LIGHTEN UP: EXPLORING SKIN LIGHTENING PRACTICES AMONG CANADIAN
SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN

AMRIT DHILLON

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR DEGREE OF
MASTERS OF ARTS

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN SOCIOLOGY
YORK UNIVERSITY
TORONTO, ONTARIO

NOVEMBER 2016

Abstract:

This thesis examines how and why South Asian women decide to engage in the beauty practice of skin lightening within Canada. Skin lightening involves the use of products, treatments and procedures to lighten, whiten and brighten ones skin tone. In particular, I examine this practice through the lens of shadeism, which is discrimination against darker skin tones. Through conducting qualitative interviews with South Asian women and South Asian women who work as beauticians, I uncover the ways in which light/er skin operates as a form of social capital with potential to improve life chances. In this thesis I trace the historical and ongoing impact of shadeism within the South Asian context by examining the legacies of the caste system, colonialism and the contemporary globalizing white beauty ideal.

Acknowledgements:

I would like to dedicate this to all of my brown sisters who opened their hearts, lives and minds with me. Family, you encouraged me to follow this passion. Sim and Dad, your daily check ins and texts mean the world to me. Friends who have patiently listened to my thoughts on "lightening, whitening and brightening" over the years, you helped make this possible.

Table of Contents:

Chapter 1: Introduction and Context

In many South Asian languages, notions of femininity and lightness are interlinked. For example, gori, in reference to a South Asian women translates to a fair-skinned beautiful female (Jha & Adelman, 2009, p. 8). In the South Asian context, a light/er[1] complexion is the most prominent trait a women can possess to be considered beautiful (Vaid, 2009). Girls grow up being told to stay out of the sun to avoid making their skin darker. The basis of my analysis is to examine why there is a deep rooted and entrenched desire for lightness among women within the Canadian South Asian community through examining skin lightening practices. My project takes a qualitative approach to understand the skin lightening practices of Canadian South Asian women. Through conducting interviews, I explore how skin lightening as a beauty practice reveals systems of gendered oppression and discrimination that favours whiteness through the constant devaluation of brown female bodies. Skin lightening involves the use of products, treatments and procedures to lighten, whiten and brighten one's skin tone. Skin lightening is situated in the larger framework of race-based discrimination that centres on skin tone. This distinct form of discrimination is referred to as shadeism and points to a pigmentocracy in our society where wealth and social status are influenced by skin tone.

The image of light skin is a historical and contemporary factor that has "fundamentally shaped social attitudes in India. Fair skin became a symbol of power and wealth, thus those equating beauty with fairness are emulating and craving their social status" (Picton, 2013, p. 89). The historical and symbolic power of fair skin in South Asia is a fluid factor also impacting the

---

[1] Throughout this thesis, I will be using the terms light/er and dark/er to illustrate the wide spectrum of skin tones present within the South Asian community. By indicating the spectrum of skin tones, I place an emphasis on how lightness and darkness are viewed relatively.

Canadian South Asian diaspora. I focus on understanding *how* and *why* this beauty practice is carried out. An overarching theme throughout this project focuses on developing a more nuanced understanding of how guiding structural systemic forces such as sexism and shadeism interplay with (ideas of) personal agency. In this thesis, I argue that practices of skin lightening are in part influenced by friendship and kinship networks, potential marriage and dating patterns and larger media forces.

Shadeism operates, in part, based on the privilege given to whiteness. White privilege, at the most broad level is "hard to see for those of us who were born with access to power and resources. It is very visible for those to whom privilege was not granted" (Kendall, 2002, p. 1). It works to normalize the category of person for those who are white, which implies "that people whose skin is not white are members of a race" (ibid). On a systematic level, white privilege supports the racial oppression experienced by people of colour largely through invisible structures. Shadeism is a widely apparent social phenomena but it has not been the topic of academic research until relatively recently (Kerr, 2005, p. 271). Shadeism and colorism are often used interchangeably, however, as I elaborate in this chapter, colorism is a site of the ongoing struggle for black rights that I do not wish to appropriate in the context of this study. Going forward, I will refer to skin tone discrimination as shadeism, however there are some scholars who prefer to work from the term of colorism. In respect of their writing and research, I will refer to this form of discrimination as colorism in direct reference to their texts.

My research was carried out within the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). The GTA has a highly dense South Asian community, and South Asians form 11% of the GTA's entire population (Statistics Canada, 2007). I conducted ten qualitative in-depth interviews with South Asian women. These participants were sorted into two groups: five interviews with South Asian

women who have engaged in skin lightening behaviours at some point(s) in their lives and another group of five South Asian women who work as beauticians. Speaking to South Asian beauticians provided a unique insider perspective on how the pursuit of fairness is created, maintained and sought after in their places of work. This project focuses on understanding this practice through the lived experiences of South Asian Canadian women by channeling an analysis through the lens of shadeism. This project works then, to address the importance of shadeism as it emerges through participant narratives.

Skin lightening is a popular beauty practice taken up mostly by women of colour. Skin lightening involves the use of products, treatments and procedures to lighten, whiten and brighten one's skin tone. Despite the rapidly growing market size, there exists a severe lack of literature and scholarship addressing the implications of skin lightening and shadeism within the South Asian Canadian context. It is this gap in the literature that my project addresses. Within Canada, products range from affordable economic price points (over-the-counter drug store skin lightening creams; Walmart Canada stocks Garnier's *Clearly Brighter 10 Minute Intensive Treatment Facial Tissue Mask,* which retails for $8.97) to more costly products sold in higher end retail spaces (such as Hudson's Bay offering Giorgio Armani's *Crema Bianca Supreme Brightening Concentrate,* which retails for $320.00)[2]. These are easily, legally and readily available within Canada. However, there also exists a massive network of extralegal products that can be purchased within Canada at mostly ethnic food stores and through the internet. Often these products are sourced illegally from around the world and may not pass Health Canada

---

[2] As of August 7, 2016, the retail price for this Garnier product was listed at $8.97: http://www.walmart.ca/en/ip/garnier-clearly-brighter-10-minute-intensive-treatment-facial-tissue-mask/6000195508903 . As of September 9th, 2016, the retail price for this Giorgio Armani product was listed at $320.00: http://www.thebay.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/en/thebay/beauty/skincare/crema-bianca-supreme-brightening-concentrate-0016-tca06468--24

regulations. In terms of procedures and treatments, the scale ranges from non-invasive treatments such as facials to more heavily invasive treatments of glutathione injections. I provide a more detailed account and analysis of the skin lightening landscape and marketplace in chapter 2. Although at times technical, the purpose of mapping out the intricacies of skin lightening is to illustrate how shadeism manifests within the real world to highlight the social meaning of skin colour as it exists on South Asian female bodies within Canada.

South Asians are a heterogenous group with varied cultural, historic, social, religious beliefs and traditions. I acknowledge the problematic nature of addressing such a diverse population under the homogenizing term of South Asian. However, I situate my work within the literature that broadly traces South Asians as those who identify with ancestry in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh (Agrawal, 2013). In a study examining gender role socialization of adolescent females within Montreal's South Asian community, Talbani & Hasanali (2000) argue, in part, the validity in examining the South Asian diaspora as an ethnic group arises because "South Asians in Canada represent diverse groups of people divided on the basis of religion, culture, language and nationalities. In political taxonomy, all these groups have been identified together as south Asians, their origin in the Indian subcontinent being the common denominator" (p. 615). As such, many cultural continuities exist between the various groups that are associated with the South Asian identity that are grounded in language, region, religion and so forth. These continuities give rise to a way in which certain labels, such as South Asian may be at times wrongly and uniformly attached but do hold currency in examining the lived gendered diasporic Canadian experience. Regarding the South Asian diaspora as a group, while keeping in mind the diversity within this group provides the framing for my project. Often scholars use India as the aggregate of South Asian identity, citing the numerous cultural factors that unite the subcontinent

(Bose & Jalal, 2004). Some scholars confound India and South Asia as one entity, which is problematic because it ignores the vast intricacies that are found within the South Asian context, I may at times within the thesis use the similar tradition of referring to India while speaking to the larger South Asian population to relate to the existing literature.

1.1 Skin Tanning: two sides of the same coin?

My interest in studying skin lightening has always been met with some pushback about skin tanning. Skin lightening is often wrongly coupled with skin tanning. I am often asked, especially from white colleagues and friends, "isn't skin tanning like the same thing?" Both skin tanning and skin lightening are essentially gendered beauty practices that are connected to ethnic or racial identity. However, the underlying social implications and notions of privilege connected to ideas of whiteness and brownness differ. Skin tanning is a practice almost always taken up by white people, in association to the symbolic economic prestige associated with travelling to warmer regions and having the luxury to idly tan outdoors. Quite specifically, "[a]mong Whites, tan skin remains a symbol of attractiveness, one that continues to communicate one's ability to partake in leisure (e.g. laying out by a pool or on a beach)" (Blay, 2014, para. 12). White privilege is not lost when a white body tans, nor is it traded for the stereotypes or discrimination held against visible minorities. Skin lightening by people of colour, is often an attempt to gain access to resources, both material and immaterial reserved for white or white-appearing bodies to improve ones life course (Hunter, 2002, p. 190). Skin tanning, on the other hand, does not function in the same way, obtaining a dark/er or tanned skin colour is not an attempt to also face the discrimination and prejudice that people of colour undergo on a daily basis. Tan skin symbolizes white skin because tans continue to represent exoticism, wealth, holidays and a leisurely lifestyle (Picton 2013, p. 87). Both historically and contemporarily, dark/er skin on people of colour, especially in the South Asian community is linked to lower class and caste

standing, those who were and are suffering economically are the groups who must labour under the hot sun in South Asian regions (Li, Min, Belk, Kimora, & Bahl, 2008) an idea shown in my research, that resonates within the Canadian South Asian diaspora. Perhaps the biggest commonality between skin lightening and skin tanning exists in the health implications and side effects that are attributed to both beauty practices.

1.2 Taking a deeper look at shadeism and colorism:

In this section, I engage in a historical and in-depth discussion about how the term shadeism has progressed within the social sciences. Although I focus much of my analysis of skin lightening in relation to shadeism and social capital, I acknowledge there are several other bodies of literature that my project could draw from and rely upon. The phenomena of skin lightening can be grasped through theories of global markets and consumption, as the linkages to the industry of this practice would provide a useful analysis. For example, Mire's (2012) literature into commodity culture is studied chronologically to highlight the ways in which present day networks of material and immaterial global exchange have sustained the massive skin lightening market. Alternatively, I could draw from larger and well informed South Asian frameworks in theory that would develop a more nuanced understanding of the caste system and colonialism and the upholding of light skin preference from a South Asian centric understanding. However, this would neglect diasporic experiences and lacks elements of intergenerationality, key components of my project, as it is empirically grounded in the experiences of women within the GTA. I unpack elements of diasporic dimensions in greater deal within my thesis, particularly as they emerge within the interviews. Alternative orientations to theoretical frame work do exist, however, by relying on shadeism I am able to address concerns of ethnicity, gendered embodiment, agency, social capital, discrimination and idealizations of beauty norms.

The use of shadeism corresponds to my data collection techniques, as narratives unfolding in my interviews are geared towards addressing the above-mentioned facets of shadeism.

Shadeism takes place both within communities of colour and across communities of colour. For example, within the South Asian community and diaspora, women who are light/er than their dark/er peers are overwhelmingly considered more beautiful and competent (Tummala-Narra, 2013, p. 183). The term shadeism emerges from the requirement for a more nuanced lens to understand skin tone discrimination as opposed to working from within the broad umbrella term of racism. This is a key aspect of my analysis because racism does not necessarily address the ways in which discrimination is occurring as a byproduct of differences in skin tone hierarchies. Due to this overwhelming existing force of shadeism, skin lightening products may offer potential access to the privileged beauty standards that globally allow whiteness to operate as the universal beauty aesthetic (McLoughlin, 2013). The term shadeism first began to appear in literature within the late 90's (Diakiw, 1999). The framework of shadeism is informed through the connections emerging from the fields of gender, race, diaspora and ethnicity. My interest in this beauty practice is oriented towards shadeism; it encapsulates not only historical processes of privilege and discrimination but provides a lens to understand the decisions users make to arrive at skin lightening.

Following this premise which connects social capital and skin tone, generally, within both intra and extra group settings, greater prestige and status is afforded to individuals who are light/er. This gives rise to a pigmentocracy, where wealth and social status are influenced by skin tone. According to Al-Solyee (2016), pigmentocracy is a societal refocusing of people along colour lines, this concept is inherently related to shadiesm. Manifestations of shadeism have stronger implications for women of colour than their male counterparts as standards of beauty for

females and skin tone are seen to be intrinsically linked (Banks, 2000). Racism targets

individuals who identify or are identified with one particular racial group, regardless of their skin

tone, however, shadeism targets individuals specifically due to their skin tone, and exclusively

based on their racial identity. The literature on shadeism suggests that this discrimination at

times occurs perniciously than racism as it specifically targets dark/er skin tones regardless of

ethnicity or racial identification.

Due to the lack of scholarship on shadeism, particularly in the Canadian context, I draw

more heavily on the ways in which colorism has been conceptualized within American literature

in reference to skin tone preference. I acknowledge that it will not translate directly to a South

Asian Canadian context, but examining colorism is the best proxy to understanding the

implications of this skin tone hierarchy. Shadeism and colorism are similar modes of oppression

and discrimination impacting communities of colour. Both terms hinge on the ways in which

preference for the light skin bias is manifested *interethnically* and *intraethnically*. Herring (2004)

elaborates on colorism by expanding on discrimination as it occurs within a group as well as

against a group. At the micro level, interethnic colorism manifests when an individual

discriminates against a member of a different ethnic group based on skin tone, while intraethnic

colorism is discrimination based on skin tone manifesting among member of the same group

(ibid). Colorism, during the American slave era was manifested by light/er slaves working closer

to, or in the homes of white owners, while dark/er slaves were restricted to more strenuous field

work and outdoor labour (Harrison, 2010, p. 68). To white slave traders and owners, the value of

lightness within black slave groups attributed to ideologies of proximity, blacks that most closely

embodied whiteness physically worked most closely to whites within their homes (Lindsey,

2011, p. 101). Colorism was a rampant societal feature of American history during the slave era that has repercussions experienced by Black American populations today.

In part, the political struggle connected to civil rights in relation to colorism emerged early in the twentieth century from legacies of institutionalized discrimination between Blacks, by prestigious networks of Black members. Bond & Cash (1992) describe tests of whiteness prescribed onto black bodies throughout the twentieth century by prestigious Black social groups. For instance, the paper bag test, required an individual to be lighter than a brown paper bag, a measure of beauty associated with physical whiteness (ibid, p. 874). The purpose of these types of tests was to restrict access to affluent prestigious social networks within Black communities such as churches, social clubs (often referred to as *Blue Vein Societies)* and neighbourhoods (Russel-Cole, Wilson & Hall, 2013, p. 58). There are many similar historical connections rooted in experiences of skin tone based on the discrimination between South Asian and Black groups. Colorism and shadeism are in fact a part of the same paradigm, however, the discourse surrounding colorism is entrenched in the historical and ongoing discussion of institutional racism against Blacks linked to slavery. The histories of South Asian oppression and struggle with shadeism are rampant, as I will illustrate through the impacts of colonialism and the caste system, yet, are separate from the historical legacies of Black slavery associated with colorism. Historically, there are many connections between the histories of slavery and colonialism, and yet I do not wish to co-opt this history of political struggle associated with colorism and will use shadeism to ground my discussion of skin lightening practices within the Canadian South Asian context.

In the following section, I focus primarily on how colorism and racism have been compared and contrasted within the literature to develop a stronger case for the need to develop

shadeism as a lens to promote research and analysis. By analytically discerning similarities and differences in the manifestations of racism and colorism, Harris (2008) clarifies the variance between the two concepts: "[t]raditional racism places a higher value on ancestry than colorism; traditional racism assigns people to discrete racial categories, while colorism assigns people to places along a spectrum from dark to light" (p. 61). Harris' approach to differentiating colorism and racism highlights the ability of colorism, as a discourse, to examine the implications of discrimination due to the hierarchy of a light to dark skin tone spectrum; I apply this to my understanding of shadeism:

> Racism involves discrimination against persons based on their racial identity, which in turn is traditionally designated through a complex mix of self-identification and other-identification through appearance (including color) and ancestry. Colorism involves discrimination against persons based on their physiognomy, regardless of their perceived racial identity. The hierarchy employed in colorism, however, is usually the same one that governs racism: light skin is prized over dark skin, and European facial features and body (Harris, 2008, 54).

While racism and shadeism are intrinsically linked and at times fluid, they are also distinct in the way that shadeism emphasizes hierarchies of prestige and status associated with lightness within groups.

Bhattacharya (2012) introduces colorism into discussions of racism focusing on legal and economic aspects to explain the persistence of skin tone bias within Indian and American marriage systems and employment markets. Although Bhattacharya works from a false notion that the United States is racially heterogeneous and India is racially homogenous (p. 119), her work does provide a useful and in-depth comparative analysis of the role of colorism within the two societies. Bhattacharya is able to demonstrate how discriminatory decisions are in part made on the basis of skin tone, solidifying the impacts of colorism within marriage systems and employment markets in both societies. Broadly, her research posits that colorism is both a historically and contemporarily persisting feature of these societies through the established

pervasiveness and privilege of whiteness. These markets and systems across societies demonstrate a preference for whiteness within communities of colour. Bhattacharya is able to thereby examine how light/er skin functions as an asset.

Within the Canadian context, Thiyagarajah's (2010, 2015) documentaries, *Shadeism* and *Shadeism: Digging deeper,* examine the discrimination based on skin tone within the African, Caribbean and South Asian diasporas through following the narratives of a group of young women within the GTA. My work contributes to this much-needed conversation through revealing the narratives of Canadian South Asian women's struggles with shadeism and skin lightening from a sociological lens. I borrow from Charles' (2011) understanding of colorism and skin lightening, as he demonstrates how the global phenomena of skin lightening functions as a manifestation of colorism. My research project applies this understanding to the experiences of South Asian women within the GTA.

Banks' (2000) use of American employment based discrimination cases solidifies the notion of colorism operating as an extension of race-based discrimination among Blacks. Through examining these court cases, she illustrates the extent to which darker skin black claimants experience discrimination more harshly than lighter skinned blacks (ibid, p. 1721). Empirical studies, such as these, exploring shadeism within America have confirmed the prevalence and persistence of a colour based hierarchy functioning in conjunction to the racial hierarchy. Hunter's (1998) mixed methods study found within black and Mexican American communities women who are light/er than their dark/er counterparts within the same ethnic group tend to have better life chances in regards to education, income and spousal status (531). Hagiwara, Kashy & Caesiro (2012) found that "darker-skinned Blacks are perceived, evaluated, and treated more negatively than lighter-skinned Blacks by both Whites and Blacks" (p. 892).

Whereas Bond & Cash (1992) studied the relationship between skin colour and body image among African American college women, and found that, lightness of skin colour works towards both personal idealization as well as assumptions about heterosexual Black male partner preferences.

Sahay & Piran (1997) conducted one of the only studies examining various aspects and attributes of body satisfaction among South Asian Canadian and European Canadian female university students, one being skin colour preference. They found that compared to the European Canadian participants, South Asian females more often expressed the desire to lighten their skin colour and exhibited lower body satisfaction (ibid, 167). Studies such as this one conducted by Sahay & Piran (1997), nearly two decades ago, demonstrate the ongoing reality of internalized skin tone bias and discrimination within the Canadian South Asian diaspora. As an interview participant revealed to me, shadeism is a bigger obstacle in her life than sexism. The mechanisms that bring forth this discrimination within different ethnic communities may differ, therefore it is not possible to argue colorism and shadeism effect individual lives in the same ways within Black, Mexican and South Asian communities, however, the implications of this form of discrimination are to some extent universally felt within communities of colour. In fact, Al-Solyee (2016) goes as far as to suggest that shadeism is about survival within communities of colour. The politics of skin tone underpin the findings of these studies showing the ongoing salience of skin tone discrimination. Shadeism operates within and through, and at times separately from the larger systematic modes of oppression carried through by racism.

