan (2008), a woman's parents are shown as being completely dependent on her income because they do not have a son. Her earnings are depicted as inadequate through her inability to afford milk and the father's wish for a son over a daughter. The daughter overhears her parents' disappointment and becomes upset by her apparent failure as a provider for the family. She then turns to *Fair & Lovely* as a solution to all of her problems. After using the product and purportedly becoming

whiter, the daughter's beauty impresses interviewers for an airline stewardess position and she

not only gets the job, but also increases her value and parents' satisfaction (Karan, 2008).

In another similar commercial for *Fair & Lovely*, a young girl and her father travel (via a

motorized rickshaw nonetheless) to the city in hopes of securing a job with a cosmetic company.

Both the father and daughter are dressed in traditional Indian clothing and both have darker

complexions. Upon entering the building, they are greeted by a light skinned receptionist

wearing western clothing. She looks at the girl, rolls her eyes and laughs as she tells her that it is

a modern beauty company and turns them away. Rejected, they travel back home and the father

deems it his duty to provide *Fair & Lovely* for his daughter. After using the product, the girl

becomes considerably lighter and returns to the company wearing more contemporary clothing.

The same receptionist is in disbelief when she sees the girl and a businessman in a suit instantly

notices her. The next scene is of the girl jet setting (presumably as a result of landing the job)

and wearing western clothing (*Fair & Lovely* ad, n.d.). As the ad depicts, a girl's beauty affects

all aspects of her life, including job opportunities, romance, and her worth as a daughter, and is

therefore her most important asset.

These commercials serve as important cultural artifacts that provide insight into the

values of Indian society. To begin, both ads focus on the women's skin color for job-seeking

endeavors. Furthermore, both jobs are stereotypically gendered positions (air stewardess and

beauty company, respectively) that emphasize attractiveness in successful candidates. Secondly,

the role of both fathers suggests a responsibility to their daughters, while underscoring the

absence of sons. The viewer is led to believe that fathers have a duty to help their daughters.

Conversely, Indian society places a strong preference on sons (as indicated in the father in the

first ad wishing he had a son), in part due to their ability to financially contribute to their

families. Women are regarded as deficits due to their lower earning capabilities as well as dowries. Furthermore, sons are often obligated to support their parents, whereas daughters are "given away" to their husbands' families.

In both advertisements, the daughters' values are measured in socioeconomic terms. That is, in both instances, job attainment is the point in which the daughters become less burdensome and more contributory, though not as much as would-be sons. Yet, neither job securement nor parental satisfaction would have been possible if it were not for the transformation of the girls' dark skin. In this way, women's material (including financial) and ideological (beauty, potential) value is intricately tied to light skin, though limited by gender.

Another prominent feature of both advertisements is the prevalence of dichotomies signaling the preference for a new modern Indian, while simultaneously rejecting outdated, traditional modes of behavior. For example, the first ad centers on the prestige of being an airline stewardess. Attainment of such a position confirms not only a woman's attractiveness, but also her aptitude for becoming culturally versed. Modernity is premised on the notion of embracing progress in forms such as globalization and technology. Working for an airline projects these values, but within the acceptable boundaries of Indian culture, specifically, the role of women as attendants. It is also my contention that lighter skin conveys an ambiguous exoticness, which may be desirable in settings such as airlines in which more Westernized (often conflated with universal) standards of beauty are preferred. In this way, the light skinned woman's body at once portrays attractiveness and modernity without breaching the parameters of the ideal Indian female.

Similarly, the second ad also represents the advantages of modernity and the disadvantages of certain traditions, as defined by Indian culture. Prior to her transformation, the

girl applying for the position at the cosmetics company is the epitome of all things "Indian." Specifically, her clothing, hair (traditional braided plaits), town, mode of transportation, and skin color. In this context, dark bodies serve as the site in which backwardness, lack of privilege, unattractiveness, and witlessness merge. In reality, not being fashionable and or light skinned can affect employment opportunities, as well as whether or not one is viewed as attractive. In this way, appearances, including skin color, dress, and hairstyle can indicate modernity or primitivity.

Once she starts using *Fair & Lovely* bleaching cream and lightens her skin, modernity inevitably follows. Upon returning to the company alone (i.e., as an independent woman), with open hair, fashionable clothing, lighter skin and confidence, she properly exhibits modern characteristics, though again within the acceptable standards of Indian culture. Lastly, she is shown disembarking from a jet with photographers waiting to take her picture. Again, the use of airplanes in the storyline conveys privilege, modernity, being cultured, as well as not being tied to a fixed time and space.

After being rejected by the company, there is a scene (intended to be altruistic and therefore heartwarming) in which her father contemplates how he can help his daughter. The solution is skin bleaching cream. The resulting message is that a good father equips his daughter with the necessary tools for her success. In this way, companies making skin-bleaching products are targeting not only girls, but also fathers by exploiting paternal responsibilities as well as the humiliation associated with having seemingly dark daughters.

c. **Resistance to Pigmentocracy**

Despite the prevalence of these types of advertisements, there are also parodies that seek to ridicule the nature of not only skin bleaching products and their unrealistic results, but also the implications of preferences for whiteness in India. However, they are few and far between and often lack the financial backing and marketing to be dispersed widely. In addition, they are commonly viewable only online and therefore inaccessible to many.

In satirical form, Nicholas Kharkongor directs a short film (approximately 2.5 minutes) titled *Fair and Lowly* (2012). In the film, a darker Indian woman is telling a doctor she suffers from an inferiority complex and domestic abuse due to her darker skin. The doctor then tells her she needs *South Asian Paints Fairness Cream*, which is an actual paint. The available colors include virginal white ("for purity and chastity"), paneer white ("specially for vegetarians"), deepika white ("for film star whiteness"), and others (Kharkongor, 2012). The woman paints her face white as does her family and the film concludes with a scene of a (different) white family. The film ends with the doctor's declaration "remember, white family is happy family" (Kharkongor, 2012).

Although this film is a spoof, it engages with notions that are rooted in reality. Specifically, women's feelings of inferiority and ugliness as well as being abused for having darker skin color are examples of some of the effects of pigmentocracy in India. The short film imitates reality in that the content is based on real and perceived disadvantages of dark skin. Furthermore, it illuminates the extent of pigmentocratic issues, including psychological and physical. The woman's desperate plea for help from the doctor also indicates the degree of internalization that women suffer due to being considered dark(er) (by others or themselves). In other words, the woman blames herself and her unsightly appearances for her problems with self-esteem and domestic violence, rather than the actual sources.

As the director, Khargonger attempts to satirize the social conventions associated with skin color allow for the problems to be illuminated through ridicule. Using real implications of dark skin color as well as poking fun at the skin bleaching industry, the film's director attempts to bring attention to the outrageous nature of racism and the industry that preys upon it.

Currently, the video is only viewable through YouTube and has less than 50,000 views. In the comments posted on YouTube by viewers, many were complimentary and praised the film's motives. One viewer wrote "excellent ... sums up a serious problem in a totally funny way ... thumbs up" (Khargonger, 2012). Another wrote "this ad is too ahead of its time. Indians still like to bash on their dark skin color" (Khargonger, 2012). The more critical comments included "racists" and "if this was white people painting black paint on their skin, you would probably get charged and banned" (Khargonger, 2012). The short film and the above comments illustrate the controversial nature of pigmentocracy, including the ways in which it manifests in everyday life and society as well as if it is perceived as a beauty preference and/or intraracial racism.

In many actual skin-bleaching commercials, the products are presented as cosmetic in nature, with an emphasis on the advantages of being fair and beautiful. The value of Khargonger's parody is that it offers a more grim (though realistic) view of pigmentocracy that problematizes society's discrimination against dark skin color, rather than skin color itself. The atrocious effects of pigmentocracy are often not openly acknowledged socially or in popular culture. Discriminating against an individual because he/she is *unattractive* is more acceptable than discriminating against his/her skin color or *racism*. Skin bleaching advertisements effectively emphasize skin lightness as a surface beauty ideal (which is more subjective in that there are no clearly defined right/wrong in aesthetical preferences) and often closely integrate the two concepts. On the other hand, *Fair and Lowly* highlights the below-the-surface meanings

attached to skin color that goes beyond appearances (which is less subjective in that racism is never acceptable).

For example, in the first *Fair & Lovely* ad, it is difficult to find fault with the girl's desire to improve her appearances and opportunities (functioning on the assumption that everyone wants to be attractive). The message that beauty *and* whiteness offers advantages is more readily acceptable than whiteness alone affords opportunities. On the flip side, in the spoof *Fair and Lowly*, the racist disadvantages of pigmentocracy are exposed, in this case poor self-esteem and domestic abuse. Lastly, the actress's literal painting of her face with white paint also parodies the ways in which skin-bleaching products are presented (and often treated) as cosmetics, which are less politicized and controversial.

d. The Problem with Skin Bleaching Products

The very real negative consequences of having darker skin has allowed manufacturing companies to effectively identify their marketing niche and develop strategies to successfully conceal and transform the underlying genealogy of preference for skin whiteness. Skin bleaching creams are presented as toiletries and cosmetic products, in much the same way shampoos and lipsticks are presented to women as beauty essentials (Karan, 2008). The problem with this view is that the origin and implications of whiteness reveal an ongoing struggle for domination and power, but categorizing skin bleaching creams as necessary beauty/cosmetic products undermines their political, social, and economic significance.

Skin bleaching companies target all women (and increasingly men) as the message is that one can never be too white. Due to their limited buying power, manufacturers of these products have started selling smaller sizes that even the desperately poor can afford (Karan, 2008).

Presenting and marketing these products as an obtainable necessity leads to the further disenfranchisement of rural, underprivileged women. According to Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "…the market for skin lighteners, although global in scope, is also highly decentralized and segmented along socioeconomic, age, national, ethnic, racial, and cultural lines" (Glenn, 2009, p. 168). The basis of Glenn's argument is that white skin color serves as global symbolic capital resulting from a "Western dominated global system" (Glenn, 2009, p. 167) in which whiteness is transmitted as superior. To this end, the principal agents of the capitalist system that promote skin-bleaching products are the multinational (often western based) manufacturers.

The safety and risk factors of skin lightening treatments are intentionally minimized, specifically the harsh active ingredients used to lighten skin, including mercury derivatives and hydroquinone, which have been linked to neurotoxicity and immunotoxicity (Shankar & Subish, 2007). Additionally, extensive studies in the area of efficacy and safety of skin lightening are lacking (Shankar, Giri & Palaian, 2006). Increasingly more reports and studies are being published in popular media as well as scholarly journals that warn consumers of the risk of skin bleaching products. Yet, sales for the products continue to increase year over year. In some cases of informed consumers, whiteness may be valued over healthiness, and/or warnings are not taken seriously. For these individuals, the advantages of (namely socioeconomic) outweigh the disadvantages of skin bleaching (see Appendices K-N: Hydroquinone Cream Side Effects 1.1-1.4).

