

SHADEISM AND GENDER: EXPLORING INEQUALITIES WITHIN A  
HISTORICIZING AGENDA

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines implications attached to skin colour, and will examine how shadeism affects societies, gender, and social standing, and how it is attached to skin colour. As well, it explores the effects of societies on women and how this plays in their social standing. In exploring shadeism, this study found it is not only an outgrowth of colonialism but also can be seen within religions and history. This research project questions the roots of shadeism, as many at this academic juncture correlate the perpetuation of this issue from the beginning of colonialism

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION TO SHADEISM

Within the discourse of social media, assumptions allotted to our lips, hair and skin colour are given, interestingly enough, lips have the ability to give us agency. Aamito Lagum's lips were publicly discriminated against on social media, where she was paid to model a new MAC lipstick. Instead of the lipstick being talked about, her lips were taken apart and victimized as an object because her lips didn't fit a beauty norm in the West (Dorking, 2016). It is instances, such as this where prejudices, inferiority, and superiority are displayed, seeing that there were more than 30 000 comments located on Instagram. This study could go into specific phenotypes, but will not.

This study investigates the positioning of colour within one's everyday life that gives meaning to identity representation within society. Although identity can be studied in many ways, shadeism for many visible minorities is very much a large part of their identity. *The Canadian Employment Equity Act* (1986), which defines "visible minorities as persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour," has helped in redefining who are the "others" in terms of whiteness. Apart from the term visible-minorities other terms are used to describe minorities such as 'people of colour' (Thompson, 2003) and racialized (Das Gupta 2007; Rice 2014). These two terms are important to note in understanding Shadeism. Many in the diaspora do not use scholarly and governmental terms as they rely on terms from their motherland. Terms such as shadeism, are not seen as important or used, and are left aside in discussion within racialized communities because of community jargon. It is my intention; to develop the idea that shadeism is not only an outgrowth of colonialism but also can be

seen in ancient religions and history. It is my hope this research will help start a different perspective when exploring shadeism. My argument is that shadeism is the outgrowth of whiteness as a valued colour globally and historically.

The implications attached to skin colour in this study examine how shadeism (Clark & Clark 1950; Herring 2004; Hunter 2007) affects societies, gender, and social standing and how it is attached to skin colour. As well, the effects of shadeism in many countries have an influence on women and their social standing. In my attempt to explore whiteness and shadeism (Hunter, 2013), as it is a gendered phenomenon that disproportionately affects racialized women (Hill, 2002), which have led to the categorizing behaviours of privilege or disadvantage. When describing women in this thesis, the word black is used, as by example of England. In England, both black and brown British are seen as the same. This points to the idea of shadeism, as there is a divide between those who are Anglo and those who are not, which subjugates identity formation (Harris, 2009). My research questions will try to answer if the superiority of whiteness can be traced before colonialism as religion has discussed the meaning of both whiteness and blackness. Added to the above questions I aim to examine the socio-cultural values and the roles of socialization around shadeism.

When looking at this issue closely, different words were used to describe discrimination based on skin colour. I wanted to know why other writers and scholars used certain words, however, a clear explanation was not presented. Not defining a word before using it becomes problematic. The word shadeism was used in this study because; the word shade sends a statement about what is to be discussed. As the individuals of this world come in different shades, which can be a determining factor of how they may be



perceived. Shadeism may be understood as, “The discriminatory treatment of individuals falling within the same “racial group” on the basis of color. It operates both intraracially and interracially” (Herring, p. 3). Whereas intraracial shadeism may be understood as when members of a racial group sought out discrepancies of skin colour based within their own group (Herring, p.3), Interracial shadeism occurs when members of one racial group pursue distinctions of another racial group (Herring, p.3). Shadeism is concerned with actual skin tone, as opposed to racial linked to biology (Hirschman, 2004). This understanding connects shadeism in levels of skin tone: darker skin or lighter skin, leading to skin-tone discrimination.

In looking at skin colour through history and religion, I point to the example of the Aztecs, as the value of white was already there prior to colonialism. The Aztecs practiced a Mesoamerican religion, which incorporated a ritualistic component required human sacrifice and sun worship (Conrad & Demarest, 1984, p. 13). It is important to note that when Spanish Conquistadors, such as Hernán Cortés came to colonize the Aztecs and rid them of their Mesoamerican beliefs; the Aztecs believed that Cortes was a deity. The Aztec ruler, Moctezuma II mistook Cortes to be the supernatural deity of Quetzalcoatl (the feathered serpent) (Collis, 1999, p.123). In the interaction between the two, Moctezuma II didn't make physical contact with Cortes, as he believed he was a divine power, in which he surrendered all their land. The Spanish Conquistadors were the first outside interaction with the Aztecs, this means the value of white was already present, prior to colonialism. Although the Aztecs will not be discussed in great detail in this thesis, this example was important to note, because it showed the value of whiteness already implemented within their society.

In thinking about what colour means or symbolizes, we can find it in literature, media, and culture where white is depicted to hold more clout over black. This study will cover the many aspects of shadeism, while questioning the roots of shadeism, because many researchers tend to correlate the perpetuation of this issue from the beginning of colonialism (Banks, 1999; Harris 2013; Hunter, 2007;). In this study, I explore where colour hierarchies were realized earlier than that of colonialism to provide answers to my research questions and assumptions.

### **Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis will be organized into nine sections. Chapter one introduces the research topic, the researcher, and provides what each chapter entails.

Chapter two discusses the three frameworks I incorporated in exploring shadeism. I found it beneficial to use more than one theoretical framework owing to the complexities that are intertwined with shadeism. This theory provides a lens to help explain the data collected rather than ad-hoc interpretations. Symbolic interactionism was used to understand the interactions and symbols attached to skin colour. This framework was also helpful in investigating the social meaning attached to skin colour on the front, back and off stages (Goffman, 1959). The next theory used to discuss shadeism was intersectionality, a theory that deals with oppression, domination, and discrimination. This theory was used as it incorporates feminism, which is beneficial to the study of shadeism as there are significant issues specific to women (Hill, 2002). Lastly, postcolonial theory (PCT) was used as it provides a framework to help evaluate how issues linked to skin colour can be discussed through white privilege and whiteness.

Chapter three lays out methodological issues that I faced, and the methods I used to research shadeism. In this chapter, I present my research questions and the methods I used to gather the data. I have also provided the responses through ethnographic research and social media such as tweets, YouTube, and blogs. I have used “Triangulation method” in order to validate the data gathered from the two or more sources in the study of the same phenomenon.

Chapter four reviews studies and articles written in the area of shadeism. This chapter helps the reader understand concepts and research related to shadeism. Outlined in this chapter are what scholars have found as the beginning of shadeism, and areas such as family, self-worth, marriage, identity, and occupation.

Chapter five discusses colonialism and how it has shaped research around shadeism. When discussing whiteness in this chapter, the issue of bleaching arises, as to what bleaching means to those who engage in it, and important issues relating to blackness. I have provided examples of popular culture in order to show that it is no longer a hidden issue but seen globally as an influence to enhance one’s colour.

In chapter six, I examine three religions as to how they depict colour. These religions were chosen as they span the globe and unlike Buddhism are not egalitarian but have gendered explanations of spirituality. Hinduism, the oldest of the 3, provides a rich context of white and black within the *Ramayana*. Christianity the next oldest uses both the Hebrew text and the New Testament and provides some context relating to colour. Islam, which comes after Christianity, also has notations around colour. Limiting my choice to these religions is arbitrary as I am sure there are many religions, which may or

may not address issues around colour. Perhaps, at a Ph.D. thesis level, this area can be extended.

Chapter seven will discuss socio-cultural values and the roles of socialization around shadeism and whiteness. This chapter discusses how colour awareness starts as early as childhood from the family who provides the main source of socialization at the earliest stages. The ideologies the child has constructed trickles down into experiences such as education, employment, marriage, self-esteem, and identity. Examples from social media are discussed in relation to these experiences.

Chapter eight summarises my findings and explains the concept of pigmenting. Like racism, shadeism is a form of discrimination based on skin color. I view it as a new name given to the historic idealism of fairness and the disapproval of darkness within a single race society. As this is a global issue, I have explored the recommendations helping to show and undo the negative effects of shadeism but this will be a challenge even in Ontario, Canada.

### **Significance of Study**

Although scholars in the area of Shadeism have critically engaged the concepts of skin colour, whiteness, and privilege, they differ greatly in their conceptualization on when this phenomenon first emerged. Many scholars (Banks, 2009; Hunter, 2007) are in agreement that Shadeism was a product of colonization to maintain the clout of whiteness, and are established on the notion that dark skin represents savagery, irrationality, ugliness, and inferiority, which was believed to have started because slave owners would use skin colour to allot jobs on the plantations (Horowitz, 1973). I do not argue that colonialism didn't progress this notion, but will point that issues of colour can be found earlier in religious texts or practices. Many scholars also tend to view this

phenomenon as primarily a black American “issue” (Hochschild, 2007; Hunter 2007; Lewis et al., 2013, Thompson, 2004;), but Shadeism reaches far beyond into that of many racial groups in Latin America, Africa, India, and China. Skin colour also reaches into the verbal communication in the perpetuations of beauty. Dr. Niranjana provokes us to interrogate, the culture question, “How are ‘we’ different from ‘them’? This question is posed in the developing world or more broadly non-western societies as part of a colonial contestation (Niranjana, 2010). The question then is why does skin shade equate to the beauty within a racial group? Also, why are women mostly affected?

Shadeism is most experienced by women. Women are constantly being bombarded by images of perfection through media; these images of beauty are often “color-coded” (Ritch, 2014), with Eurocentric beauty ideals. When we look at the Indian film industry know as Bollywood, women are predominantly white with several of their background dancers coming from Eastern Europe. Although my research does not go in depth in this area, I have viewed several Indian movies to view the colour of the leading ladies within the context of shadeism. The men in the movies are darker and do not seem to be affected by issues of colour as demonstrated in the movie *Dil to Pagal Hai*. (A Yash Chopra Flim, [www.yashrajflim.com](http://www.yashrajflim.com)).

This research is not about males and how shadeism affects their standing in society as that would have taken another year of research. This research is not about how individual countries deal with shadeism or how different ethnic groups deal with skin colour but is more generalised as to the origins of shadeism and how it is currently discussed. My research in literature and data collection ended in September 2015. Once again, I would like to emphasize that the data and the understanding of experiences

around shadeism come from a subjective discourse in social media and within diaspora communities. Should you find that I have not provided a forum for other viewpoints, it has not an oversight but a choice to limit data collection to answer the questions raised in this thesis. This study is not intended to be balanced, but is one that looks into expressions and insights around shadeism. In the following chapters, the reader is provided with an understanding of shadeism as discussed earlier. In brief, this chapter details the outlines of this thesis.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Shadeism is a complex issue that cuts across more than one substantive theoretical framework, making this an interdisciplinary study. This topic needs to be evaluated within a critical context because many women that are affected come from different social, economic, and cultural backgrounds, which makes this study larger than just a “black” and “white” context. A varied theoretical base is needed to create a foundation that would be able to understand the complex issues when analysing the data on shadeism. Thus, for my work I chose to incorporate symbolic interactionism (SI), a theoretical framework that relates to meaning and the subjective and intersubjective experience of individuals. The next theory I chose relates to intersectionality, a theory that deals with oppression, domination, and discrimination. As there are significant issues specific to colonization, and finally my last theoretical framework is postcolonial theory (PCT). PCT provides a framework to help evaluate how issues linked to skin colour can be discussed through white privilege and whiteness. For this reason, the three theories were chosen to examine the meanings attached to colour, the oppression, and discrimination faced by women with darker skins. Scholars adopt feminism when discussing gender issues as feminist theory challenges societal/male assumptions and defines the causes of women’s oppression. It can be argued that this theory is important when analysing shadeism. To discount gender would deprive this study, and I argue that using the three frameworks chosen will provide answers for the role gender plays in shadeism which allows me to take out the use of feminist theory to explain shadeism.

## Symbolic Interactionism

A framework of symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934; Goffman, 1959, 1963, 1967) was selected to explore shadeism, to understand why women from brown and black ethnic groups think and engage in certain behaviours. In *Mind, Self, and Society* (1934) Mead seeks to establish how social conduct and interaction take place. The 'Self' responds to stimuli and is constantly processing the developing of its self-image. He (Mead, 1934) assumed a relationship concerning self-conscious mental activity and social interaction. For Mead, it is language that develops the mind. Therefore, how families, ethnic communities and peers speak about shadeism will help formulate the 'self's' understanding of being a 'visible minority'. There can be no self-identity without a mind and society. Mead's concepts also appear in theories such as 'role theory', 'reference group theory' and 'dramaturgical theory' (Goffman, 1959). I will be using dramaturgical theory as part of SI.