1.3 Thesis Roadmap:

In the following chapter I outline my methodology and rationale for collecting data through qualitative interviews. I begin with my fieldwork process, by outlining a participant profile of South Asian women and the work South Asian beauticians engage in. I then address

the role of ethnicity when considering processes of self- and other-identification with regard to the South Asian community in Canada. Within the context of my project and the corresponding literature on shadeism, I hope to demonstrate that ethnicity is better suited as a concept than race, because it speaks to the cultural and social background that enables shadeism. I also provide a detailed account of how skin lightening is carried out through the various products, treatments, and procedures. This analysis is enriched through the use of interviews collected with beauticians and other relevant data that include examining print advertisements and promotional materials released by dermatology clinics within Toronto. I then discuss my research process and highlight ethical dilemmas that arose while I was in the field through acknowledging personal limitations inherent in this methodology. Finally, I discuss the ways in which I pull from a Bourdieusian framework to analyze my findings around the notion of social capital and skin lightening.

The Bourdieusian concept best suited to understand skin lightening motivations is the notion of social capital, which is the basis of analysis in Chapter 3. I provide background and context into how contemporary global scholars are positioning social capital and skin tone discrimination to understand the practice of skin lightening. A sense of internalized shadeism is identified in interviews as participants recall how they experienced certain socialization processes encouraged by both friends and family relations into maintaining or obtaining a light/er complexion. From here, I draw on the predominant themes that emerge from the data that speaks to shadeism and skin lightening through links to social capital.

In chapter 4 I emphasize the historical and contemporary legacies of shadeism that operate within South Asia and it's Canadian diaspora. I focus on understanding how the caste system and colonialism have worked to perpetuate a pigmentocracy that is continually found within contemporary social factors. I trace how the neoliberalization of India's marketplace has

rapidly changed the skin lightening marketplace. The globalizing white beauty ideal, which builds upon values of lightness as maintained by historical factors is in large part maintained by Bollywood and it's many connected markets. This chapter focuses on further uncovering *why* South Asian Canadian women lighten their skin.

In the last chapter of my thesis, I further address the limitations in my work and share my thoughts on how future directions within research can work to build a more holistic understanding of skin lightening and shadeism. For example, there is an emerging market for male skin lightening, taking an in-depth look at the sociological implications of this market is beyond the scope of my project, however I do point to how this issue can be taken up going forward. Although my thesis largely focuses on the social analysis of skin lightening practices, there are very real health consequences that arise from participating in this practice. Therefore, in this section, I briefly outline actionable insights that can be applied to better disseminate the health impacts of skin lightening products to the mass consumer base. This thesis sets out to map out an in-depth understanding of why and how South Asian women within Canada engage in skin lightening practices.

Chapter 2: Methodological Approach:

The focus of this chapter is to elaborate on the various aspects of my methodological and theoretical approach to this research project. I begin by illustrating how I conducted interviews with South Asian women who engage in skin lightening as well as with South Asian women who work as beauticians. Through the incorporation of interview data from beauticians, I outline a comprehensive map of the ways in which skin lightening is carried out within the contemporary Canadian context. From here, I provide a literature review and situate the lived experiences of South Asian women within Canada. I chose this approach as it is in some fashion shaped by the mixed method approach of Margret Hunter, a prominent American sociologist and scholar in this topic. Hunter's work studies the topic of gendered skin tone hierarchies within the American context and using both qualitative interviewing and quantitative methods. Much of her work addresses how social capital, a key concept developed by Bourdieu, speaks to understanding micro and macro motivations to lighten one's skin tone. To further illustrate the usefulness of employing an adaptation of social capital in the analysis of shadeism, I highlight how scholars within this field have utilized the notion of social capital to examine skin tone discrimination. This section emphasizes the different essential components that become unified within this project to provide the necessary background information to understand why South Asian women within Canada lighten their skin.

2.1 Fieldwork and Interview Process:

I conducted ten qualitative in-depth, semi structured interviews with South Asian women. Five women I interviewed work as practitioners of skin lightening, referred to as beauticians. The remaining five South Asian women have engaged in skin lightening practices. I prioritized interviewing as my approach to data collection as it allows me to elicit rich qualitative information from participants in a face-to-face conversation and learn from them as experts of

their lived experiences. Interviewing is especially necessary as there is not a large body of preexisting primary research on the topic of skin lightening and South Asian women within Canada for me to draw on. An additional benefit of interviewing is that it allowed me, as a researcher, to probe themes, stories and narratives in a flexible manner as they emerged during the interview process. However, there are shortfalls that arise with engaging in interviewing, I outline one such instance as a personal limitation that I encountered in my field work process.

Snowball sampling was used to secure participants. The GTA is a regionally strategic site to situate this research: South Asians are the largest visible minority group within this area and Punjabi is the second most frequent non-official language spoken at home (NHS, 2011). Since I am fluent in Punjabi, some of the participants chose to speak in Punjabi during the interview. As a second generation Indo-Canadian female, I am aware of cultural sensitivities and was able adapt to the specific norms, intricacies, and practices existing within the diaspora. In many cases I was treated like an insider by the women as they often assumed I was aware of the topic we were discussing by issuing statements such as "as you know", "we are brown" and "the way our culture works". This allowed us to exchange our ideas in a more organic fashion such that the assumptions of cultural homogeneity facilitated a sense of insider-knowledge. As I illustrate in an example below, being aware of these cultural sensitivities was especially important in respecting the dignity of participants. However, there are also negative aspects of being considered an insider, especially in the context of the work of beauticians. For example, I was often not able to fully elicit definitions of certain practices and products from beauticians because my high level of awareness in this field was known to them.

As part of a research methodology course I have completed in my Master's studies, I conducted three interviews in 2015, two with South Asian beauticians and one with a South

Asian woman who identified the impacts of shadeism and has undergone skin lightening. I have obtained ethical approval from York University and the participants to include these interviews in my thesis.

Data analysis took the form of transcription to reveal the common themes emerging from discussions with participants. I focus on what the women said about skin lightening practices to highlight how their lived experiences with this beauty practice is shaped by the larger societal impact of light skin preference. Emerging from my interviews, which I discuss in detail throughout chapters 3 and 4, I analyze the relation between social capital and skin lightening, drawing heavily from a framework inspired by Bourdieu and the empirical ground work of Margret Hunter's sociological inquiry. Much of the personal interest I bring to this project is inspired by Hunter's dedication and style of approach to uncovering skin tone discrimination within visible minority groups. Therefore, this is the awareness I bring to my interviews that inevitably shaped the course of data collection.

2.2 Participant Profile: A Brief Sketch of South Asian Women and Beauticians:

It is to be noted that the expression participant, interviewee and respondent is used interchangeably throughout my work. To gain a fuller understanding of skin lightening, I chose to speak to South Asian women who are beauticians, offering skin lightening treatments and procedures in addition to South Asian women who engage in skin lightening themselves. As expected, there is a level of overlap between both groups of participants and much of my analysis treats both group as the more broad group of South Asian women, unless otherwise indicated. Below I explore the characteristics of both groups of women I interviewed.

I have found a multitude of studies that prioritize understanding the lived experience of South Asian women within Canada (see Dyck & Dossa, 2007[3]; George & Ramkissoon,1998[4]; Khan & Watson 2006)[5]. Although there are numerous studies that focus on understanding the lived experience of the Canadian South Asian diaspora, I selected these three to familiarize myself in a high level sense with many broad aspects South Asian Canadian female life that has been researched. From here, I primarily consult two additional texts exploring the lived experiences of these women to develop a basis of understanding of how it is situated within the literature. Aujla's (2000) work explores the otherness felt by this group. She argues dominant culture places even Canadian born second generation South Asian women in the immigrant category. They are viewed as incongruent with being authentically Canadian, despite the national rhetoric of multiculturalism and inclusion. Although acknowledging the vastly different lived experiences of multigenerational Canadian South Asian women, Aujla (2000) is able to identify commonalities present in the lives of these women such as "experiences of racism, feelings of being 'other' and not belonging, colonialism, patriarchy, sexism and living in a diasporic culture" (ibid, p. 41). In her work, she views the colonial discourse that continues today regarding the persisting and contradictory ways in which sexuality of South Asian women within

---

[3] Dyck & Dossa (2007) compared differences in lived experiences that arise for British Columbia's South Asian migrant women in how they think through the idea of women's work in creating healthy spaces to orchestrate family health. The key themes that emerged from this work was how activities such as food preparation and consumption, traditional healing and religious observance impacts how they navigate physical, social and symbolic dimensions of healthy space in their migrant settlement.

[4] George & Ramkissoon (2000) This study examined 47 South Asian immigrant women within Canada. Through the variables of time of immigration, age at immigration, immigration class the authors keep in mind how aspects of race-ethnicity, gender, class and social constructions interplay in these women's lives as they negotiate identity through 'interlocking oppressions'.

[5] Khan & Watson (2006) conducted a qualitative study on seven South Asian Pakastani women who immigrated to Canada within the last year. The focus of this study explores quality of life, personal stresses and strains that arise for these women as they migrate to a different culture.

Canada is portrayed: subservient, traditional, pre-modern, seductive, exotically desirable, over-fertile, undesirable, smelly and oily haired (ibid, p. 42). Aujla argues, "These co-existing sentiments of desire and revulsion can be seen as remnants of British colonial attitudes towards South Asian women" (ibid, p. 43), they were both viewed as repulsive and sexually attractive and desirable. In this way, she particularly locates the persistence of the colonial discourse within the lives of these women as an oppressive force that constructs South Asian women. In many ways, South Asian female identity is founded upon the overwhelming sentiment of feeling like *others in their own land* despite the national rhetoric of a multicultural mosaic being a standard Canadian framework.

Secondly, I look to Samuel's (2010) qualitative study on mating, dating and marriage among immigrant and second generation South Asian women in Canada to understand how these diasporic identities are created and maintained. Her research reveals South Asian women, both immigrant and second generation, more than their male counterparts, feel burdened with preserving and upholding familial and community reputations particularly as these forces shape decisions around marriage and mate selection. According to Samuel, to understand how Canadian South Asian women negotiate their diasporic identity, we must examine the roles played by the *traditional* culture and Canadian society in regards to gender norms throughout their lives. Samuel's work is also particularly relevant in helping to address an aspect of my analysis: the connection between marriage, dating and shadeism. Although my work contributes primary and most directly to the understudied field of skin lightening, it is also a study exploring the lived realities of South Asian women within Canada and works to build to this body of research and literature.

Contextualizing South Asian Beauticians:

The work of South Asian beauticians is ethnically niched within the larger industry of beauty making and salon work. Threading, a form of hair removal, is the unique sector of this labour market occupied by South Asian beauticians within the beauty industry (see Hewamanne, 2012). The labour market for beauticians is female dominated, and it's numerous specialized sectors are further demarcated along ethnic boundaries. Ethnic niching describes the phenomenon whereby an ethnic group gains overrepresentation within an activity or job (Wilson, 2003, p. 431). For example, the American manicurist industry is overwhelmingly dominated by Vietnamese women, "In 2009…Vietnamese, who comprised less than 1 percent of the U.S. population…account for 40 percent of manicurists, up from 33 percent" (Eckstein & Nguyen 2011, p. 647). Although this statistic is American, the beauty industry, beauty culture and ideals do not differ extensively between Canada and America. Ethnic niching is the driving force facilitating the structuring of South Asian women's employment into roles connected to the work of beauticians.

There is not much written on the lived experiences of female South Asian beauticians, despite their prevalence in this field. From my own experience as a woman visiting South Asian beauty salons within various Canadian cities throughout the last decade, I can attest to the ways they too have dominated the market of threading within the beauty industry. Hewamanne's (2012) ethnographic research examines how South Asian immigrant American women use threading as a home business to find meaning and negotiate their identity. This study is one of the only projects which works to understand the lived experience of South Asian beauticians. Threading is thought to have originated within South Asia and continues to be "practised very widely in India, and is the single most popular method of hair removal of eyebrow hair in South

Asia" (Verma, 2009, p.363). Threading is gaining popularity in non South Asian nations, both among South Asian women in diasporic communities as well as non South Asian women (Abdel-Gaward & Abdel-Hamid & Wagner, 1997; Verma, 2009). Due to this landscape, it is widely accepted that threading services are almost exclusively offered by South Asian women. This is echoed in my interviews when beauticians discuss threading. Most pointedly, Mannat[6], a Pakistani beautician within the GTA notes that "before, the Canadian people, they don't know about the threading and stuff" when asked to define Canadian, she defined Canadian as "white people". Although threading as a beauty practice is not linked to skin lightening, it is an integral part of the work that beauticians do and was discussed prominently with my interview participants. Within both Hewamanne's (2012) and Eckstein & Nguyen's (2011) research, the notion of an ethnic niche informs the types of specializations that women of colour work from within the beauty industry. In addition to understanding skin lightening, my project compliments this (limited) existing literature by addressing Canadian South Asian women who work from and own beauty salons.

2.3 Situating South Asians as an Ethnic Group:

In order to more fully understand the lived experiences of South Asian women within Canada, I provide a brief contextualization of why and how I utilize ethnicity within my project. As discussed in the introduction, within the context of this project, ethnicity provides one unique entry point into understanding aspects of South Asian Canadian lived experience. As I have illustrated, South Asians can be considered an ethnic group within Canada, as such, I work from a framework that combines ethnicity and race for multiple reasons. Satzewich & Liodakis' (2010) text "'Race' & Ethnicity in Canada" offers illuminating discussions into the debate on the

---

[6] All names of participants have been changed.

use and legitimacy of *race* and *ethnicity* within the social sciences. In debating the merits of

these terms, they expand on Banton's commonly held viewpoint that "ethnicity tends to reflect

positive tendencies of identification, whereas 'race' usually represents the negative tendencies of

exclusion and disassociation" (p. 13). In an attempt to bridge the gap between these two terms,

Satzewich & Liodakis (2010) also discuss how Goldberg's use of *ethnorace* highlights

similarities arising for ethnicization and racialization (ibid, p.14). However, I do not subscribe to

the value of the term *ethnorace* because it too broadly merges the differing connotations of race

and ethnicity in their social realities. Ethnicity, as it tends to focus on cultural aspects, captures

the heterogeneity found in the South Asian population through the vast languages, traditions,

region of origins, religious traditions etc., that form the cultural aspects of the South Asian

diaspora. In the context of my project, ethnicity, more so than race is particularly relevant to the

lived experiences of South Asian women because I am interested in analyzing the cultural and

social gendered beauty standards of this group. As I mentioned briefly in the introduction, I

largely follow how prominent scholars generally contextualize South Asian ethnicity: as

individuals with ethnic origins in the region of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Tamil

(Agrawal, 2013). I understand that grouping such diverse cultures as one segment of the

population is problematic, 'South Asian' is a socially constructed identity particularly in Canada,

however there are also many similarities that unite groups and cultures under the term South

Asian, therefore supporting the use of ethnicity.

　　While the focus of my work remains understanding this beauty practice, developing a

basis of ethnicity as it relates to South Asians in regards to skin lightening requires brief

contextualization. Writing from the standpoint of ethnicity as it relates to South Asians in regards

to gender and beauty practices, is an important aspect of my research. I do have a critical

awareness of these terms of race and ethnicity, as concepts that are not dichotomous or fixed, but are fluid and open to interpretation. Using ethnicity appeals to me because it maintains a sense of uniqueness that is found within each group that is placed under the term of South Asian. Concurrently, South Asian, as an ethnicity, addresses aspects of the broader South Asian history and culture that contribute to shadeism, such as the caste system and the ongoing history of colonization. The analysis that flows throughout this thesis addresses the topic of skin lightening from these contemporary and historical ethnic cultural cues promoting shadeism.

2.4 Interviewing Limitations:

I am aware of the many privileges I hold as cis gendered second generation Punjabi-Canadian woman. Given that I have light/er skin and green eyes and often fit the standard of a desired light/er skin tone, I am often asked if I am half Indian. My privilege is not lost on me, in casual conversations when I'm asked what I study at school, some are quick to point out the problematic nature of my desire to understand the world of shadeism, based on my skin tone and appearance. During my undergraduate studies, when I shared my research interests and goal to apply to graduate studies to research this topic, a professor took me aside to share that South Asian women will not honestly have these conversations with me because of how I look. Through the process of conducting research, the conversations I had were heartfelt and sincere. However, I am constantly aware and continuously question the impact my privilege had in the types of conversations and content I was privy to. I am hoping this exploratory research and initial peak into the South Asian community regarding skin lightening will be taken up by a diverse body of scholars in the future to continue to grow this literate in ways my privilege would not allow me to.

In quite a few of the early meetings I had with beauticians, many assumed I was personally interested in undergoing skin lightening procedures or purchasing products to make

my skin lighter. Because actively engaging with skin lightening at this stage in my life, stands in direct opposition to my personal politics, I would politely decline their offers for such treatments and products. This is in part and parcel of my open-minded approach: my research is about understanding and uncovering *how* and *why* women engage in this behaviour, not to assign a value or perpetuate bias against women who are gracious enough to have these personal and touching conversations with me.

Although my research is empirically bound and grounded to the GTA as a region, many informal stories emerge from my personal history growing up within South Asian enclaves of the Metro Vancouver area. When I moved to Toronto in the fall of 2014, I began to build an ongoing relationship with both South Asian women. With South Asian women who work as beautician, I was first a paying customer and recommended them to friends and family, which continues to this day. In recruiting beauticians as participants for my study, I sought to establish a rapport with beauticians of South Asian descent working within Toronto. In placing myself within this field, I have been very open with these women about my position as a graduate student interested in studying beauty practices and skin lightening among South Asian women. Initially, I was concerned that my position as their paying client could latently coerce them into consenting to interviews. However, I was able to determine this was not an ethical concern, due to the low value of the monetary transactions that were occurring between myself, the beauticians and their salons.

In practical terms, initially gaining the trust and building a rapport with beauticians for the purposes of conducting an interview was rather difficult. My request required them to set time apart for me during business hours in which they may have to turn down walk-in clients, which forms a large base of their daily clientele. I was very cognizant of this request and the

implications it had on their work and cash flow. Many times, other employees, family members or clients would chime in with their thoughts on skin lightening, gender norms and beauty practices, or the interviewee would pause her conversation with me to accommodate a client's request for service. These are the situational circumstances that a researcher learns through experiential work, providing me with a nuanced and authentic portrayal of the workspace of beauticians in relation to my research topic. By being mindful of the working environment of beauticians and spending considerable amounts of time in these spaces, it strengthened my interviewing to more fully understand the concept of shadeism from the standpoint of their lived experiences.

At the time of my first interview, presenting a paper version of the required *Informed Consent Form* may have juxtaposed my earlier casual presentation of self as a researcher "hoping to have a *conversation* about skin lightening and beauty practices". This resulted in a few participants refusing to sign the form and not allowing me to record the conversation. This is a structural problem with ethics protocol and a discussion of how I attempted to pivot and best address these issues as they arose. I take up one such example as a glimpse into the problematic and restrictive regulations of conducting university sanctioned ethically approved research in the social sciences that at times hindered my project.

The first interview I had scheduled was with an immigrant Indian beautician, Deepa, with whom I had built a strong rapport. Deepa and her husband are co-owners of a beauty salon within Toronto's Indian Bazaar. Deepa refused to sign the *Informed Consent Form*, citing that her husband was not present and she wanted to have his input before signing any legal document that could impact their business. I did my best to explain the form and highlight the ways that it is created to protect her confidentiality. This was especially difficult for me, as Deepa prefers to

communicate in Hindi, a language I am not fully proficient in. I have full professional fluency in

Punjabi and as a result of growing up actively immersed in the South Asian diaspora within

Vancouver, I have gained a level of elementary language skills in Hindi. This made for very

interesting situational dynamics as Deepa speaks Hindi but can converse in both English and

Punjabi, but due to the comfortable relationship we had built over the months, she would often

switch to Hindi in our conversations throughout my visits to her salon. Perhaps if I was fluent in

Hindi, I could have better translated the concepts of *consent*, c*onfidentiality* and *legal rights*

highlighted on the form and contextualize them to facilitate more trust between Deepa and

myself. As I mentioned earlier, although interviewing, as a whole is the strongest approach to

data collection for this topic, in situations such as this, interviewing methods and protocols are a

hindrance to data collection.

     Going into my first interview, I did not anticipate participants would refuse to sign the

form, but reflecting on the instance retrospectively, I have a better grasp on confounding cultural

intricacies that may have impacted their decision. Speaking with my thesis supervisor, Dr.

Nijhawan, about this unexpected issue was helpful in allowing me to understand how the

different axes of Deepa's intersectional identity may have shaped her response to the legally

intimidating consent form.

     The hierarchies of age and deference of respect afforded to old/er individuals within the

South Asian community and diaspora are also relevant to understanding perhaps why Deepa

refused to sign the consent form. I estimate that Deepa is between the ages of 50-65, and as such,

is considered my elder. Therefore cultural relevancies are powerful coordinating factors within

these interactions. I could not repeatedly ask her to reconsider signing the consent form, as this

would come across as ignorant, disrespectful and brash particularly because of her status as my

elder. I felt it would be unethical if I presented myself as someone who is not aware of these powerful cultural mores and intricacies with hierarchies that hinge on generational relations.