Though harmful, western-based companies such as Pond's, Vaseline, L'Oreal, Garnier, Oil of Olay, Neutrogena, and others exhibit some (though clearly insufficient) caution in the production and dispersal of their bleaching products. According to the companies as well as widely believed perceptions, the standards for ingredients as well as the research and testing

done prior to sale contribute to the relatively higher quality of the products as well as the higher cost. As such, these products are often inaccessible to those of lower socioeconomic status. Though smaller trial sizes are often available at lower prices, the products often require continual and regular use. For many, the cost of western commodities is prohibitive, but the desire to lighten one's skin serves as a motivator for uncovering other channels for skin-bleaching products. Accordingly, the "black" market supplies products for those who cannot afford name brands. Often, these products contain more dangerous and unknown ingredients compared to their mass produced counterparts.

In addition, women seeking to become fairer through skin altering bleaching treatments are succumbing to androcentric residual notions of race, class, and caste advanced by colonizers. In short, whiteness as a colonial inheritance has become indigenized. These social constructs perpetuate the privileging of males through a system that reifies and subjugates women's bodies based on the rationale of biological determinism. A recent and controversial skin bleaching products/methods to be introduced to Indian markets is vaginal washes (Appendix O: Clean and Dry Freshness + Fairness Advertisement) that are promoted through ads in which a female is concerned about pleasing her male partner. The power relations confirmed through practices such as these (patriarchal and racial) result in the reinforcement of hierarchies while simultaneously reducing the value of women through objectification.

e. Conclusion

A light-skinned wife can impart a specific kind of status related to her husband's ability to outcompete others. That is, she is a symbol of his success in the marriage market as fair brides are often the most coveted. Regardless of whether the husband is of high caste, class, or

educated, the societal assumption is that he must be superior in some way in order to secure such

a prized bride. That being said, more often than not, men who seek to marry fair, attractive

brides possess competitive qualities, often related to professions and/or socioeconomic status.

Social scientists refer to the negotiation of men's socioeconomic value for women's

attractiveness as the social exchange theory:

> Social exchange theory suggests an exchange of rewards, costs, material, and social entities.
>
> According to the theory: 'Individuals evaluate relationships in a relatively rational manner akin to
>
> an economic analysis'(Miller, 2005, p. 170). Several researchers have tested the exchange theory
>
> that hypothesizes that men are likely to offer financial stability in exchange for women's physical
>
> attractiveness, and vice versa for women (de Sousa Campos et al., 2002; Koestner & Wheeler,
>
> 1988; Rajecki, Bledsoe, & Rasmussen, 1991 as cited in Jain & Ramasubramanian, 2009, p. 259).

The implications of the social exchange theory present in matrimonial ads and skin bleaching ads

serve to reinforce pigmentocratic ideals in Indian society. Working in tandem, they perpetuate

the notion that light skin color is a necessary characteristic of beauty. Additionally, skin-

bleaching advertisements also correlate light skin color with better employment opportunities,

thus capturing and leveraging both professional and personal aspects of women's lives.

Skin bleaching manufacturers profit from through the vehicles of cultural imperialism

and capitalism and in doing so, play a large role in perpetuating the contemporary ideals of

whiteness and the Othering process (whether intentionally or otherwise). Corporations

piggyback on established Western ideologies in order to foster demand for their bleaching

products. In the case of bleaching products in India, multinational companies did not necessarily

create demand. Rather they effectively identified a potential market (often former colonized

spaces) based on the groundwork laid by Westerners before them and exploited the resulting

insecurities.

Chapter VIII

Universalized Localities of Intraracism:

Parallels of Indian Pigmentocracy in the Global Context

"I do not laugh. I am quite straight-faced as I ask soberly: But what on earth is whiteness that one should so desire it? Then always, somehow, some way, silently but clearly, I am given to understand that whiteness is the ownership of the earth forever and ever, Amen! Now what is the effect on a man or a nation when it comes passionately to believe such an extraordinary dictum as this? That nations are coming to believe it is manifest daily. Wave on wave, each with increasing virulence, is dashing this new religion of whiteness on the shores of our time."

~W.E.B. Du Bois, *Darkwater*

Introduction

Pigmentocracy in India is commonly thought to be enacted by elites in an effort to access privileges through the suppression of inferior groups. I supplement this idea by arguing that pigmentocracy also serves to minimize disadvantages. That is to say, only white European descendants can benefit from the full advantages of whiteness. Yet in some cases, lighter nonwhites can approach, and at times breach, the parameters of whiteness and access some of its advantages. At best, nonwhites in pigmentocratic societies worldwide can seek to decrease their disadvantaged state. However, most will never experience the same level of privileges that whites enjoy. Though the distinction between accessing privileges and minimizing disadvantages may seem nominal, it is in fact significant. The seemingly scarce benefits accompanying whiteness in capitalist states leads to competition among oppressed nonwhites, thus driving internal divisions. As a result, color and class taxonomies are established among racialized Others in hopes of gaining (limited) entry into whiteness.

Pigmentocracy occurs in many nonwhite cultures and spaces, including India, China, the Philippines, Japan, South Africa, Algeria, the United States, Mexico, and Brazil. Pigmentocracy manifests itself differently in each context, but there are broad patterns that subsist across time and space. India is my reference point for comparison of pigmentocracy in other areas around the world. However, in doing so, my intention is not to imply that colorism originated in India or that its significance to India is any way more critical than in other areas. Rather, my goal is to extend my understanding of India's pigmentocracy to a broader application in which similarities and differences are contextualized by unique histories, cultures, economies, and other factors:

> 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…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 (Hall, 2013, p.vii).

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the multitude of ways in which the effects of colonialism, imperialism, and globalization have pigmentocratically-impacted cultures around the world. I explore a hosts of issues in diverse contexts, including marriage, miscegenation, indigeneity, and media. In discussing pigmentocracy in the global sense, local nuances must also be considered as pigmentocracy occurs in unique ways that vary depending on histories, cultures, economies, customs, and other factors. Yet, similarities across geographies are also present and indicate larger patterns informed by colonialism, globalization, imperialism, and capitalism. Many of these topics have been discussed in previous chapters related to India, but my goal is to extend the dialogue on pigmentocracy to other areas in an effort to connect broader patterns.

Furthermore, I ground much of my discussion on the premise that according to Rondilla, "skin color marks the civilized and modern from the savage and backward" (Rondilla, 2009, p. 65).

An insightful question posed by Radhika Parameswaran in her article "Reading the Visual, Tracking the Global: Postcolonial Feminist Methodology and the Chameleon Codes of Resistance," is: "how is the supremacy of the visual as a symbolic value of globalization linked to the repressive historical discourses of Western science and colonial conquest and trade?" (Parameswaran, 2008, p. 409). In response, I argue that the national consciousness of postcolonial, neocolonial, and culturally imperialized states of the global east and south is in part informed (in varying degrees) by western principles. These designs of whiteness contribute to pigmentocracy and are distributed through influential macro channels such as media, globalization, colonial models, religion, and capitalism. Likewise, micro systems, such as schools, families, communities, social attitudes, churches, and so forth can also contribute to the phenomenon of colorism. The effects of macro and micro systems can include a lack or overabundance of ethnic solidarity; divisions of labor and uneven distribution of wealth; exclusion of the proletariat from dominant discourse; and intraracial tensions resulting from differences in religion, caste, gender, geography, class, and so forth.

The question of how and why racism and pigmentocracy developed is often addressed in various degrees in discourses relating to oppression and inequalities. In an effort to minimally contextualize the roots of colorism that are applicable across time, space, cultures, values, and so forth, I refer to a passage in *The Color Complex:*

> A more sociologically based possibility has to do with the hundreds of years of European dominance, both in the Americas and in many countries elsewhere, that has forged a seemingly unbreakable link between color and status. In short, light skin both signifies and grants power by association (Russell-Cole, et. al., 2013, p. 158).

a. On Religion and (Im)Morality

As previously discussed, according to widespread beliefs informed by Hindu scriptures, caste designations are divine will. Those of the upper echelons are considered blessed and conversely, lower castes/outcastes ("Untouchables") have been condemned for past sins (Dirks, 2001). In addition, Dalits are thought of by caste members as impure and therefore polluting, due to their association with professions related to death and other "unclean" tasks. Further edicts regarding skin color (*varnas*) are present in the *Rigveda* (Ayyar & Khandare, 2013). Comparably,

> Like India, Japan has had a class of citizens derisively called 'Untouchable.' The official name of this minority group is Burakumin, and predictably the Burakumin are the ones with the darkest skin. The Burakumin were actually once slaves in Japan, assigned in the feudal Japanese caste system to jobs associated with death—as executioners, butchers, and undertakers (Russell-Cole, et. al., 2013, p. 37).

Buddhism, originating from India and influenced by Hinduism, was introduced to Japan in the mid-sixth century CE (Alldritt, 2013). Like Hinduism, "Buddhism is often associated with purity/impurity in its opprobrium against killing and eating meat. This negative attitude was extrapolated to the handling of dead animals and their byproducts" (Alldritt, 2013, p. 336). As a result, those whose work entailed killing or handling of dead bodies were relegated to the status of ritually unclean, as were family members. This denigration persists across generations and even occupations as the label of Burakumin is fixed to names, places, class, and skin color. In addition to religious dogmas, modernity and Western ideology contributes to the outcasting of Burakumin:

> The arrival of Western discourses of "race, nation, and capital," to borrow Amos's description, redefined the qualities that needed to be quarantined from the rest of society behind the *cordon*

sanitaire, as the Meiji state sought to redefine the Japanese as a modern, civilized, and wealthy nation possessing a peerless ethnic homogeneity centered upon an ancient and sacrosanct imperial line. Groups that exhibited qualities anathema to this ideal image were rapidly marginalized through a discourse that envisioned these qualities as intrinsic to whom they were, as the state and civil society alike discursively purged "Japan" of poverty, disease, and difference. (Bayliss, 2013, p. 458-459).

Burakumin, like the Dalits of India, represent the ways in which traditional modes of thinking and organizing society convene with modernist, Western values. Hinduism in India and Buddhism in Japan provide a distinctive platform for justifying intraracial prejudices. Introduced through imperialism and colonialism, Western notions of modernity combined (and often working in conjunction) with existing religious principles, have led to the oppression of Dalits and Burakumin in areas of employment, housing, education, occupation, and social relations, such as marriages.