Blumer (1969) who coined the term Symbolic Interactions expanded on Mead's work on self and states:

Symbolic interactions rests in the analysis of three simple premises. The first premise is that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them... the second premise is that the meanings of such things are derived from or arise out of the social interaction that one has with one's fellows. The third premise is that these meanings are handled in and modified through an interpretative process used by the person dealing with the things he encounters. (p. 2)

The above framework stresses the significance of group influence upon the individual, where human behaviour is learned due to interactions with family, friends, community, and work environments. Through interactions with the family at an early age, shadeism is passed on subconsciously or consciously, in so shaping the way individuals present



themselves (Wilder & Cain, 2010), which interactionism would point out how meanings get attached to behaviours, whereby constructing meanings. For interactionist, like Mead and Blumer, the self with other selves provides a group context where communication and interaction occur. This reference group provides meaning to interactions that take place. The self can have several reference groups instructing it of norms and values important in everyday life as viewed within the group. Since, symbolic interactionism stresses one's group and/or society's influence on the individual, this is a useful theory in looking at the stigmas (Goffman, 1963) attached to women experiencing shadeism, from society's expectations and misrepresentation of skin beauty. According to Goffman:

the Median notion that the individual takes toward himself, the attitude that others take toward him seems very much oversimplification. Rather, the individual must rely on others to complete the picture of him of which he himself is allowed to paint only certain parts (1967, p. 84).

Goffman offers insight on why those who are often stigmatized adjust their social identities to achieve acceptance, which contributes to their behaviour in public and semi-public spaces, Goffman (1963) discusses this behaviour, in order to adhere to the rules of acceptance as;

... special tone and temper, a special piquancy, that blurs the communication lines, giving each participant some desire to encroach where he does not have a right to go, and to keep from being engaged with others who perhaps have a right to engage him. Each individual, then is not only involved in hopes, fears, and actions that bend the rules if they do not actually break them (p.107).

The application of behaviours in public and private spaces, where participants intrude and engage, and where women who are experiencing shadeism use tone, blurring communication lines, but implant colour lines of beauty and what is acceptable as shades of beauty. Since meaning is reliant on reflexivity which is a process of turning back on

oneself and looking at what has been going on; SI provides a way of understanding the meaning of shadeism within a cultural group and between cultural groups. Goffman (1959) also cites impression management as a means to carry out daily rituals, which are used when encounters occur in public and private spaces. In his book entitled, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), Goffman describes the theatrical performances through a dramaturgical metaphor, consisting of front, back and off stage, meaningful when interpreting relationship and patterns in everyday life. Using the dramaturgical metaphor, auto-ethnographic data points to both back stage and front stage communications relating to shadeism. In Goffman's world, individuals are intertwined in a daily drama, where s/he reveals features and patterns that are part of everyday interactions. In the context of shadeism, the actor carries out a performance in front of others as a means of calculated impression, in comparison to how they may make act when alone with their "hair let down". Social identity is more front stage behaviours as it is about the person's sense of who s/he is within the group. In public, the individual is aware of her actions due to awareness of how behaviours are perceived in particular situations. Accordingly, I argue that for shadeism to flourish on social media, and within the diaspora, it must be about being either part of the performing team and/or the audience. Both roles require impression management which is accompanied by the term "face" (Goffman, 1955, p. 213), a mask one wears in various situations, the idea of putting on a "front" (Goffman, 1959. p. 22) or morphing's ones behaviour to survive are parallel in ideas of the "mask" and "mimicry" (Bhaba 1994; Fanon 1952). Impression management does not apply to social media such as Twitter as many individuals hide their identity while saying whatever they wish. For impression management to occur

individuals interact with each other. When they enter the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about her/him, or to bring into play information about the person they already possess (Goffman, 1959. p. 1). His self-reflectivity goes further than Mead, or Blumer because for Goffman (1967) the self has a face, thinks, watches, defines and tries to anticipate the other.

Goffman's concepts have added to the discussion of shadeism, specifically, making sense of rituals and behaviours. This is helpful in looking at relationships of those who have experienced shadeism. However, Goffman's work is seen as problematic because he looks at structure and forms, these are not elements of symbolic interactionism, but are still used by theorists for interpretation.

### **Labelling Perspectives and Symbolic Interactionism**

Labeling Perspectives are commonly used in criminology and deviance to look at the relationship among those who have the ability to label (Schur 1971; 1980) and, those who do not. Frank Tannenbaum, often known as the grandfather of labeling theory (Jones, Ross, Richards & Murphy, 2009), wrote *Crime and Community* (1938), discussing the social interaction involved in crime and deviance. Edwin Lemert (1951) and Howard Becker (1963) are acknowledged for their contributions of labeling perspectives, and will be incorporated into this research on shadeism. The next paragraphs will serve to discuss how Lemert and Becker are needed in this conversation of shadeism.

Lemert (1951) discusses the idea of primary and secondary deviance, by exploring the ways our behaviours can lead us to be labeled, and rejected from society.

Primary deviance, refers to the beginning or the initial act of deviance, whereas, secondary deviance is a result of the interaction between the primary deviation and negative societal response. Secondary deviance is a societal construction that results from the actor coping with the primary deviation. The response from society is what forms and supports the stigma. Becker (1963) held similar interests to Lemert, as he was not only interested in the causes of crime, but how some groups are defined as deviant. Becker (1963) adds to the discussion of labeling perspectives by suggesting, an act becomes deviant when others see it as deviant,

...social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labelling them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an "offender". The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behaviour is behaviour people so label (p. 91).

Becker promotes the idea that the audience decides whether or not the label will be applied, and also, this is dependent on who commits the act, and the circumstances surrounding it. Becker's concept of master status (1963), describes the outcomes of an applied label, where all the actor's actions are now understood within the limitations of that label. This applies to those who are experiencing shadeism, because they are often viewed differently in society, because of the colour of their skin. Instances of these occurrences are found within the family, and workplace (Brown, 2009; Landor et al, 2013) and have been attributed to not obtaining socio-economic privileges. This perspective provides the researcher the ability to investigate the interaction between those who have the power to define, and those who do not.

A postcolonial framework discussed by Fanon (1952; 1959; 1961), Said (1978) and, Bhabha (1994) were chosen because this analysis addresses the social and political issues of decolonization, and identity politics. Edward Said, for instance, shows or depicts how the West views the Orient and perhaps influences the understanding of how skin colour bias is viewed.

These issues are important to look at because scholarship has explained shadeism as a historical product of colonialism (Hochschild & Weaver 2007), as the meanings of black and white were implemented during this time. These meanings attached to colour were socially constructed, whereas, lightness was associated with European civility, and dark skin the binary opposite. This led slave masters to allow more privileges to the light skinned slaves, causing an intra-hierarchy among the slaves (Hunter 2007). In this study, I acknowledge that colonialism helped perpetuate ideas surrounding shadeism, but have not started it, as there were colour biases present before. However, this framework is relevant as it supports a purposeful and descriptive analysis of cultural values and practices that have influenced colour biases.

Fanon is used in this study because of questions he raises pertaining to skin colour, however, it is important to note the works of Fanon varies. I am mindful of his work on the political economy; however it is not the focus of this thesis, but could be relevant. Fanon's discussion on the political economy could offer a separate study in itself. In *White Skin Black Masks* (1952), Fanon discusses the inadequacy, and confusion faced in identity within a white world, producing an "inferiority complex" (p. 4). Fanon, born in the French colony of Martinique, wrote *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs* or *White Skin, Black Masks*, after fighting in World War II, while studying psychiatry and

medicine in France, where he encountered overt accounts of racism, and distinctions between skin colour (Macey, 2012). These experiences led Fanon (1952) to question colour, and how black people were supposed to get by in a white world. Fanon speaks about language, and the weight it carries in subconsciously accepting cultural meanings attached, “To speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization” (p. 8). In looking at descriptions that address women of dark and light skin, women with lighter skin are seen as more beautiful, than those of dark skin (Herring, Keith & Horton, 2004), as women that are dark are measured as second best and “Less classically beautiful” (Stanley, 2014). Fanon asserts in his analysis that the understanding of language asserts meanings attached to shades of colour, where white is good and black is bad.

Fanon’s question, ‘why women of colour idolize white men, but look down at men of the same colour?’ He concludes, the dismissal of men of colour has little to do with their colour, but the association of goodness with white men, and example is given by a “frantic” woman of colour, “‘You, as a Negress—.’ ‘Me? a Negress? Can’t you see I’m practically white? I despise Negroes. Niggers stink. They’re dirty and lazy. Don’t ever mention niggers to me” (Fanon, 1959, p. 35). Colour has a bearing on mate selection, but there are often deeper meanings attached, “I knew an Antillean who said of another Antillean, “His body is black, his language is black, his soul must be black too.” This logic is put into daily practice by the white man. The black man is the symbol of Evil and Ugliness” (Ibid, p.139). The meanings attached to both black and white are noted and known, through Fanon’s analysis he asserts the “negro” wants admittance to

the “white sanctuary” and approval from the white man (p. 36). Marrying a white man makes obtaining whiteness a more realistic goal, attributing to why families strongly advise their darker skinned family members to marry those of lighter skin (Wilder and Cain, 2010). The issue surrounding whitening of the skin by peers and family members are a common concern for those of darker skin, Fanon’s term “lactification” describes the want for racial groups to be whitened, when racial groups see it as a necessity to whiten the race, to save the race (p. 33). On social media, there are blogs that examine issues surrounding “lactification.” For example, *Bougie Black Girl*, *The London Curls*, and *Colorism Healing*. The blogs often narrate issues associated with whitening, and offer their understandings on why the issue still maintains a stronghold, and what could be done to stop it from happening.

Frantz Fanon (1959; 1961), writes about breaking free from the colonizers abuses and is known to be “The Handbook of the Black Revolution” (Fairchild, 1994). Fanon’s analysis surrounding decolonization is observed during the Algerian Revolution, where the people of Algeria resisted, and embraced cultural patterns from before colonization to recreate a culture (Fanon 1959). Fanon asserted decolonization was needed to turn those who have been colonized into privileged new people,

It transforms spectators crushed with their inessentiality into privileged actors, with the grandiose glare of history's floodlights upon them. It brings a natural rhythm into existence, introduced by new men, and with it a new language and a new humanity. Decolonization is the veritable creation of new men (Fanon, 1961 p. 36)

Shadeism is the connection of identity-based on skin colour, with the result of social value associated with one's shade of skin, decolonization gives perspective on identity

construction apart from those imposed on them in the context of colonization by engaging in history and discerning movements to change.

Edward Said's work, *Orientalism* (1978) discusses the inaccuracies of the west's portrayal of the East, and the cultural representation and ideologies that are reproduced by colonialists and imperialists. From Said's understanding, the Orient and its depiction has little to do with reality, these ideologies are not passively made and implemented, but have been constructed to obtain domination and control by the west. *Orientalism* has been a defining role in implementing European culture, as powerful and in control, it is a geopolitical awareness that is expressed through mediums to obtain and manipulate (Said, 1978, p. 12). The acceptance of the West and their construction of the East has led to "elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, "mind," destiny, and so on" (Said, 1978, p. 3). Said asserts by portrayal of the west as superior and the east as inferior causes a divide,

Orientalism can also express the strength of the West and the Orient's weakness—as seen by the West. Such strength and such weakness are as intrinsic to Orientalism as they are to any view that divides the world into large general divisions, entities that coexist in a state of tension produced by what is believed to be radical difference (p. 46)

These ideologies set by the west set the "stage" for Goffman's stigma-related issues of what is considered "normal" and "accepted".