Despite not signing the consent form, Deepa insisted on having a conversation about the work she does at her beauty salon in regards to skin lightening for nearly two hours. During this conversation I felt very restricted by the guidelines of conducting university sanctioned ethical research in the social sciences. She was giving me valuable information, speaking openly about the questions I was asking. However, because she did not sign the form, I was not able to record the interview. At the same time, I could not bring the meeting or conversation to an unnatural or abrupt ending, because she believed she was still helping my research process by taking the time to talk with me very openly and candidly. I did not know how to tell her that the conversation we were having could not be used in my research in any way other than as filler for background information. After this interviewing instance with Deepa, I emailed or dropped off a copy of my *Informed Consent Form* to participants a few days before the interview was scheduled so they would have a chance to read it over and be prepared to sign it for the interview. I learned that I must explicitly tell potential participants that my interview is contingent upon their signature on the consent forms. This ethical conundrum with Deepa allowed me to gain first hand experiential knowledge in how peculiar and removed from reality consent forms are, especially in the everyday context of building relationships with people. I realize now in retrospect, that in this instance I could have attempted to secure her consent verbally, however, as a relatively inexperienced interviewer at the time, I felt intimidated and restricted to complying with ethics boards, and did not explore this option. It is within these spaces that I read ethics forms as culturally insensitive, as they can only account for very regimented, traditional and restricted notions of interviewing. This raises the issue of how universities have taken up the role of

coordinating individualistic notions of consent which as illustrated by Deepa's case, sidesteps the individual's actual notion of consent. While interviewing is a strategic and useful method that I employed within my project, given the difficulty in studying this issue, this is a reflection of how even this data should be viewed cautiously, as with any other research method.

Reflecting on Bourdieu's views on empirical research "in all of its forms, from ethnography to sociology and from the so-called questionnaire to the most open-ended interview" (Bourdieu et al., 1997, 607), I do keep an awareness in mind of how I view my methodology, particularly the 'sticky' situations, such as in Deepa's case, that arise. Bourdieu holds it "imperative to make explicit the intentions and the procedural principles that we put into practice in the research project whose findings we present" (ibid). To keep in mind a *"reflex reflexivity"* (ibid, 608) addresses the social relationship present in the interview, as it occurs to enable the researcher to keep in mind her own presuppositions (ibid). Bourdieu encourages the interviewer to address forms of "non-violent" communication:

> To attempt to know what one is doing when one sets up an interview relationship is, first of all, to seek to know the effects one may unwittingly produce by that kind of always slightly arbitrary intrusion inherent in social exchange (chiefly by the way one presents oneself and presents the survey, by the encourage one gives or withholds. etc.) (ibid, p. 608-609)

Addressing the asymmetrical social relationships as they constantly arise in this methodological approach enriches my empirical interview data because I am able to more fully and actively listen and adjust to the social structures and relations I encounter.

2.5 Skin Lightening: A Closer Look at the Contemporary Market, Products and Procedures:

In the introduction, I briefly discussed how skin lightening is carried out: through products, treatments and procedures. Here, providing a detailed account of these networks is a key sociological aspect of understanding *why* and *how* South Asian women lighten their skin within the local context. The guiding focus of this work is to understand *why* South Asian

women lighten their skin, to establish this, we must first take a deeper look at *how* this is done. The importance of providing concrete examples of the products, treatments and procedures that South Asian women use in Toronto helps to map their experiential reality within this beauty practice. This analysis examines the treatments as well as how the marketplace has grown to shape an ever-growing "yearning for lightness" (Glenn, 2008, 298).

The market for skin lightening in South Asian nations such as India exists on a massive scale. In 1999, this market had been evaluated at $68 million (Parameswaran & Cardoza, 2009, p. 236), by 2012, it had grown to be evaluated at over $434 million (Russel-Cole, Wilson & Hall, 2012, p. 34). This rapid growth in India's skin lightening sector has largely been attributed to the neoliberalization of the Indian economy. The early 1990's saw a state driven and backed shift to restructure India's economy from a 'quasi' socialist economic player into a forerunner within the globalizing capitalist world economy (Parameswaran & Cardoza, 2009, p. 220). This restructuring allowed the private sector to commodify and further capitalize on the notion of lightness as a desirable and required feminine trait. At the macro state level, this economic shift has translated directly into the rapid growth of the contemporary market of Indian skin lightening products. India's increasing appetite and consumption for skin lightening products is not unique, as mentioned earlier, the global market has been evaluated at over $10 billion, with much of the growth coming from Asian markets (Al-Solyaylee, 2016). Although comparable figures of Canadian consumption and use of skin lightening products have not been collected or published, there has been a marked growth in the field of ethnic dermatology (Bascaramurty, 2011) which points to an increased uptake of skin lightening.

Today, Indians, and members of the Indian diaspora account for the largest global consumers of skin lightening products (Glenn, 2008, p. 289). Within South Asian communities,

women between the ages of 16 and 35 form the bulk of consumers (ibid), this is roughly

reflected in my data as well. In 2000, due to the growing demand to obtain fairness, over 30

types of skin lightening products were available to Indian consumers (Parmeswan & Cordoza,

2009). These corporations strongly maintain that "they are only responding to market demand"

(Russel-Cole, Wilson & Hall, 2012, p. 35), claiming that they are not responsible for producing

shadeism, but instead offer solutions. There has not been market research collected yet on the

size of Canada's skin lightening market, despite its growing size, however, sources point to the

sizeable growth this industry is seeing within Canada (Bascaramurty, 2011; Thiyagarajah 2010,

2015) .

The magnitude of this $10 billion global market reveals a flourishing industry allowing

consumers to engage with a plethora of products and treatments in attempts to alter their bodies.

The world of skin lightening products, treatments and procedures is a vast, intricate and

expansive global network. Many of these are products that are created by large cosmetic

corporations such as Dior, Shiseido, Burt's Bees and so forth. Still, spaces such as beauty clinics,

wellness centres and spas blend the world of cosmetics, pharmacology, science and medicine to

offer skin lightening products for purchase. Online retailers such as Amazon and brick-and-

mortar retail spaces found within diasporic ethnic enclaves facilitate the sale of products that are

intended to be regionally restricted to South Asia, creating a flourishing extralegal market place.

A prominent example of this transnational link is evidenced by the prevalence of the Fair and

Lovely brand of skin lightening products sold within Canada.

<u>Contemporary Skin Lightening Products and Treatments:</u>

Fair and Lovely is the world's largest skin lightening brand and is a repeated point of

contention emerging from 80% my interviews. Although Fair and Lovely is not officially

marketed to Canadian consumers, it serves as a symbolic icon that represents the very act of skin lightening in a contemporary global era.

Rani, a 25 year old second generation Gujarati Indian woman, shares how she was first introduced to using Fair and Lovely:

> Amrit: "For the Fair and Lovely that you used to use, how long did you use it for and how did you get into it? Cus like it is trickier to track down to buy in Canada so how were you able to get it?
> Rani: "it was probably with my mom at an Indian grocery store…she's like 'Oh try this out!' to help with the marks and stuff".

Rani's experience in acquiring Fair and Lovely, is similarly echoed by many of the women who shared their stories with me, as I elaborate throughout this section. Fair and Lovely is a standard item available for purchase in these spaces, figure 1, shows the bottle of product I was able to purchase at a prominent franchised Indo-Canadian grocery store in Surrey, British Columbia, a predominately South Asian enclave. The branding and marketing of this one single skincare line, resonates to such an extreme that it has become the global archetype for skin lightening within South Asian and the South Asian diaspora. The very act of skin lightening, which encompasses products, treatments and procedures, is often unanimous with the Fair and Lovely brand and product name.

Standards of beauty, globalization and modernity amongst Indian women are tied to the world of skin lightening; the most prominent player situated within this market space is Fair and Lovely (Gelles, 2011; Jha & Adelman, 2009). With sales totalling over $60 million in 2003, Fair and Lovely is the leading skin lightening product in South Asia (Karan, 2008), maintaining a top spot with 80% of India's skin lightening market share (Picton, 2013, p. 85). Fair and Lovely is owned by the holding company Unilever, which operates over 400 brands globally, including Dove, Axe, Knorr, and Lipton (Unilever, 2016). In fact, Unilever boasts on any given day that over two billion people use their products around the world (ibid). Fair and Lovely is one of the

most profitable companies under Unilever, and is sold in over 40 countries, with India being its

biggest market (Karnani, 2007, p. 1352). In India alone, it has a customer base of over 27 million

and is steadily growing at 10-15% per year (Ayyar & Khandare, 2012, p. 90). These statistics

which show just the size of one product alone highlights how Fair and Lovely finds a symbolic

and physical home within the broad South Asian diasporic community, despite not actively being

marketed within Canada.

     Hydroquinone (HQ), the bleaching agent and most commonly used active ingredient in

skin lightening products, is purported to whiten the surface of the skin and slow the production

of melanin (Franklin, 2003). A report by Health Canada shows that in June 2010, HQ was

featured on the *Cosmetic Ingredient Hotlist* due to health concerns brought forward by the

Government of Canada's Chemicals Management Plan (Health Canada, 2015*).* More alarmingly,

Canada's Chemical Substances summary on HQ shares these disturbing insights: "The

Government of Canada has declared hydroquinone "toxic" as defined under the Canadian

Environmental Protection Act, 1999", while recognizing its everyday use, "Hydroquinone is also

used in some health products such as skin lightening preparations" (Chemical Substances, 2010).

In 1982, the American Federal Drug Administration (FDA) ruled that skin lightening products

containing between 1.5-2% HQ are generally recognized as safe and effective (FDA, 2015).

However, in light of updated medical research in 2006, the FDA proposed to withdraw HQ from

being considered generally safe and effective due to considerable medically noted impacts and

side effects (FDA, 2015). Often, extralegal international products exceed this FDA regulation,

with some products being tested that contain upwards of 7% HQ (Geoyens, Masse, Borremans,

Fermont & Vienne, 2000, p. 200). Sales of products containing HQ have been banned in

Thailand and South Africa due to its known health impacts (Russell-Cole, Wilson & Hall, 2012,

p. 34). Side effects of HQ include cancer (Gelles, 2001), disfiguring discoloration of skin (Franklin, 2003; Hersh, 2008), and "damage to adrenal glands, kidney failure, [and] liver failure" (Hunter, 2011, p. 150). Even at the suggested and regulated limit of 2%, ochronosis, a severe form of skin discolouration, has been reported to occur (Johnson, 2002).

In conducting my fieldwork, I spoke, off the record, to one receptionist at a Toronto beauty and medical clinic in the upscale Yorkville neighbourhood. He revealed to me that in the industry, the negative impacts of HQ are well known, and now, more sophisticated clinics and salons are phasing HQ out in favour of Hydrafacials. This facial, used to treat and improve dark spots and brighten complexion, is a purported safer alternative to HQ. The actual mechanics of the *Hydrafacial* procedure are facilitated through a machine that cleanses, exfoliates and extracts dead skin to deliver the skin lightening product which include antioxidants, peptides and hyaluronic acid (Hydrafacial, 2015).

Within Canada, there has been a marked growth in the field of ethnic dermatology (Bascaramurty, 2011). This branch of dermatology purports that non-white skin is problematic in ways that differ from the pathologizations of white skin. Ethnic dermatology problematizes skin of colour with 'diseases' such as *hyperpigmentation* that can be treated through scientifically and medically sanctioned and mediated skin lightening products and procedures. I asked Hajra, a Pakastani beautician and salon owner in downtown Toronto, to clarify what this medicalized term means, according to her, ""hyperpigmentation is brown spots you have seen on the face. Hyper means like a lot of pigmentation. These are basically your melanin cells that come up on the top of the surface of the skin and come together". Hyperpigmentation, then quite literally is the presence of a brown colour in skin.

My fieldwork took me to Canada's first ethnic dermatology clinic. The promotional literature offered by this clinic directly medicalizes and pathologizes brown skin. This clinic, located in Toronto's Liberty Village, offers an extensive menu of procedures catered to brown skin with the purpose of lightening through a variety of procedures with varying degrees of invasiveness. Two of the procedures include a de-pigmentation treatment and an uneven skin tone prescription cream. My repeated requests over many months to speak both on the record or off were not met by staff at the clinic.

Taking a step back to examine procedures as a whole, I focus on varying types of skin lightening that are offered throughout the GTA. Facials, microdermabrasions and laser therapies are offered by the majority of beauty salons, beauty parlours, beauty bars and clinics. These procedures also lighten and whiten the surface of the skin.

Hajra elaborates on the procedure of microdermabrasions which is "basically a mechanical treatment, it is a mechanical peeling of your skin." She recommends this procedure to clients with *hyperpigmentation.* Laser treatments, on the other hand, as used by Hajra, are treatments of radiation that are more potent and effective than microdermabrasions for skin lightening. "You need to have laser for the pigmentation", she elaborates, "if someone has really really deep pigmentation, I would suggest them to go laser than dermabrasion. Definitely...laser is the strongest one".

These types of services are offered throughout the GTA and steadily sought out by women of colour. There are also full body bleaching packages that are commonly available in these spaces as well, a spa, with three locations in the GTA offers a full body bleaching

treatment at $90.00 per session[7]. When asked to share a list of products used in this treatment, staff refused to reveal the names, brands or ingredients and stated that they are herbal.

In December 2014 the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) allowed an advertisement for a skin lightening procedure on their vehicles, figure 2. This advertisement shows two models, one Black woman and one South Asian woman. Both female models are shown with a split image of their face with the possibility of drastically lighter skin on one half and their natural, undesirable, fixable dark skin on the other half. This particular advertisement explicitly draws upon a ethnicized and gendered discourse encouraging women of colour to "get lighter brighter skin". These terms are deemed to be more palatable than blatantly labeling this procedure as skin bleaching. Alarmingly, the advertisement promotes the use of injections to lighten skin. Although this beauty service is framed within the narrative of health services, such as lightening one's skin to address the 'ailments' of "hyper-pigmentation", "skin-discolouration" and "uneven skin-tone", the association with beauty and skin lightening is latently yet clearly activated within this commercial. By participating in this "safe and natural treatment" women of colour have the potential to be considered beautiful, as beauty is equated with white skin. Although there are strong negative health impacts associated with engaging in such procedures, as I have outlined above, advertisements, such as this one featured on the TTC contrast this by emphasizing the health benefits through the use of scientific and medical jargon. This commercial received significant backlash from Toronto residents and TTC customers. A total of 11 official complaints were filed with TTC officials, resulting in the company offering this service to willingly remove their advertisement (Khandaker, 2014). Overwhelmingly, public perception of this advertisement

---

[7] This price and sales package was effective during the Spring/Summer of 2016.

acknowledged the racial underpinnings enforcing the prevalence of such practices framed within the less subversive realm of skin lightening and brightening.

Through further investigating the clinic sponsoring the TTC advertisement, I learned about the prevalent use of glutathione treatments offered intravenously, as an injection, to lighten skin. A Google search reveals at least five health and beauty clinics within the GTA that offer these injections. Glutathione is an antioxidant that has "a skin-whitening effect in humans" (Watanabe, Hashizume, Chan, & Kamimura, 2014, p. 268) through inhibiting melanin production (ibid, p. 272). Glutathione is also available in oral pill form, in products such as *Ivory Caps Skin Whitening Lightening Max Glutathione Pills* through online retailers such as Amazon. Having mapped out how South Asian women engage in skin lightening, I now turn to understanding ideas about why women may engage in this practice.

2.6 Social Capital: A conversation between Hunter and Bourdieu:

Margret Hunter, an American sociologist and author of many texts focuses on the politics of skin tone, race and gender within contemporary American society. Taking into account the recent global rise of skin lightening among women, her work highlights how the improved social and economic status that accompanies lighter skin for women of colour globally, can account for skin lightening practices being increasingly taken up. Her specific empirical work examines skin tone as a form of social capital within various visible minority American groups. Images of white and light beauty are circulated within both global and regional media internationally, creating a hegemonic standard of beauty, rooted in many social institutions such as "education, religion, mass media and popular culture" (Hunter 2011, p. 143) which pivot on white and light skin. Skin lightening is often undertaken to activate this cultural privilege given to light/er skin tones: "People of color with dark skin tones continue to pay a price for their color, and the light skinned continue to benefit from their association with whiteness" (Hunter, 2007, p. 249). This privilege

quite literally may translate into improved life chances: "Through the process of beautifying one-self, which in this context means lightening oneself, a woman may increase her value in the sense that she increases her ability to get a job, get a promotion, further her education, or attract a high-status husband" (2002, p. 179).

In her 2002 article, Hunter outlines her stance on the connection between gender, beauty, social capital and light skin: "The concept of social capital is used to explain how beauty, defined through light skin, works as capital and as a stratifying agent for women on the dimensions of education, income, and spousal status" (p. 175).

Race, Gender, and the Politics of Skin Tone is Hunter's 2005 book that continues her scholarly, empirical approach to the commonly known phenomena of discrimination based on skin tone. In many instances of her analysis, she invokes a Bourdieusian framework to understand skin lightening practices and structures of colorism that promote them. Although she has contributed significantly to the political and academic understanding of shadeism, perhaps her most insightful segment of scholarship is found within the chapter entitled "Learning, Earning and Marrying More". Through using American data from the National Survey of Black Americans and the National Chicano Survey, both representative samples of Black American and Mexican Americans with reliable skin tone variables, she is able to draw powerful connections to gender and skin tone stratification within these American groups. For these women, the rewards collected by possessing an image of whiteness are real, actionable and measurable.

Overall, she finds that women who are light/er than their dark/er counterparts tend to have higher educational attainments, incomes and marry spouses with higher status, proving many patterns of privilege, linked to skin tone, impacting the lives of Mexican American and

Black American women. Not only does light skin improve social and cultural capital, it has very real impacts on economic capital as well. In this way, she is able to synthesize with the available data how cultural, social and economic capital function in different fields to promote gendered beauty ideals localized on whiteness. These quantitative findings point to the resilience of hierarchies based on colour, "whiteness is believed to represent civility, intelligence, and beauty and in contrast, blackness and brownness are seen as representing primitiveness, ignorance and ugliness" (Hunter, 2005, p. 49). In a 2007 article on a similar topic, Hunter argues this advantage finds its way into the housing market as well, expressing how systematic this form of discrimination is in many social fields. Access to resources such as education and income are determined more by physical appearance for women than men, skin colour and tone works to further this impact among women of colour. In exemplifying how different but linked forms of capital operates within social lives and structures, Hunter argues: "the relationship between skin color and perceptions of attractiveness may be particularly important for women on the job" (2007, p. 241). Hunter's use of Bourdieu's terms traces how the prestige associated to light skin mobilizes realms of social, cultural and economic capital to impact life chances of women of colour. The social and cultural histories of Black, Mexican and South Asian diasporas vary greatly, however, the common lived reality of shadeism does continue to impact these groups. An overview of the main insight provided by Hunter's dedication to this topic of study is expressed in this idea:

> The practices of skin bleaching and cosmetic surgery are both body modifications designed to alter bodies of color in order to align them with globally dominant white and Anglo aesthetics. Skin bleaching practices that whiten or lighten the skin are responses to hegemonic cultural norms that idealize white beauty (Hunter, 2011, p. 157).

Although Hunter primarily works in conversation with Bourdieu's social capital, she does broadly engage in addressing impacts of economic and cultural capital that promote gendered

skin tone hierarchies. The scope of her work allows her to do an in-depth exploration of differing forms of capital. She often splices these forms of capital into more nuanced lens of analysis: educational capital (2002, p. 177), broader forms of human capital (2002,p. 188) and racial capital (Hunter, 2011). Although the focus of her 2011 work, racial capital is dropped from her lens of analysis in other texts. As she reiterates, "My use of the term "social capital" is related to Bourdieu's use of the concept" adding, "…theoriz[ing] the role of beauty as a form of social capital for women of color" (Hunter, 2002, p. 177).

Hunter incorporates in-depth interviewing to supplement her quantitative findings. The narratives that emerge from her conversations with Black and Mexican American women on the topic of skin tone hierarchies are similar to the types of conversations that transpired through my field work as well. For example, one women reveals to Hunter (2005) "I guess they're [black and Latino men] attracted to white women…I think they like a lighter, closer to white variety of females" (p. 3). This draws attention to the frustration many women of colour feel in regards to the dating preferences of heterosexual men of colour. These similar experiences emerges in many conversations that I have highlighted throughout this thesis. Although my analysis, due to logistical constraints does not address economic ramifications, it is feasible to predict similar results among Canadian South Asian women as Hunter's findings. There are no reliable collected national data sets or surveys that problematize skin tone as a variable to be measured to infer the impacts of economic capital and skin tone. Therefore, my reporting on this issue must inherently follow a qualitative interview approach that uses participants self-reporting of narratives and storytelling.