The influences of Hinduism in India and Buddhism in Japan regarding impurity/purity have been augmented with modern values, such as cleanliness, race, criminality, and nationhood imported from the West (Amos, 2011). The combined result is the ostracization of Dalits and Burakumin along color, class, religious, and even temporal (modern/non-modern) and spatial ("slums") lines. In both India and Japan, these groups of outcastes symbolize primitivity and are often viewed by the more accepted members as antithetical towards the goals of progress (in terms of technology, economy, military, politics, etc.) , nationalism, and global competitiveness. Like Dalits, Burakumin also face subjugation closely resembling that of racial discrimination.

   b. *Colonialism, Caste, and the Color Continuum*

The legacies of domination and colonialism have left a lasting impression in the colonized imagination, government and political systems, economy, laws, and sociocultural values. Additionally, colonialism and imperialism contribute to a pigmentocratic hierarchy. Beyond the dichotomies of white and black, in postcolonial and imperialized societies, a color continuum is present in which people are placed in pigmentocratic taxonomies. For example, in the Philippines, the United States, and Brazil, the ranges of skin color can result from natural variances, white settlement, interracial mixing, and the slave trade, but white is consistently at the top and black at the bottom. I argue that this hierarchical arrangement based on skin color as well as the associated characteristics (such as class, attractiveness, etc.) functions similarly to the caste system in India. I describe caste as social ranking based on factors such as race, skin color, occupation, history, and socioeconomic status. Like castes in India, one is born into a group designated by skin color and faces privileges and/or prejudices accordingly. Additionally, those in the higher echelons of colorist social organization are considered to be the ideal members of society due to their embodiment of nationalism, modernity, and attractiveness. This section explores the ways in which colonialism informs casteist practices based on skin color in Southeast Asia, the United States, and Brazil. Using the Indian pigmentocratic model as a referent, I seek to draw international parallels linking practices and values, such as caste, beauty standards, and skin bleaching.

The ongoing postcolonial struggle for states to reestablish themselves as independent reflects the sundry challenges they face. According to Pandey, postcolonial states are confronted with "the worst effects of feudal and colonial relations, long-established patriarchal and familial structures, and the extreme inequality—the entrenched hierarchies and skewed access to

resources—that they perpetuated" (Pandey, 2013, p. 17). These colonial models were often maintained or evoked in the rebuilding process.

Additionally, a reconceived nationalism is developed by formerly colonized people in an effort to assert autonomy as well as further common goals. In the rebuilding and goal setting processes, postcolonial states must also consider the projects of modernity as extensions of nationalism. Often, colonial and imperial apparatuses influence developments in the areas of nationhood and progress among newly independent states. The colonial model of divide and rule is often reproduced by native elites and include the continuing of differentials according to class, skin color, gender, and in some cases, caste. Subsequently, the defining characteristics of in-groups and out-groups are often along these lines. As Benedict Anderson writes, "in this way, nation-ness is assimilated to skin-colour, gender, parentage and birth-era—all those things one can not help" (Anderson, 1983, p. 143).

In postcolonial settings, those who embody the ideals of nationhood and modernity are considered (ideological) members of the state. Those outside of the envisioned model, including those who represent outdated versions of nationalism, are often ideologically excluded and Othered in much the same way as the colonial/native divide. In many postcolonial sites, poverty, rurality, lack of cultivation, and dark skin color are defining characteristics of the non-modern individual. As such, those who are able to embrace specific colonial legacies as they relate to nationalism and modernity are deemed desirable members of the state by the ruling class. However, not all who wish to participate in rebuilding projects can do so due to limitations beyond their control, including skin color. Indeed, the effects of colonialism are evident in the racialized ideologies prevalent in many postcolonial states.

As discussed in previous chapters, colonialism in India has largely informed pigmentocratic values. Equally, the Philippines also has a long history of colonialism that has been influential in the building of the independent state. In particular, the Philippines have inherited preferences for whiteness. The racial divide between colonizers/colonized was blurred during the Age of Discovery. "White European explorers began colonizing Filipino territory, and bloodlines were mixed further (Russell-Cole, et. al., 2013, p. 37). The authors further contend:

> U.S. colonial administrators, many of them military officers from the South, seem to have drawn American-style Jim Crow racial distinctions, including the taking of *mestizo*[18] concubines by White soldiers in preference over darker women (the Americans included general Douglas MacArthur). So the racial marking of a biological sort that was begun in the Philippines late in the Spanish colonial era was intensified during the American period, in support of United States colonial domination (Rondilla & Spickard, 2007, p. 54).

One of the results of colonialism and interracial mixing in the Philippines is a colorist hierarchy that delineates the range of value according to degrees of whiteness. According to Rondilla and Spickard, this color stratification is attributed to U.S. colonization and hegemony and "the creation of a fairly large class of *mestizoisie*" (Rondilla & Spickard, 2007, p. 54). That is to say, *mestizos* served as a color intermediary between white colonialists and non-mixed natives. Due to their link to both whiteness and Philippine indigeneity, *mestizos* represent the ideals of the modern nation state. Vicente Rafael writes:

> Mestizoness in the Philippines has implied, at least since the nineteenth century, a certain proximity to the outside sources of power without, however, being totally absorbed by them…mestizoness comes to imply a perpetual and…privileged liminality: the occupation of the

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[18] Mestizo is a Spanish term referring to people of European (i.e. colonizers) and native (i.e. colonized) lineage.

crossroads between Spain and the Philippines, Hollywood and Manila (as cited in Rondilla &

Spickard, 2007, p. 54).

Rondilla further argues, "one of the many ways that the legacy of U.S. imperialism has impacted

Filipinos is with respect to skin color and ideas of civility, cleanliness, and beauty" (Rondilla,

2012, pp. 24-25). In short, these characteristics are often associated with modernity. As is the

case in India, the importance placed on light skin color is the impetus for the practice of skin

bleaching. The benefits of light skin in the Philippines are also similar to those in India. Areas

of life affected by skin color include marital preferences, socioeconomic status, and societal

treatment.

The Philippines has one of the highest consumption of skin bleaching products, with

approximately fifty percent of Filipino women reporting usage (Russell-Cole, et. al., 2013).

However, Filipinos are not alone in their usage of whitening products:

The first decade of the new millennium witnessed a rise in sales of skin-lightening products not

only in Japan and the Philippines, but also in Korea and China. A 2007 Nielson global survey

found that 29 percent of South Koreans and 46 percent of Chinese had used a skin-lightening

product within the past year. Unilever believes that China has even greater market potential that

India for selling its skin-lightening products, perhaps up to $2 billion. And, like India, China is a

country on the economic move, with a growing middle class and a rising number of professional

working women with disposable incomes of their own to do with whatever they want (Russell-

Cole, et. al., 2013, p. 38).

A news article published by *The New York Times* titled, "Beach Essentials in China: Flip Flops, a

Towel and a Ski Mask," further explores the preference for whiter skin in East Asia. Though the

article makes no mention or speculation of the causes of pigmentocracy[19], it does offer an interesting insight into the measures taken to maintain whiteness—namely wearing a ski mask to protect one's face from the sun:

> For legions of middle-class Chinese women—and for those who aspire to their ranks—solar protection is practically a fetish, complete with its own gear. This booming industry caters to a culture that prizes a pallid complexion as a traditional sign of feminine beauty unscathed by the indignities of manual labor. There is even an idiom, which women young and old know by heart: "Fair skin conceals a thousand flaws" (Levin, 2012).

Like many Asian states, China's encounters with Western imperialism are numerous and include unequal relations (particularly regarding trade) with France, Germany, Britain, Russia and the United States. Like India and the Philippines, imperialist values, class, caste, modernity, and beauty exacerbate China's preference for light skin. The axiom "fair skin conceals a thousand flaws" is applicable to not only aesthetic flaws, but also perceived weaknesses in other areas of life. For example, the emphasis on light skin as a symbol of femininity can offset less desirable "ethnic" traits, such as short height and lack of a second eyelid fold (often surgically added through cosmetic blepharoplasty to make eyes appear larger) (Rondilla & Spickard, 2007). Markers of socioeconomic status such as low class, lack of education, familial reputation, clothing, etc. can also be mitigated to varying degrees by lighter skin.

As described, numerous systems of governance and control (particularly economic) implemented by imperialists remain intact in many postcolonial states. The ranking system in which white colonialists, in part based on their constructed racial superiority (as well as technology, imperialism, military, economy, etc.), assumed the position of authority and privilege extends beyond India and the Philippines. It is my contention that enduring colorist

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[19] I, however, speculate that doing so could be seen as violating the "merits" of color-blind ideology or self-implicating of the role of whiteness.

hierarchies from white to dark in postcolonial and/or racialized societies can be examined through the lens of a caste system.

Conflating caste and class is a common misconception that discounts factors beyond those related to socioeconomic matters. That is not to say that the two should be assessed independent of the other, as there is an evident correlation. However, caste systems are complex and cannot be adequately understood from an economic platform alone. Skin color must also be considered as a function of the vertical arrangement of Indian society (Ayyar and Khandare, 2013).

As described in Chapter IV, the caste system in India is grounded in a very specific history, religion, geography, ethnicity, and skin color. Although this form of rigid social ordering is particular to India, castes are not. Gupta's account of the color continuum in the United States could also be understood as a caste:

> In America too these fine colour distinctions exist. In 1945 Charles H. Parrish discovered 145 terms such as half-white, yaller, high yellow, brown, red bone, chocolate, ink spot, and tar baby. In the early decades of the twentieth century, mulatto clubs existed in different parts of America where darker Blacks were not allowed. Some of the well-known mulatto clubs were the Bon Ton Society in Washington and the Blue Vein Society in Nashville. Admission to all these clubs were based on strict physical criteria (Gupta, 2000, p.91-92).

The ranked ordering of African Americans (by themselves as well as by other Americans) based on skin color denotes a caste system reminiscent of the era of slavery in the United States, specifically in which whiteness served as the standard for which African Americas were valued against non-blacks and blacks alike. For example, the mixing of white slaveholders and black slaves led to the creation of a caste of mulattos. Due to their relation with whites and whiteness,

mulattos were often assigned to coveted indoor positions. As such, the association between light

skin color and privilege was further strengthened.

Today, the colorist legacies of slavery that privilege lightness still persist in the United

States.   In *A History of Prejudice: Race, Caste, and Difference in India and the United States*,

Gyanendra Pandey conducts a comparative study of Dalits in India and African Americans. His

intention is not to collapse the complexities of Dalits and African Americans into a single

discourse. Rather, he seeks to draw parallels between the lived experiences of both groups. In

doing so, Pandey asserts that racism and discrimination in the United States function similarly to

casteism and the oppression of Dalits in that both are informed by colonial and imperial

ideologies:

> Both Dalits in India and African Americans in the United States have been visibly
>
> stigmatized groups, long marginalized and disenfranchised (in both the narrow and broad senses
>
> of that term) because of that very stigmatization. Both have had to organize and
>
> fight against the consequences of what could be described as a disguised form of internal
>
> colonialism…neither Dalits nor African Americans have inherited geopolitical conditions that
>
> would allow them to carve out a place for themselves as "mainstream." (Pandey, 2013, p. 12).