Homi Bhabha a forerunner in postcolonial studies, a professor, and director of the humanities program at Harvard University has been used in a limited capacity. The reasons for this restriction are because Bhabha's work is known and criticized for using numerous "buzzwords" making it difficult for the user to understand. This has been attributed to him having "nothing" to say according to Dr. Marjorie Perloff, an emeritus professor of English at Stanford University (Eakin, 2001). Dr. Perloff conveyed her



somber feelings for Homi Bhabha being appointed as a professor at Harvard, stating, “When I heard that, I was dismayed” (Eakin, 2001). Additionally, Dr. Mark Crispin Miller, a professor of media studies at New York University criticized him for using “indecipherable jargon”. Dr. Miller went on to say “ Most of the time I don't know what he's talking about.” (Eakin, 2001). That aside, the terms I found useful for this study were: mimicry, hybridity, and the third space. Mimicry is when an individual imitates the person or group that holds the power; this behaviour is carried out in hopes of holding the power (Bhabha, 1994, p. 123), this view can help discuss the want to be white, and bleaching. The Concept of the third space used by Bhabha (1994), is used to explain the place of tension where two cultures meet, where colonial powers and dominant ideologies are challenged, where identity is “constructed and reconstructed” (Johnston & Richardson 2012, p.122), this citation was used, because Bhabha was interviewed and explained the term in plain English. Bhabha in an interview, stated, “...hybridity to me is the third space that enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives” (Johnston & Ricardson 2012, p. 122). The third space is a concept, which helps examine the relationship between, those who have experienced shadeism, and the dominant ideologies in society, to understand how they “construct or reconstruct” their identities. The third space can promote no identity because you are neither committed to either culture, implying that one is lost. In looking at dramaturgy in the backstage where the audience is not present, examination of those of whiter skin can look down on black skin as the ideologies of black and white are implements and one does not have to show a “good face” on the front stage.

## **Intersectionality**

Discussing intersectionality leads us to acknowledge Critical Race theory which names inequality and is also a tool for rooting out inequality and injustice (Treviño, Harris & Wallace, 2008). Second generation CRT scholars take scholars like Bell, Delgado, and Crenshaw's ideas and employ an intersectional analysis to include gender, ethnicity, language, culture, sexuality, and other key markers of difference. A theoretical framework such as Intersectionality (Collins 1995, 2002; Crenshaw 1989, 1991;) helps capture the complexity of shadeism, and will be the last framework incorporated into my analysis. Intersectionality studies the connection between multiple dimensions of social relationships and questions relating to societal norms. Intersectionality states that the classical conceptualizations of oppression within society, such as racism, sexism, homophobia, and other types of bigotry do not act independently of one another but are interrelated. These oppressions are connected to each other creating a system of oppression and discrimination. Viewing those who are experiencing shadeism collectively opens up analysis to many groups possessing varying amounts of "... Penalty and privilege in one historically created system. In this system, for this example, white women for penalized by their gender but privileged by their race" (Collins, 2002, p. 246), which creates the politic of oppression (Hooks, 2000), referring to the joint beliefs in inferiority and superiority, the foundations of all those systems. Using this lens to understand shadeism helps us understand that there are different ways one can experience domination and oppression. Standpoint theory (Collins, 1989; Smith 1987), strives to understand a women's experience in a patriarchal society, examining the systems of dominations and oppressions that devalue women. Standpoint feminism also

incorporates the matrix of domination, which helps view women's experiences as different and not universal, a valuable tool for dissecting shadeism as every woman has had different experiences based on their social stratification. According to Collins (1989), in black organizations if looking at resisting racism is concentrated on, and not understood, "... dominant ideologies are simultaneously resisted and reproduced. Black community organizations can oppose racial oppression yet perpetuate gender oppression can challenge class exploitation yet foster heterosexism" (Collin, 1989, p. 86). This quote shows that knowledge and understanding are key to unlocking the systems of inequality and dominance, not isolation on one issue over the other. Shadeism is a complex system whereas, women are objectified and stereotypes based on colour are reproduced. Collins asserts to resist oppression and the devaluing of those affected, and self-definition are two ways of resisting internalized oppression and to obtain a free mind, build self-confidence (Collins, 1989, p 112), and battle othering.

## **Summary**

In this chapter, different frameworks were examined to better understand shadeism. The frameworks used to display the innovative nature of this thesis. In using both post-colonial theory and symbolic interactionism helps this study take on new directions and informs one and other. Whereas, symbolic interactionism looks at the social self, which interacts with others and attaches meaning that are understood or held in common. This framework serves to help understand shadeism because of its ability to look at a person's everyday life and look at behaviours and symbols attached. Post-colonial theory is important because it looks at the pieces left by the colonizer, and what

the effects are of decolonization are, which are especially important when looking at issues surrounding identity politics. These theories may not be used often together, but serve a purpose in this study while looking at shadeism. With the issue of shadeism, it is multilayered, composed of different variables that need to be seen in conjunction with each other, rather independently. Intersectionality is a framework that is mindful of the complexity of oppression, which is why the matrixes of domination are implemented. These frameworks have been chosen as they add to the discussion of shadeism in a unique and different way, which can help bring more understanding and depth to the issue at hand.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY: QUERIES RELATING TO QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the qualitative research design used in this study. This research methodology will help answer my research questions. My research questions will try to answer:

- (1) If the superiority of whiteness can be traced before colonialism?
- (2) To examine if whiteness is viewed as superior and blackness is viewed as inferior, can these meanings be found in the religions such as Christianity or Islam or Hinduism.
- (3) To examine the socio-cultural values and the roles of socialization around shadesism/ whiteness with attention paid to race, gender, and “coloniality” (Quijano, 2000) relating to power and social order, vis a vis skin involvement and the construction of identity?

These aims have been achieved by pursuing the following objectives:

- (1) Data collection that will comprise documents such as scholarly works, magazines, and social media outlets such as blogs, twitter, and YouTube
- (2) Engaging in an auto-ethnographic study that will explore the issue of shadeism

#### **Rationale for the use of qualitative research methodology**

To make findings of what I heard within the Trinidadian diaspora and comprehend the actors' meanings of shadeism, a qualitative methodology can help organise in-depth subjective understandings. This method helps emphasize subjective meaning among the several versions of interpretive methodology studies (Jacobs, 2000 p. 116). The qualitative methodology provides for both the understanding of meaning and for autoethnographic data and analysing through secondary data and documents the environments that shape the actions of actors (Denzine, 1989). Qualitative methods also permit for a number of methods of data collection to research the attitudes and meaning around shadeism. Marshall & Rossman (2010) describes qualitative research as:

... a broad approach to the study of the social phenomena. Its various genres are naturalistic, interpretative and increasingly critical, and they typically draw on multiple methods of inquiry (p. 3).

Qualitative research methodologies help understand human interactions in context, by different means of interpretation. This serves as an appropriate measure for evaluating the issue of shadeism, as it is complex in nature. Qualitative research methodologies also serve to explore biases that the researcher may have in evaluating the issue (Estenberg, 2002, pp. 2). As the researcher I have faced shadeism personally, I have strived to understand the meanings attached to the issue better. Considering my own vulnerabilities, and complexities to shadeism it was important for me to engage in an autoethnographic study, which is a subsection of qualitative research.

### **Autoethnographic and Ethnographic**

Autoethnographic and ethnographic data allow for subjectively understood behaviours and follows an interpretive narrative. Neither the data of a person nor the history of a society can be truly understood without reviewing both.

Autoethnographic and ethnographic methods are valuable in research relating to shadeism, because it contributes insight on the experiences of daily situations in an environment i.e. depiction on “beauty, intelligence and moral character” (Herring, p. 3), which can highlight data making it more comprehensible, broadening theories and understandings (Royal Anthropology Institute, 2015), and produce culturally relevant knowledge. Among the stories shared in informal groups, I allowed the communication to be led by family and friends and listened to what they had to say about the ideas of being dark or black. I will incorporate my life story, which includes my own personal vulnerabilities and insecurities. My own writing on shadeism can

be viewed as a therapeutic release as the author. According to Ellis (2011), “personal narratives are stories about authors who view themselves as the phenomenon and write evocative narratives specifically focused on their academic, research, and personal lives” (p. 276). The personal narrative shares experiences, which embellishes the academic literature and brings it into context for the audience to understand.

Data gathered from the internet serves for unregulated opinion, because of the complexity of the topic and the strong mental ties and emotions, opinions gathered on social media leans on being more truthful because of the ability of not facing a live participant (Kelly, 2013). The gathering of these narratives will allow for the ethnographic fieldwork which, “involves documenting people’s beliefs and practices from the people’s own perspectives”; (2) “Cultural interpretation involves the ability to describe what the researcher has heard and seen within the framework of the social group’s view of reality” (Fetterman, 1989, p. 28). The blogs that were consulted were chosen because they consistently addressed the issue of shadeism, these narratives of opinions and life experiences give the reader a different contextual stage to base their understanding on. Also, when gathering data from blogs, updated narratives will be inserted in, because social media moves at a fast pace, seconds at times, which is why news outlets and political talk shows often gather viewer’s comments within moments of a topic or hashtag being announced. For examples, *Power and Politics* with Rosemary Barton (CBC) would not be as engaging if tweets from a public forum didn’t ring in, to juxtapose or oppose views of the live debates between guests, this poses a critical conversation between the social forum and those of the program that is recent and up to date. This reasoning is parallel to the usage of social media in my

research, as recent narratives will be gathered, which will engage in scholarly work creating critical conversation discussing the issues associated with shadeism. The narratives from twitter were carefully considered when surveying process and deciding what to research and code. What was found to be an effective way to survey and collect data relevant to the research questions and narrow research options was the usage of twitter hashtags (#) that encompassed keywords or phrases known to the shadeism community. The twitter narratives were generated using the hashtags: #shadeism, #colorism, #Teamlightskin, #Teamdarkskin, and #TeamlightskinvsTeamdarkskin. The outcomes of the data will be discussed and dispersed throughout the research project.

### **Social Media Data**

Social media data was collected from Facebook, twitter, YouTube and blogs. Social media has become important in evaluating social events and issues from the Oscars to politics, as it is a fast and accessible way to compile what a group of individuals is saying about a given topic because the information is public. According to Salmons (2012) shares, “Social media sites allows researchers to develop new interpretations of classic qualitative data collection approaches: observations, interview and document analysis”, research is changing; social media is a new and updated phase of qualitative research in the social media era.

### **Twitter**

According to the University of Leicester (2014), twitter is a good place to find interdisciplinary information on a given topic, as many people from different walks of



life are on this media tool. In the 140 character allowed, users need to be succinct and to the point on what they want to share and discuss. This social media space allows for engagement with others by sharing views and arguments or even surfacing awareness of given events and topics. Those who want to engage in this social conversation could add a hashtag, keyword or tag accounts, this has the ability to be retweeted (RT) and make a grand online presence, otherwise known as going “viral”. By building a twitter network, which could serve to keep a community up to date, could help bring awareness to an issue by attracting attention, funding and corresponding positive social initiatives. This mentioned because words are powerful, twitter is powerful because it is an ongoing conversation, among communities. Additionally, twitter also gives an opportunity to a diverse group of participants to the ongoing discussion, those who are experiencing shadeism and those on the outside, those who are part of different social stratifications, this all adds depth and richness to the discussion on shadeism.

The conversation relating to shadeism on twitter is particularly unique as it all started as a war within the black community. The event that inspired this twitter phenomenon occurred when club promoters in Ohio hosted a party on January 21, 2011, with the theme, "Light Skin vs. Dark Skin" (Essence Magazine, 2011). The theme of plotting dark and light skin went viral, gaining media attention, in August 2012, Tré Melvin criticized the practice of “cyber-shadeism” in a video entitled "#TeamLightskin vs. #TeamDarkskin through a YouTube video (Essence Magazine, 2011). Although, there have been efforts in exposing cyber shadeism, the hashtag has spread, to the Hispanic, Caucasian and South Asian communities.

The limitations I faced when conducting research concerning twitter concerned the difficulties in ascertaining the country of origin or gender. This information is available in the twitter biography, but problems such as: (1) some users do not indicate gender or country of origin (2) It is difficult to see if biographical information is accurate, because information provided is at the user's discretion (3) Some users are anonymous (4) twitter users can change their biographies and names and maintain the same content. It is evident that in the three months examined, #teamdarkskin had significant more tweets than #teamlightskin. In exploring twitter, the hashtags #colorism and #shadeism were searched through the dates, Oct 1 – Dec 1, many did not tweet.

The table below illustrates the number of tweets per hashtag. The tweets were manually collected by counting each tweet per twitter hashtag, as well as checked if numbers were accurate by using Topsy, a social media analytics tool, which allowed me to search by time frame and twitter handle. The results of the twitter hashtags are encompassing of any tweet with the hashtag, this includes retweets. The charts of tweets presented below were organized by the hashtag through the time frame of Oct 2014 to Dec 2014. Hashtags were looked at in terms of (1) Negative events associated (2) positive events associated (3) attractiveness (4) unattractiveness (5) competitiveness associated with skin colour i.e. #teamlightskin and #teamdarkskin. These particular categories were used, because of the trending themes in coding the tweets. In counting a tweet under the “negative events” category, word usage that was used to undermine someone based on his/her skin colour was counted in that category. Positive events were managed, by looking at word usage that was used to

propagate one's self, based on skin colour i.e. success behaviour. In looking at hashtags associated with attractiveness or unattractiveness, word usage was paid attention to in correlating good or bad looks with skin colour.