Due to the constraints in the structuring of my qualitative interviews, and participant profiles, I do not have adequate primary data to contribute in the realm of economic capital as an

aspect of shadeism and skin lightening. However, my analysis of Hunter's work, particularly her engagement around economic capital functions to fill these gaps in my work. My work is inspired by the frameworks, methodologies and activist nature of Hunter's multiple and formidable works on this topic. Her interpretation of Bourdieu's notion of capital in its various forms, particularly social, is a practical guide to understanding why South Asian women engage in skin lightening practices. It is this perception and awareness that my work stems from, these are the political inequalities, focused on the politics of skin tone and gender I wish to bring to light within my research project.

Hunter's adaptation of Bourdieu's concepts provides an examination of the ways in which a Bourdisian inspired framework can be applied to my research. The main objective I have set out to understand within this project is to comprehend why South Asian Canadian women lighten their skin. In previous sections, I have discussed the variety of ways that skin lightening, as a beauty practice, is taken up, ranging from non-invasive over-the-counter creams to invasive procedures such as injections. To understand why, especially in women's day-to-day lives, I turn to the framework of capital, as put forward by Bourdieu. This section will give an overview of key terms and concepts that I apply in my research taken from Bourdieu as well as how other scholars writing and researching on shadeism, skin lightening and pigmentocracy incorporate Bourdieu's concept of capital into their texts.

2.7 Incorporating a Framework Inspired by Bourdieu:

Bourdieu's analysis on the various forms of capital is widely understood as his most important and original contribution to sociology (Calhoun, 2003). Capital, in its various forms is essential to "account for the structure and functioning of the social world", through examining

the distribution of these types and subtypes of capital at any time, we are able to map out a

representation of the structure of the social world in all of its complexities and inequalities

(Bourdieu, 1986).

Capital, for Bourdieu (1986), in any of its forms is an accumulated and reproducible

resource that allows action; as such, social action can be dissected through examining the roles of

capital. His theorization of capital rests on these ideas:

> capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: as *economic capital*, which is immediately
> and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the forms of property rights;
> as *cultural capital*, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be
> institutionalized in the forms of educational qualifications; and as *social capital*, made up of
> social obligations ('connections'), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic
> capital and may be institutionalized in the forms of a title of nobility (p. 185)

Economic capital constitutes of wealth tied to money, forms of cultural capital are non financial

social assets including mannerisms, tastes, and so forth. Social capital constitutes the connections

needed to make use of the cultural capital, essentially access to a broad social network. Bourdieu

examines the social world, and the role of capital through the notions of habits and the field.

These are complementary concepts that represent social and individual psychological processes

mediating actions and attitudes. Light/er skin, as a form of social action is moderated by a larger

held macro cultural capital belief system based in shadeism; while individually, women of colour

may rationally engage in this practice as a result of the social milieu that promotes a

pigmentocracy to increase their economic capital.

The field, operates as an institution, or a set of rules that are commonly held based in

norms and hegemonic ideals. This relationship focuses on how rewards such as status and

authority, among others, are distributed to individuals within a field. The field of romance and

marriage, for example, favours women who embody norms of beauty. This standard of beauty

for non white women is to be as closely associated whiteness and lightness as possible (Xie &

Zhang, 2013). Women who more closely resemble what is culturally considered beautiful have higher status in the field of romance, dating and marriage, and are rewarded accordingly. The distinctions and differentializations within fields represents how they are placed within hierarchies, along many social identities. Different fields favour and attract different types of capital. Transitions and translations between fields are made possible through capital. Bourdieu argues that fields motivate participants to carry out functions of the field, in this way, beauty and the field of dating, particularly for women, are interconnected at many points. As one author writing on Bourdieu puts it, the field is the ecosystem and the habitus is formed of the biotic beings occupying the ecosystem (Blunden, 2004). This is a particularly helpful notion that strongly illustrates an insightful understanding of skin lightening motivations. The values of field and habitus work in conjunction as integral aspects of social life.

The idea of habitus, as an aspect of social structure, refers to the ways in which social and cultural capital is intertwined with unique aspects of human social experience. It allows individuals to navigate the social relations, and fields that they occupy to such an extent that it can be mistaken for a natural social order and form. Bourdieu (1984) defines habitus as a: "structuring structure, which organises practices and the perception of practices" (p. 170). Habitus moves beyond just a physical environment to encompass the wider net of social life engrained into people's lives. Habitus is the socially constructed system of dispositions that inform the ideas and actions of individuals, it is created socially and collectively. It operates to highlight how deep rooted and preconceived our structures of ideas and thoughts can be, which works to emphasize how ideas of beauty, race, and class are intrinsically tied. Bourdieu invokes the idea of classes as categories in which tastes are bound and bordered through hierarchies of fields and differing habitus, class identity becomes marked by participating in tastes and taste

making. Bourdieu's understanding of habitus is useful in unpacking how the preference and taste for light skin is manifested, embodied and ingrained throughout a variety of fields and habituses impacting the social lives of women of colour.

By and large, Bourdieu's framework and view of social capital is particularly helpful in providing an efficient lens to analyze strategic and latent motives behind skin lightening. It provides a strong starting point to investigate how our social world is constructed and contested through the actions of everyday people based on categories of knowledge. In a broad sense, his sociology teases out implications of class and power transmission intergenerationally. His work on the forms of capital is especially influential and has been taken up in the contemporary analysis and understanding of shadeism and skin lightening practices by many scholars, which I discuss throughout this chapter.

Bourdieu's work is informed by a core theoretical stance and grounded in deep empirical research within Kayble society in Algeria and French societies on the topics of labour markets, class, taste, marriage, family structures and so forth (Jenkins, 1992). As a theorist, Bourdieu strongly championed and supported the essential need for empirical analysis to develop theoretical frameworks. Calhoun, argues much of Bourdieu's work distinctly sits within the broad poststructuralist generation. Reflecting on Bourdieu's scholarship, Calhoun notes:

> In a sense, Bourdieu developed an internal challenge to structuralism, incorporating much of its insight and intellectual approach but rejecting the tendency to describe social life in overly cognitive and overly static terms as a matter of following rules rather than engaging in strategic practice (2003, p. 282).

I have established the usefulness in examining Bourdieu as an entry point into understanding both individual motivators and cultural pressures that uphold shadeism. However, a predominant critique of Bourdieu, as put forth by Skeggs (2004), is that his work overlooks and simplifies the conflicting roles between structure and agency in the social world. While some argues that,

"[Bourdieu's project] can itself be critiqued for being an overly deterministic rendering of human thought, feeling and behavior" (Throop & Murphy, 2002, p. 186). This sentiment is observed and echoed by many authors who also critique Bourdieu of being overly deterministic (Jenkins 1992; Lizardo 2004). I include this brief critique to get a more comprehensive understanding of Bourdieu and the debates surrounding his work.

Although Hunter is the most predominant scholar utilizing notions of social, cultural and economic capital as a starting point to analyze skin lightening behaviours, implications and social structures, other researchers in the social sciences have also used Bourdieu's framework to practically and pragmatically situate their writing on shadeism, skin lightening and pigmentocracy. Bhattacharya (2012) examines colorism from an economical point of view. She argues that in India there is an entrenched preference for white skin, which leads advertisers for skin lightening creams to "connect fairness to greater employability and beauty" (p. 121). The capital associated with light/er skin is used by those with dark/er skin in an effort to increase their access to opportunities and resources reserved for those with light/er skin tones, such as employment opportunities (ibid). Fokou's (2009) qualitative study consists of interviews with Ghanaian women to investigate marriage markets in relation to skin bleaching habits. He found that skin colour largely functions as a salient form of social capital in this marriage market (ibid, 125). In chapter 3, I further examine the similarities with Fokou's analysis and findings and my data that converges around social capital and marriage. Furthermore, Verna (2008) explores how a light/er skin tone is a marker for beauty and is a "form of social capital that grants access to resources of many different types, including marriage to higher status men, higher self-esteem and access to 'visible' occupations" (p. 26). He goes on to argue, "complexion operates as a form of social capital that can be converted to human capital assets" (p. 29). This argument is also

crucial to McLoughlin's (2013) research, which focuses on representations of beauty in a magazine geared towards Indian consumers within India and the diaspora. She finds that "the magazine promulgates a universal aesthetic of female beauty which is persistently white, western and wealthy" (p. 15). She puts forth an explanation that white and light skin operates on the global marketplace as a strong indicator of cultural capital, and skin lightening offers the potential to access this capital (p. 16) and emerges markedly in the ways marriage is discussed within this society. Engaging with the concept of capital, especially social capital, particularly as championed by Bourdieu serves as a strategic starting point to analyze behaviours of skin lightening and shadeism in general by many scholars, and as I explore, allows me to understand *why* South Asian women engage in skin lightening practices.

Chapter 3: Interpreting social capital and skin lightening:

Of the three forms of capital outlined by Bourdieu, the concept of social capital most strongly aligns with understanding the impacts of light skin preference within my project. Social capital implies that the social networks of an individual can influence his or her behaviours, beliefs and access to resources. Light skin remains an important status symbol within the diaspora (Joshi, 2011) and light skin particularly operates as a form of social, cultural and economic capital for South Asian women.

Hunter's scholarship is preeminent in the field of race, gender and skin tone politics. I agree with her interpretation of beauty, skin tone and social capital. She supports the idea that the social capital afforded to light/er skin among women of colour is often readily transformed into other forms of capital:

> light skin tone is interpreted as beauty, and beauty operates as social capital for women. Women who possess this form of capital (beauty) are able to convert into economic capital, educational capital, or another form of social capital (2002, 177).

Having light/er skin pushes girls and women closer or into the category of beauty. Furthermore, family members can mobilize this prestige by having female family members who are considered light and beautiful and vice versa. I found that the social value attributed to light skin among women within South Asian communities works in a cyclical way, especially in the social context of a family. Within my research, participants place a high value on light/er skin, as they repeatedly link the norms of beauty and femininity ideals that they follow to skin tone. This internalization, as I will demonstrate, is maintained by friendship and kinship networks, potential marriage and dating patterns and larger media forces. These factors are interconnected into the lives of South Asian women and mediated by shadeism, examining these factors addresses why women engage in skin lightening practices.

In my interviews I found that women recounted how the variations in skin tone among family female members resulted in differential treatment by their kinship network. Selena, an Indian-Guyanese women in her mid twenties, addresses how this value manifested in her family. According to her, her light/er cousins were regarded as prettier while her dark/er cousins were treated poorly because of their skin tone:

> Amrit: So, you know, that I'm interested in skin lightening…Can you talk a little bit about what you think about that? Or, any experiences that you have with it or anything?
>
> Selena: I think that shadeism is so real, it's such a real real issue for like me, and my family…Because your lighter cousins are automatically the prettier cousins [Amrit: Yeah, mhm]. And the darker cousins are automatically, they could be the most gorgeous person on the world, but they are not pretty and you see that in the way they're treated right? Like they obviously they don't get treated the same way. When guys would come around, the light skin cousins would be ones that are pushed, like my grandma would always wanna marry one of my cousins off to everyone single guy that came because she was lighter skin and she was considered to be, like, uh, beauty queen in our family. Like people would literally call her the beauty queen right? And its interesting right? Cus she was light skin but she also dyed her hair blonde so she looked very very white, and I think that is one of the reasons that she was considered that way. But like for my other cousins, who was very dark skinned, like you could see it in the way she was treated *man*. Like they treated her so badly, and you know, like made her seem like she was not, like you know, like suitable for anyone, right? So shadeism is such a real thing…

There are often many variations of skin tone found within a family. Landor et al., (2013) conducted a study with over 700 participants based on data from a longitudinal sample of African American families to understand how skin tone impacts experiences with discrimination and difference in parenting within families. As expected, they found that "darker skin adolescents tended to receive lower quality of parenting than their lighter skin counterparts" (ibid, p. 821), in relation to gender, the researchers found "lighter skin females receive higher quality of parenting than their darker skin counterparts" (ibid). Family dynamics of treatment are particularly salient in how the women I spoke to conceptualize hierarchies of skin tone through their lived experiences. This cyclical narrative emerges in my conversations with Anjali, a women of Tamil background, whose childhood memories illustrate how she was treated both superiorly than other siblings due to her lighter skin, and simultaneously considered an asset that

was protected by her mother. She recounts one particularly vivid memory in relation to

discussing shadeism:

> I remember before my…party my mom would pressure me. I wasn't allowed to go to the park, I wasn't allowed to get dark. I was in grade 6, and I had to be light so that when the party happened, the pictures…my sister, because she wasn't as light, she got to do whatever she wanted.

Anjali's light skin is leveraged by her mother and the wider family network to increase the

prestige associated to having light/er skin across the family's network and within the wider South

Asian community. Having a daughter with dark/er skin can be a cause of worry within a family

setting, partly due to marriage conventions, as mentioned by Selena, which I discuss in the next

section of this chapter. My research reveals that pressures to maintain a light/er complexion and

engaging in skin lightening is most often attributed to social network in which the women

participate. Direct pressures from family members and latent influences of peer groups were

reflected upon as primary reasons for respondents, to lighten their skin.

The role of male romantic partnerships (whether actual or potential and for casual dating

or marriage) also furthers the role of shadeism in perpetuating skin lightening practices. A latent

benefit of marriage for women is the ways in which it can increase their social status through

securing a partner who is upwardly mobile. Fokuo's 2009 research focuses on skin bleaching and

marriage patterns among Ghanian women in its relation to social capital in the marriage market.

The Bourdieusian theoretical framework taken up by Fokuo in his research posits that skin

bleaching is a form of feminine social capital. This social capital, he finds, has both cultural and

economic impacts. In a cultural lens, light/er skin is regarded as more prestigious, while,

economically, light/er skin translates into greater material and educational increases. Ultimately,

Fokuo argues, in the Ghanian context, skin bleaching can be read at times as a necessary

procedure to secure improved life chances due to the crucial role of marriage in this society (ibid

p. 126). My conversations with South Asian women in Canada similarly evoked an intimate connection with light skin and elevated levels of social capital which I will elaborate on going forward.

3.1 The Relation of Dating and Marriage in Light Skin Preference:

In order to understand the salience of skin tone discrimination as a factor in the field of dating and marriage, I will briefly contextualize marriage practices, conventions and norms of the South Asian diaspora to provide more insights on how this field typically operates. Within the South Asian diaspora, there are variations in the types of marriage patterns that are prevalent. Netting (2006) argues, in some cases in, "North America today, in order to find suitable spouses for their children, Indian families use a modified version of the traditional arrangement" (p. 135)" but points to a trend that "in some ways the Indo-Canadian marriage system is converging with standard North American practice" (ibid, 141). Studies still support the idea that parental consent is a resounding factor in spousal selection within the Canadian South Asian diaspora (LaLonde, Hynie, Pannu & Tatla 2004, p. 504).

Marriages within the South Asian context are largely seen to fulfill the function to "preserve group solidarity, strengthen family relationships and keep the family's economic resources within the community" (Talabani & Hasani 2000, p. 216). Due to this aspect marriage within the South Asian context is still viewed as a unification of two families, as opposed to an individualist view that marriage is the unification of two individuals (LaLonde et al, 2004, p. 504). In a qualitative study carried out in Montreal, Talbani & Hasanali (2000) interviewed 22 adolescent South Asian girls. They found that: "About 25 per cent of the participants felt that they would have an arranged marriage, 45 per cent thought that parents would seek their opinion in this matter and might respect their wishes" (ibid, 621). Although arranged marriage was not a topic of concern voiced by my participants, perhaps due the fact that many of my participants

were older and/or married than the sample in Talbani & Hasanali's study. The salience of the

topic of marriage in relation to family approval, particularly in the lives of women residing

within Canada's South Asian diaspora is apparent. In a more contemporary study conducted by

Samuel (2010) the topic of mating, dating and marriage is discussed in relation to South Asians

within Canada. She argues, "Because of the social value placed on marriage and the family

within Indian society, South Asian…women feel pressure to fulfil familial expectations around

mate selection and marriage" (ibid, p. 96). Within both first and second generation South Asian

women, the overwhelming sentiment focuses on "the complexity of not only finding suitable

mates, but fulfilling obligations toward parents and community" (ibid, p. 101). Samuel found

that, "for all these respondents, even those who had a love marriage, parental input was

important" (ibid, p. 102). This is largely reflected within the scholarship on this issue as well as

within my research, which points to the salient role marriage plays within the lives of South

Asian women within Canada. My analysis focuses on how skin tone stratification is connected to

the field of mating, dating and marriage.

 Vaid's (2009) analysis of skin colour and the commodification of self in Indian

matrimonial begins with asserting "marriage is the central aspect of societal function in South

Asia" (p. 148). Throughout the conversations I had with South Asian women who identify skin

lightening and shadeism as chief factors in their lives, the topic of discussion inevitably shifted to

dating and marriage within Canadian South Asian communities. The salience of this topic, as it

emerged in these conversations, reveals important connections between intergenerationality,

shadeism, disasporic relations and gender dynamics.

 Maya, a twenty four old women of Punjabi background explicitly viewed skin tone as a

form of social capital that emerges in the ways in which beauty is discussed in relation to

marriage, dating and kinship relations. While we discussed the particularly gendered beauty ideas that are present in the lives of Canadian South Asian women, Maya made this insight:

> Amrit: It is interesting cus guys can be unattractive, broke, and not working. And he still has the right to be like, 'Oh I'm sorry I want a light skin bride'.
>
> Maya: "It is honestly like capital. To have light skin, it's something you add to your check list…something you associated with beauty."

According to Bourdieu, social capital is the collection of resources, both actual and potential that can be accessed and drawn upon through one's social network. Given the hierarchal position occupied by a light/er complexion, many women feel strongly about maintaining a light complexion as a necessity to heterosexual attraction and compatibility. This notion is echoed within the work of Bhattacharya (2012): "In India, there is an entrenched social preference for white skin. Lighter skin is considered a sign of beauty and men specifically seek light skin colour as a requirement in a prospective mate" (p.121). This highlights the important gendered role that skin colour plays in the Indian marriage process, which I found is salient within the Canadian South Asian diaspora as well. This brings to light the importance of light/er skin as it emerges as a form of capital in this field.

The narrative I have collected is reflective of a select group of women who explicitly identified as heterosexual. Therefore, my research does not account for the spectrum of sexualities and lived experiences in the South Asian community. However, my research reveals the gendered ways that the importance of light/er skin is organized. Femininity and lightness are deemed to be intrinsically linked (Hunter, 2002). In fact, light skin and femininity are necessarily linked to such an extent that Selena recalls how she grappled with accepting a romantic connection with her now fiancé, who has noticeably lighter skin than her:

> Amrit: Okay, so, what are your ideas around men and like male light skin?
>
> Selena: Male light skin?

Amrit: Yeah.

Selena: Okay, so I'll tell you a story.

Amrit: Sure.

Selena: My boyfriend, he is from Goa, which is a part of India, that has like Portuguese, so he has like really, really light skin. When I first met him, and it became a potential that I was going to date him, I was like, 'no way, I cannot date him, because he is lighter than me'. Well I felt like, girls are always supposed to be lighter, right? I had an automatic assumption, there is no way his family is going to like me because I am dark skinned. Like this is going to look so weird the fact that it's a girl going out with a lighter skinned guy, I don't know I just felt like it would be so *weird*. Like it would be such a bad horrible thing, like for me to date someone who is lighter skinned than me.

Selena's story clearly indicates the interlacing roles of gender, skin tone with familial expectations to marriage partners. More broadly, she address normative standards for femininity which centre around a white beauty ideal. My findings regarding marriage and dating are in line with Shariff's (2006) research focusing on gender, acculturation, ethnic identity and parenting among South Asian families in Canada . Her review of the literature points to the importance of marriage being a pivotal aspect of family and individual life among South Asians within diasporic spaces such as Canada. Perhaps this points to the larger social structure where women's social capital stands to improve and increase through securing a partner of higher socio economic status (Hunter, 2005). This is in line with the work of Fokuo (2009) whose research illustrates the hierarchies of light and dark skin in Ghanaian society in terms of marriage markets. This vein of research has also been taken up by Samuel (2010) who focuses on mating, dating and marriage, specifically in the context of diasporic South Asian women within Canada. Samuel (2010) indicates the importance placed on marriage and how these pressures are particularly felt by South Asian women within Canada in regards to mate selection and familial expectations more so than their male counterparts. Samuel argues that, "daughters in the second generation are faced with the burden of maintaining and preserving the reputation of the family" (ibid, p.96). It is not surprising then, the extent to which marriage is discussed among my

participants, and the position it holds to alter and improve the social capital of women. Through activating the social capital tied to light/er skin complexions, it may provide women access to people (partners) that may not be possible to those women with dark/er skin tones.