He further writes: "In both the US and India, claims to the exceptional character of the local state

and society are tied to questions of modernity and nationhood" (Pandey, 2013, p. 12). According

to the logic of nationalism and modernity discussed earlier in this chapter, Dalits and African

Americans are similarly excluded due to their low caste and color designations.

Postcolonial Brazil is also troubled with a hierarchal system resembling of castes in

which whiteness is disproportionately privileged. The domination of Brazil by the Portuguese in

the sixteenth century greatly contributed to this colorist ideology, despite the fact that eighty

percent of Brazilians are purportedly to be of African or indigenous ancestry (Darity, 2008).

Like Filipinos and African Americans, Brazilians also have categorized racial distinctions

resulting from often-violent miscegenation (in the same way white slave masters often coerced

female slaves) among indigenous Brazilians, white(-r) Portuguese, and black Africans, the

population of Brazil became increasingly mixed. Expectedly, the influence of European

ideology prescribed that white minorities in Brazil were of a superior race and thus laid the

groundwork for racial domination (Darity, 2008). As a result, a similar ranking exists in Brazil,

in which variations in color are distinguished using the medium of language:

> Harry Hutchinson found eight terms in Brazil distinguishing different shades of Black. They are
> (i) preto—all Black, (ii) cabro—lighter than preto, with less kinky hair, (iii) cabo verde, who have
> dark skin but straight hair, thin lips and nose, (iv) escuro—dark skin with Caucasoid features, (v)
> mulatto—yellowish skin colour, kinky curly hair, (vi) pardo, which is characterized by an even
> lighter skin mulatto, (vii) followed by light skin, who are reddish blond but with Negroid features,
> and finally (viii) Moreno, who are almost like Caucasians (Gupta, 2000, p. 91).

In *Diploma of Whiteness: Race and Social Policy in Brazil, 1917-1945*, Jerry Dávila elaborates

on the role of colonial whites in the dissemination of racist and casteist discourse through

education. He argues that the establishment of the education system in Brazil by government

officials was motivated by racial ideology in several ways. "First, they built on centuries of

domination by a caste of white European colonists and their descendants, who lorded over

slaves, indigenous peoples, and individuals of mixed ancestry" (Dávila, 2003, p. 4). Dávila also

argues that the white policymakers perpetuated values informed by colonialism and imperialism

in which whiteness held the ideals of power, cleanliness, and goodness—"values that were

preserved and reinforced through the deprecation of other groups" (Dávila, 2003, p. 5). Lastly,

he maintains that the curriculum was motivated by the "pursuit of a utopian dream of a modern,

developed, and democratic Brazil, their vision influenced by the meanings race held for them"
(Dávila, 2003, p. 5).

Ranking according to color is not unique to India or even to nonwhite groups. In his book, *The Souls of White folk: White Settlers in Kenya, 1900s-20s (Studies in Imperialism MUP)*, Brett Shadle discusses the disputes among whites in Britain and the United States in regards to who counts as white. He argues that according to the some whites, eastern and southern Europeans and Jews were not fully bona fide whites. Furthermore, Shadle contends that many whites subscribed to the belief that there were numerous white races (Shadle, 2015).

c. On Emulation and Indigeneity

As Brahmins emulated white British colonists, the lower castes emulated Brahmins—also known as Sanskritization. Coined by M.N. Srinivas, Sanskritization is defined as:

> …the process by which a 'low' Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual, ideology, and way of life in the direction of a high, and frequently, 'twice-born' caste. In other words, sanskritization involves claim for upward social mobility through status emulation, with Brahmanical codes for conduct setting the standard for status (Dirks, 2001, p. 251).

Dirks further argues that this "conceptual celebration of the force of Brahmanic hegemony, is an idea that is inseparable from colonial history" (Dirks, 2001, p. 253). Fanon reasons that "racism of the young national bourgeoisie is a defensive racism, a racism based on fear" (Fanon, 2005, pp. 163-164). Using Fanon's mode of logic, I make the case that intraracial prejudices resulting from factors such as pigmentocracy, casteism, colonialism and imperialism, occur largely due to the fear of losing power. By constructing color, class, and "progress" lines, privileged groups believe they are distancing themselves from inferior members of the race (often those considered the darkest and/or indigenous) while simultaneously attempting to approach the superiority of

whiteness as symbolized by colonialists, modernity, capitalism, democracy and so forth. This is often rationalized (by lighter groups and others) through claims of having white blood, and therefore inherent superiority, than darker individuals.

Beyond performativity such as Sanskritization, many nonwhite groups also attempt to emulate elites through "the bleaching syndrome" (Russell-Cole, et. al., 2013). The latter is purportedly achieved through marrying lighter skinned spouses and bearing lighter children, an intraracial miscegenation if you will. The assumption among many postcolonial societies is that dark skin constitutes a closer association with indigenous natives. In this way, darker individuals who participate in the practice seek to ideologically distance themselves and their children from the denigrations of indigeneity while approaching the benefits of whiteness. From a discursive view, I posit that Sanskritization also encompasses the aforementioned whitening efforts. As such, Sanskritization allows for the traversing of caste and color lines.

In a discussion of global pigmentocracy, I argue that the concept of Sanskritization or emulation is not unique to India. In the context of Algeria, Fanon argues that "by rubbing shoulders" with colonials, colonized elites sustain the colonial systems and ideology in an effort to retain their status through the exploitation and disenfranchisement of natives. The outcome is a deliberately contrived (by colonialists) system of black versus black[er] (Fanon, 2005). Fanon's argument is applicable to many postcolonial states as the newly designated native elites have been ingrained with the tenets of colonial hierarchies and seek to access power using racialized reasoning.

Comparable to the bleaching syndrome in India discussed above, many areas of Latin America are also witness to a longing for whiteness thought to be achievable through "miscegenation." According to the essay on *Whitening*:

…many Latin American countries in particular—including Brazil, Venezuela, Cuba, Argentina, Uruguay, and Colombia—enacted collective whitening strategies during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Such efforts typically revolved around promoting white European immigration (often while restricting immigrants of color) and encouraging "race mixing," or miscegenation, as a way of gradually lightening the total population (Darity, 2008, p. 90).

In reference to Veracruzanos, Christina Sue articulates the signficance of the bleaching syndrome:

To demonstrate how central the idea of whitening through race mixture is to the culture, one only need focus on the colloquial phrase *limpiar* or *mejorar la raza* ("to clean" or "to better the race"), a term that embodies the whitening sentiment. This phrase is used to describe the seeking out of lighter-skinned partners so that the next generation will come out lighter (Sue, 2009, p. 115).

According to Dávila, Argentina was the most effective of these nations in instituting a system of "soft eugenics" in the eradication of African blood. Dávila argues that soft eugenics was a project implemented to improve the indigenous race of a population through hereditary traits. In essence, the premise of this strategy lied in the idea that racial diversity is not an asset, but rather a result of black pollution. One result of the constructed racial taxonomies between indigenous groups and Africans in Latin America is the vying for governmental resources:

An area where the disparity between Black groups and indigenous groups is of particular interest is in the disproportion of collective rights awarded in multicultural government reforms. Hooker (2005) claims Afro-Latinos are much less likely to gain formal recognition as only seven of the fifteen Latin American countries to implement multicultural reform give collective rights to Afro-Latinos and only three give Afro-Latinos the same rights as indigenous groups… African Descendant groups commonly fight to be considered an indigenous group in order to win collective rights (Cotton & Jerry, 2013, p. 210).

Yet, in some postcolonial contexts like India, indigeneity and racialization are often conflated. This occurs to such an extent that dominant groups frequently essentialize indigenous groups as racially distinct from their lighter, urban and more "civilized" compatriots. Darker skin is a commonly conceived marker of indigeneity, which depending on contexts, can be viewed by lighter individuals as negative (for example, non-modern), positive (for example, authentic), or otherwise. To elucidate, those who are on the lighter side of the skin color spectrum as well as those inheriting of colonial legacies, and/or upper class are more likely to associate those on the darker end as rural, poor, native or aboriginal. In reference to the earlier discussion on modernity, this is why in part, rationales for projects of modernity and nation building often exclude indigenous castes. In other words, natives, especially those who are dark, lower class, uneducated, etc., can never be reformed, modern, cultivated, or sophisticated. As discussed in Chapter IV, some lighter skinned Dalits attempt to disassociate themselves from derogatory canons of indigeneity by claiming to be of Aryan lineage (Ayyar & Khandare, 2013).

Nonetheless, many rural communities—including particular peasant/agrarian groups in India, Algeria, South Africa, New Zealand, the United States, Mexico and Brazil—are proud of their dark(er) skin color (Rothenberg, 2005). Among some indigenous groups, the negative views imposed on them by both urbanites and white westerners alike, are inverted to serve as a source of ethnic pride. In other words, the admixing of white blood, Western customs, values, etc. are seen as a contagion that dilutes the authenticity of indigenous identity and culture.

This pride stems from multiple considerations, including a rejection of whiteness values and relatedly, the desire to defend one's ethnicity, skin, color, heritage and culture (Fanon, 2005). Furthermore, the association of whiteness with colonialism also proves to be a deterrent for embracing Eurocentric ideals. As Fanon articulates, "peasants distrust town dwellers—

dressed like a European, speaking his language, working alongside him…he is considered to be a renegade who has given up everything which constitutes a national heritage" (Fanon, 2005, p. 67). In addition to being an advocate of peasants, Fanon is also criticizing the traitorous elite who collaborate with the French in their colonizing efforts.

I posit that this view of elite complacency is in large part due to the consciousness of the oppressed that develops after witnessing firsthand the detrimental effects of colonialism, including killing, violence, rape, marginalization, repression, economic exploitation, starvation, loss of dignity and agency, dehumanization, etc. Additionally, among some proletariats exist a hatred and/or resentment towards the colonized elites for their complicity in colonizing efforts. Yet, the material and ideological advantages of embracing whiteness and Western constructs in postcolonial states are undeniable. In postcolonial sites such as India and Latin America, speaking English, wearing Western-style clothing, being light-skinned, demonstrating worldliness, having power and wealth, etc., are all factors that can contribute to better opportunities in education, work, marriage, and society. Beyond spatial associations, darker skin, low socioeconomic status, lack of education, and/or traditional customs also serve as an identity marker for indigeneity.

d. On Gender and Marriage

The standards of beauty mandated by Western values relating to whiteness, wealth, health, and others result in inequitable treatment of darker people, especially women who are often objectified, hypersexualized, and deemed immoral by their respective society. As discussed in Chapter VI, this stigmatization often yields material harms in the form of higher dowries, higher incidences of rape and domestic violence. Beyond India, bodies are marked by

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gendered constructions, including color, in many postcolonial sites. Light skin is associated with

femininity, whereas dark skin connotes masculinity. Non-affluent, uneducated women who are

relatively darker are often expected to be hard working and have gratitude towards their spouses.