Table 1: #Colorism

Category	Number of Tweets
Negative Event Associated	45
Positive Event Associated	70
Attractiveness	16
Unattractiveness	32
Questions	44

Table 2: #Shadeism

Category	Number of Tweets
Negative Event Associated	25
Positive Event Associated	0
Attractiveness	6
Unattractiveness	3
Questions	13

Table 3: #Teamlightskin

Category	Number of Tweets
Negative Event Associated	15
Positive Event Associated	8
Attractiveness	68
Unattractiveness	4
Questions	3
Competitiveness associated with Hashtag	47

Table 4: #Teamdarkskin:

Category	Number of Tweets
Negative Event Associated	7
Positive Event Associated	8
Attractiveness	8
Unattractiveness	2
Questions	10
Competitiveness associated with Hashtag	40

## **YouTube**

YouTube, a valuable tool for this research project, as the way we receive information has changed from about a decade ago, as social media has been a new way for many to receive critical and updated information faster and conveniently. These critical changes are noted by Borgman & Furner (2002), “ in electronic scholarly communication already has led to “scholars communicat[ing] with each other for informal conversations, for collaborating locally and over distances, for publishing and disseminating their work, and for constructing links between their work and that of others” (pp. 3–4). YouTube videos are especially important because, “online videos, for instance, may be useful for scholarly communication within the arts and humanities since human emotion is fundamental in some visual and performing arts (e.g., dance, theater, and film)” (p.1712). These videos provide a wide range of content, for the public to view. From YouTube short films such as, *Skin Bleaching to be #TeamLightSkin ?!*, “*Caribbean Fashion Week - Dance Hall and Skin Bleaching, Pretty for a Dark Girl: Colorism in the Black Community*, or how to video’s such as: *How to whiten your skin, how does a black girl get a white or Asian guy?* These videos all reveal issues pertaining to shadeism, with related commentaries in the comments section of YouTube. We are in a media rich society; video gives a voice to

people of different backgrounds to share their ideas on Shadeism. Since videos are visual, we are able to see emotion, which may look different from a blog or tweet, therefore bringing an interdisciplinary outlook on this research project. In searching YouTube for keywords pertaining to shadeism the chart below shows the result count.

Table 5: YouTube

	Shadeism	colorism	Dark skin	Light skin	Skin bleach	Dark skin vs. Light skin
Result count	1 580	7 610	746 000	563 000	348 000	145 000

Date: November 12, 2014

The results of this YouTube search show that overall more tended to search “dark skin”, and the least amount searched for the terms “shadeism” and “colorism”.

### **Blogs**

The “blog sphere” has become a significant “feature of online culture”

(Hookway, 2008, p. 91). Many scholars have used blogs to conduct research studies:

It is generally recognized that cyberspace offers a new and exciting frontier for social research. Recent edited collections by Batinic et al. (2002), Hine (2005), Johns et al. (2004) and Jones (1999), together with works by Coombes (2001), Hewson et al. (2003) and Mann and Stewart (2000), have made significant practical, theoretical and methodological contributions to the development of this field. (Hookway, p. 92)

The above quote shares the many authors that used blogs to enrich their work, by effectively carrying out research initiatives in a new way. Gathering information from blogs is a great way to connect with others that are experiencing the issue or onlookers, this helps build a community and narrative, for the research project to grow and bring about awareness. Blogs also provide and opportunity for many to participate by giving their feedback on thoughts, which in many cases leads to the

issue being looked at differently. Therefore, it was important to have blogs in this research project. The blogs that were consistently consulted were: *Intraracial Colorism Project*, *The London Curls*, and *Colorism Healing, and Bougie Black Girl*. Overall these blogs described themes of advantage based on being lighter-skinned, and disadvantage based on being darker-skinned. Many narratives from these blogs portrayed experiences that prompted self-questioning of their identity, and their sense of belonging within society. Additionally, these blogs all had supportive resources on how to empower those living with the repercussions of shadeism, whether it was resources on how to deal with family hatred, or how to manage hair of different textures.

### **Data Collection**

For this thesis, I used books to understand the deep seeded historical issues behind shadeism. Books that looked at the history of the United States, Africa, and India (Cohn, 1996) were used in this research project. Also,

Collecting the tools to bring understanding and depth to the research project at hand is important. Understanding the issue academically, will not only lead to unraveling the layers of an issue but also help bring awareness and empowerment. Academic resources were collected from the York University Library databases. The academic databases utilized were: Google scholar, JSTOR, and Proquest. Books were also important means of collecting research, the Toronto Public Reference Library and York University Libraries, had the relevant books, and historical and religious books needed to explore shadeism. The religious texts consulted were The *Bhagavad Gita*, The *Ramayana*, The *Quran*, and The *Bible*. Religious texts often have different

versions/ translations available; therefore, to ensure quality and reliability a variety of different versions were consulted. Collective knowledge was gained with the view of assessing evidence around issues of shadeism in these texts. The information in the text assisted in understanding the culture, which produces shadeism.

### **Reflexive Practice and Validity**

According to Visano (1987), the validity and reliability of data clearly depend on the specific procedures used. This research involved the collection of data through many sources, such as academic journals, social media, magazines, and books. This was done to engage in a deeper understanding of shadeism, and to aid in the research's validity. Validity in qualitative research is concerned with whether subjects build concepts and constructs of their daily social reality out of the same experiences, which the researcher has observed and gathered (Visano, 1987). When compiling data for the proposed study, I was careful that results depended on the explanations of the individual. However, as the researcher, I was always careful of my role and the data that was gathered to explore shadeism.

This study is unique as it looks at the importance of the historical background of shadeism, as research at this juncture tends to portray the emergence of this issue at the time of colonialism, this study looks beyond the history of colonialism. Therefore, this study acknowledges the academic and historical limitations of the experiences, in which documents were checked for reliability and subjectivity.

Social media is a great tool for understanding an issue, and its complexity due to its interdisciplinary nature, however, attention to detail needs to be followed to ensure its reliability. According to Hookway (2008), it is important to have an

attitude that is:

Indicative of how textual data are often approached as ‘background’ material with the real research only beginning when the researcher starts asking questions. One cannot help thinking then, that the stubborn mistrust of naturally occurring data like blogs is reflective of living in what Silverman (2001) calls the ‘interview society’ – a society occupied by social scientists, media presenters and journalists who are convinced that the only path to individual ‘authenticity’ is through the face-to-face interview (p. 98).

It can be difficult to decipher social media’s authenticity because it is challenging to tell if someone is being truthfully honest, however, the same can be said of an interview. Therefore, it is very important to question social media outlets and ask questions. On the plus side, however, authors may be more honest in responses because, there is a layer of anonymity of the online context, which may give the author an opportunity to be more free and honest on a given issue. (Hookway, p. 96).

### **Triangulation**

Triangulation can be understood as, the construction of social behaviours through the combination of several research methodologies (Denzin, 1970). Triangulation refers to the application of more than one method to the examination of research questions in order to foster confidence in the findings. Denzin (1970) distinguished four forms of triangulation: data triangulation, theoretical triangulation, methodological triangulation, and investigator triangulation. In this thesis, I was able to collect data at different times, use more than one theoretical position to interpret the data and use more than one method in collecting my data. However I was the only investigator, and I was mindful that the results depend on the interpretations of a single individual. Agreeing with Kirby and McKenna (1989) my autoethnographic



baggage “is the record of the experience and reflections of the researcher that relate to the focus of the research” (p.49). It became important for me, as the researcher, to account for my ‘brown’ life in this research. Shadeism is like an onion, encompassing of layers, and to fully get to the core the layers need to come off since shadeism deals with subjective matters; a framework that encompasses different methodologies such as triangulation will need to be consulted for an explorative and open approach in looking at this social issue. Also, Interpretive analyses of social processes can suggest a depiction of shadeism. Conventions in interpretive tradition require individuals as social actors who interact in social worlds and live within human societies. These actors do not solely respond, instead, they gather what occurs within communities and societies. Contributing a framework for culture within society, symbolic interactionism developed the methodological context within which the individual is socialized. Meanings will be extracted from secondary sources reflecting the social context while attentive to features of racialized group life and the consensus within groups that brings about the group’s understanding of shadeism.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethics is about doing good and avoiding harm. Ethics, irrespective of the methodology, is troubled when data is examined where judgements and decisions are made. Ethics looks at the conduct of the research, and the researcher. A major difficulty in ethical analyses is there are no clear decisions to ethical dilemmas. I found dilemmas to be subtle at times when it came to the choice of how I wrote my own autoethnographic work. It is very important to make ethical decisions when dealing with personal narratives about someone’s life. When collecting blog

narratives of those affected, it was important for me to email the owners of the blogs to let them know, I would be using their narratives in my research project. The email correspondence will be filed in Appendix B. In this research paper, questioning to the emergence of shadeism is examined, and religion is discussed. In the chapter discussing religion, it was important not to confuse this domain of thinking as the same as ethical reasoning, because “Too often, ethics is confused with these very different modes of thinking... for example, for highly variant and conflicting social values and taboos to be treated as if they were universal ethical principals” (Paul & Elder 2006). To help gain an understanding of the theological texts more appropriately, I consulted more than one translation. Also, in my study to keep me accountable, I have consulted professors that have mastery knowledge in that field to understand the texts better, and the cultural context behind some of the meanings.

### **Summary**

The research methodology outlined gives an overview of the strategies used to investigate the research topic by firstly, identifying the most appropriate method of qualitative research and the reasons for its use. Secondly, the chapter described the research methods, data collection, and analysis process. Also, the chapter describes the social media used and the results of searches, which are aided by explaining why reliability and validity are important. In order to enhance the research and ensure that research is done in an appropriate way, ethical considerations are explained. Further research can look at the terminology that is associated with shadeism because when searching terms such as colorism and shadeism results for minimal, compared to terms such as dark skin and light skin.

## CHAPTER 4

### CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY

I was very young, when I first heard about skin colour, and what it means to others. I remember my family members constantly talking about it, and I started to begin to understand skin colour was important. To my family's discontent, I was born dark skinned. In which my family members would constantly share with me how dark I was, unfortunately, that is how I saw myself for the most part. To my "darkness", nicknames such as "blackie", "darkie" and "dark gyal" were allotted. As a child, some of my aunts and uncles didn't want to play with me. One of my uncles at a party even assumed my intelligence from my skin colour, and told me I was not smart enough to play with his "fair" kids. My uncle also shared with me he married a light-skinned woman, so his kids would be beautiful and smart, and not like me. That day was one of the most painful memories of my childhood. I still remember how they laughed at me that day.

On many occasions growing up, when aunts came to visit they would often share with me, different remedies to lighten my skin, which included natural and store bought. Family get-togethers and photo taking was also a hassle, this is because I was ordered to stand in the light, so I would not look "black" in the pictures. During social events such as weddings, my makeup was applied much lighter than my skin colour – I ended up looking ashy in pigment. I knew as a young child, that I was not classically beautiful because I was never adorned with comments affirming my beauty, like my fair skinned cousins, were. These messages made me feel very sad and were hindering my self-confidence.

At family events, I was always told to work hard and get an education; because my dark skin was a drawback. In my their eyes, they believed if I achieved a high level of

education, then I could marry well, and have “fair skin” children. I know these thoughts are not exclusive to their thought processes, because upon attending many parties with newborns, family and friends many commented firstly on the child’s skin colour. The remarks about the child’s skin resembled that of snow or a beautiful porcelain doll. Once the remarks on skin colour were allotted, comments about the child’s future job and family were voiced, in which if they had light skin were positive affirmations. Since my skin is dark, it would be unheard of if I decided to marry someone darker than me, or even spoke about it. Having a family composed of dark skin would be spoken about negatively among family members and friends alike. I knew this as my truth as I heard these types of conversations among family members at various events. This posed a dilemma to my self-worth, so I actively sought out ways in which I could better myself.