Jasmine, a Punjabi women in her mid twenties, elaborates that marriage talks started occurring quite regularly in her family when she was in her early teenage years: "when I was 15, the marriage talk started to come in". Exploring this further I learned:

> Amrit: Where does it come from? How have they talked about it kind of, I know they equate lightness with being pretty but where do you think that is coming from?
>
> Jasmine: I feel like it's a mixture of it, a large part of it is having to be that pretty girl that someone chooses to get married to. A lot of it has been based on marriage. As you know, we are brown, the way our culture, we raise our daughters, and then we want to make sure that they are perfect. And for them to be selected for marriage. And then the responsibility is off, like *phew*, we did our job…it's all based around marriage. Everything is tied to marriage.

Jasmine's comments point to how central marriage is in the lives, even at a young age, of the second generation diasporic South Asian women. In a later point within this interview, she shares how maintaining a light complexion was a responsibility her grandmother enforced on her, so that she may one day be selected for marriage. It is this notion of being selected for marriage, and selecting partners for marriage that I focus this section of my analysis on. According to Johnson, Honnold & Threfall (2011) social capital, "represents the opportunity an individual has to realize goals, i.e., work and marriage" (p. 14). Although I did not delve into connections of employment as economic capital, I have illustrated the ideals surrounding marriage and dating factor heavily when considering the use of skin lightening products and procedures. I contribute to this conversation and field of research by discussing the role of shadeism to marriage and dating markets among South Asian Canadian lived experiences and how it links to notions of social capital.

Complexion operates as a crucial marker of perceived acceptability between the matching of partners. Selena's critical interpretations and responses illustrate how South Asian women continually deemed the importance of light/er skin in not only attracting a potential partner, but in satisfying their potential in-laws. Selena's concerns about not being accepted by a potential partner's family are not unfounded; dating within the South Asian community is often seen as courtship that should inevitably lead to marriage. Rabina, a daughter of a Pakistani beautician within Toronto, directly draws a connection between marriageability, intergenerational expectations, in-law exceptions and skin tone of brides:

> For mothers wanting a bride for their son, the things that I have seen that they will look at is skin tone colour, and if she skinny or not. If she is skinny and is white, *phewf*, she is the most beautiful girl ever." She adds, "You know, the son, doesn't matter what he looks like. He wants a bride that is pretty and white coloured. Even the family wants that.

Teasing out Rabina explanation here allows one to uncover the importance placed on gendered norms about beauty, which are tied to skin tone and social capital, and in a way, social liability. She illustrates how beauty, associated with light skin is feminine and a necessity to securing a suitable marital match. Arising from these conversations, I also note how spousal and partner selection is thought of in a collectivist sense, there is not a clear demarcation between how and who is responsible for choosing a spouse within the family structure. It appears then, the pressures to achieve a light/er skin tone is in part created by women and enforced upon women by women, not exclusively the male gaze, particularly within a kinship context. This is echoed in a later section of this chapter, when many participants revealed that the majority of individuals enforcing them to maintain lighter skin tones, particularly by avoiding the sun where women, whether friends and family members such as mothers and grandmothers.

Anjali reiterated similar sentiments as Rabina, in explaining the prevalence of shadeism within the Canadian Tamil community, she shares with me:

>Anjali: "Ya because in the Tamil community shadiesm is like a huge thing…"
>Amrit: "How is it a big issue in the Tamil community? I'm not familiar."
>Anjai: "Because the fairer you are, the more beautiful you were recognized to be. Like you want your sons to marry fairer girls.

The conflation of marital partner selection from individual to the larger family unit is tightly bound to notions of attractiveness hinging on skin tone. As a second generation Punjabi female, I also identify with these pressures and narratives that women shared: the murkiness in dating, spousal selection and its navigation in this diasporic space. Research on skin colour and body image among African-American college women conducted by Bond & Cash (1992) illustrates that subjects believed black men found light skin most attractive (p. 874). Their findings overwhelmingly overlap with my qualitative data, Maya shares with me: "you start looking at yourself like 'Hey, maybe the reason he didn't like me was because I'm like too dark right now'. Does your beauty go with the seasons? 'Oh summer', I'm just not gunna try to find a guy, in the winter I will, cus I will be lighter skinned."

The impacts of shadeism, as illustrated here, are internalized and subsequently impact individuals on a multitude of psychological fronts. Maya and Selena's musings point to issues of wavering self-esteem tied to actual or perceived romantic rejection, gender and skin tone discrimination. These are not isolated dismissible cases, they are reflective of the general view held on skin tone by women, which merits further research into understanding impacts of shadeism among Canadian South Asian populations. Through identifying skin tone, and more largely, aspects of beauty as forms of social capital, it allows an alternative approach to understanding the rise in skin lightening. In speaking about colorism within Black and Mexican American communities, Hunter's mixed methods research yielded these findings: "This phenomenon allows light-skinned people to 'marry up' and essentially exchange the high status of their skin tone for the high status of education, income, or occupation in their spouse" (2007,

p. 247), this is the lived reality that connects shadeism and skin lightening within my project as well.

Jha & Adelman (2009) conducted a study on skin colour preference within Indian matrimonial and mate seeking websites, finding that not only do men exhibit preference for brides who are light/er, women have low prospects of marrying men who are lighter than themselves, thus highlighting the pervasive gendered nature of skin tone preference and bias. This underpins the gendered ways in which beauty and light skin work in conjunction to acutely impact the life chances of South Asian women, particularly in the realm of marriage and dating. Armed with this insight it is understandable to regard skin lightening, in some respects as a decision women arrive at to increase their social capital in the many fields outlined in this section.

As I think through the various aspects emerging from my interviews, it is clear to see how shadeism intercepts the lives of South Asian women, in almost every aspect of social and personal life. In one way, skin lightening can be read as an attempt to mobilize and maximize social capital in the dating and marriage markets available.

3.2 Impacts of the Sun: Behaviour Modification to Maximize Social Capital:

Jasbir, a beautician and makeup artist of Punjabi descent I interviewed described her skin tone as such: "I've always been on the lighter side", going on to elaborate, "I was really fair when I was younger". This lightness of skin tone exists on a spectrum for her, particularly in comparison to her sisters who she describes as such:

> My sisters, on the other hand, their skin tones are different shades. I'm the lightest one from them, so with them, they'd always avoid the sun, cus, they get dark easy and they didn't like it. They already felt like they are darker, a lot more browner, I guess. And they try to avoid it…So I guess maybe, they prefer to be lighter, like me…when they get tans, it's like that dirty tan. They prefer not to be tan, because their skin tone doesn't tan nice. I'm guessing if the tan is nice then they wouldn't mind it.

Unpacking Jasbir's statement to understand how dark/er skin is viewed unfavourably within her family system reveals a prevalent manifestation of shadeism. Her recounting of history fuses together how her sisters avoided tanning in the past, and still continue to avoid the sun in an attempt to "prefer not to be tan". Associating brown and tanned skin with dirt and dirtiness as Jasbir does, is a part of the ongoing legacy of discrimination against people of colour (Glenn, 2008). These linkages between kinship and avoiding the sun show how shadeism is at play within both a family setting but also within the larger cultural systems governing hierarchies in gendered beauty norms, such as the practices that women partake in. There is a strong connection between the social capital afforded to value of light/er skin, and the behaviours, such as avoidance of sun that South Asian women engage in to maintain and improve this social capital which speaks to the larger cultural dominance of shadiesm.

Gender and beauty norms are strongly linked to the social capital attributed to light/er skin. My interviews suggest that behavioural modification to avoid the sun is strongly encouraged within the social networks in which these young women engage in. The value attached to whiteness in Indian society is salient within the diaspora as well; warnings are given to Indian girls to avoid staying exposed to the sun for extended period of time through the "associated negative conceptions surrounding dark skin" (Bhattacharya, 2012, p. 122). Participants experienced and expressed, in many instances both externally imposed restrictions and policing as well as self imposed restrictions in regards to limiting time spent outdoors in the sun. This theme emerges considerably throughout the stories shared by the women I spoke to, so much so that Jasmine, "from time immemorable" knew that light skin was regarded favourably and to be protected within her family. She shares with me how gender ideals were mapped out for her at a young with instructions to be followed: "the message is still strong as hell like, "you

better stay out of the sun, you better not play sports" even these gender norms, stay inside, be a

good housewife, have light skin".

Femininity, at a young age meant maintaining a light complexion and learning more

traditionally feminine tasks such as house work as opposed to engaging in typically masculine

leisurely activities such as sports. This behaviour followed Jasmine and her twin sister well into

their adolescent years. She shares:

> I'm like oh okay wow, so I need to stay out of the sun, so then after that, every time I would go
> out with my sister, we'd purposely look for shady areas, we'd look for trees. I noticed that with a
> lot of my other, um South Asian friends.

The women I interviewed repeatedly shared a similar narrative with me, this is echoed in the

scholarship of Al-Solaylee who despairs, "brown and black people generally spend their lives

avoiding [the sun] to keep their skin as light as possible" (2016, p. 66). The social capital

attributed to maintaining a light complexion is at the crux of this behavioural modification to

avoid the sun. Anjali reveals how perniciously the sun factored into her early formative years:

> Amrit: I know that is like a big part of my family too. Where it's like don't go outside, don't go
> out in the sun.
> Anjali: "Don't go outside and play". I had a horrible childhood.

While this may be an overly dramatic statement made based on the comfortable rapport we had

established in the lead up to this interview, I dug deeper to understand the emphasis she places in

this statement. According to Anjali, for a Tamil woman, she has remarkably light skin, similar to

how Jasbir views her skin as a woman of Punjabi background which speaks to the vast spectrum

of skin tones found within families, and groups within the South Asian diaspora. Anjali's light

skin was (and remains) a source of personal beauty, social capital, and familial social status—

she was strongly discouraged from going outside in the sun to preserve both: family status and in

effect, her beauty. For Anjali, this attention to the sun and its impacts have manifested well into

her adulthood decision, although she is more aware of shadeism now, in the past she did her best to avoid the sun.

Johnson's (2002) research into gender-specific health dimensions of colour prejudice in India reveals that the "tanning effects of the sun are also seen as highly undesirable" (p. 219). In a moment of reflexivity during my conversation with Anjali, I was able to address how I personally combated the impacts of shadeism through sun avoidance as they factored into my adolescent years:

> Amrit: I just remembered when I was around 13 or 14, I was very obsessed with applying sun screen. I would cover it up in a mask, of like, "You guys don't know, I read all these articles on skin cancer". But it was just like, I don't want to get any more tan. For the same reason that my grandma would love me more than my other cousins because I had lighter skin than them. Ya, it took me quite a while to figure out my own ways of how I used to try to keep my skin lighter and not get any darker.

> Anjali: Ya, going on vacation was like the hardest thing ever for me, I would like have to hide myself. I know, I know. It is ridiculous, like vacation is about to enjoying yourself but I would be like, 'ah, sun, sun, hot'.

Bourdieu's analysis of habitus, in particular provides a glimpse into understanding how the power of modifying behaviours becomes a central aspect in these women's lives. The legitimacy of cultural life allowing light/er skin to be seen as most desirable are continually upheld. These socialized behaviours and norms, the habitus, such as those illustrated through Rani, Jasbir, Jasmine, Maya and Anjali's lived experiences normalize shadeism.

Rani, a women of Gujarati descent and I both bonded during the interview in discussing our hobbies, many of which included spending extended time outdoors under the sun. However, this was not always the case for Rani. Much of her childhood and adolescent years were spent excessively staying indoors, not much different than other participants I have spoken to. Similar to Jasmine, Rani too was reprimanded into staying indoors by older female relatives.

During our conversation I learned that Rani had recently travelled extensively throughout India, which led my line of questioning. Similar to Jasmine, Rani shared stories of having been reprimanded into staying indoors by older female relatives within Canada:

> Amrit: Do you find like that pressure of *the lighter the better* is in Indian society there, or do you find that it has some weight and value in Indian society in Canada?

> Rani: Um, I think it does have some value in Indian society in here for sure. I can definitely see it. I've heard things definitely from older generations, um for myself like, I love the sun, so especially like even the second when it turns from winter to summer time I'll be outside. I know growing up, my grandma would be like, 'Oh don't go out for too long, you'll get dark!' And I actually have a really good friend of mine, she doesn't like the sun. She doesn't like getting dark like specifically that's why she doesn't like going out. So its interesting to see it, there it is like very blunt in your face and here, it is very much like quick snide remarks, but it it is still present here.

Commonalities between Jasmine and Rani's experiences arise in the way that older female relatives, mostly grandmothers, attempt to strengthen ideas of lightness being a privilege needing to be guarded and protected. The darkening female body, holds less value in these kinship structures. There is also a strong connection between the behaviours of female peers and friends that latently push them to avoid the sun. Many participants indicate this is also the case within their wider friend base. One can assume that these types of behaviours that women engage in specifically to avoid the sun and seek the shade is a unifying experience of Canadian South Asian women. Maya, reveals one rather extreme measure taken by a friend:

> Amrit: Do you think growing up you ever did things to be, you probably didn't use straight up bleaching cream, but did you ever do things to make your skin lighter or not get any darker?

> Maya: I remember there was a period in high school, I did have a friend who was light skin and she would just, she was like a vampire when it came to sun, like hoodies and towels.

> Amrit: towels?

> Maya: Yeah, towels over her face so like no sun exposure. But I think it was during that period where I myself just had to like take a step back and be like hey, if she hates the sun so much, I don't want to get darker either.

This demonstrates the constant flow and cycle of women interacting with each other, so as to reaffirm what can be seen as a habitus of beauty. Shadeism, the discrimination and prejudice

against darker skin tones, within South Asian society creates a social environment that fosters skin lightening as a beauty practice. Through this understanding, I have shown how light skin is continually privileged. As this project demonstrates, beauty and femininity is linked to light/er skin tones. This reprimanding, which is both overt and covert, of female bodies within the South Asian diaspora focuses on preventing skin from darkening. The obsessive requirement by family members to maintain a light complexion follows Maya into her adult years. I began by asking her about how her family and why her older female cousins avoided the sun, a topic she had mentioned in previous conversations:

> Amrit: why do you think that, what was driving them not to get tanned?
>
> Maya: Ya, it is like, its just associated with beauty, like lightness. [Amrit: mhm] It is engrained in you, like you heard from your mom, or your family like just 'oh if you get darker,' they'll notice it. They'll point it out, you're so dark now, make sure you don't tan anymore. Make sure you wear sunscreen, or don't go out, [Amrit: yah] I went to Cambodia, [Amrit: mhm]. It was 40 plus degrees, and my sunscreen would melt off me and I came back and I was so much darker, and that is like the first thing my mom said, 'You're so dark, like stop going out in the sun'.

Excessive sun exposure can lead to painful sunburns, a weakened immune system, eye damage, prolonged exposure to harmful UVA/B rays, premature aging and skin cancers: common reasons avoiding the sun is a popular health discourse and instruction within Canadian mainstream consciousness (Health Canada, 2012). However, the discourse on avoiding the sun within the South Asian context is linked to appearance and beauty rather than health concerns. Tanned skin is viewed unfavourably and the task of guarding ones skin against the sun and risking the tanning effects, seems to fall squarely on the shoulders of women.

My project shows that women who are light/er than their dark/er counterparts do experience more privilege and are rewarded more, highlighting how deep rooted and entrenched the desire for light skin really is. By engaging in behaviours to lighten skin through products and procedures, as well as modifying behaviours such as limiting time spent in the sun, South Asian women work to access and acquire the social status that is associated with light/er skin. Light

skin can impact social capital because it holds the potential to influence social networks, primarily through relations to family, friends and romantic partners. Gaining and maintaining light/er complexions is one way women may seek to improve and increase their social capital, as the benefits have been widely documented. Thus, exhibiting their agency and showing how categories of beauty and light skin are linked social capital. Standards of physical appearance, beauty, and attractiveness impact women more, "in terms of access to resources (income and education), skin color matters more for women and stratifies them in many areas of life" (Hunter, 2002, p. 190). The linkages are developed through how normative control is exercised and a particular habitus is reinserted. This demonstration particularly speaks through the examples of kinship monitors, friendship and peer influences that have a controlling hand in behaviour. One impact of this control is the influence it exerts over partner selection. The hierarchy created based on stratification of skin tones within South Asian communities points to skin tone acting as a form of social capital that can be mobilized into cultural and economic gains.

Chapter 4: Ongoing historical and contemporary legacies of shadeism:

Beyond kinship norms, there is a massive influence of the media in how the commercialization of Indian beauty standards through the film industry and advertisements have exerted an influence on beauty standards in the South Asian diaspora. Many of these forms are also entangled with actual cultural practices, fashion and aesthetic styles which are found in the market landscape of skin lightening products, treatments and procedures. In this section, I conduct an analysis of this market to further understand the intricate nuances of skin lightening.

During the 1990's economic neoliberalization of the Indian marketplace, numerous multinational skin care companies such as: L'Oreal, Revlon, Nivea, Avon, Ponds and Unilever expanded into India's skin lightening market. The growing landscape of this market reflected changes to the advertising of these products and larger media representations of feminine whiteness. Overwhelmingly, models used in skin lightening advertisements targeted towards South Asian consumers appear significantly lighter than the vast majority of the South Asian population (Nadeem, 2014; Shevde, 2008) with many campaigns using white, non-South Asian female models (Franklin, 2013). This trend can also be seen in the skin tones of Bollywood actresses, who are overwhelmingly lighter than South Asian populations (Osuri, 2008).

Often, prominent female Bollywood figures are employed to represent and act as spokespersons for skin lightening products and brands (Karen, 2008). Predominantly, the level of lightness portrayed within media catered to selling these products to South Asian consumers is not phenotypically possible for the majority of South Asian consumers to achieve (Franklin, 2013). Beauty standards in societies dominated by white groups, such as Canada are centered almost exclusively on whiteness, increasingly these standards are becoming the norm in South Asian societies as well.

To understand how the neoliberalization of the Indian market contributes and speaks to shadeism, it is first important to historicize the phenomenon. Historically, the precursor to skin tone discrimination in found within both colonial beauty ideals and the caste systems of South Asia, which I explore below. Examining the global skin lightening market, particularly in the South Asian context requires a level of historicization to uncover how these legacies continually shape the marketplace today. The ideologies of shadeism entrenched within the caste system and colonization are ongoing within contemporary South Asia, and I discuss these through the modern advertising techniques used, particularly in the Bollywood context. The symbolic value attributed to whiteness, within the contemporary globalizing white beauty ideal is another factor which influences South Asian women within Canada to engage with skin lightening practices.

4.1: Historical Factors Perpetuating Shadeism

Caste System

Skin tone discrimination is felt globally, its pernicious roots are traced back further than colonialism into the ascribed caste system within India and South Asia. In the following discussion I use Jha's (2016) definition of the caste system. Broadly, caste organization is a:

> coercive spatial segregation of groups based on birth, occupational hierarchy, and endogamy (patriarchal rules inhibiting marriage outside of caste groups) to ensure reproductive purity and continuing economic exploitation. Caste was based on the demeaning notion of untouchability, a religiously infected purity and contamination rule, where people of lower castes were not allowed contact with people of higher castes. This system dehumanized a large group of people and condemned them to a degraded and segregated existence due to rituals of untouchability and structural poverty (p. 58).

Those texts that emphasize the historical roots of skin lightening practices single out the caste system as the single most important institution through which gender inequality is (re)produced. The caste system is a complex social system that varies significantly and regionally throughout South Asia. Many variations exist within this system and not all groups within South Asia

prescribe to the caste system homogeneously. Literature has addressed the roles and implications of shadeism within the caste system, both historically and contemporarily. Nadeem's (2014) analysis of skin lightening advertisements in Indian popular media shows how these products are positioned as agents of self transformation, he teases out implications for the ongoing desire of lightness. Nadeem (2014), connecting shadeism to the project of the caste system points to an historical process of "subjugation of dark-skinned Dravidians by fair-skinned Aryan migrants from the north" (p. 226). Other scholars highlight political and economic aspects of the caste system to draw connections of how individuals of higher caste ranking typically have had greater access to both material and immaterial resources (Rahman, 2005). For Indian women, light, fair skin is more closely associated to high caste standing begetting greater immaterial social prestige associated with caste rankings (Rahman, 2005). Jha & Adelman (2009) also point to this body of literature arguing, "Over the past few decades, scholars particularly have pointed out how the caste system in India promotes the hierarchy of skin color, since lighter skin is more likely to be seen in higher caste members…" (p. 7). In some instances, this translates to higher caste individuals possessing light/er skin by lacking a requirement to work under the sun due to access to financial resources (Abraham, 2011). Differences in skin tone may symbolically represent the distances between castes and class. The hierarchies created and maintained as tools of a caste system come to associate light or white appearing complexions as signifiers of not only beauty but of higher-ranking castes thereby fusing notions of beauty, class, caste and status.