In *The Color Complex,* Russell-Cole, et. al., also argue that lighter skinned women are thought

to be "more fragile and easily subdued than women who are darker skinned" (Russell-Cole, et.

al., 2013, p.163). They further contend that existing meanings attached to skin color are

endorsed by media and are therefore further perpetuated in the popular imagination:

> ..what seems to have changed little over the years is the way in which skin color is encoded to
>
> represent something larger in regard to an African American's character. When a woman is light-
>
> skinned, we can expect she will be desirable and kind, and when a man very dark skinned, we can
>
> bet he will be either criminally dangerous or sexually potent. And when there is a dark-skinned
>
> woman in the story, we can assume she will be some combination of undesirable, eccentric, or
>
> impoverished (Russell-Cole, et. al., 2013, p. 205).

To further illustrate the commodification of beauty, I turn towards the formerly French

controlled state of Mali. In a news article published by BBC News, author Joan Baxter reports

that "dermatologists estimate that more than half the women in Mali are now using these creams

to lighten their skin" (Baxter, 2000). Moreover, a Malian doctor states that the risks of skin

bleaching, including cancer, disproportionately affect poor women, "because the cheaper the

product, the more dangerous it is" (Baxter, 2000). In another news article, a woman in China

named Yao Wenhua declares "a woman should always have fair skin, otherwise people will

think you're a peasant" (Levin, 2012).

Marriages in India are often endogamous and necessarily correspond with socioeconomic

qualities such as caste, religion, class, age, education, geography, and increasingly, skin color.

This system allows for the preservation of the purity of abovementioned traits. Whiteness in a

bride is a highly desirable. Point of fact, during pre-wedding celebrations and preparations,

turmeric paste is rubbed on both the bride and groom to brighten/lighten their complexions for

the big day.

In the United States, in regards to online dating among Americans "it is more—not less—

likely that decisions regarding dating choice will come down to the more basic attributes, such as

race, religion, height, weight, and skin color" (Russell-Cole, et. al., 2013, p.179-180). Due to

other compensating factors, men are not held to the same pigmentocratic standards as women, as

their worth is more often determined by accomplishments such as education, employment, and

wealth. In many societies in India and beyond, the perceived value of women is often relegated

to appearances first and foremost, which are intricately intertwined with whiteness. As Russell-

Cole, et. al., posit:

> Color classism flourishes best in societies where men own women, where daughters are little
>
> more than burdens to unload, and where women's opportunities for advanced education are
>
> limited. In such cultures, a man calls all the shots, and if having a light-skinned wife and a pale-
>
> skinned daughter is what it takes for him to be noticed as successful in society, then female
>
> offspring will have no choice but to fall in line (Russell-Cole, et. al., 2013, p.49).

However, skin color works in tandem with other social factors in the coupling process. As

discussed in Chapter VI, money, caste, education, and profession can offset the disadvantages of

dark skin color. On the other hand, light skin color may offset the lack of these qualities.

Christina Sue further argues that intermarriage in the United States and Brazil are deliberate

incidences that often result in "status exchange, [which] occurs when an individual marries

someone with lighter skin or from a higher-status racial group by offering other valued attributes

such as economic status, education, or power" (Sue, 2009, p. 120). In a similar vein, Sue posits

that in Veracruz, marrying a darker individual is generally only acceptable if the spouse is of a higher class (Sue, 2009).

e. On Socioeconomic Status

In postcolonial settings, low literacy rates are most common among the poor and rural. In India, the Philippines, and Brazil, a further subset of high illiteracy is found among women, particularly those who are darker. This is mostly due to the inabilities of families to afford sending daughters to school. In India and in societies where dowries are common, the other contributing factor is the rationale that attending school and acquiring degrees postpones marriage and the longer marriage is delayed, the higher the dowries, notwithstanding the fact that future spouses often require a higher dowry from darker women.

Furthermore, the advantages of school are often negated due to racialized notions (informed by Eurocentric ideology developed to elevate whites and suppress Others) related to servitude. For example, Brahmins maintained this ideology in postcolonial India. This is due in part to the logic forwarded by colonialists that privileged groups should be served by the subordinate groups. Brazil and the United States provide additional examples of racialized divisions of labor, undoubtedly remnants of African slavery. The phenomenon of darker groups serving lighter and/or higher status groups are exemplified in the undesirable and low paying jobs that racialized members of society occupy. Though the caste system continues to undergo a decrease in occupation specialization (for example, Brahmins have ventured into professions beyond priesthood), Dalits still comprise the lowliest workers (Kolenda, 1978). Likewise, in Latin America, studies comparing levels of education and occupations according to skin color conducted by the Project on Ethnicity and Race in Latin America (PERLA), are outlined in

Edward Telles's contemporary text, *Pigmentocracies: Ethnicity, Race, and Color in Latin America*:

> As with education, self-identified mulattos grew up in homes with parents employed in higher-status occupations than other identity groups (21.4 percent). Similarly, the parents of mestizos and whites occupy an intermediate position in terms of occupational prestige (9.5 percent and 7.1 percent, respectively), and black and indigenous respondents occupy the bottom category (4.2 percent and 1.9 percent, respectively), with their parents mostly employed in low-skilled manual occupations such as domestic servitude or construction (Telles, 2014, p. 107).

However, like India's caste system, the fluidity and variances in skin color can complicate the distinguishing of whites, mulattos, mestizos, indigenous, and Afrodescendants. However, in situations where skin color is not a sufficient marker of identity, socioeconomic statuses (education, occupation, and income) often become the racially defining factors.

Relatedly, as a direct result of black slavery in the United States, the Caribbean, and elsewhere, whiteness signifies freedom and full membership in society (ideologically) , while blackness signifies thralldom and subordination (Jablonski, 2012). In the United States, a study recently conducted by Shilpa Banerj calls attention to the significance placed on light skin in hiring decisions:

> [Banerj] asked participants to engage in a mock-hiring task in which they would be asked to indicate their preferences for hiring applicants who varied by manipulated criteria. The design of the study was such that there were two different resumes, one in which the job candidate's credentials were quite strong, and the other in which they were minimal. Attached to each of the two resumes was one of six possible photographs of an African American man who was either light skinned or dark skinned. The most startling finding was that, out of all the possible combinations of skin color and resume strength, a lighter-skinned applicant was preferred over a

darker-skinned applicant who had more managerial experience and was more highly educated

with an MBA degree (Russell-Cole, et. al., 2013, p.193-194).

This study is telling of the discriminations those with dark skin encounter despite compensating

attributes. In other words, though the values attached to skin color are often fluid and contextual

in the sense that high socioeconomic ranking can offset dark skin, prejudices still abound in

which light skin is preferred. In this study, light skin compensates for a "thousand flaws,"

including a lack of management experience and education. In this way, the cycle of systemic

racializations sustains itself: they are underprivileged because they are black; they are black

because they are underprivileged.

The government in India, similarly to affirmative action in the Unites States, has

implemented reservation systems for Dalits. Though these projects are intended to improve

(albeit marginally) opportunities for oppressed groups, it is my contention that within reservation

and affirmative action systems, intraracial discrimination still occurs in which lighter individuals

are preferred for employment in the government sector (and otherwise) as well as

public/prestigious positions—in short, positions entailing greater social interaction. According

to Russell-Cole, et. al.:

> Historically, individuals of mixed-race ancestry and light skin have long been the political
>
> mainstay of the Black community. Walter White, NAACP executive secretary from 1931-1955,
>
> was so light skinned that he was often mistaken for a White man, and close to all of the early
>
> Black leaders were light-skinned mulattoes (e.g., Frederick Douglas, John Mercer Langston, and
>
> Booker T. Washington). The trend continues. A recent survey found that lighter-skinned African
>
> Americans are overrepresented by a margin of nearly two to one in Congress (Russell-Cole, et.
>
> al., 2013, p.185-186).

Though darker persons are more often than not formally recognized as citizens in their respective states, their darkness is often an impediment to full membership. Oppressed groups may be classified as citizens, but they face institutional inequalities incited by western ideologies (including whiteness) that leads to alienation (Bhabha, 1994). Furthermore, groups categorized by skin color, low class, indigeneity, lower caste, etc. are severely underrepresented in the public sphere, thus denying them a voice in the expansive matters affecting the distribution of resources.

In every society in which lightness prevails, darker groups inevitably suffer great inequality and economic disparities, as evidenced in the acute contrast of lifestyles. Capitalism, in part, functions on the premise that the proletariats are not capable of managing their own lives (Fanon, 2005). The myth of opportunity is also fabricated by capitalism (Pandey, 2013) and piggybacked by industries, such as skin bleaching manufacturers, which sell promises (not products) of a better life for those who are lighter. As Parameswaran articulates:

> Libidinal sign systems of the native Other in the global commerce of colonial culture sustained
> the burgeoning spheres of industrialization and consumption in the empire—the visual
> incarnations of gender and race that purvey the riches of global commodity culture in Asia
> continue this trajectory of linking consumer desire to corporeal significatio (Parameswaran, 2008,
> p. 413).

In other words, the representation of Othered bodies through the lenses of modernity, the West, and whiteness have contributed to the racing and gendering of capitalism. Ideals presented to consumers are intricately woven with colonial and imperial wealth/power, while ideas and products relating to undesirability are intimately linked to nonwestern, nonwhite, nonelite, etc.

As discussed in Chapter VI, Fanon reasons that former colonies have become a consumer markets implemented and maintained through Eurocentricism (Fanon, 2005). This is a symptom

of the neocolonial practice in which colonial control in postcolonial states persists through the

contriving of economic dependency and exploitative practices (Nkrumah, 1965). This economic

domination occurs through the vehicles of white cultural imperialism, western capitalism, and

globalization. The global world economy, as disproportionately dictated by Western terms,

coalesces with racialized performativity via the skin bleaching industry, media, and popular

culture. The neocolonial impulses and racial superiority contained within transnational

circulation of commodities and messages benefit the West, through profits, influence, and power.

Furthermore, the neocolonial system promoting Western imperialism maintains dominance

through capitalistic exploitation and racist ideology. In this way, former colonizers preserve

marketing channels (Fanon, 2005) that benefit the white, Western bourgeoisie.

f. Conclusion

Using international pigmentocratic practices and discriminations as a referent, I posit that

colonialism and imperialism are the prevailing channels for perpetuating pigmentocracy in the

global sphere. For example, the belief that darker and/or lowliest members of society are

religiously impure and inferior extends beyond Dalits to include the Japanese Burakumin. I also

make the case that castes are (and have been) ubiquitous, as well as ahistorical in the sense that

the structural institution is not defined by temporal or spatial limitations. In other words, castes

existed in the past and survive in contemporary societies beyond India, including the Philippines,

the United States, and Brazil.

Furthermore, since darker members of society face political, social, and economic

inferiority, the practice of emulating whites while simultaneously condemning indigenous groups

has become a vehicle for transcending low status. Light skin serves as a marker for modernity

and nationalism in many postcolonial sites, including India, Algeria, and Latin America. On the other hand, darker skin represents backwardness and primitivity. I draw further parallels between pigmentocracy in India by discussing similar marital preferences in the United States amongst African Americans.