One of my favourite aunts was getting married and I was about seven years old. I was so excited because I had a fascination with wedding dresses. I liked how the dresses were so big, and all the glitz and glamour that surrounded the event. My role in the wedding was to be the flower girl. I remember getting my pink dress and white shoes – this was very exciting, as on the wedding day, I was part of my aunt's bridal entourage. The makeup artist doing my aunts makeup told my mom that I needed makeup. I was excited because I loved playing with makeup and was excited to get my makeup done. But, upon looking at the pictures I saw how light my face looked. It looked as though baby powder was applied on my face. I remember asking the makeup artist why the other flower girls didn’t wear makeup, and the reply was that they were beautiful just the way they are. After hearing this, I decided to hide from the photographer and videographer. I didn’t want to be captured on film, and part of the wedding photos.

I wanted to fit in badly, I wanted to be accepted and seen as beautiful to others so I decided to join an Indian modelling and talent agency. In anticipation for the audition, I lost lots of weight so I could compensate for being dark, as I knew that would be a problem. I went in for my audition, and I was praised for my body and features but was told black and white headshots would be more flattering, so my features would be prominent and not colour. I became a good dancer by practise and determination. I was even used to train other dancers because I got the moves faster. However, when it came to performances I was always placed at the back. This hurt my feelings; I knew I was a good dancer, after all, I was asked to train the other dancers. There were countless times when I went for auditions and my skin colour was made an issue.

In high school, I was heavily involved with music. I was in the symphony orchestra and played the viola. With two of my high school teachers, I found a temporary escape from shadeism, as people that constantly spoke about it surrounded me. It was unfortunate even girls my age in school would talk about it, an emphasis on fairness was in the Bollywood movies they watched, and therefore bleaching was among regular conversation. I had a music teacher, that helped me see I was an individual rather than a shade. She saw my talents in the orchestra as my own, she viewed me independently of the negative narrative woven into my life. I felt like she was on my side and liked me for me. One day she got tickets to go see a choir downtown, and decided to take me! I didn't understand why she would choose me; she was so kind to me. When I was with her I forgot colour even mattered, and when she went back to Newfoundland I was devastated. However, she was not the only teacher that poured into me. I remember one day I was sitting on the bleachers alone in the shade with my head down while others were on the

field socializing. My English teacher came up to me, and asked me what was wrong? I told her I didn't want to get darker because I am already ugly. From that conversation, we had many talks about how that thinking was wrong. She shared with me, she grew up thinking she was ugly because of her complexion, and many friends and family "demonized" her. I felt a bond with her because she always told me I was beautiful and had many things to offer, and that my skin colour didn't depict who I was. It was hard to hear this information, because of my inner thinking and teaching. I tried to grasp this information the best I could, even though I socialized with those who constantly engaged in acute shadeism. This teacher was the strong person I needed in my life, to help me on my journey of starting the process and dismantle the narrative that was so woven in my life.

### **My Work Experience and Skin Colour**

I felt uncomfortable in my skin. In the midst of the hustle bustle downtown, I used to look at what was considered beautiful, I would people watch and walk around and look at the billboards on my lunch. I remember observing many slender, white females on the billboards, or light skin "ethnic" looking models. I remember going through a phase of only wearing my hair straight, using high-end products that "brighten, lighten" one's complexion, and wearing lots of lighter makeup. I remember spending lots of money on items that would help me fit what I thought was beautiful. I also remember in the department I worked in, that men would look at the girls with the fair complexions. Also, many of the mannequins were white and slender. The more I observed around the Eaton Center, the more I felt uncomfortable in my skin.

As a young woman working as an early childhood educator, I started to see the biases many of the workers had of me. Many of the workers that made colour remarks were from Asia, South Asian or even African backgrounds. I remember one day, I didn't have time to straighten my hair, and so I left it wavy as it naturally is, also that day I was substantially darker because I had visited the cottage in the previous week. I walked into the childcare facility at 6:45 AM, as I often did, and the support staff (M) Instead of saying "good morning," or "how was your trip?" M replied, "What have you done to yourself?" I was shocked; I didn't honestly think I did anything to myself but go on vacation. What was so memorable about this situation is M would not leave it alone; she kept on insisting that I never looked like that again. I was in shock, I thought what does this have to do with my profession. What is the big deal? I look darker and have wavy hair. I was well dressed in a blouse and dress pants, my hair was wavy but well groomed. The district Manager later came in that day because we had a staff meeting. She said nothing about my appearance, and she is also known to send people home for unprofessional attire.

### **My Trip to India**

My trip to India was truly a very interesting experience that I learned a great deal from. A friend was going to India, to look at potential suitors, for marriage. Since I was fascinated by Bollywood and my Indian roots – a world that was new and exciting to me. I decided to visit India with at a friend's invitation after I was finished high school. In preparations for this trip, I had to gather all my clothes for the trip and, the family that I

was going with told me not bring dark clothes so “I could look my best”. I listened to them, as I thought they were trying to help me.

I arrived in India and got settled. Looked around, started to enjoy the food, noises and culture. After a couple days of getting accustomed to the new country, I was in. The suitors that were coming to see my friend started. I dressed nicely and sat with her for support. There was one young man that she liked and voiced her opinion to her mother. However, that young man, liked me, even though I had minimal interaction with him. He told my mother, however, my mother voiced that I was not here to get married but to explore India with her. My friend’s family was angered and voiced they couldn’t believe that a “girl like me” could be preferred over a fair skin girl. My friend’s mother called me names, such as “Kali” and “black”, and really couldn’t believe that the best suitor saw something in me. I was ordered to take off the clothes she lent me and asked to leave her home.



## CHAPTER 5

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This study will benefit from obtaining an understanding on shadeism found in the literature on shadeism and provide a foundational understanding for this study its and related theories. In this chapter, the writings of those who have been defined, characterized and theorized about shadeism are present. These sources will be introduced here, with recognition of the fact that their definitions serve different purposes, and contain different elements. Scholarship on shadeism has been approached and looked at in different ways but varies in their approach depending on their conceptual frameworks. Despite the frameworks used, and the academic findings, when looked at in the grand scheme of the issue, these studies miss important perspectives that would add to the discussion. The important perspectives and questions missed are of historical relevance, these are critical in understanding studies that explore shadeism and its effects.

Colonialism often is used as a key factor in exploring shadeism, as it is often cited as the provider of the beginning of this problem, this analysis is harmful as it provides a limited set of answers to a set of complex problems, that has the ability to influence one's "life chances" (Charles 2014). Therefore, despite the different ways in which academics' view this issue, and their important findings, these studies have yet to explore the historical relevance prior to colonialism thoroughly. This literature review will highlight key related literature situated around (1) related concepts (2) perceptions of beauty and self-esteem (3) origins of shadeism, and (4) socio-economic privileges.

#### **Passing: Your Key to Socio-economic Success**

What is defined as beautiful? Who started this idea? These ideas are a component

of this research study, as women affected from shadeism often have issues surrounding how they are perceived (Banks, 1999). According to Patricia Collins in, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism*, states “standards of female beauty” are meaningless without the comparison of black women that do not fit that mould (p. 194). Additionally, Delgado (1997) writes, “privileged identity requires reinforcement and maintenance, but protection against seeing the mechanisms that socially reproduce and maintain privilege is an important component of the privilege itself” (pp. 293 -294). This privileged identity helps promote difference, where different is measured and judgments are attached. For example, there are stereotypes associated with those of black and brown skin that include thoughts of one's class and behaviour. Black women are often portrayed as “Matriarchs,” “Sapphires,” “Angry Black Women”, and “Welfare Mothers”, opposed to the encouraging, cherishing mother-like characters in white households perpetuated through commercial media culture (Puff, 2012). Indian women with fair skin are viewed of a higher class, with more beauty and intelligence (Parameswaran & Cardoza, 2009). In other words, stereotypes and skin colour are well related, the darker the women, the easier she is compartmentalized against the “norm” and seen as the “other” (Johnson-Bailey, 1999). Cheryl Harris (1993) describes whiteness as an “asset” and “treasured property”, because of the privileges granted to those who are of a lighter hue, therefore, those who are racialized often engage in what is called as “passing” (p. 1713). “Passing” is when those who are black with light skin try to “pass” as white (p. 1713), this contributes to a psychological burden but also limits self-confidence and judgments about beauty (Elmore, 2009). To engage in an identity based on falseness to obtain privilege and access is damaging. Dubois, in *The Souls of*

*Black Folk*, writes about this falseness through double-consciousness,

A peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,-- an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body..." (pp. 10 -11).

This brings insight into skin tone and the implications surrounding identity, and self-worth.

### **Perceptions of Beauty and Self Esteem**

The research on shadeism and the negative effects on a woman's self-esteem are not surprising, given the societal value placed on Eurocentric female beauty. Rice (2014) states, "Worldwide, millions of women worry about image and understanding that appearance shapes their self-esteem, social status, and life chances" (pp. 3 -4). The idolization of white persists as "light skin is defined as more beautiful, and more desirable than dark skin, particularly in women" (Hunter, 2004, p. 23).

Research on shadeism often discusses the personal advances light skinned women gain, because of their skin colour, resulting in a better life to their darker skinned counterparts (Banks 1999, Hunter 2002; 2007, Shaw-Taylor, 2007). When the social capital of shadeism is discussed, it is usually in the context of women, although research on shadeism acknowledges both men and women are affected, but proportionality affecting women (Fears 1998; Keith, 2004; Okazawa-Rey, Robinson, & Ward 1987; Wilder & Cain 2010). The majority of this scholarship is situated with studying women's material attractiveness and experiences associated through shadeism (Hunter, 2007; Thompson and Keith, 2004). Skin tone, along with other correlated characteristics such as hair texture and facial features determines a women's grade of beauty (Okazawa-Rey,

Robinson & Ward 1987; Hill, 2002). Women's bodies are subjected to the material standards of the "traditional" grade of beauty (Craig, 2002), examples of these beauty standards are seen in the media, such as advertisements and television (Schooler, Ward, Merriwether, 2004). These expectations can lead women to view their bodies negatively which threatens their self-esteem, many suggest, this mindset causes women to engage in unhealthy behaviours to fix the issue (Richins, 1991; Morgan 1991; Bordo 2003; Frisby, 2004; Rice 2014). Body image is a problem that affects women throughout their everyday lived experiences, because of "the cult of thinness and the commercialization of identity" (Hesse-Biber, 1996). On the other hand, a study by the Journal of Applied Social Psychology (1992), stated body image is a layered issue, and when ethnic phenotypes are added, places women of colour in a difficult space as they have to measure up to western beauty standards (Bond & Cash). The connection between skin tone and material attractiveness is considerably deeper for women than men, with a preference for very light women (Fink, Grammer & Matts, 2006; Hill, 2002; Hunter 2002). There are claims on who holds the title of beauty, however "people across ethnic groups and class levels tend to agree about who possesses beauty and who does not. This is very important because it clarifies who has access to beauty capital and who does not" (Hunter, 2002). Also, skin color is more significant as a predictor of self-esteem among women than among men; lighter skin tones are positively related to higher self-esteem, particularly for women with lower socio-economic status (Thompson & Keith, 2001).

### **Historical Origins of Colonialism**

Shadeism or otherwise known as colorism has been cited to have started at the

beginning of colonialism (Charles, 2014; Hunter, 2013; Quiros, & Dawson, 2013; Story, 2010), due to the power hierarchies established through the slave and slave trader roles (Banks 1999; Hunter 2008; Lindsey, 2011). Lighter skin slaves were given more privileges than those who had darker skin (Herring, 1991; Hunter 1998; Viglione & DeFina 2011). Light skinned slaves were allowed to work in the houses, opposed to working in the fields. In addition to being given more favourable and arguably easier jobs, lighter skin slaves were given the opportunity to learn (Russell & Hall, 1992). These privileges caused tension between lighter and darker slaves (Hunter, 2007). Being able to work inside was equated to being of the upper class like the blue veins were. The Blue veins were a group that didn't engage in laborious work, which allowed them to stay indoors, causing their complexion to remain fair (Lake, 2003). These events and unequal treatment based on hue progressed a gendered intraracism. Additionally, within the constraints of colonialism beliefs and meanings were applied to both black and white people (Charles, 2014), whereas white represented: power, beauty and fairness, and black the binary opposition. These ideologies surrounding colour have helped maintain the clout associated with whiteness.

### **The Socio-economic Benefits of Shadeism**

Light skin can also work as social capital for women of colour, more specifically, lighter skinned African American women are more privileged in the areas of education, income, and marriage than their darker skinned counterparts (Hunter, 1998, 2002). Lighter skinned women are viewed as a higher class, and of more worth, which equates to being valued more (Hughes & Hertel 1990; Keith & Herring 1991). The epitome of beauty lies in the package of Eurocentric beauty ideals, which creates a problem for those

who do not fit that package. These societal practices of rating beauty or pursuing beauty a certain way creates a divide between those experiencing shadeism in their communities (Wallace, 2013).