The desire for an individual to lighten her skin can be understood as one attempt to blur and cross caste boundaries by appearing or maintaining an identification of upper caste belonging. Although arranged marriage is an institution in which families negotiate partner

preference through a consideration of numerous criteria among which external physical features might appear derivative, scholars have observed that due to the augmented beauty ideals of a rapidly modernizing society, undeniably, beauty preferences have complicated this negotiation process. Much of the incentive, in these South Asian locales for women to lighten their skin is linked to increasing their marriageability (Glenn, 2008). The idea of increasing marriageability is also a central aspect of how light/er skin, and therefore skin lightening practices are linked to increased social capital, which I analyzed in chapter 3. Hall (1995) for example, argues that even though there are historical continuities, it is specifically in the contemporary context of neoliberal modernity in India that brides who are light/er are preferred, indicative of a bias of a lack of perceived beauty against dark/er Indian women. This preference manifests within Indian marriage markets in which light/er brides of lower castes can obtain upward mobility by trading up their light/er skin, as a manifestation of social capital, for caste position. As men do not typically secure brides of higher caste positions based on their skin tone (ibid), this raises the importance of analyzing the gendered lens of caste and class in this context. "In India, skin colour and caste are closely interrelated; with high caste *Brahmins* associated with fair skin, and *dalits* (literally 'broken people', also previously known as 'untouchables') and other low castes with dark skin" (Picton, 2013, p. 88). Picton's 2013 article traces discriminatory practices of Indian skin lightening advertisements. In particular he focuses on Fair and Lovely through the wider fairness complex embedded in historical and contemporary Indian society. In discussing how the connection between white skin, beauty, wealth and success have developed, he in part attributes this to the caste system associating higher castes with fair skin and lower castes with dark skin.

While varying skin tones are found within each caste category, light/er skin continues to be associated with higher castes while dark/er skin is connected in many ways to dirtiness, pollution, sin, backwardness, and such, lower caste individuals (Chakravarti, 1993, p. 581). Although outlawed, the implications of caste remain, in the systematic ingraining ability to promote detrimental and negative hierarchies based on skin tone. The caste system remains an overwhelmingly enduring feature of contemporary societies in these regions with strong implications for shaping one's life course. While less of a salient system of social organization within Canada than in South Asia today, the caste system continues to be a significant socializing and discriminatory force within the Canadian diasporic South Asian community (Chan, 2013; D'Souza, 2015).

<u>Colonialism</u>

The second and perhaps most pertinent factor that fuses the preference for light/er skin within South Asia is of colonialism. Hierarchies based on skin tone maintained by the caste system were further entrenched and solidified by colonialism, which now, contemporary global impact exasperates (Jha, 2016). The British in India further contributed to solidifying ideologies entrenched in the caste system, "British…champion[ed] lighter skinned groups as intelligent and martial and attractive, while dark-skinned peoples were portrayed as effeminate and dimwitted" (Nadeem, 2014, p. 226). Politics of skin tone as it operates in South Asia and its wider diaspora today can be traced through historical and ongoing legacies of colonialism and the caste system. Ramamurthy (2008) offers an historical analysis for shadeism within India, illustrating how the colonial anthropological discourses of the mid-nineteenth century linked Indian preference for light skin to caste based social and economic stratifications. A commonality in much of the literature points to the effects of colonialism in solidifying the pre-colonial preference for light skin (Bhattacharya, 2012; Franklin, 2013; Johnson, 2002).

Although Franklin (2013) acknowledges shadeism proliferating in pre-colonial India in relation

to the colourist caste system, she argues the biggest driving and impacting force behind skin tone

bias within Indian society today is the promotion and idealization of white skin brought forward

by colonization. Bhattacharaya (2012), takes a legal approach by highlighting the importance of

whiteness in colonial India, as whites had legal, social and economic privileges that native born

Indians did not (p. 120). Although the legal framework of these privileges has been abolished,

the symbolic value of whiteness is still embedded within contemporary Indian society (ibid).

India's experience of colonization served to greatly reinforce the preexisting views of shadeism

linking and reinforcing ideas of whiteness to symbols of beauty, power and 'superior' breeding

(Johnson, 2002, p. 217). In fact, the connection between the historical colonial presence and the

driving force of whiteness in today's society is an argument Maya makes in our interview: "its

also like, in a world run by whiteness and like created by colonization and colonialism".

Furthermore, Selena, shares this insight into her family life and gendered beauty ideals

with me. Although I did not directly probe Selena to reveal notions of ingrained shadeism in the

colonial legacy, this is the narrative she identifies:

> Amrit: "I'm interested in skin lightening...Can you talk a little bit about what you think about that? Or, any experiences that you have with it or anything?"

> Selena: "It's such a real real issue for like me, my family, and my culture. I think a part of it is that for my grandma and my mom and even for me, it is like all you know. For my grandma and my mom's generation and like all of my elders. I guess, you would say, that's like all they know that light skin is better than dark skin. That is what they were taught from day one at school from like the colonial legacy, I think.."

Examining this notion serves as a way to comprehend the power relations that form the

foundation for the politics of skin tone in neo-colonial global relations operating today.

Arnold (2004), a leading scholar in medicine and the body during colonial India argues the

British viewed light/er Indian men and women as inherently more intelligent and attractive than

their dark/er counterparts, in addition to viewing dark/er male Indian subjects as less masculine and dark/er Indian women as lacking in beauty (p. 266).

In addressing the role of colonialism in the rise of skin tone discrimination within India, Russel-Cole, Wilson & Hall (2012) argue: "as a group northern Indians are generally lighter than Southern Indians, but within each of these regions, the upper class tended to have relatively lighter skin color than others in the population" (p. 33), adding, "In that way, lighter-toned skin increasingly became associated with the upper classes, and light-skinned individuals began to become more upwardly mobile, while the darkest skinned Indians fell to the bottom of the economic ladder" (ibid). Notably, the British colonials had disparaging views of Indian nationals during their rule. Many of the views centered on stereotypes and tropes about personality and morality that stemmed from the social values attributed to varying skin tone hierarchies found among the vastly heterogeneous Indian population of the time. More directly, there are recorded accounts of the negative ways in which whites in the colonial space viewed the varying degree of brownness among the people they ruled over. For instance, the dark/er skin of Bengali women was not seen as beautiful or healthy (Arnold, 2004). More broadly, anthropological discourses during the colonial era, in an attempt to further understand differentiations in Indian society, dedicated scholarship to fundamentally understanding the caste system. These discourses focused on "race-oriented ethnography" (Arnold, 2004, p. 261) as the foundational barriers and boundaries of caste groups, linking lighter skin tone to higher caste standing.

European colonialists viewed themselves as physically, culturally, emotionally and societally advanced and superior. While they did not grant equal rights to Indians, they did hold differential views on regional tribes and groups as more attractive and as an extension, worthy than others. Northern Indians, typically have light/er skin tones, they were viewed as closer to

the white beauty ideal of Europeans (ibid, p. 264). Bengali men are described as *inferior, small* and *very black* while Northern Indian men, in comparison, were seen as *tall* and *handsome* (ibid, p. 266).While both Bengali and Northerners did remain under colonial rule, there were undoubtedly implications that arose from this privilege. While some Indians, especially from the North, may have been deemed to have a closeness and likened to white physical standards, as Arnold argues, they were not seen to have a "shared ethnic identity [with the British] in the present nor a common social and political destiny in the future" (ibid, p. 273).

Examining the transnational and global market of skin lightening with an applied lens on the impact of ideologies sprouted by colonialism and the caste system reveals how these historical legacies continue to drive and influence the skin lightening market today. Hunter (2005) argues the increasing sales and consumption of skin lightening is a byproduct of the increased advancement in technologies of the body, such as advances in cosmetic and medical products, procedures and treatments linked to colonial ideologies. The increase in this practice, globally, points to a merger between old ideologies of colonialism and race, manifesting in advances in medical and cosmetic technologies applied to the pursuit of lightness. As such, global medical and scientific developments through biomedicalization continue to facilitate the increased appetite, presence and growth of products meant for bodily modifications such as skin lightening treatments and procedures.

Notions of white supremacy, continually galvanized through colonialism are present within the symbolism, imagery, and stories told within today's skin lightening advertisements. For example, L'Oreal's *White Perfect Re-Lightening Whitening Day Cream* (figure 3), featuring Bollywood actress Sonam Kapoor links whiteness to perfection, grace, purity, and success. The desire to obtain whiteness, and the ideas it sells continues to drive this market both within South

Asia and its diaspora. This demonstrates a perspective that solidifies the preference of lightness in skin tone through linking it to histories of colonial imperialism that entrench institutionalized whiteness with roots in today's global neoliberal market. Underpinning the foundation supporting skin lightening practices points to global socio-historic structures advancing white supremacist ideals that continually drive legacies of shadiesm.

4.2 Contemporary Factors Promoting Shadeism: Globalizing White Beauty Ideal

Although the legacies of the caste system and colonialism are continuous factors contributing to a system of ongoing oppression, the globalizing white beauty ideal has also been put forth as a contemporary contributing factor to the subjugation of dark/er bodies. The ideal standard of beauty for non-white women is to be as closely associated to whiteness as possible (Jones, 2000). This white beauty ideal was the topic of discussion for much of my interview with Maya. Below is an excerpt taken from our conversation that picks up the discussion after she asked me about popular campaigns that fight shadeism. Here, she argues that the beauty standard has changed and narrowed in such a way that it focuses exclusively on whiteness:

> Amrit: There is a campaign called Dark is Beautiful and they actually, have been doing quite a bit of work on getting fairness creams ads banned...so they've been able to get a few skin lightening ads banned...but that doesn't change much, there is still that market.

> Maya: Cus it's also like, in a world run by whiteness and like created by colonization and colonialism. Not even like lighter skin South Asian but like white, is standard is everywhere.

Whiteness is the category for and of beauty with which non-white women are measured against, illustrating how shadeism operates *within* ethnic groups as well *across* ethnic groups. Maya's comment above shows how this ideal filters into the lived experience of South Asian women within Canada. The white beauty ideal exists within the increasing networks of transnational and globalizing connections, acting as vehicles for the exchange and flow of material and immaterial goods and ideas. Within brown South Asia, whiteness sells ideas about lifestyle racially underpinned by meanings of modernity, progress, beauty, power and sophistication (Parmeswan

& Cordoza, 2009, p. 249). Picton (2013) describes the white beauty ideal functioning in this way: "It is increasingly palpable that a globalised concept of beauty is emerging as dominant and this is defined by hegemonic 'Caucasianisation'/ internationalisation of beauty concepts" (p. 90). The pursuit of fairness within South Asia comes to symbolize beauty and upwards mobility, my research reveals that it represents and symbolizes similar things among Canadian South Asians, particularly in the ways in which it affords women the opportunity to maximize their social capital.

Despite the formal abolishment of the caste system and colonialism, their legacies within shadeism continue to drive global white beauty ideals and promote the increased use of skin lightening products within South Asian communities. I look to the theme of a globalizing beauty ideal to further examine the continued rise of skin lightening practices. These are the sites of interconnections between historical legacies that shape and drive the neocolonial capitalist contemporary global markets. The way in which these systems operate today influences globalizing white beauty ideals and the narratives that tell us about women who undergo skin whitening practices is a rich site of investigation. Contemporary hierarchies valuing light skin, especially on women, are indelible in South Asian societies.

The contemporary preference for light skin among women within South Asian culture and the diaspora is found within all aspects of social life. This shade based hierarchy is recreated within numerous spaces in the continued globalization of our world. Media of all forms upholds and promotes images of beauty, showing women who are increasingly light/er as more deserving, smart and beautiful. This argument is also the basis of Mishra's (2015) analysis, she deliberates, within the Indian context:

> Beauty ideals are now governed by the media, which glorifies lighter skinned models–both male and female–who are chosen to advertise almost all products over darker skinned models. Television stars, actors and actresses promote "fairness" products (p. 732-733).

I further analyze this notion throughout this chapter. This skin tone bias has become a part of our cultural fabric (Jha & Adelman, 2009, p. 4) within both South Asia and globally; unpacking this argument is at the core of my research in order to understand how shadeism operates as a cultural institution and driving force behind skin lightening practices.

My work on the notion of an increasing globalized white beauty ideal ties into the earlier discussion of implications of the growth of 1990's neoliberalization of the Indian market. The unprecedented growth of the South Asian and Indian skin lightening market has seen an influx of Western market influence; many key players in this market are multinational, non South Asian owned corporations such as L'Oreal and Unilever. Western, white beauty standards are increasingly finding their way into South Asian standards that are impacted by media choices. This change in beauty standards, is in part coming from increased use of Western, white, and Eurasian models in skin lightening markets within South Asia.

Jasmine laments on the problematic inclusion of white women as well as the exclusion of black female bodies in Bollywood, raising issues of challenging beauty ideals pushed upon South Asian viewers through cultural appropriation.

> Amrit: And ya, we still see the same Bollywood movies right?
>
> Jasmine: now they're incorporating white girls in their Bollywood movies and music videos. That is something once that was only supposed to be for our culture. They're incorporating it, and they love it so much. Do you think they'd ever see a black girl on there? Twerking?"

This beauty ideal being pushed upon South Asian women, in South Asia, is increasingly making use of models who are distinctly not South Asian, connecting the notion of South Asianness with undesirability. In fact, Li et al (2008) argue, specifically in regards to the whitening of India's beauty standards, "the prevalence of Caucasian models in many Asian advertisements for beauty products raises the possibility that beauty ideals are or are becoming global" (p. 444). Gelles' (2011) work also supports this growing body of research and the argument that Western

standards of beauty are being subsumed into Indian norms and standards. The strategic

marketing of skin lightening products draws on the desires of the consumer through explicit

themes that connect light/er skin in women to femininity and male approval (Goon & Craven,

2003). The implicit messaging is that light skin symbolizes heterosexual attraction and

membership into higher caste and class groups as well as a sense of global citizenship; while

dark/er skin continues to be attributed to backwardness, traditionality, ugliness and localized,

non global lack of beauty. These themes are present in chapter 3 when participants reveal their

motives behind engaging with skin lightening products and procedures in relation to social

capital. In studying how Indian advertising for consumer goods promotes this globalizing white

beauty standard, Mishra (2015) notes: "most of the advertising billboards have white skinned

foreign models—even for traditionally Indian products like antique jewelry, Saris, and other

traditional clothing" (p. 733).

To understand the politics of skin tone, gender and ethnicity that underpin the use of

Eurasian models within these media spaces, I take a more focused look at Goon & Craven's

research. The legacies of the colonial system reemerge in how Eurasian models are represented

within this space. Goon and Craven (2003) provide a detailed unpacking of the significance of

Eurasian models in this context. They argue, by including Eurasian models in South Asian

media, the skin lightening industry operates a "postcolonial structure of commoditisation and

consumerism which is still influenced by a colonial past" (p. 1). The use of Eurasian models is

not an accidental exercise in using models with the only criteria being attractiveness. The

increase can be explained by what the Eurasian model projects: a "glamorous subject of global

media, a preformative subject who can claim both 'white' as well as 'coloured' investments"

while "middle and working class female targets of skin-whitening cosmetics are positioned as

consumers of personal grooming products" (Goon & Craven, 2003, p. 3). The Eurasian, comes to represent an 'authentic' outcome of globalization, migration and the melting pot (ibid). Broadly, the current day increase in skin lightening sales can, in part, be traced to the transnational and transcultural commodifications which produce hybrid notions of colour, paleness and whiteness, fusing economic, neo-colonial and class-based hierarchies of value (ibid, p. 2).

Multinational Western cosmetic conglomerate corporations are increasingly using famous women of colour in their global beauty campaigns. However, the women they bring on board, as representatives of their respective nations are often significantly light/er and strongly conform to the white beauty ideal. One such example is Bollywood star Aishwarya Rai Bachchan (hereafter referred to Aishwarya Rai/Rai) who has signed on with L'Oreal and appears in media advertisements internationally, figure 4 and 5. This is read as L'Oreal's attempt to bring on board more women of colour in a show of multicultural diversity. However, Rai does not challenge or disrupt the white beauty ideal; she is in close proximity to whiteness. I elaborate more on shadeism within Bollywood and Rai's problematic role in a later section of this chapter. The increasingly standardizing globalized beauty ideal is not only a white one, it is also upwardly mobile and Western (Zhang, 2013). This works to recreate the dominating perception that whiteness is the most valued angle of beauty to be presented globally by South Asian nations.

The encompassing perception of beauty is a homogenous version of whiteness within South Asia, to the extreme that it cannot be achieved by many individuals, this builds on centuries of shadeism that proliferate this region and its diaspora. As shown by my interviews, shadeism is a rampant feature of the South Asian Canadian lived experience. Dark/er skin continues to be upheld as inferior and unfeminine, in the face of increasing globalized pressures brought forth by shadeism, engaging in the skin lightening may be a way for dark/er women of

colour to mitigate stigmas surrounding darkness. As Glenn (2008) succinctly argues, women of colour attempt to secure lighter skin privilege by using cosmetics and treatments to make their skin appear lighter (p. 13). This white beauty ideal is shaping and enforcing conformity of the beauty standard by non white, women of colour. Gelles, in her 2011 paper, "Fair and Lovely: Standards of Beauty, Globalization, and the Modern Indian Woman" also attributes historical changes in Indian beauty standards to the increase of the neoliberalization of the Indian economy. Broadly, she finds that women compare themselves to an international standard of beauty more than regional or national standards (p. 2). Shifting from providing a historical portrait of Indian women's beauty standards, Gelles research strongly reiterates support for the existence of shadeism linking into notions of a globalizing white beauty ideal influencing perceptions of beauty within India. In one interview it is revealed to Gelles (2011) that: "Fairness is so important to beauty in India that…just being in possession of this one feature and having no other specific deformities can be enough for a women to be considered beautiful" (p. 13). This sentiment is also strongly echoed in various narratives emerging from my interviews, showing the locations of shadeism as present within both South Asia and its Canadian diaspora. Rabina, echoes this sentiment: "honestly the things that I have seen that they will look at is skin tone colour… At the end it is all about looks. And looks is considered with your skin tone colour. The whiter you are, the [more] beautiful you are."

Contemporary Indian standards place an emphasis on the valourization of light and very light skin, to the extent that even medium skin tones are deemed undesirable. In this way, the "cultural standards of beauty in India are narrowing and conforming to more international standards, and that these changes are causing new physical and psychological problems to be introduced into Indian society" (Gelles, 2011, p. 2).

Whiteness is also a facet of Hall's (2013) investigation. In discussing the internalized assumptions about negative connotations of dark skin, and positive associations with light skin, he states:

> idealization of light skin among people of color is in the way they perceive, assess, and evaluate the potential for a quality of life to which they aspire. The social pathogen is a consequence of how those who perceive themselves as dark-skinned respond to universal ideals for light skin (p. 558).

As this ideal continues to globalize, these themes and messages are increasingly present within the marketing of skin lightening products to people of colour. Parameswaran and Cardoza (2007) examine print and television advertisements for both national and multinational fairness cosmetics that reproduce and function upon the creation of light skin feminine beauty as a form of currency to be desired (p. 217). This work examines the rise and connection of South Asian skin lightening markets to a larger lifestyle network of escalating consumption in contemporary Asian markets. Light skin is an essential ingredient to the recipe of an Indian woman's beauty (ibid, p. 216) and emerges as a visible gendered marker of beauty and subsequent social status (ibid, p. 217). This notion also links to the ways in which light skin operates as a form of social capital discussed in chapter 3. This monograph's textual analysis of the symbolic codes of advertising argues that audiences are persuaded to register discourses of beauty (whiteness) as a part of a larger system of overlapping statements: global mobility/local authenticity, tradition/modernity, nationalism/cosmopolitanism about particular geographies, namely "modernizing" India and its closer alliances with the west (ibid, p. 218). These preconceived attributes given to lightness interact with the historical legacies of shadeism to drive the engine of skin lightening in India. Pointing to Hunter's work with Bourdieu's concepts of capital, Parameswaran and Cardoza encourage a call to a critical multidisciplinary examination of skin lightening advertisements arguing, "[t]here is very little sociological research on colorism in the

South Asian community in comparison to the black community in the United States… a few

empirical studies…have pointed to the tightly knit relations between light skin color and norms

of ideal feminine beauty (ibid p. 226)". Studying skin colour and skin lightening is warranted as

we have seen the pivotal role it plays on the lives of South Asian women internationally.