Finally, I consider global implications of pigmentocracy as they relate to socioeconomic conditions. In India, Latin America, and the United States darker individuals have limited access to occupational and educational sectors, thus contributing to lower incomes and standards of living. These social inequities are further reflected and perpetuated in societal treatment. The end result is a greater marginalization and discrimination of darker skinned individuals enacted by the dominant members of society.

Chapter IX

Conclusion

a. Review and Emancipatory Objectives

A common perception among many scholars, communities, policy makers, and others is that racism occurs between races rather than within a race. However, pigmentocracy and its implications fit the understanding of racism as it leads to the disadvantaging of people based on dark(er) skin color and needs to be recognized as such. Moreover, by marking and understanding colorism as a form of racism, multiple levels and areas of societies are more likely to acknowledge and affect change against it. Governments may also be more likely to consider darker members a protected group. In turn, this may help decrease degrees of discrimination at the macro political and socioeconomic level, but also trickle down to micro levels of community and family.

The previous chapters help to historicize and politicize the emergence of intraracial classifications in India, and the domination and disenfranchisement that follow. Furthermore, they explore the role of white, Eurocentric epistemologies in perpetuating race and caste differences. I have argued that meanings attached to skin color are temporally and spatially constituted. Yet, larger messages that venerate whiteness are also continuously circulated and driven by capitalism, imperialism, and media. In addition, I illustrated the ways in which whiteness, as a constructed and fluid entity often evades critical examination. In short, the power relationships essentially shaped by whiteness is a product of its invisibility (Garner, 2007). The meanings associated with both white and nonwhite skin color are central for implicating the production of racial essentializations governing supremacy and inferiority. Though these connotations are nuanced according to specific contexts, an increasing universally symbolic meaning is attached to skin color.

The study of pigmentocracy sits at the intersection of the studies of whiteness, colorism, postcolonialism, caste systems, cultural imperialism, capitalism, globalization, popular culture, and feminism. It is my goal to provide a multidisciplinary theoretical basis for examining pigmentocracy in multiple areas of inquiry, including mass media, culture, caste, class, representation of women, and consumerism. My work seeks to identify and challenge past and present power distribution as it relates to whiteness and blackness in India.

Additionally, the limitations of studying pigmentocracy must also be acknowledged. The effects of colonialism, imperialism, globalization, and pigmentocracy at their intersection can never be fully comprehended as the ways in which they are internalized vary across individuals, families, classes, castes, religions, groups, cultures, regions, and nationally. As such, my intention is not to collapse these complex psychologies and realities into a simplistic or universalized understanding of the racialized individual's lived experience. Rather, my goal is to provide a referencing framework for considering the larger underpinnings and malignant effects of pigmentocracy as well as provide nuanced examples of how pigmentocracy ensues on the ground level.

The Indian government has taken minimal action to acknowledge and address the repressive political, economic, and sociocultural features of pigmentocracy. For example, officially reserved quotas for hiring Dalits within state positions have been established, but this has done very little to combat the economic and social disparities present between racialized groups. Integration of all dimensions of the darker Indian's life is necessary to move beyond separatism arising from colorist ideology. Anecdotal evidence, cases, and parodies exemplifying the struggles against pigmentocracy are emerging in various arenas, including among oppressed groups, celebrities, scholars, and notable commentators. Yet, these efforts often lack a solidarity.

Through the presentation of new arguments informed by intraracial theories, relational analysis, and epistemologies related to pigmentocratic rhetoric, solidarity could be improved that promotes greater awareness of the oppression darker Indians experience.

India's history is troubled by external domination of various groups and nations, including Mughals, Aryans, Portugal, and most recently, Britain. As discussed in Chapter IV, the theory of Aryans conquering of northern India is often provoked to justify upper caste, Brahmin hegemony. That is to say, those who lay claim to the notion that they are of Aryan lineage (i.e., the pure, white, ideal race), in part, leverage assumed biological determinism to exert superiority over the masses. The evidence presented for validating this elite, Brahmin assertion mainly lies in alleged phenotypical characteristics. These include stereotypical European features (such as lighter eyes, hair, sharper noses, taller bodies), and most importantly, lighter skin color. The associated physiognomic traits of whiteness include, but are not limited to, advanced intellect, civility, modernity, and morality.

The long-standing and ongoing debate about India's racial heritage is indicative of the significance of vying for the claim to white identity. As alleged descendants of Caucasians, elite Indians distinguish themselves from darker Indians who are collectively stigmatized as barbaric, backwards, and simple. Through the ideology of pigmentocracy coupled with casteism and classism, Brahmins and other higher status Indians who claim to be Aryan descendants elevate their status above poor, darker, lower-caste Indians. The inter-caste tensions that ensue signal the politicization of race and skin color in colonial and postcolonial India. Consequently, skin color in India has become one of the most distinguishing characteristics in ascertaining Aryans/non-Aryans (*Dasyus*) (Ayyar & Khandare, 2013). In short, darkness is a racial defect (Bhabha, 1994).

b. Gendered Pigmentocracy

Darker women are often made by societies (and even those close to them) to feel that they are worth less or entirely worthless. In India, every day, three Dalit women are raped, and many more assaults go unreported as the likelihood of legal retribution is low, whereas the chances of the victim being denunciated are high (Ayyar & Khandare, 2013). In order to reverse the views reminiscent of India's colonial eras, the androcentric system of domination must be dismantled at all levels, including family, community, and national institutions. Women's rights in India are constitutionally protected, but are exercised to a lesser degree than in many other democratic nations (Chaudhuri, 2004). Moving women closer to rejecting notions of pigmentocracy will best be accomplished through education and empowerment. A postcolonial intersectionality model can be useful in the educating project as it includes multifaceted dimensions of Indian women's lived experiences and realities. An increased feminist scholarship in the field of intersectional postcolonial and necolonial thought can contribute to greater understanding and knowledge of the whiteness phenomenon, not only in India, but also in many non-white cultures by considering comprehensive oppressions. Another appropriate place for postcolonial intersectionality theory to be useful is at the site of capitalism. As capitalism and consumerism continue to spread through globalization, a framework that addresses and confronts both historical and modern sources of oppression is valuable.

Colorism among Indians is dividing society and marginalizing women on several levels, including gender, caste, class, location, and skin fairness. Pigmentocracy further fragments women's interests by adversely impacting their ability to coalesce and counter the sources of oppression. To this end, language plays an instrumental role in denouncing colorism and its

fragmenting effects on society. For example, one way that language can become an integral

feature of redefining the social culture of India is through a concrete description and

understanding of pigmentocracy in relation to casteism, classism, and sexism.

   c. **Global Implications and Catharsis**

   The concept of colorism is not unique to India as it is prevalent among the vast majority

of nonwhite spaces, including the greater parts of Asia, North and Latin America, and Africa.

Studies pertaining to postcolonialism, whiteness, feminism, imperialism, and racism are useful,

but the applicability of pigmentocracy to each culture and ethnicity varies in degrees. As such,

each cultural form of pigmentocracy requires its own conceptualization in order to better

examine, elucidate, and understand distinctive experiences. Although darker-skinned Indians

experience a unique intersection of social, economic, and political subjugation, numerous other

cultures in the world share similar oppressions due to the preoccupation with whiteness

promulgated through colonialism and imperialism.

   Beyond South Asia, many Asian cultures place a great emphasis on whiteness. For

example, Geishas in Japan historically were required to be fair or heavily powdered to appear

light. Asia, and particularly China, is also the largest market for skin bleaching products. In

addition to consumerism, trends illustrating precautions to prevent tanning are seen in the

practices of carrying parasols and wearing swimming masks at the beach (Appendix P: Asian

Woman with Parasol on Scooter and Appendix Q: Beach Face Masks in China), thus further

demonstrating the importance of light skin, notably among women. Pigmentocracy is also

exercised in the Asian diaspora, especially those in predominantly white, western societies. In

Joanne Rondilla and Paul Spickard's work, *Is Lighter Better? Skin Tone Discrimination Among*

Asian Americans, the authors examine the issues of colorism and classism among Asian

Americans, particularly women. They argue that the focus on beauty ideals held by Asian

American women are informed by internalized western white standards (Rondilla & Spickard,

2007).

The idea of whiteness and who constitutes as white (categorically and otherwise) is continuously

changing in the United States. Many nonwhites, including Asian Americans, Latin Americans,

and African Americans are continuously struggling to assimilate into white culture. For global

audiences, many celebrities epitomize current beauty ideals. As such, nonwhite celebrities in the

United States are often light-skinned and embody Western-valued qualities (light eyes,

light/straight hair, etc.). Famous Latinas in the United States, such as Jennifer Lopez (Appendix

R: Jennifer Lopez), Shakira (Appendix S: Shakira), Eva Longoria (Appendix T: Eva Longoria),

and Salma Hayek (Appendix U: Salma Hayek) all have lighter skin. Moreover, African

American celebrities such as Michael Jackson (Appendix V: Michael Jackson), Whitney Houston

(Appendix W: Whitney Houston), Beyoncé Knowles (Appendix X: Beyoncé Knowles), and Tyra

Banks (Appendix Y: Tyra Banks) are also lighter (or have progressively become so) than many

who identify as being of African descent.

Physical marginalization of impoverished and/or darker bodies is another function of

pigmentocracy, which bears significant resemblance to segregation in the United States. Dalits,

blacks in Brazil, African Americans, French Algerians, and black South Africans among many

others, often live in communities and unplanned housing developments (also known pejoratively

as slums, favelas, shantytowns, ghettos, etc.), which after skin color, is one of the most

identifying markers of class. Pandey describes the resemblances of Dalit and African American

segregation:

There is a parallel between post-Second World War development in India and the USA, in the formal abolition of Untouchables in India in the 1950s and the dismantling of the legal apparatus of racial segregation in the American South in the 1960s and '70s, although the consequences of the long history of stigmatization, discrimination, and exploitation against large segments of the population may still be observed in both cases (Pandey, 2013, p.16).

The reality of racialized 'slums' and 'ghettos' are well known and include alcoholism, drug addiction, violence, health concerns, domestic abuse, unplanned pregnancies, young marital ages, and so forth.

Beyond tribulations manifested within socially segregated spaces, abundant external threats also loom. Violence, rape, and physical and verbal abuse of darker, lower class/caste people are not uncommon occurrences in India, Brazil, and other states facing serious racism and colorism. Also inducing of both psychological and physical trauma is the impending threat of police biases and resulting discrimination and brutality. A study conducted by Trina Jones illustrates the inequalities of the justice system in sentencing African Americans for suspected crimes. The study indicates that lighter African Americans are more likely to receive lighter sentences than their darker counterparts (Jones, 2000). The emotional distress of these social problems can include fear, anxiety, stress, helplessness, depression, anger, and terror, just to name a few.