Colour related biases are still prevalent, with examples seen through policing, education and social opportunities (Hunter 2007; Banks 1999). Shadeism is also persistent in schools as skin-color reflects deeply held cultural beliefs about class, modernity, sophistication, and beauty (Ernst 1980; Morrison 1992; Smedley 2007). The negative perceptions embedded into a child's mind are facilitated through social experiences such as schooling and directly correlate to their lack of self-esteem (Breland-Noble 2013; Mucherah & Frazier 2013; Okazawa-Rey 1987).

Women of colour experiencing self-esteem issues due to their biology, often resort to bleaching creams and/or treatments to lighten their skin, which hurts their daily psychological functioning. (Charles 2003). The issue of skin bleaching is not restricted to North America, but globally: India, Africa, the Philippines, Mexico, Jamaica and Saudi Arabia (Charles 2003; Glenn 2008; Shevde 2008; Hunter 2007; Mendoza 2014). Skin tone is an important characteristic in defining beauty, and beauty is an important resource for women (Hunter 2003), as light skin receives advantages in employment and income (Hunter 2008; Culbreth 2006; Russell, Wilson, and Hall 1992).

Shadeism extends into the spousal selection as well, "...the marriage market provides those black men who are sought after with the opportunity to attain a high status spouse, which has placed a premium on black women with lighter skin" (Hamilton, Goldsmith & Darity 2009). Both men and women wanted a spouse of lighter skin, which is viewed as higher spousal status (Edwards, Carter-Tellison, & Herring, 2004; Hughes

and Hertel, 1990). Research on spousal selection reveals statistics showing that dark-skinned women are the least desirable and sought after (Edwards, Carter-Tellison & Herring 2004; Hitsch, 2010; Wade 1996). Spouse selection based on skin colour is not exclusive to the black community, but also extends to religious communities such as the Sikh and Muslim communities (Grewal 2009). People may be unaware of their preferences for lighter skin because the ideology is so deeply entrenched in our culture. We live in an image glorifying culture, and are bombarded with images of light skin and Anglo facial features; this spreads the idea white beauty as the “standard” and the “ideal” (Kilbourne 1999).

### **Summary**

This literature review outlines the current findings relevant to the intentions of this study and has provided key terms relating to shadeism, alongside information on the perceptions of beauty and self-esteem, origins of shadeism, and the socio-economic privileges related to light skin. Although there have been some great contributions to scholarship in regards to shadeism, research that goes deeper into the historical events of colour biases need to occur, as colonialism is seen as the emergence of this issue.

## CHAPTER 6

### MEANING OF RELIGION IN SHADEISM

Exploring religion within the constraints of shadeism is important because of the notions of identity construction as they these two concepts are linked. Thomas (1966) argues that an interaction with God through ritual or process of worship can affect an individual's identity. Identity construction can be understood as "The social processes involved in an individual's creation of a sense of identity" (Cerulo 1997). Here I argue that shadeism existed and was practiced before the emergence of colonialism. Therefore, I analyse religious scripture and practices. In looking at religion, there is a role played by interpreting scriptures, therefore making important to include hermeneutics in this discussion. Scriptures can be interpreted differently depending on contexts, history, and space. For example, in Colonial context, interpreted scriptures use Christianity for elevating white men first. Religion is at the core of one's world constructing process because it involves what people hold sacred (Berger, 2011). The notions implemented by religion, affect an individual's behaviour and are carried out in society. This chapter's discussion is on how religion and shadeism work together to implement notions of colour in the world.

#### **The Klu Klux Klan, Christianity, the Songs of Solomon**

The Klu Klux Klan (KKK) is a white southern organization that was founded in 1865 to stop the approaching civil rights movements (Chalmers, 1981, p. 9). This group is known to engage in violent hate crimes to showcase their dissatisfaction towards those who do not fit into their idea of social or political norms. This group claims to be 100% white Christians; those who strive to keep America white without mixing. As we unpack



this group and what it entails, evidence pointing to shadeism is present. The Klu Klux Klan has taken a set of ideologies such as religious scripture and twisted it to carry out their ideas on colour, race, and civilization. Their philosophy was cultivated and instilled in the vision of this group through the linkage of Christianity to Americanism and patriotism by Billy Sunday in 1917 (Wade, 1998, p.168). These notions were morphed into God's chosen "protestant army," even using the language of the white man's religion to "battle" their enemies (MacLean, 1994, p.161). Although, scholars have noted Jesus is of Jewish heritage (Young, 1993), the KKK has been known to commit hate crimes against those who identify as Jewish. There are obvious limitations and reliability issues relating to the KKK's beliefs. They choose and take samples of Biblical scripture and interpretations out of context. There is a danger in interpreting religious scripture, out of its intended scope for analysis, as the message becomes something that it is not, the examples of this occurring are plentiful. For instance, the story of Abraham's curse of slavery upon Hamm's son, Canaan in Genesis 9: 20-27, initially raised a question among the commentators. They needed to justify why Abraham cursed Canaan for the wrong doing of his father. Notwithstanding, the latter interpretation suggested skin colour as a sign of slavery although the verse does not mention skin colour. I must also mention that most Christian, Jewish, and Islamic denominations strongly reject this commentary. Goldenberg (2009) and Haynes (2002) further argue that the colour symbolism was taken out of context and invented meanings were attached for economic gains. However, misinterpretations of religious literature are not limited to Christianity and it is clearly seen in Islam as well.

Derayah (2011) in *The Myths of Creation and Hijab: Iranian Women, Liberated or Oppressed?* Discusses how surah (24:31) in the *Quran* was misinterpreted to enforce the hijab or head covering on Muslim women. Derayah states, “the verse requires only the covering of private parts of the body, interpreters of the *Quran* came to consider the whole body private and shameful: Hence the whole body should be covered to avoid sexual appeal and decadence” (2011, p. 10). The verse and its interpretation show that the evaluation of religious scripture needs to be viewed in appropriate cultural contexts.

Contrary to the views and beliefs of the KKK, there are colour positive passages such as the Song of Solomon, regarding acceptance and beauty. Jewish interpreters cite this book as God’s love for Israel, whereas Christian interpretations view this book as God’s love for the church, and relationship with believers (Constable, 2015). However, in reading this text literally there is an apparent love poem between a woman and her beloved:

*She*

I am very dark, but lovely,  
O daughters of Jerusalem,  
like the tents of Kedar,  
like the curtains of Solomon.  
Do not gaze at me because I am dark,  
because the sun has looked upon me.  
My mother's sons were angry with me;  
they made me keeper of the vineyards,  
but my own vineyard I have not kept!  
Tell me, you whom my soul loves,  
where you pasture your flock,  
where you make it lie down at noon;  
for why should I be like one who veils herself  
beside the flocks of your companions?

**Solomon and His Bride Delight in Each Other**

*He*

If you do not know,  
O most beautiful among women,  
follow in the tracks of the flock,  
and pasture your young goats  
beside the shepherds' tents.  
I compare you, my love,  
to a mare among Pharaoh's chariots.  
(Song of Solomon, chapter 5, verses 5-9)

The *Song of Solomon* starts off with a woman expressing her love for her beloved but then expresses she has become darker because of the amount of hard labour in the sun. Her beloved still expresses his delight for her, and expresses his adoration by praising her beauty, although her skin has become “very dark”. If the aesthetics of her skin were problematic, her beloved would have mentioned his discontent, and raised questions to the biases in colour. This was not the case, as throughout the love poem her beloved only had praise for her beauty. In examining the *Song of Solomon*, the inconsistency of the KKK’s philosophy arises where scripture is looked at, and the lack of evidence supporting the KKK’s philosophy unsound. Sociologist Emile Durkheim (1893) and his notion of a collective consciousness may lend understanding to the issue of the Klansmen. Religion, in this case, was used to bind this group together and build a collective consciousness necessary to carry out white supremacy and ideologies on skin colour. The emotions of the group were symbolized, and interactions and rituals were established to promote and build group identity. These processes have been in the works since 1917 as Americanism and Christianity were linked to whiteness for this group.

### **The Houri: Whiteness the Real Reward**

Shadeism has roots in Islam (622 CE) as colour imbalances can be found in scripture. The Quran is composed of metaphorical language, leaving room for interpretation, in the

areas of light and dark (Rabab'ah & Al-Saidat, 2014). For instance, white in Islam is depicted as pure, and black as unclean (Taha & Abdel-Azim, 2012). These metaphors specifically do not talk about skin colour, but metaphors of good and evil. Direct examples of skin colour are found through The Houris, mentioned in the *Quran*. Chapter 47, verse 15 of the *Quran*, sets the stage for the gift of paradise, by expressing the necessary good and noble deeds and its implementation. The reward is a Houris or woman “of paradise.” that will be a companion to a pious and righteous man (Quran 56:35-37). The description of the Houris is furthered as: “And [for them are] fair women with large, [beautiful] eyes, The likeness of pearls well protected, As a reward for what they are used to do” (Quran 56:22- 24). The gift of “paradise” noted in the *Quran* for doing “righteous” acts is a “fair woman”. The question here is why is skin tone mentioned? This idea of something that is perfect implies what is imperfect and unwanted, especially when rooted in religious scripture. Arab and South Asian Muslim Americans have been known to have preferences for lighter skinned partners and use skin colour to assess status (Grewal, 2009). According to an article by Style Arabia entitled, *Let's be Fair*, Dr. Shazia Ali a dermatologist based in Jeddah Saudi Arabia shares her experiences with patients, that are willing to “ruin” their skin to bleach (Guellaty, 2013). In the article, the doctor spoke about the many bleaching and whitening requests she would receive daily. However, numbers started to decline when she mentioned to patients that skin colour could only be lightened by two shades:

I explained to them that it is practically impossible to change your skin color completely without seriously damaging it, as complexion is a genetically determined trait, they then ask, “How did Michael Jackson magically change his skin color permanently (Guellaty, 2013)

This quote exemplifies the desire to pursue the objective of fair skin, no matter what the cost, after explaining the limitations of bleaching and hazards. In this blog, the doctor says the main reason why women want to bleach is spousal pressure. This desire to bleach comes from confusion associated with their identity and self-worth tied in with cultural norms (Charles, 2010). The example of wanting to bleach at any cost embodies religion, thought and culture. According to the CIA factbook (2013) cited the majority of the population of Saudi Arabia is Muslim with 85 – 90 % Sunni and 10 – 15% Shia, and within this community non-Muslim places of worship are prohibited. By acknowledging that Saudi Arabia has a Muslim dominated demographic, it is useful to consider the intersecting and or interlocking systems of thought and historical considerations such as The Houri. The Houri as mentioned earlier represents beauty and the gift of “paradise”, and it is not to go without noting that the most applicable reason for women wanting to bleach is spousal pressure.

### **Hinduism and Bollywood**

Bollywood and Hinduism are close, as Hinduism still holds prominence in Bollywood films. This is not unexpected when looking statistically at India’s religious makeup. According to the CIA factbook, Hinduism is the largest religious denomination in India weighing in at over 80% of the country’s population (2001 census). Therefore, it is not by chance, Bollywood’s premier film was a reenactment of Hindu religious scriptures such as the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, which debuted in 1913, entitled *Raja Harishchandra*. Major influences attributed to Bollywood have been the (1) ancient Indian Epics such as the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, in particular, the way the stories are told in film, and also the ideas and principals (2) Ancient Sanskrit dramas because of

the use of dance, music and dramatic experience correlating to Hindu scripture (Dissanayake & Gokulsing, 2004). Since 1913, there have been more re-enactments of Hindu scriptures' stories present in films such as, the 2006 film *Krrish*, which depicts the story of Krishna. Indirect examples of Hinduism can be seen through social engagements in films such as weddings, festivals, or even a chant or song celebrating a deity accompanied by a choreographed dance. Since there is a presence of Hinduism in Bollywood it is necessary to look closer into religious literature to unravel the customs and ideologies that are present that contribute to shadeism. In Bollywood's first film *Raja Harishchandra*, which debuted in the silent era of cinema, the *Ramayana* was featured, which features the Epic war against Rama and Ravana, called the battle of Lanka. The illustrations of colour prejudice or shadeism can be seen in the pages of this epic battle, and characters. It is interesting to note, that Prince Rama is depicted as good (Book 1), alongside his "Beautiful" wife Sita.