4.3: Bollywood: Spinning Stories of Shadeism:

Bollywood as an institution shapes beauty ideals by playing a formative role in dictating

idealized standards for South Asian women. India's film industry produces more films than any

other nation (Larouche & Brunet, 2015, p. 64). The socializing force of Bollywood is not

restricted to Indian borders, influences of beauty norms and ideals perpetuated within this media

space impact consumers in the global South Asian diaspora. Bollywood uses and is situated

between both new digital media (Facebook, Instagram, Pintrest, etc.) and older forms of media

(television and print), marketing similarly recycled and reproduced cultures of beauty that

continually showcase females in a one dimensional static whiteness (Jha, 2016). Jha and

Adelmen (2009) argue the popularity of Bollywood has lasting impacts on Indian consciousness,

this form of media problematically manifests an embodiment of shadeism. The stories and

narratives broadcast within this media space continue to synchronize tropes of goodness linking

it to lightness, as evidenced by the casting decisions of Bollywood actresses with remarkably

light skin. Parameswaran & Cardoza (2009) in discussing Bollywood casting similarly argue, "a

majority of the high-earning film actresses are young and light-skinned" (p. 230).

This is a theme Jasmine discusses in detail in regards to Indian and Punjabi soap operas,

colloquially referred to as *dramay* within the Punjabi Canadian diaspora:

> Jasmine: "And another thing, every time we would watch Indian dramay, you know I'm sure
> you've watched them. [Amrit: Ya] Okay, through things like this, we get these ideas even more
> because it's through the little comments,
>
> Amrit: What do you mean about the dramay, like what about them?

> Jasmine: Like all the women in the dramay, are all so light skin. Isn't that weird? You never see a dark skin woman.
>
> Amrit: Ya. They're supposed to be Southern Indian as well!
>
> Jasmine: Ya, and the only dark skin people that are on the show, are like the men, or like the men that are the servants. The servants, they're in those roles where they have to do a lot of chores, house work…

This shows how the connections between class, caste, and gender portrayed in these media spaces are salient within both South Asia as well as its diaspora that uphold a hierarchy of pigementocracy. Quite similarly, Al-Solaylee also discussed this stereotyping found within South Asian media while doing field work in Sri Lanka, "darker actors play villains or servants, while those with fairer complexions are cast as romantic leads" (2016, p. 63). Darker skin tones represent undesirable social and class positions. This demonstrates the ways that class, gender and skin tone are symbolically linked in their representation within these media spaces. These larger cultural ideas that symbolize the juxtaposing values of lightness and darkness do latently influence skin lightening behaviours. Osuri echoing this sentiment, argues, "Bollywood has been one of the major cultural forms through which this discursive embodied validation of light-skinned women is manifested" (2008, p. 15). This serves to reinforce and strengthen gendered and race based myths associated with the deplorability of dark skin and desirability of light skin, particularly as featured on women. Representations and reproductions of lightness as inscribed on female actresses are rampant in this film industry. Actresses are overwhelmingly much fairer than their male counterparts and the South Asian population on the whole (Shevde, 2008), despite this not being representative of the natural distribution of skin tones within this population. Music is an essential component within the Bollywood market (Larouche & Brunet 2015, p. 68), songs often reference these women as *gori*, translating into a beautiful light skinned woman.

When asked about what type of skin colour is most associated with beauty in the Canadian South Asian community, Maya responds:

> Amrit: We talk about our beauty ideals, our being, like we are both South Asian girls. What do you think the beauty ideal for you is [Maya: like for me personally?] For what you should be. Like what our community wants us to be. How the mainstream media pushes on us to be beautiful.
>
> Maya: …Like there is a Punjabi song called *Soolarah Rung*, about like almond skin colour. [Amrit: What is slooarah rung?] It means like almond colour. Lets say almond milk. It just means the colour, it is like *badam*, like that is the word. [Amrit: okay] But it is like that, you know kind of creamy off white?
>
> Amrit: it's still like basically white?
>
> Maya: It's like white. So ya, that's the colour.

This observation by Maya links into the social attribution of light skin and beauty, not only is light skin more desirable, it is inherently deemed intrinsically feminine across media spaces. Dark/er women of colour face further difficulties finding spaces in the narrow categories of femininity and beauty, and may turn to aids (sometimes even painful ones) such as skin lightening products and procedures to achieve the desired classification of femininity (Jha, 2016).

Bollywood maintains a central role as a macro cultural influencer. Osuri (2008) highlights the pivotal role that Bollywood plays to valourize the necessity of lightness to womanhood. Shadeism is a pernicious feature of the Bollywood industry, linking lightness to femininity and womanhood, drawing out South Asia's valourization of fair skin status. There is a monopoly of light skin actresses within Bollywood's leading roles, which is entirely unrepresentative of the variance in actual skin tone of the groups of people this film industry purports to tell stories for and about. Bollywood, like Hollywood, is not an exclusively siloed media space, it brings into its fold many other commodities, markets, and economies. Beyond the restrictions of the cinematic component of Bollywood, actors, leveraging their celebrity status, have come to endorse lifestyle products, lending their public image to a variety of campaigns,

both political and corporate. One such industry is the common use of Bollywood stars,

predominately women, in advertising campaigns for skin lightening products. Rani, is fully

aware of this partnership between Bollywood figures and skin lightening corporations:

> Rani: I don't know if it was Buzzfeed, or like some sort of website. They had done, like I think it
> was like either a video or an article, about like Fair and Lovely and these creams and stuff and
> like. And, they were showing how almost every single major Bollywood actor and actress has
> endorsed it. All of them have.

This can be read as a successful public figure attributing their global stardom and fame to their

constant ritualized application and maintenance of a bright, light, complexion that can be

achieved, on some scale, by all consumers. Light skin continues to be associated with education,

upper-class status and success, further conflating whiteness to progress, modernity and

Westerninzation (Jha, 2016, p. 10). Unraveling the politics of shadeism, as it is represented

within Bollywood invariably allows us to examine how this space attributes to maintaining

hierarchies of gendered beauty norms. Given the social atmosphere that praises lightness and

punishes darkness, through an individual's social capital and the media, these factors can act as

catalyst for engaging in skin lightening behaviours.

Unpacking "*the most beautiful woman in the world":* Aishwarya Rai's Role

In this section, I will focus on examining the implications of Aishwarya Rai's role as a

global beauty ambassador of India. Osuri, a sociologist, explores the social connections enabling

the transnational stardom of Rai and how it speaks to interchangeable notions of necessary

gendered beauty and skin colour. Rai was crowned Miss World in 1994 and is commonly

referred as *the most beautiful woman in the world* (Agrawal, 2014). Since her pageant win, she

has transitioned into Bollywood and reached mega stardom, leading to roles in Hollywood as

well as working as a brand ambassador for various Indian lifestyle products, including Fair and

Lovely (Singh, 2013). In 2004 she was named a global brand ambassador for L'Oreal. It is the social implications of this position and partnership I tease out below.

L'Oreal's inclusion of Rai is often read as a corporate shift towards a multicultural embrace of inclusivity, colour and diversity. Although Rai in popular Western mainstream perception is heralded as a classic Indian, non-white beauty figure, her approximation to the white beauty ideal does not challenge the hegemonic hierarchy of Eurocentric and Euro-American standards. Media comments centering on Rai's appearance often suggest her look is *exotic*, and as such, unplaceable to a specific geographical region. It is problematic to label her as a classic Indian beauty, as her look does not represent most Indians. Aishwarya Rai's skin is significantly lighter than most South Asians and her eyes are green (Shingler, 2014, p.101); an uncommon combination among South Asians. Rai's image is not a drastic shift or disruption to the global white beauty ideal, she approximates this Eurocentric standard closely and safely by presenting her image as "lighter-brown multicultural one" (Jha, 2016, p. 63). Osuri (2008) succinctly traces the problematic position occupied by Rai:

> if Aishwarya Rai is validated through the inability to place her appearance, she is named as a Bollywood star in entertainment magazines precisely to place her Indianness. However, her Indianness, in fact, becomes attractive because it can be dissociated from Indianness. Therefore, comments that describe Aishwarya Rai as a Greek goddess or the fact that she cannot be placed as Indian appear to make her a more attractive Indian celebrity (p. 116).

In recent years, India is among the top two producers of successful Miss World candidates and winners, showcasing the trajectory of female Indian beauty being accepted on a global stage of Eurocentric standards (Jha, 2016). However, these contestants, such as Rai, do not drastically challenge white beauty standards. Rai has emerged from this socio-cultural milieu as a transnational figure of Indian beauty, due to her proximity to the white beauty ideal. Globally, she represents and "appears to speak for an Indian Bollywood femininity" (Osuri, 2008, p.117). Aishwarya Rai is acknowledged by Eurocentric standards as the only image of Indian beauty that

is acceptable on a international stage, yet this ideal is not physically attainable for a vast majority of women who are Indian. Rai, is Bollywood's "main avatar of feminine allure" largely due to her light skin colour (Glenn, 2008, p. 290). These ideals of whiteness, according to Jha (2016), "[flourish] in media images influencing Indians by the presence of global culture and its embodiment by beauty queens and Bollywood stars" (p. 65). In speaking about Rai's international fame as a beauty queen and successful celebrity, Osuri argues, in part the success is attributed to her light/er skin colour. While it appears international multinational corporations such as L'Oreal are seeking out diversity in the form of representations of various women of colour such as Rai, closer investigation reveals the ways in which these gendered and ethnic beauty hierarchies are being maintained and unchallenged.

This chapter has addressed how historical legacies uphold contemporary manifestations of shadeism within South Asia and its wider diaspora. This historical and present day account of how shadeism proliferates is an insightful window into understanding how and why South Asian women within Canada take up the beauty practice. I have illustrated how both the caste system and colonialism have historically functioned as pigmentocracies leading to present day manifestations of shadeism.

Many of the women I interviewed spoke about the impacts the media, specifically Bollywood, had in shaping the ideals of beauty they aspire to. They alluded to representations of South Asian female bodies in media space as both being unattainably light but still functioning as their beauty inspiration and goals. This allows me to analyze the role that Bollywood, and more specifically, Aishwarya Rai has as an ideal of unattainable South Asian beauty. In order to understand how this media space promotes skin lightening practices, I analyzed the role the neoliberalization of India's economy during the 1990's played in sustaining this ideal. This

economic reform contributed to the massive rise of India's skin lightening market, which is currently valued at over $434 million (Parameswaran & Cardoza, 2009, p. 236) an increase of over 6 times in size from 1999's skin lightening market (Russel-Cole, Wilson, Hall, 2012). Today there is a globalizing white beauty ideal within both South Asia and the diaspora which, in many cases, allows women the opportunity to maximize their social capital.

Chapter 5: Concluding Discussion

Beauty practices are often relegated and restricted to the realm of vanity and thus dismissed as trivial gendered beauty making pursuits (Glenn, 2008, p. 3). Although all beauty practices are politically gendered and racialized, they are not often understood as such. Glenn argues that looking beyond the trivialization of skin lightening reveals a "lens through which to view the workings of the Western-dominated global system as it simultaneously promulgates a "white is right" ideology while also promoting the desire for and consumption of Western culture and products (ibid, p. 2)". Building on this call to action, my project works to highlight the topic of skin lightening among Canadian South Asian women. In doing so, I have also examined the ways in which shadeism prevails as a dominant force in the lives of these women.

As outlined in chapter 4, skin lightening involves the use of products, treatments and procedures to lighten, whiten and brighten one's skin tone. These products and procedures are often taken up by women of colour. According to the comprehensive global report tabled by Global Industry Analysts, the skin lightening market is projected to be evaluated at over $10 billion dollars, with India being one of the fastest growing global markets for skin lightening products (GIA, 2009). The vast majority of the skin lightening market caters to and targets women as consumers, however, in recent years, skin lighteners have been launched for male consumers.

Male skin lightening accounts for approximately 20% of India's skin lightening market (Mishra, 2015, p. 733). In 2005, Unilever launched Fair & Lovely Menz Active "which actually uses the same formula as its women's lightening cream but with a more masculine-sounding name" (Russel-Cole, Wilson & Hall, 2012, p. 35). There are many cleavages and continuities in regards to how skin lightening products are marketed towards South Asian women and men based in ideologies of femininity and masculinity which need to be explored further.

Approaching the topic of skin lightening as it is taken up by men is beyond the scope of this

project, however, integrating an analysis of the complex factors facilitating male skin lightening

will provide for insightful research going forward. Understanding how ideals of lightness which

are predominately linked to femininity within the South Asian diaspora both relate to and are in

opposition of South Asian masculinity will enrich our understanding of how shadeism operates

within this diaspora.

5.1 Examining Health Impacts Further:

Many participants reveal the problematic potential health impacts that are associated with skin

lightening practices. An aspect of my conversation with Anjali reveals this issue:

> Amrit: Do you recall purchasing things or buying and using things to like specifically make your skin lighter?
>
> Anjali: Oh, ya. There was obviously Fair and Lovely. I remember I put it on, I remember my mom brought it and like, it was because I got dark. I put it on and it was like a pasty white substance, like it leaves kind of like a mark on your face and I was like "Ew gross". So then my mom has a lot of Vietnamese friends, and like East Asian friends. They had their own skin lightening creams, which she brought as well. She'd make us put them on.
>
> Amrit: What were the Vietnamese products like?
>
> Anjali: I don't know what it was called, but like it was *bootleg*. It was similar, it had like this um, like a powdery, like powder mixed with cream kinda feel.
>
> Amrit: Oh okay, so kinda like a gooey, jelly consistency?
>
> Anjali: Ya, you know how Fair and Lovely, you wipe it off your face, it comes off? Like that. You put it on at night and its supposed to lighten under your eyes [Amrit: Oh, all night?] Ya
>
> Amrit: Damn, I'm shocked.

The point of this vignette is to illustrate how extralegal products with questionable medical side

effects commonly find their ways into the homes and lives of Canadian South Asian women. The

use of 'bootleg' overnight treatments to lighten the delicate and sensitive eye area may have

severe health impacts on users. This aspect of Anjali's narrative resonates with me as a reason to

discuss and promote how the health impacts of these products requires more public awareness and attention.

This thesis has taken a sociological stance to understanding the social world of skin lightening through the lens of shadeism, in particular to highlight how skin lightening often at times affords social benefits to South Asian women within Canada. A topic I have not examined in much detail is the health impacts that are associated with skin lightening, particularly those that arise from the use of extralegal skin lightening products and procedures that are not adequately regulated by governmental health agencies. In chapter 2, I briefly discussed the impacts of HQ and the many documented cases of women continuing their use of skin lightening products and procedures during pregnancy (Mahe, Ly, Aymard & Dangou, 2003, p. 495). This is often done in hopes of passing on a light/er skin tone to their unborn child/ren, as well as actively lightening the skin of their child/ren (Hunter, 2011, p. 143). These actions speak to the desire for women to combat the adverse impacts of shadeism from an early age for their child/ren. An initiative that targets consumers to raise awareness about the health impacts of skin lightening products could be mandated to be taken up by both the industry and public sector. These health warning messages hold the potential to enact wide scale public knowledge allowing consumers to make more well informed decisions.

5.2 Conclusion:

There are awareness campaigns in India such as "Dark is Beautiful", which are becoming increasingly popular, that set out to battle skin tone discrimination and bias (Khalid, 2013). Yet, the indelible and prevailing norm of beauty is still attributed to light skin. Whiteness is the category for and of beauty with which non-white women are measured against, illustrating how shadeism operates within ethnic groups as well across ethnic groups. Dark/er skin pigment among the Indian population is continually considered unattractive (Mishra, 2015, p. 725). My

work has gone beyond describing this phenomenon as shadeism, to understanding why and how

it continues to operate within contemporary South Asian Canadian society. Associating light/er

skin tone with beauty is a deeply rooted aspect of South Asian society (Nadeem, 2014, p. 225).

This research has opened a conversation about skin lightening among Canadian South Asian

women. In doing so, I have shed light on the many social components that are intricately meshed

to draw out why and how South Asian women lighten their skin.

This project has looked at South Asian women within the GTA and has found both micro

and macro factors that facilitate skin lightening practices. In addition to interviewing South

Asian women who engage in skin lightening practices, I also conducted qualitative interviews

with South Asian beauticians to understand how they maintain, create and understand skin

lightening products, treatments and procedures. Chapter 2's insights are enriched by interview

data collected from beauticians to understand *how* women lighten their skin from creams, lasers,

facial peels, injections and oral pills. Chapter 2 continues to focuses on how women lighten their

skin, highlighting the vast global industry of products, treatments and procedures and how it is

carried out throughout Canada. My project is exploratory in nature due to the lack of pre-existing

research that addresses the practice of skin lightening from a sociological lens. I focus on

unravelling two key components to understanding this practice: *how* and *why*. Due to the lack of

scholarly knowledge on this topic, there does not exist a large body of work that documents,

researches, and strives to understand how skin lightening is undertaken within Canada. This is an

essential aspect of understanding why women chose to lighten their skin, and as such has been a

site of analysis within my work. Although not conclusive due to the growing nature of this

sophisticated and evolving practice, I have mapped out the differing products, treatments and

procedures women undergo to lighten their skin. In doing so, this has given way to having the

opportunity to deeply examine what the existence of Fair and Lovely and ethnic dermatology says about the contemporary landscape of Canadian beauty standards. The narratives and stories that have been shared with me highlight how women discuss the impacts of light skin preference within their lives, the discrimination they have faced and how efforts they have taken to mitigate the discrimination, is often through lightening their skin or maintaining a light/er complexion. Addressing how the background of these narratives are shaped by larger cultural context of many sociological phenomena, including shadeism, reveals an insightful lens to examine light skin preference.

Broadly, I found that there are many factors that are at play throughout the process of women choosing to lighten their skin. Pigmentocracy is a "group-based social hierarchy based largely on skin colour" (Sidanius, Peña & Sawyer, 2001 p. 827). My work supports the notion of a pigmentocracy operating in Canada through the ways shadeism informs the lived experiences of Canadian South Asian women. Shadeism is discrimination based on skin tone and has historic and contemporary legacies among South Asia and its diasporic populations. Shadeism operates in micro and macro settings. Narratives of shadeism playing out in family dynamics through kinship networks is a common thread that runs throughout my analysis. These structures within family settings do influence women to engage in skin lightening, daughters and sisters who are light/er are valued more in the family dynamics. This treatment within the family setting is a microcosm for how shadeism operates within the wider social world. Both within South Asian communities and across groups, women who are light/er are considered more beautiful and thus viewed with greater privilege, status and prestige than their dark/er counterparts.

This idea of greater privilege, status and prestige is linked to how social capital works to influence people's actions. Conceptualizing and applying Bourdieu's notion of capital,

particularly, social capital can indicate why women engage in skin lightening practices. As outlined in Chapter 2, capital is a resource, often reproducible and transformable that facilitates action, and as such, social action can be examined through its connection and roles with capital. Perhaps then, skin lightening is undertaken as a direct means through which South Asian women attempt to mitigate gendered skin tone discrimination. Having drawn extensively from Hunter (2011; 2007; 2005; 2002; 1998) there is strong support for this notion. Hunter also argues for the importance of acknowledging social capital as an illuminating lens of analysis to examine motivations behind skin lightening. Hunter's work on skin tone discrimination within certain Black and Mexican American communities finds that women who are light/er experience higher educational attainments, higher incomes and have partners of higher socio-economic status (2005). My research has revealed, in part, South Asian women engage in skin lightening in an attempt to improve and increase their social capital. Further investigation into the role that agency plays in decisions regarding skin lightening as taken up by women will reveal more insights into this issue.