Lastly, the health detriments of skin bleaching products are expansive and prevalent. Challenging transnational and even national companies requires an elaborate undertaking that would be most effectively achieved by consumer advocacy groups and governmental regulations. The former would serve as representatives for consumer interests and lobby government regulatory bodies to tighten regulation and marketing criteria for skin bleaching products and demand further research into their safety.

d. Conclusion

The socially constructed categories of white and nonwhite are in a constant state of flux due to the permeability of whiteness taxonomies as well as their lack of biological basis. Yet, broaching the borders of whiteness requires a degree of assimilation to white, Western paradigms and values. In the context of India, whiteness is upheld as a desirable characteristic that symbolizes collective and national belonging, and is promoted through colonialism and imperialism. The result is a pigmentocratic system in which privileges and discriminations are codified through skin color. Accordingly, skin color is one of the primary mediums for which casteist, racist, sexist, imperialistic, and colonialist ideologies are conveyed. One of the main channels for the circulation of these ideologies at their intersection is Bollywood. Media, including film, advertisements, and print promote pigmentocratic ideals and narratives in which darker individuals are Othered.

The results of influences privileging whiteness include disparate socioeconomic status, levels of education, occupation, marital opportunities, societal treatment, housing, rates of violence, and marginalization. Many of these forms of oppression disproportionately affect women, thus necessitating a feminist discourse. Though the function of colorism is largely socioeconomic in nature, the effects of "whitening" Indian culture extend to other areas including media, gender, spatial, and caste differentiations. I have demonstrated how pigmentocracy contributes to socioeconomic inequality and how this condition does not function independently, but rather in conjunction with other social, political, and cultural factors. In short, skin color associated with caste, class, (un)attractiveness, and geography is not fixed, as

demonstrated through its global application, and can be disrupted or emphasized through

contextual influences.

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1&u=viva_vpi&it=r&p=GVRL&sw=w&asid=d2c1cb811027b2a5dcf487e65795d309

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Feminist Philosophical Reflections*, p.77-84. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield

Publishers, Inc.

Appendix

Appendix A: Sonam Kapoor L'Oréal White Perfect Advertisement

Source:
http://www.google.com/imgres?hl=en&tbo=d&biw=1093&bih=390&tbm=isch&tbnid=2nIHZDmvF83yd
M:&imgrefurl=http://forum.xcitefun.net/sonam-kapoor-loreal-makeup-t56551.html&docid=ejvQxfuAkVr
BJM&imgurl=http://img.xcitefun.net/users/2011/09/265717,xcitefun-sonam-kapoor-loreal-cream.jpg
&w=500&h=335&ei=GJjGUMKqCeGR0QHHyYGADA&zoom=1&iact=hc&vpx=174&vpy=58&dur=7
96&hovh=184&hovw=274&tx=152&ty=58&sig=113195042672839712609&page=2&tbnh=129&tbnw=
193&start=9&ndsp=25&ved=1t:429,r:11,s:0,i:117.   Retrieved December, 2012, Used Under Fair Use
2012.

Appendix B: Deepika Padukone Neutrogena Fine Fairness Cream Advertisement

Source:
http://www.google.com/imgres?num=10&hl=en&tbo=d&biw=1093&bih=390&tbm=isch&tbnid=6DFhL
2O8LlbF9M:&imgrefurl=http://www.sucharitha.com/category/at-home/&docid=8TdwhA5wg2YNp
M&imgurl=http://sucharitha.com/wpcontent/uploads/2012/02/deepika_padukone.jpg&w=600&h=450&ei
=n5XGUNSiLuqJ0QHz84DABQ&zoom=1&iact=hc&vpx=505&vpy=95&dur=1295&hovh=194&hovw
=259&tx=140&ty=105&sig=113195042672839712609&page=2&tbnh=145&tbnw=206&start=13&ndsp
=21&ved=1t:429,r:31,s:0,i:184. Retrieved December, 2012, Used Under Fair Use 2012.

Appendix C: Shahrukh Khan Fair and Handsome Advertisement
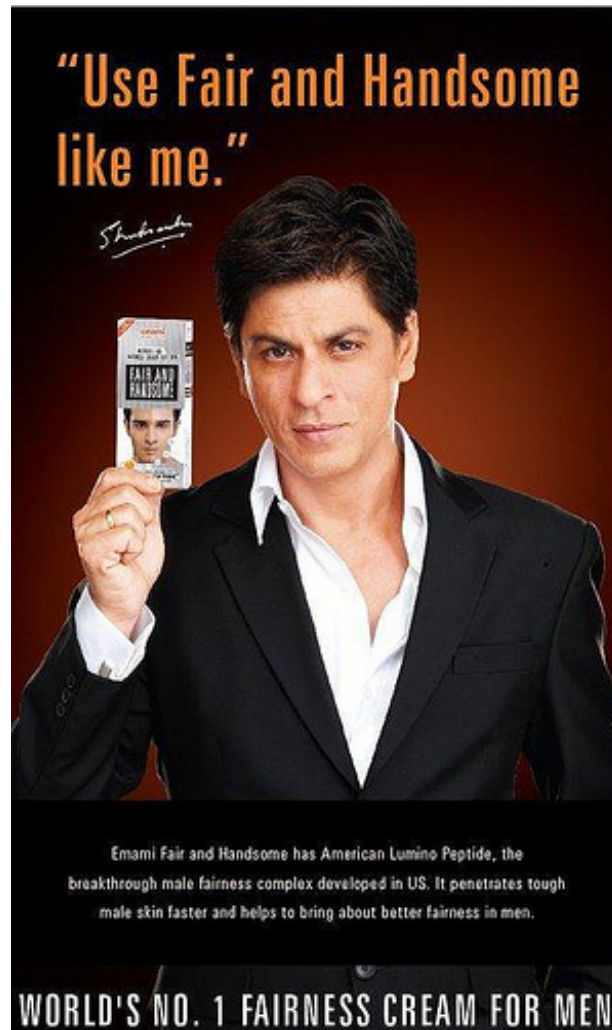
Source:
http://www.google.com/imgres?hl=en&tbo=d&biw=1093&bih=390&tbm=isch&tbnid=pGKd1e_vwy8U
dM:&imgeefurl=http://bitchmagazine.org/post/isnt-he-lovely-its-boom-time-for-male-skin-
bleaching&docid=UFGnVLKzUGL9M&imgurl=http://farm7.static.flickr.com/6086/6143963939_8e2b34
632c.jpg&w=299&h=500&ei=gpfGUO_1NoHN0AGyt4DACw&zoom=1&iact=hc&vpx=211&vpy=-
37&dur=1372&hovh=290&hovw=173&tx=99&ty=190&sig=113195042672839712609&page=1&tbnh=
134&tbnw=80&start=0&ndsp=11&ved=1t:429,r:1,s:0,i:86. Retrieved December, 2012, Used Under Fair
Use 2012.

Appendix D: Shahid Kapoor Vaseline Men Facebook Advertisement

Source:
http://www.google.com/imgres?hl=en&tbo=d&biw=1093&bih=390&tbm=isch&tbnid=2uAkMjHkdR7K
M:&imgrefurl=http://www.thisis50.com/xn/detail/784568:BlogPost:21034163%3Fxg_source%3Dactivity
&docid=APENXvlgTOG5LM&imgurl=http://api.ning.com/files/4XVLKsm4OkgjzfxDTgu28HA9*gkeyz
f89SWJ6B6Df6*MXQQKOneztoZe86I3j8vdJGQA5O*Ijlg*djk6kkWmDfSdqA3uRa4/article12946490A
6FE598000005DC869_468x329.jpg&w=468&h=329&ei=nZjGUPCdMrDJ0AGYkoDQDA&zoom=1&i
act=hc&vpx=444&vpy=49&dur=936&hovh=188&hovw=268&tx=108&ty=105&sig=113195042672839
712609&page=1&tbnh=129&tbnw=184&start=0&ndsp=12&ved=1t:429,r:2,s:0,i:89.Retrieved
December, 2012, Used Under Fair Use 2012.

Appendix E: Diya Mirza The Body Shop Moisture White Advertisement

Appendix F: Lisa Ray Expert Skincare Photo

Appendix G: Katrina Kaif Olay Natural White Advertisement

Source:
http://www.google.com/imgres?hl=en&tbo=d&biw=1093&bih=390&tbm=isch&tbnid=-vM0JqT_6EqDYM: &imgrefurl=http://fullytimepass.com/2010/08/18/katrina-kaif%25E2%2580%2599s-olay-natural-white-ad/&docid=4-7RfGmTdZ0vnM&imgurl=http://fullytimepass.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/34_0.jpg&w=600&h=937&ei=tanGUKCqB-S40AGiuYGoBg&zoom=1&iact=hc&vpx=624&vpy=-10&dur=312&hovh=281&hovw=180&tx=104&ty=185&sig=113195042672839712609&page= 1&tbnh=166&tbnw=107&start=0&ndsp=13&ved=1t:429,r:4,s:0,i:95. Retrieved December, 2012, Used Under Fair Use 2012.

Appendix H: Amy Jackson Yardley London Advertisement

Source:
https://www.google.com/search?hl=en&biw=1280&bih=608&site=imghp&tbm=isch&sa=1&q=amy+jac
kson+advertisement&oq=amy+jackson+adv&gs_l=img.3.0.0.8520.10305.0.11923.9.9.0.0.0.0.59.424.9.9.
0.msedr...0...1c.1.64.img..3.6.299.u5LBuDNEpss#imgrc=5b9FhbqSZ0R87M%253A%3B49jVq0Uck0nh
JM%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fwww.stylemeindia.com%252Fwpcontent%252Fuploads%252F2012%2
52F04%252FAmy-Jackson-endorsesYardley.jpg%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fwww.stylemeindia.com%
252Fbeauty%252Famy-jackson-brand-ambssador-yardley-woohoo-19627%3B600%3B326. Retrieved
April, 2015, Used Under Fair Use 2015.

Appendix I: Bruna Abdullah Photo

Source:
http://www.google.com/imgres?hl=en&tbo=d&biw=1093&bih=390&tbm=isch&tbnid=zrjkd3CHuTTifM
:&imgrefurl=http://www.santabanta.com/photos/brunaabdullah/9974003.htm&docid=m4KVb33CxS63A
M&imgurl=http://media1.santabanta.com/full1/Indian%252520%252520Celebrities(F)/Bruna%252520A
bdullah/bruna-abdullah-3a.jpg&w=1024&h=768&ei=B63GUKqnKOn0AH01YH4Cg&zoom=1&iact=hc
&vpx=788&vpy=24&dur=187&hovh=194&hovw=259&tx=192&ty=112&sig=113195042672839712609
&page=4&tbnh=123&tbnw=165&start=66&ndsp=25&ved=1t:429,r:90,s:0,i:384.   Retrieved December,
2012, Used Under Fair Use 2012.