Sita is described as:

The beauty of the goddess Earth mortal eyes cannot see in its fullness, but we get glimpses of it as we gaze with grateful hearts on the emerald green or golden ripeness of spring time or autumn fields, or with awe and adoration on the glories of mountain and valley, rivers and ocean. This loveliness was Sita in its entirety" (The Ramayan, p. 14)

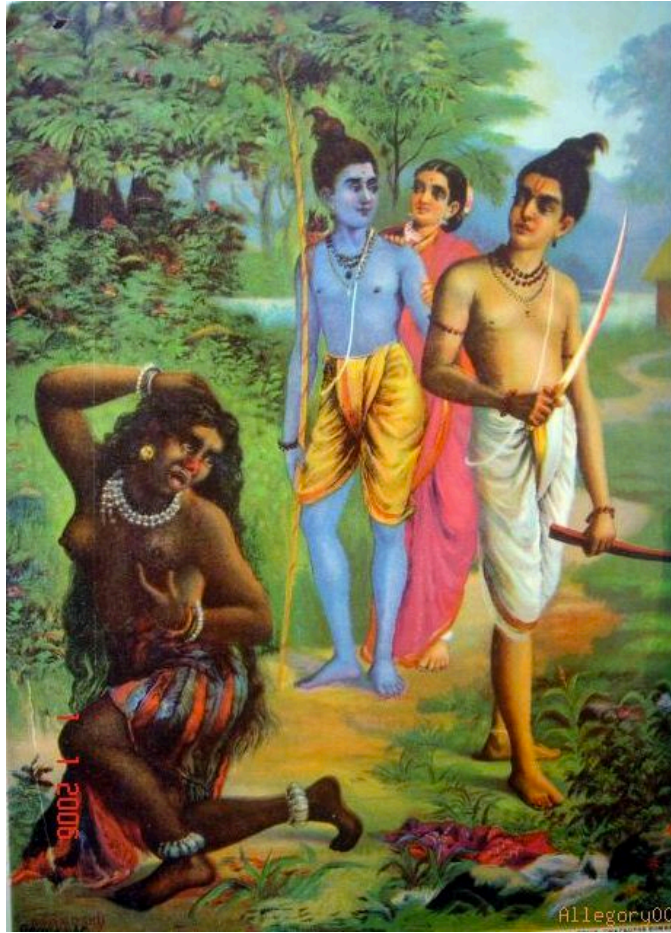
Sita's beauty attracted many men to want and marry her, "Many princes who had heard of Sita's beauty went to Mithila only to return disappointed. None could fulfill the condition" (The Ramayana, p. 26). Sita's beauty was well known, as was kidnapped by the evil king Ravana. When Sita was kidnapped, Prince Rama consulted Hanuman to help find her. Prince Rama described Sita like this in the *Ramayana*, (Book 4):

Even the lotus has its petals pale,

The moon has got its spot, and where is form  
Of any kind without the slightest fault ?  
But thou wilt see no imperfection mar  
Her shapely form.

The excerpt from the *Ramayana* describes Sita as fair with no imperfections. As mentioned earlier her beauty was well known as many tried to marry her. Among casual conversations in family gatherings, I have heard the beauty of fair skinned girls compared that of Sita. Comments like those made me look at Sita in a different way, as young women may try to look like her. Sita is seen as a “good woman” King of Lanka, Ravana is depicted as evil, with many hands, dark and hairy. Ravana the antagonist of this story has encountered a shame and pain because of his dark skin, hairiness and many hands, as early as a child. His sister Surpanakha, has also been ridiculed and seen through Hindu mythology as the epitome of ugliness, because of her dark skin, thinning hair and belly. Surpanakha has also been depicted as a troublemaker with little sense. She came to know her brother’s idolization of Sita, because of her accompanied beauty and fairness, which is why she was at the head of the strategy to help her brother kidnap Sita. This act initiated the war against Prince Rama and King Ravana when Rama came to know who kidnaped his bride. In order for Rama to obtain his bride, he had to enter the Kingdom of Lanka and fight Rakshasa. This kingdom is described as filled with ugly and fierce demons. Rama was able to fight the Rakshasa, and defeat Ravana and cut Surpanakha’s nose off.

Illustration 1: Surpanakha



(Source: Epics of India)



Illustration 2: Ravana



(Source: mottikamai)

Illustration 3: Sita



(Source: shreema.org)

## **Caste and Colour**

In the popular imagination, the fair complexion of an individual was associated with the upper castes like the Brahmans. This idea goes back to the notions of Sita's fairness and goodness, and her opposite Supnakha, these concepts are found in the *Ramayana*. However, this was complicated by two factors: Brahmans from South Indian were generally darker than people from North India (Singh, 127). Secondly, upper class men all over India had access to lower caste women, which was a matter of power relations (Singh, p. 76), many in the lower caste groups were fairer in complexion than many in the upper castes. Also, it is important to note the correlation between labour and colour. Darker complexions were both a symbol and reality of labouring under the sun through rough conditions. This is due to the centuries of African slave labour, Singh States,

...had created a vision of plantation labour as non- white constructed inferior in intellect and ill equipped to be anything worthwhile other than a production on land. This commodified view of labour, with colour, had become part of the social, psychological and sexual imagery of planters and managers (p. 230)

The ideas associated with plantation, lead to hard labour being seen as non- white, while those who had a fair complexion, on the other hand, was associated with living off the labour of others.

In the *Karma Sutra* written sometime in the 3rd century, we read, "her skin is fine, tender and fair as the yellow lotus, never dark-coloured, though resembling, in the effervescence and purple light of her youth, the cloud about to burst."(<http://www.sacred-texts.com/sex/kama/kamapre.htm>). The *Karma Sutra* is not only about sex and marriage but it sheds a light on that period of ancient Indian history and the meaning of colour within India. Another important book related to Hinduism is the *Laws of Manu*, which is

the foundational work of Hindu law and ancient Indian society, which has been a key text in underlying the details pertaining to the caste system (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2015). Laws presented in the book have colour imbalance such as, “Having, according to the rule, espoused her (who must be) clad in white garments and be intent on purity, he shall approach her once in each proper season until issue (be had)” (9: 70). This verse illustrates the metaphorical meaning of colour in ancient Indian law, as if the women is not pure by wearing accompanying white garments, then she is not suitable to be with.

### Racism and Religious Concepts

The role of racism can be seen on large scales such as the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust (Melson, 1996), and can also be seen today in current history such as Rwanda genocide, racial profiling and policing behaviours towards racialized man (Hernández-Murillo & Knowles, 2004). Theorists like Frantz Fanon (1967) and Edward (1978) speak to this racial inequality through the ideas of colonialism, race, and racism. Fanon questions how the “white man” viewed him, and how the past is connected with stereotypes based on historical events. Fanon states that,

And then the occasion arose when I had to meet the white man’s eyes. An unfamiliar weight burdened me. The real world challenged my claims. In the white world, the man of color encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema. Consciousness of the body is solely a negating activity. It is a third person consciousness (p. 83).

These stereotypes, based on history, instill racist thoughts and creates an “inferiority complex” (p. 4). Said (1978) goes on to discuss these stereotypes are instilled and implemented by the inaccurate portrayals of the East by the West. These notions of inferiority and superiority are recycled today in our social world, and can be seen through

our social interactions. Hooks (1990), in her work on racism, interrogates culture and aesthetics, as there is a connection between black experience and racism. Hooks was concerned about expanding the discussion on racism to include the experiences of the black women and feminism, whereas Mohanty (1995) raised questions to the western version of feminism, and discusses colour blindness as it relates to female experiences as this construction is central to feminist discourse (p. 70). Mohanty (1989) also discusses how women in the 'third world' own agency helps to place racism into a where culture also has an effect on the experience of their exclusion. She raises valid questions when looking at shadeism, as women from the African and Indian diasporas own thought processes, and outlook on things are shaped by the culture in which they live, whereas their own thoughts help perpetuate these notions on skin colour and 'othering' further.

As laid out above this theoretical understanding of racism will link shadeism and religion, and in this paragraph, religious concepts that depict shadeism and racism will be discussed. Bollywood was been known to produce movies surrounding Hindu ancient texts such as Raavan (2010), which is based on the Hindu Epic the *Ramayana*. When looking at the women employed in Bollywood films, they are fair complexioned and could easily "pass" for white. The construction of women being light skinned is linked to Sita, as that is what she is described as in the Hindu Epics. In some cases, Eastern European women are cast in Bollywood films, as backup dancers, or in roles despite not being able to speak Hindi. These images of fair complexion women denote darker skinned women's disadvantages in beauty and purity. Bollywood is an important industry in the Indian diaspora. Although these colour-coded messages are not spoken, these messages get transmitted to the greater population – this is a form of racism. For

example, I've heard many in the Trinidadian diaspora refer to dark skinned girls as not "star girl" (lead actress in Bollywood film) quality. The greater population recycles these ideas, whereas racist thought on people and colour gets instilled.

The Hindu Epics and Bollywood are not the only vehicles to perpetuate the ideas of shadeism and racism, other religious texts such as the *Quran* also contribute to these ideas. The *Quran* and its religious concept of the Houris perpetuate ideas of white skin as ideal, as the Houris is described as that of white skin and large eyes. Correlations of this ideal can be seen throughout Muslim circles for the want of fair skin brides (Grewal, 2009), and also in the high level of skin bleaching that occurs in Saudi Arabia (Guellaty, 2013). These ideas on skin colour become powerful, as they are a determining factor in spousal selection, but in large, an indication of one's purity and goodness.

Racism is about power. An example of this is the KKK and their philosophies. The KKK has connected colour with superiority and religion. This group claims their ideals are centered on Christian ideals to "Keep America white", as they take Biblical scriptures to mean those who are white are exclusively part of the chosen protestant army. This exchange between religion, patriotism and colour help instil racist thoughts to a larger group.

## **Summary**

Powerful religions such as Christianity, Islam and Hinduism are instrumental in implementing ideas surrounding colour. The role religion plays in our everyday life forms early childhood messages to the authority religion has been given in society makes it a powerful socialization agent. Ideas surrounding morality, and or what is accepted in

society haven been implemented by what that predominate religion in that given country dictates. Religion is riddled through society and can be seen in music and arts, and even though one may not be “religious” is still susceptible to it. For instance in order to understand certain symbolisms in Western Literature, understanding of Biblical ideas and images need to be understood. That is why religion and what it entails needed to be discussed and stressed in this chapter. This chapter sought to convey relevant connections between religion and the cultural interpretations added to society. The ability of the text that I encountered made me realize that the gods are not blind but engage in colour coding.

## CHAPTER 7

### SUPERIORITY OF WHITENESS AND COLONIALISM

*Until The Lion has his Historian, The Hunter will Always be the Hero - African Proverb*

This chapter on shadeism is trying to lay down the foundation that could be used to understand, and discuss this issue in a deeper way because much of the conversation on shadeism is centered on discussing the issue as a result of colonialism. The explanations offered in regards to shadeism being a historical product of colonialism, lies within the accounts of the slave and slave-master relationships, resulting in associating power with whiteness, and establishing a colour hierarchy within the slaves. The relationships with the slave master and slave have undoubtedly added to the issue of shadeism, however, discussions on structures and events prior to colonialism are missing, and need to be looked into. In critically engaging with shadeism and its origins, questions start to arise as to why these ideologies concerning white as superior, and black as inferior, were so powerful as a means to captivate those physically and mentally. This argument offers a valid critique, as for colonialism to work in such a powerful way, ideologies concerning colour must have been there previously. Such an idea surfaces the option of another powerful force, which occurred earlier to influence these colour-coded messages. Religion is a powerful force as wars have been started in the name of religion, for instance, the French wars of religion, a series of wars against the Roman Catholics and Protestants (Knecht, 2002), and the Lebanese civil war between the Sunnis and Shiites (Kalyvas, 2008). However, religion is versatile, as it also has the influence to heal, a study published by the Journal of affective disorders, revealed those who believed in God were far more likely to react well to treatment, and work towards mental wellness

(Rosmarin et al, 2013). As can be seen by previous examples, religion is an influential and powerful force, with the capability of producing vastly different outcomes depending on the circumstances. Religion has been in the picture far before colonialism, in fact, religious doctrine has been taken out of context to perpetuate ideas surrounding colonialism and promote shadeism. More of an analysis surrounding shadeism and religion will be presented in chapter six. This chapter will examine colonialism and its contributions to carrying out the colour-coded regime of shadeism, and its relation to the implantation of ideologies associated with skin colour.