This increase in social capital is particularly significant in the mating, dating and marriage talk and patterns of South Asian women. Skin tone particularly is a marker of beauty towards women of colour. As discussed in chapter 2, Bourdieu posits that social capital is the collection of resources, both actual and potential that can be accessed and drawn upon through an individuals social network. Given the hierarchal position afforded to light/er skin tones, many women feel strongly about maintaining a light complexion as a necessity to heterosexual attraction and compatibility. Dark/er skin pigment on women is considered unattractive and unfeminine, as shown in my analysis, and does not merit higher social capital. Marriage is among one of many institutions that women can mobilize their social capital around (Johnson,

Honnold & Threfall, 2011), and is a strong focal point within the lives of diapsoric Canadian

South Asian women (Samuel, 2010, p. 106). This aspect of my research reveals the many

influences associated with heterosexual mating, dating and marriage that promote shadeism and

skin lightening at micro and macro levels among the women I interviewed. My research not only

contributes to understanding this highly stigmatized beauty practice, I also provide further

insights into the sociological literature, addressing the lived experiences of South Asian women

within Canada. I have developed an understanding of shadeism within the South Asian context

that traces historical social systems such as the caste system and colonialism as factors that have

perpetuated this form of discrimination with South Asia and its Canadian diaspora. In chapter 3,

I build on understanding how the globalizing white beauty ideal, which posits that beauty for

women centres on whiteness has largely been attributed as a leading cause in the continued rise

of skin lightening products (Li et al, 2008, p. 444). Complicating the white beauty ideal as it

impacts South Asian populations, I have highlighted the role played by Western multinational

cosmetic conglomerates, such as Unilever, the company producing and marketing Fair and

Lovely, in the ever increasing craving for fairness through the early 1990's neoliberalization of

India's market place. The media space of Bollywood and its associated markets is a significant

cultural socializer within South Asia and the South Asian diaspora, as identified within the

literature and echoed in my research. In many cases, Bollywood figures are tapped to act as

spokespersons for skin lightening products which in a way links their success to fixing their

dark/er skin. These factors arise among the women I spoke to, they point to how Bollywood

problematically represents bodies of South Asian women to a degree of lightness often not

attainable by a vast majority of the South Asian population. A segment of this analysis focuses

on the problematic role occupied by Aishwarya Rai as the predominant international figure of Indian female beauty.

Throughout this thesis, I have complicated a binary understanding of why South Asian women lighten their skin tone. Shadeism, connected to particular set of gender and ethnic norms is the larger cultural understanding that light/er is better and influences individuals in latent and subconscious ways. Yet, as illustrated by the use of social capital as a starting point to analyze skin lightening behaviours many women may deliberately undergo skin lightening as a calculated means to improve their life chances. Ingrained within diasporic South Asian society, is the habitus that places a premium on light/er skin among women which shapes individuals socialization through their networks and larger systems such as media that prescribe to this notion of shadeism. Skin lightening, therefore, as a practice, represents a convergence between societal standards of beauty steeped in shadeism as well as personal agency to improve ones social capital.

Figures:

Figure 1: Fair and Lovely, purchased by author in
Surrey, B.C.
Source: Photograph is author's own

Figure 2: TTC commercial
Source: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ttc-removing-controversial-skin-lightening-ads-after-outcry-1.2862061

Figure 3: L'Oreal's *White Perfect Re-Lightening Whitening Day Cream* featuring Bollywood actress Sonam Kapoor
Source: http://www.pinkvilla.com/entertainmenttags/sonam-kapoor/sonam-kapoor-loreal-white-perfect-ad

Figure 4: L'Oreal's *DermaGensis* campaign featuring Aishwarya Rai Bachan
Source: http://coolspotters.com/actresses/aishwarya-rai-bachchan/and/health-beauty/loreal-paris-derma-genesis/media/210855#medium-210855

Figure 5: L'Oreal's international campaign featuring Ashwariya Rai Bachan
Source: http://blogs.ft.com/beyond-brics/2013/01/14/loreal-india-aishwarya-rai/

References

Abdel−Gawad, M. M., Abdel- Hamid, I. A., & Wagner, R. F. (1997). Khite: a non- Western technique for temporary hair removal. *International Journal of Dermatology, 36*(3), 217-217.

Abraham, N. S. (2011). Intra-racial prejudice among Asian Indians: The role of skin color. (Master's dissertation). ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database

Agrawal, S. (2014, September 3). How Aishwarya Rai never stopped being 'the most beautiful woman in the world'. Retrieved from: http://www.browngirlmagazine.com/2014/09/aishwarya-rai-never-stopped-beautiful-woman-world/

Agrawal, S. (2013). Economic disparities among South Asian immigrants in Canada. *South Asian Diaspora, 5*(1), 7-34. doi: 10.1080/19438192.2013.720514

Al-Solaylee, K. (2016). *Brown: What being brown in the world today means (to everyone).* Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers.

Arnold, D. (2004). Race, place and bodily difference in early nineteenth- century India. *Historical Research, 77*(196), 254-273.

Aujla, A. (2000). Others in their own land: Second generation South Asian Canadian women, racism, and the persistence of colonial discourse. *Canadian Woman Studies, 20*(2), 41-48.

Ayyar, V., & Khandare, L. (2013). Mapping color and caste discrimination in Indian society. In In R. Hall (Ed.), *The Melanin Millennium* (pp. 71-95). Springer.

Banks, T. (2000). Colorism: A darker side of pale. *UCLA Law Review, 47*(6), 1705-1746.

Bascaramurty, D. (2011). The rise of 'ethnic' dermatology. Retrieved from: http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/fashion-and-beauty/beauty/the-rise-of- ethnic-dermatology/article581161/

Bhattacharya, S. (2012). The desire for whiteness: Can law and economics explain it? *Columbia Journal of Race & Law, 2* (1), 117-147.

Blay, Y. (2014, January 29). Your blues ain't like mine: Bleaching vs. tanning. Retrieved from http://yabablay.com/your-blues-aint-like-mine-bleaching-vs-tanning/

Blunden, A. (2004). Bourdieu on Status, Class and Culture. Retrieved from: http://www.academia.edu/7910510/Bourdieu_on_Status_Class_and_Culture

Bond, S., & Cash, T. (1992). Black Beauty: Skin Color and Body Images among African-American College Women. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 22*(11), 874-888.

Bose, S., & Jalal, A. (2004). *Modern South Asia: History, culture, political economy*. New York: Routledge.

Bourdieu, P. (1986a). The forms of Capital. In J.G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook for theory and research for sociology of education* (pp. 241-258 *).* New York: Greenwood.

Bourdieu, P. (1984b). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of tastes*. Trans. Richard Nice. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Bourdieu, P., et al. (1997). *Weight of the world: Social suffering in contemporary society.* Stanford: Stanford Press

Calhoun, C. (2003). Pierre Bourdieu. In G. Ritzer (Ed.), *The Blackwell companion to major contemporary social theorists* (pp. 274 - 309)*.* Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Chan, C. (2013). 'We are zero': Immigrant says she cant escape sting of India's caste system, even in Canada. Retrieved from: http://news.nationalpost.com/news/we- are-zero-immigrant-says-she-cant-escape-sting-of-indias-caste-system-even-in-canada

Chakravarti, U. (1993). Conceptualising Brahmanical patriarchy in early India: Gender, caste, class and state. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 579-585.

Charles, C. (2011). Skin bleaching and the prestige complexion of sexual attraction. *Sexuality & Culture, 15*(4), 375-390.

Chemical Substances. (2010). Hydroquinone. CAS Registry Number 123-31-9. Retrieved from: http://www.chemicalsubstanceschimiques.gc.ca/challenge-defi/summary-sommaire/batch-lot-1/123-31-9-eng.php

D'Souza, J. (2015). Indian caste system in Canada called 'a disease' worse than racism. Retrieved from: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/indian-caste-system-in-canada-called-a-disease-worse-than-racism-1.3090441

Diakiw, J. (1999). Becoming an antiracist educator, Black, South and East Asian perspectives (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from University of Toronto.

Dyck, I., & Dossa, P. (2007). Place, health and home: Gender and migration in the constitution of healthy space. *Health & Place, 13*(3), 691-701.

Eckstein, S., & Nguyen, T. N. (2011). The making and transnationalization of an ethnic niche: Vietnamese manicurists. *International Migration Review, 45*(3), 639-674.

FDA. 2015. Hydroquinone studies under the national toxicology program (NTP). Retrieved from: http://www.fda.gov/AboutFDA/CentersOffices/OfficeofMedicalProductsandTobacco/CDER/ucm203112.htm

Fokuo, J. (2009). The lighter side of marriage: Skin bleaching in post-colonial Ghana. *African & Asian Studies,* 8(1/2), 125-146. doi:10.1163/156921009X413180

Franklin, I. (2013). Living in a Barbie world: Skin bleaching and the preference for fair skin in India, Nigeria, and Thailand. Senior Honors Thesis, Stanford University.

George, U., & Ramkissoon, S. (1998). Race, Gender, and Class: Interlocking Oppressions in the Lives of South Asian Women in Canada. *Affilia*: *Journal Of Women & Social Work, 13*(1), 102-119.

Gelles, R. (2011). Fair and Lovely: Standards of beauty, globalization, and the modern Indian woman. Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection. Paper 1145. http://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/1145

Glenn, E. N. (2008). Yearning for lightness: Transnational circuits in the marketing and consumption of skin lighteners. *Gender & Society, 22*(3), 281- 302.

Goeyens, L., Masse, M. O., Borremans, M., Fermont, J., & Viaene, M. (2000). Analytical survey of hydroquinone in skin lightening cosmetics available on the Belgian market. *Archives of Public Health, 58*(5), 199-211.

Goon, P., & Craven, A. (2003). Whose debt?: Globalisation and whitefacing in Asia. Intersections: Gender, history and culture in the Asian context, 9. Retrieved from: http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue9/gooncraven.html

Hagiwara, N., Kashy, D. A., & Cesario, J. (2012). The independent effects of skin tone and facial features on Whites' affective reactions to Blacks. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 48*(4), 892-898.

Hall, R. (1995). The bleaching syndrome: African-Americans' response to cultural domination vis-à-vis skin color. *Journal Of Black Studies, 26*(2), 172-184. doi:10.1177/002193479502600205

Harrison, M. (2010). Colorism: The often un-discussed "-ism" in America's workforce. *The Jury Expert, 22*, 67-77.

Harris, A. P. (2008). From color line to color chart?: Racism and colorism in the new century. *Berkeley Journal Of African-American Law & Policy, 10*(1), 52-69.

Herring, C. (2004). "Skin deep: Race and complexion in the "color-blind" era" in C. Herring, D., Keith & H. Horton (eds). *Skin deep: How race and complexion matter in the color-blind era.* (pp. 1-21). Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Hewamanne, S. (2012). Threading meaningful lives: respectability, home businesses and identity negotiations among newly immigrant South Asian women. *Identities, 19*(3), 320-338.

Hunter, M. (2011a). Buying racial capital: Skin-bleaching and cosmetic surgery in a globalized world. *The Journal of Pan African Studies, 4*(4), 142-164.

Hunter, M. (2007b). The persistent problem of colorism: Skin tone, status, and inequality. *Sociology Compass, 1*(1), 237-254.

Hunter, M. (2005c). *Race, Gender, and the Politics of Skin Tone*. New York: Routledge.

Hunter, M. (2002d). "If you're light you're alright" light skin color as social capital for women of color. *Gender & Society, 16*(2), 175-193.

Hunter, M. (1998e). Colorstruck: Skin color stratification in the lives of African American women. *Sociological Inquiry, 68*(4), 517-535.

Jha, S., & Adelman, M. (2009). Looking for love in all the white places: a study of skin color preferences on Indian matrimonial and mate-seeking websites. *Studies in South Asian Film & Media, 1*(1), 65-83.

Jha, M. (2016). The global beauty industry: Colorism, racism, and the national body. New York: Routledge.

Jones, T. (2000). Shades of brown: The law of skin color. *Duke Law Journal,* 1487-1557.

Jenkins, R. (1992). *Pierre Bourdieu.* New York: Routledge.

Johnson, S. (2002). The pot calling the kettle black? Gender-specific health dimensions of colour prejudice in India. *Journal of Health Management, 4*(2), 215-227.

Johnson, J. A., Honnold, J. A., & Threlfall, P. (2011). Impact of social capital on employment and marriage among low income single mothers. *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare, 38*(4), 9-32.

Joshi, V. (2000) *Indian daughters abroad: Growing up in Australia.* New Delhi: Sterling.

Landor, A., Simons, L., Simons, R., Brody, G., Bryant, C., Gibbons, F. Granberg, E., & Melby, N. (2013) Exploring the impact of skin tone on family dynamics and race-related outcomes. *Journal of Family Psychology, 27*(5), 817-826.

Karan, K. (2008). Obsessions with fair skin: Color discourses in Indian advertising. *Advertising & Society Review, 9*(2).

Khalid, S. (2013, October 2). Fighting India's ugly fancy for fair skin. Retrieved from: http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/09/india-fair-skin-dark-campaign-das-20139181353151512.html

Khandaker, T. (2014). Complaints lead to removal of controversial ad for skin lightening treatment seen on TTC. Retrieved from: http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2014/12/04 complaints_lead_to_removal_of_controversial_ad_for_skin_lightening_treatment_seen_ on_ttc.html

Kendall, F. (2002). Undoing racism: Understanding white privilege. Retrieved from: http://www.cpt.org/files/Undoing%20Racism%20-%20Understanding%20White%20Privilege%20-%20Kendall.pdf

Kerr, E. (2005). The paper bag principle: Of the myth and the motion of colorism. *Journal of American Folklore, 118*(469), 271-289.

Khan, S., & Watson, J. (2005). The Canadian immigration experiences of Pakistani women: dreams confront reality. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly, 18*(4), 307-317.

Lalonde, R. N., Hynie, M., Pannu, M., & Tatla, S. (2004). The role of culture in interpersonal relationships do second generation South Asian Canadians want a traditional partner? *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 35*(5), 503-524.

Larouche, V. & Brunet, J. (2015). Excel entertainment: A reflection of contemporary Bollywood. I*nternational Journal of Arts Management 17*(2), 64-74.

Li, E., H. Min, R. Belk, J. Kimura, S. Bahl. (2008). "Skin Lightening and Beauty in Four Asian Cultures." *Advances in Consumer Research* 35. 444-449.

Lindsey, T. B. (2011). Black no more: Skin bleaching and the emergence of new negro womanhood beauty culture. *Journal Of Pan African Studies, 4*(4), 97-116.

Lizardo, O. (2004). The cognitive origins of Bourdieu's habitus. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 34*(4), 375-401.

Mahe, A., Ly, F., Aymard, G., & Dangou, J. (2003). Skin diseases associated with the cosmetic use of bleaching products in women from Dakar, Senegal. *British Journal of Dermatology, 148*(3), 493-500.

McLoughlin, L. (2013). Crystal clear: Paler skin equals beauty – a multimodal analysis of Asiana magazine. *South Asian Popular Culture, 11*(1), 15-29. doi:10.1080/14746689.2013.764639

Mire, A. (2012). The scientification of skin whitening and the entrepreneurial university-linked corporate scientific officer. *Canadian Journal of Science, Mathematics and Technology Education, 12*(3), 272-291.

Mishra, N. (2015). India and colorism: The finer nuances. *Washington University Global Studies Law Review, 14,* 725-750.

Nadeem, S. (2014). Fair and anxious: on mimicry and skin-lightening in India. *Social Identities, 20*(2-3), 224-238.

Netting, N. (2006). Two-lives, one partner: Indo-Canadian youth between love and arranged marriages. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 37*(1), 129-146.

NHS. (2011). Statistics Canada: NHS focus on geography series. Retrieved from: http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/fogs-spg/Pages/Fog.cfm?lang=E&level=1&GeoCode=01

Osuri, G. (2008). Ash-coloured whiteness: The transfiguration of Aishwarya Rai. *South Asian Popular Culture, 6*(2), 109-123.

Parameswaran, R., & Cardoza, K. (2009). Melanin on the margins: Advertising and the cultural politics of fair/light/white beauty in India. *Journalism & Communication Monographs. 11*(3), 213-274.

Picton, O. (2013). The complexities of complexion: a cultural geography of skin colour and beauty products. *Geography, 98,* 85-92.

Rahman, R. (2005). Colour as a status: The role skin colour in Hindu women. *South Asian Graduate Research Journal, 15,* 1-31.

Ramamurthy, P. (2008). All-consuming nationalism: The Indian modern girl in the 1920s and 1930. In Weinbaum, A. E., Thomas, L. M., Ramamurthy, P., Poiger, U. G., Dong, M. Y., & Barlow, T. E. (Eds.), *The modern girl around the world: Consumption, modernity and globalization* (pp. 147-173). London: Duke University Press

Russell-Cole, K., M., Wilson and R., Hall. (2013). *The color complex: The politics of skin color in a new millennium* (2nd edition). New York: Anchor Books.

Sahay, S. & Piran, N. (1997). Skin-color preferences and body satisfaction among South Asian-Canadian and European-Canadian female university students. *Journal of Social Psychology, 137*(2), 161-171.

Samuel, L. (2010). Mating, dating and marriage: Intergenerational cultural retention and the construction of diasporic identities among South Asian immigrants in Canada. *Journal of Intercultural Studies, 31*(1), 95-110.

Satzewich, V. & Liodakis, N. (2010). *'Race' and ethnicity in Canada: A critical introduction* , 2nd Edition. Don Mills: Oxford University Press.

Shariff, A. (2006). Gender, acculturation, ethnic identity, and parenting stress among South Asian families. (Master's Thesis). Retrieved from: EBSCOhost. Available from: Family & Society Studies Worldwide.

Sidanius, J., Peña, Y., & Sawyer, M. (2001). Inclusionary discrimination: Pigmentocracy and patriotism in the Dominican Republic. *Political Psychology, 22*(4), 827-851.

Singh, P. (2013, November 2013). Never understood the concept of fairness: Kangana Ranaut. Retrieved from: http://www.hindustantimes.com/bollywood/never-understood-the-concept-of-fairness-kangana-ranaut/story-CkryXE9w8PzXmnhKLjLG6O.html

Shevde, N. (2008). All's fair in love and cream: A cultural case study of Fair & Lovely in India. *Advertising & Society Review, 9*(2). 1-9.

Shingler, M. (2014). Aishwarya Rai Bachchan: from Miss World to world star. *Transnational Cinemas, 5*(2), 98-110.

Skeggs, B. (2004). Context and background: Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of class, gender and sexuality. *The Sociological Review, 52*(s2), 19-33.

Statistics Canada. (2007). The South Asian community in Canada. Retrieved from: http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-621-x/89-621-x2007006-eng.htm.

Talbani, A., & Hasanali, P. (2000). Adolescent females between tradition and modernity: Gender role socialization in South Asian immigrant culture. *Journal of Adolescence, 23*(5), 615-627.

Thiyagarajah, N. (Director). (2015a). *Shadeism: Digging deeper.*

Thiyagarajah, N. (Director). (2010b). *Shadeism.* Retrieved from: https://vimeo.com/16210769.

Throop, J. & Murphy, K. (2002). Bourdieu and phenomenology: A critical assessment. *Anthropological Theory, 2*(2), 185-207.

Tummala-Narra, P. (2013). Psychotherapy with South Asian women: Dilemmas of the immigrant and first generations. *Women & Therapy, 36*(3-4), 176-197.

Unilever. (2016). Who we are. Retrieved from: https://www.unilever.com/about/who-we-are/

Vaid, J. (2009). Fair enough? Color and the commodification of self in Indian matrimonials. In E. Glenn (Ed.) *Shades of difference: Why skin color matters* (pp. 148-165). Standford, CA: Standford University Press.

Verma, S. (2009). Eyebrow threading: a popular hair- removal procedure and its seldom-discussed complications. *Clinical and Experimental Dermatology, 34*(3), 363-365.

Verna, K. (2009). A colorstruck world: Skin tone, achievement and self esteem among African American women. In E. Glenn (Ed.) *Shades of difference: Why skin color matters* (pp. 25-40). Standford, CA: Standford University Press.

Watanabe, F., Hashizume, E., Chan, G. P., & Kamimura, A. (2014). Skin-whitening and skin-condition-improving effects of topical oxidized glutathione: A double-blind and placebo-controlled clinical trial in healthy women. *Clinical, Cosmetic and Investigational Dermatology, (14)*7, 267-274.

Wilson, E. (2003). Ethnic niching and metropolitan labor markets. *Social Science Research, 32*, 429–466. doi:10.1016/S0049-089X(03)00015- 2

Xie, Q., & Zhang, M. (2013). White or tan? A cross-cultural analysis of skin beauty advertisements between China and the United States. *Asian Journal of Communication, 23*(5), 538-554.

Zhang, L. (2013). Eurocentric beauty ideals as a form of structural violence: Origins and effects on East Asian women. *Violence and Suffering in the Contemporary World*, 4-11.