Appendix J: Giselli Monteiro Photo

Appendix K: Hydroquinone Cream Side Effects 1.1

Source:
http://hydroquinonecream.us/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/fgmv6.jpg. Retrieved November, 2014, Used Under Fair Use 2014.

Appendix L: Hydroquinone Cream Side Effects 1.2

Source:
https://www.google.com/search?hl=en&biw=1280&bih=609&site=imghp&tbm=isch&sa=1&q=side+effe cts+of+skin+lightening+creams&oq=side+effects+of+skin+&gs_l=img.3.3.0l3j0i24l7.122754.125879.0. 129425.21.14.0.7.7.0.108.708.12j1.13.0.msedr...0...1c.1.61.img..1.20.731.W93fvGvMnaE#imgdii=_&im grc=YlWM7pfLFCJsUM%253A%3BFtopI5UhhecuPM%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fcosmoblack.com% 252Fimg%252Fgalerie%252Fhydroquinone%252FHQ_03.png%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fskin.theflar eblog.com%252Ftag%252Fskin-whitening-cream-hydroquinone-melasma-pigmentation-reviews%3B490%3B357. Retrieved November, 2014, Used Under Fair Use 2014.

Appendix M: Hydroquinone Cream Side Effects 1.3

Source:
https://www.google.com/search?hl=en&biw=1280&bih=609&site=imghp&tbm=isch&sa=1&q=side+effe
cts+of+skin+lightening+creams&oq=side+effects+of+skin+&gs_l=img.3.3.0l3j0i24l7.122754.125879.0.
129425.21.14.0.7.7.0.108.708.12j1.13.0.msedr...0...1c.1.61.img..1.20.731.W93fvGvMnaE#imgdii=_&im
grc=UnbDrkvfzbsWvM%253A%3BgpahNGjn8W7KM%3Bhttps%253A%252F%252Fhowtowhitenyour
skin.files.wordpress.com%252F2014%252F07%252Fochronosis.jpg%3Bhttps%253A%252F%252Fhowt
owhitenyourskin.wordpress.com%252Fcategory%252Fskin-whitening%252F%3B1001%3B727.
Retrieved November, 2014, Used Under Fair Use 2014.

Appendix N: Hydroquinone Cream Side Effects 1.4

Fig 1. Increased facial pigmentation secondary to skin bleaching (Photograph courtesy of Dr Frances O.A. Ajose, FRCP-Lagos State University Teaching Hospital)

Source:
https://www.google.com/search?hl=en&biw=1280&bih=609&site=imghp&tbm=isch&sa=1&q=side+effe cts+of+skin+lightening+creams&oq=side+effects+of+skin+&gs_l=img.3.3.0l3j0i24l7.122754.125879.0. 129425.21.14.0.7.7.0.108.708.12j1.13.0.msedr...0...1c.1.61.img..1.20.731.W93fvGvMnaE#imgdii=_&im grc=cP5QX7Tno442yM%253A%3BMBS0Iq66jqmlJM%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fwww.blurtit.com% 252Fvar%252Fquestion%252Fq%252Fq7%252Fq72%252Fq726%252Fq7268%252F0384b7dde856f6dcf 6752bfd85e115cbec.jpg%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fwww.blurtit.com%252F1621946%252Fafter- using-melacare-forte-when-i-stop-using-it-the-skin-starts-getting-dark-what-to-do%3B388%3B202. Retrieved November, 2014, Used Under Fair Use 2014.

Appendix O: Clean and Dry Freshness + Fairness Advertisement

Source:
https://images.search.yahoo.com/images/view;_ylt=AwrB8pWTtc5UJH4AXFCJzbkF;_ylu=X3oDMTIz
M20wNzJoBHNlYwNzcgRzbGsDaW1nBG9pZANiOGQ1OTU5MTMzMDNjNTU1OWNkMThjNjZm
ZjA2MTVkMwRncG9zAzM2BGl0A2Jpbmc?.origin=&back=https%3A%2F%2Fimages.search.yahoo.co
m%2Fyhs%2Fsearch%3Fp%3Dskin%2Blightening%2Bproducts%2Bin%2Bindia%26fr2%3Dpiv-
web%26hsimp%3Dyhs 001%26hspart%3Dmozilla%26tab%3 Dorganic%26ri%3D36&w=650&h=
366&imgurl=thegrio.files.wordpress.com%2F2012%2F06%2Fvagina16x9.jpg%3Fw%3D650%26h%3D
366&rurl=http%3A%2F%2Fthegrio.com%2F2012%2F06%2F08%2Fvagina-brightening-indian-tv-ad-
for-genital-skin-whitening-product-stokes-controversy%2F&size=57.0KB&name=...+%3A+%3Cb
%3EIndian%3C%2Fb%3E+TV+ad+for+genital+%3Cb%3Eskin%3C%2Fb%3E+%3Cb%3Ewhitening%
3C%2Fb%3E+%3Cb%3Eproduct%3C%2Fb%3E+stokes+controversy&p=skin+lightening+products+in+
india&oid=b8d595913303c5559cd18c66ff0615d3&fr2=pivweb&fr=&tt=...+%3A+%3Cb%3EIndian%3C
%2Fb%3E+TV+ad+for+genital+%3Cb%3Eskin%3C%2Fb%3E+%3Cb%3Ewhitening%3C%2Fb%3E+%
3Cb%3Eproduct%3C%2Fb%3E+stokes+controversy&b=0&ni=21&no=36&ts=&tab=organic&sigr=13k
1jdeu7&sigb=149pus71o&sigi=11udpal9v&sigt=1348mga3n&sign=1348mga3n&.crumb=VxsKdTCL1m
o&fr2=piv-web&hsimp=yhs-001&hspart=Mozilla. Retrieved November, 2014, Used Under Fair Use
2014.

Appendix P: Asian Woman with Parasol on Scooter

Source:
https://www.google.com/search?q=asians+afraid+of+sun&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ei=OxLPVN
LZLta1sQT4ioG4DQ&ved=0CAgQ_AUoAQ&biw=1280&bih=609#imgdii=_&imgrc=p2OZftep1Up8M
%253A%3BhtekrY9MzS1hGM%3Bhttps%253A%252F%252Fthingsasiansdo.files.wordpress.com%252
F2008%252F05%252Fpublish-asian-with umbrella.jpg%3Bhttps%253A%252F%252Fthingsasiansdo.
wordpress.com%252F%3B500%3B374. Retrieved November, 2014, Used Under Fair Use 2014.

Appendix Q: Beach Face Masks in China

Source:
http://www.amusingplanet.com/2012/08/the-latest-chinese-beach-craze-face-kini.html. Retrieved November, 2014, Used Under Fair Use 2014.

Appendix R: Jennifer Lopez

Source:
https://www.google.com/search?hl=en&site=imghp&tbm=isch&source=hp&biw=1280&bih=609&q=jennifer+lopez+light+skin&oq=jennifer+lopez+light+skin&gs_l=img.3...1295.11333.0.11536.47.16.11.20.28.0.456.1086.14j41.15.0.msedr...0...1ac.1.61.img..12.35.1141.1JtAtRTa1J4#imgdii=_&imgrc=xdfNLSNyvVCX2M%253A%3BhyqBbuYLjCFtbM%3Bhttps%253A%252F%252Fs-media-cacheak0.pinimg.com% 252F236x%252F8d%252Fa0%252F11%252F8da011e218248eb5035087fd9ffcf2e7.jpg%3Bhttps%253A%252F%252Fwww.pinterest.com%252Fst0rmb0rn%252Ftan-skin-light-hair%252F%3B236%3B236. Retrieved November, 2014, Used Under Fair Use 2014.

Appendix S: Shakira

Source:
https://www.google.com/search?q=shakira&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ei=vL3OVIW3GbHjsATe2
4HYCQ&ved=0CAgQ_AUoAQ&biw=1280&bih=609#imgdii=_&imgrc=lf9HJljmYmTpWM%253A%3
BodfFDTzz4MS57M%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fwww.directlyrics.com%252Fimg%252Fupload%252
Fshakira-2014.jpg%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252F www.directlyrics.com % 252Fshakira-waka-waka-
lyrics.html%3B600%3B350. Retrieved November, 2014, Used Under Fair Use 2014.

Appendix T: Eva Longoria

Appendix U: Salma Hayek

Source:
https://www.google.com/search?q=salma+hayek&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ei=4rzOVOrJNYnjsA
S2noGwAw&ved=0CAgQ_AUoAQ&biw=1280&bih=609#imgdii=_&imgrc=kSldl1iq6J59iM%253A%3
BQEeq-iOPf0q3eM%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fremezcla.com%252Fwp-content%252Fuploads
%252F2014%252F11%252FSalma-Hayek.jpg%3Bhttp%253A% 252F% 252Fremezcla.com%
252Ffilm%252Fsalma-hayek-doesnt-know-word-feminist-means%252F%3B4768%3B2680. Retrieved
November, 2014, Used Under Fair Use 2014.

Appendix V: Michael Jackson

Source:
https://www.google.com/search?q=michael+jackson+skin+lightening&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ei=Nr_OVND6LaZsQTDtILgDw&ved=0CAgQ_AUoAQ&biw=1280&bih=609#imgdii=_&imgrc=JwyiEHmG_b4AJM%253A%3BYv7E0DIvsFAlUM%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fimg2.timeinc.net%252Fpeople%252Fi%252F2009%252Fspecials%252Fmichaeljackson%252Feccentric%252Fmichael-jackson 8.jpg%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fwww.people.com %252Fpeople%252Fpackage%252F gallery %252F0% 252C%252C20287787_20287806_20639007%252C00.html%3B400%3B300. Retrieved November, 2014, Used Under Fair Use 2014.

Appendix W: Whitney Houston

Appendix X: Beyoncé Knowles

Source:
https://www.google.com/search?biw=1280&bih=609&tbm=isch&sa=1&q=beyonce+skin+lightening&oq
=beyonce+skin+lightening&gs_l=img.3..0l2.1838.11023.0.11192.39.24.1.11.11.4.129.1477.19j4.23.0.ms
edr...0...1c.1.61.img..8.31.1175.z6MQDgkGyTU#imgdii=_&imgrc=jmpw1G5HPYKseM%253A%3BWn
-XYhWRtFRt2M%3Bhttps%253A%252F%252Fs-media-cacheak0.pinimg.com%252Foriginals%252Fce
%252Fbb%252F7b%252Fcebb7bd9f5f59fc1bcc385134dcb4a39.jpg%3Bhttps%253A%252F%252Fwww.
pinterest.com%252Feugenehealth%252Fskin-lightening-products%252F%3B450%3B349. Retrieved
November, 2014, Used Under Fair Use 2014.

Appendix Y: Tyra Banks

Source:
https://www.google.com/search?biw=1280&bih=609&tbm=isch&sa=1&q=tyra+banks+lighter+skin&oq
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