### **Whiteness and its Meaning to Shadeism**

The social construction and significance of whiteness have been tightly linked to history through the “origin of property rights” in the United States (Harris, 1993, p. 1706). The social construction of whiteness as an ideology is tied to social status (McIntosh, 1988; Thompson 2001; Hartmann, 2009) culture and historical understandings of whiteness. In looking at those affected by shadeism, whiteness is seen as a commodity and for this reason, those with light skin often try to “pass”. Light-skinned people earn more money, complete more years of schooling, live in better neighbourhoods, and marry higher-status people than darker-skinned people of the same race or ethnicity (Banks 2009; Hunter 2013). Skin colour matters as it holds the key to how others view you in terms of social factors such as beauty, intelligence, status and morals (Corbin, 2013). According to Peggy McIntosh, in her work, *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*, she notes the positive experiences associated with her white skin,



My skin color was an asset for any move I was educated to want to make. I could think of myself as belonging in major ways, and of making social systems work for me. I could freely disparage, fear, neglect, or be oblivious to anything outside of the dominant cultural forms. Being of the main culture, I could also criticize it fairly freely. In proportion as my racial group was being made confident, comfortable, and oblivious, other groups were likely being made unconfident, uncomfortable, and alienated. Whiteness protected me from many kinds of hostility, distress, and violence, which I was being subtly trained to visit in turn upon people of color. (1990)

Within this discussion of shadeism, I thought it was important to include this quote, as the author shares her own experiences as a white woman, confronting her awareness of what white skin symbolizes, and how her biology has granted her substantial amount of privileges. McIntosh's observations on being white, voices useful and important findings in relation to assets, emotions and security related to whiteness, privileges those experiencing shadeism cannot naturally obtain. The biological gains associated with whiteness are great, as it is viewed as standard or normal, which all else is measured up to, those experiencing shadeism are influenced by their skin colour and are trying to obtain acceptance from the stigmas closely associated in their everyday life (Wilder & Cain, 2010). Academic journals are not the only documented examples of privilege associated with skin colour, there are examples available on social media such as twitter, YouTube, and blogs. For instance, under the hashtags #Teamlightskin and #Teamdarkskin, an online war between skin colour is occurring, where skin colour is used to discuss issues surrounding beauty, attitude, intelligence, and success. Some examples of this online war will be shared below:

My Mama Named Me @26YearsADave  
#TeamLightSkin RT @johnlegend And to the haters, I'm still smarter, more talented, more successful and better looking than u. So fall back  
(June 2010)

FRANK LOTION @thebohemianmunk

“We Have To Take Our Women Back From The Darkies #TeamRedBone #TeamLightSkin”  
(Nov 2014)

ma'ata @atamyyyy  
The ONLY reason why I like winter is because I get lighter #TeamLightSkin  
(Dec 2014)

FIDEL CASHFLOW @mauri\_onpoint  
I hate all y'all lightskin niggas fuck all of you! #teamdarkskin  
(Dec 2014)

Lou Will @eyezzstayloww  
Black girls got to much attitude nd im convinced there all crazy  
... #TeamLightSkin #TeamWhiteGirls#WhereYallAtTho  
(Dec 2014)

The above examples were taken from twitter’s online war between those who are part of #teamlightskin and #teamdarkskin. In the 160 characters allowed, the tweets show the capacity to undermine and promote base on skin colour, also to have the ability to narrate ideas about behaviour, beauty, and attitude. These narratives from tweets help flesh out the issues of shadeism because it comes from real people that have chosen to engage in the online conversation. According to an article by BBC news (2015), many go online to connect with those who are liked minded to build community, and generate comments. In tweets and Facebook posts, intentional hashtags are sometimes not included, but the content speaks for itself. On April 13, 2015, a video went viral over a young girl crying over Mufasa dying in the Lion King,

Viktoria watching Lion King for the first time, and Scar just killed Mufasa! Check out her light skin reaction.... <http://fb.me/7eO6BrQt1>  
(Keith Harris, Facebook)

The video in a couple days of publishing generated: 5.7 million views, 240,470 Likes, 61,405 Comments, and 95,117 Shares. But that’s not all; news and print outlets such as *Time Magazine*, *The Daily Mail UK*, *People*, and online have covered this “cute”

video. I have a childcare background and found this cute; because I also remember getting emotional when I saw this film, many years ago. However, what is difficult about this video comes in the second part of the Facebook post, “Check out her light skin reaction”. Why is her skin colour relevant in the context of her emotional response to a video? Her father in his comments is speaking to a deeper meaning attached to skin colour and attitude. Post-Colonial scholar Frantz Fanon, in *White Skin Black Mask*, discusses the purity associated with whiteness, “I knew an Antillean who said of another Antillean, “His body is black, his language is black, his soul must be black too.” This logic is put into daily practice by the white man. The black man is the symbol of Evil and Ugliness” (Fanon, 1959, p.139). These are the ideas used to label the “other”, as discussed in Howard Becker’s academic work, *The outsiders*, which contributes to the deep-rooted relationships of who has the ability and power to label (Schur, 1971; 1980), and those who do not have the ability to challenge social stigmas. These stigmas on colour run deeper than what meets the eye, and have been linked to areas such as policing, in viewing those who are black as “intrinsically criminal and a potential threat to the law” (Visano, 2002, p. 216). These ideas on blackness as bad, evil or internally criminal or whiteness as “pure” and “good” are widely seen, whether in a “cute” video or media portrayals of black males as “criminal and dangerous” (Oliver, 2003). However, there is hope through social media. Although there have been negative messages associated with colour, as seen by the previous examples, social media can aid in having a social worldwide community forum on challenging these messages, which can empower and initiate social change. These tweets have been used to challenge the twitter handles pertaining to colour,

Odley Jean @odley\_j

The #teamlightskin #teamdarkskin shit is stupid. We both black wtf.  
(Nov 2014)

Tayla Claire Moore @taybaymo

For all yall claiming #teamlightskin and #TeamDarkSkin get educated. Cause YOU look stupid.  
(Dec 2014)

vanessa huxtable. @ayoo\_des

Divide and conquer. Divide us with all the bullshit including #TeamLightSkin #TeamDarkSkin stupid confoolery ass shit.  
(Dec 2014)

These set of tweets further social awareness, by combatting the rationale to base one's worth on the colour of their skin. The last tweet narrates engagement in behaviour and thinking around skin colour is unwise, as it is used to “divide and conquer” a group of people. Plotting those against each other to obtain power and economic gains are not a new strategy of dominance as similar examples are seen by the British in the Indian subcontinent (Viswanathan, 2014) or Germany and Belgium in the Hutu and Tutsi conflict (Destexhe, 1995). Basing everything on colour otherwise known as a “chromatism” (Spivak & Harasym, 1990, p.62), is faulty thinking that divides a group of people based on skin colour, creates otherness and implants ideologies on what is viewed as superior and valued. The next couple of tweets shows awareness of skin colour related issues,

Elizaveta Friesem @lisafriesem

"We talk about this age old cliche that #beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but who is training that eye?" Dr. Yaba Blay #colorism  
(Nov 2014)

allthepiecesmatter @allthpcesmatter

my mom being afraid of me bringing home brown friends but happy w/ white & east asian #myexperiencewithracism #shadeism #internalizedracism  
(Nov 2014)

The tweet by @lisafriesem relates to the implementation of views and where they come from, and questions an old common saying whereas, the tweet by @allthpcesmatter is an example of what ideologies reproduced internally can do to a group without interacting with them. These tweets make a meaningful commentary on the idea of shadeism, in which the ideals of the past are still present and used to judge. Social media is a diverse platform, as it is a vehicle in which promotes shadeism while idealistically offering a way to achieve a world without it.

### **Reproducing White Skin is Right Skin**

Scholarship in the area of shadeism has predominately viewed this issue as a historical product of colonialism (Charles 2014; Hunter 2007; Wilder 2008). Scholars note, through colonialism slave owners used skin colour to reinforce ideas about the superiority of whiteness, by granting privilege to those of mixed ancestry, thus creating a colour hierarchy (Herring 2004; Quiros 2013; Hunter 2007; Story 2010; Russell, Wilson & Hall 1992). The history of skin tone stratification is premised around light skin being a type of power, granting slaves with light skin privileges, darker skinned slaves didn't receive. Because of the unequal treatment of slaves based on their skin colour after emancipation in the United States, many African Americans had the "white is right" mentality. A majority of black aristocrats were of mixed – race heritage, therefore resulting in a lighter shade (Gatewood, 1988). This lighter shade was the epitome of what black Americans strived to achieve to be accepted. However, the highest acclamation one could achieve in black aristocratic society is "blue veinism" (Gatewood, 1990, p. 157). This colour-coded aristocracy became intertwined in American politics and culture, whereas skin colour was the invitation into the prestigious club. Class and

colour were further established, through the emergence of the black aristocrats, these philosophies on skin colour lead to a profitable beauty business, directed to black women by white businessmen to offer a remedy to dark skin.

The trending of “blue veinism” and lighter skin associated with the African high class, started a beauty market that is still influential and prevalent today. In the beginning of the production of the African beauty market a similar marketing scheme mimicking the manufacturing of white beauty products. This advertising approach was deliberate as its aim was to showcase the ability to obtain the same look white women achieved. In many ways, because of the positioning and marketing strategy of these beauty products, black Americans began to see other black Americans as physically unattractive because of their features such as skin colour (Dorman, 2011). To add to this dislike of black beauty, these women had negative stereotypes associated with them i.e. barbaric and inferior (Hunter, 2007), advertisements selling slaves helped propagate these notions about their bodies (Coltrane & Messineo, 2000). Companies that were owned by whites sold skin care products that promoted the “American” and “modern” beauty ideals – these products claimed to whiten black skin (Lindsey, 2011). Coincidentally during this time freedwomen wanted to be associated with “civility” and not blackness, and since these products claimed to whiten black skin and promoted an American modern society, made the beauty market more appealing and therefore, more profitable (Massey, 1993). The purchasing of these beauty products did not only play on the want to whiten one's skin, but was symbolic, as it acted as a passage of new beginning from slavehood in aspirations of being viewed differently by society (Lindsey, 2011).

As seen earlier in the postcolonial example of the American elite, whiteness

became an important element in the beauty industry, as it was linked with class, beauty, and intelligence. Unfortunately, these notions have not changed. The skin lightening industry has expanded and become influential (Hunter, 2011), this empire has infiltrated countries such as Africa, India, Saudi Arabia, China, etc. (Al-Saleh & Al-Doush, 1997; Dadzie & Petit, 2009; Morand & Mahé, 2007). Whiteness has remained a dominant value in the lives of many, working as a commodity. It is like going into an interview, with your resume rooted all over your skin. Since, people with darker skin are devalued in many respects (Charles, 2014; Hunter, 2007), leads to the internalization of negativity that shapes lived experiences. Skin bleaching can be a way to be accepted, or appear more desirable in the color hierarchal societies they live in (Hall, 1995).

The African elite can be connected to University as they are both seen as prestigious groups. University is a component of human development, providing social and technical skills for the labour market and life (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), where these skills have the potential to be used to promote economic growth, benefiting society. In North America sororities and fraternities are social organizations for predominately undergraduate students (Young 2015), and according to blogger Treasure Trump, the experience she had at her sorority, was filled with many good experiences such as academic and peer support, alongside opportunities to travel and practise leadership, which is why she named this the “best decision of her life” (2013). However, sororities and fraternities are often colour biased, and historically have been also (Hughey 2010). A post by Bougie Black Girl highlights inequalities associated with skin colour bias that elite organizations servicing predominately “coloured” people engaged in,

There are structures within the Black community itself that have historically worked to benefit people of a lighter hue. Spike Lee’s “School Daze” movie

touched on it. Some of America's oldest historic Black organizations participated in colorism. Historically Black sororities and fraternities had paper bag tests. Yes, THEY DID! If you were too dark skin, your application to join could have been denied simply because of your hue. The NAACP was a very colorist organization. The NAACP wanted only light skin receptionists. But please remember, the NAACP was not the only one (2015).

It is unfortunate that historically black sororities engaged in paper bag tests (Kerr, 2006) and the NAACP preferring light skinned workers (Hunter 2008), but these issues circulating around colour have not gone away. The Yale Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity (SAE), turned students of color away from the door at a 2015 Halloween party (White, 2015), also, the University of Oklahoma (SAE) chapter made headlines with a YouTube video stating "Sigma Alpha Epsilon brothers singing in unison, happily, what sounds like, "There will never be a n—— SAE/There will never be a n—— SAE/You can hang 'em from a tree, but it will never start with me/There will never be a n—— SAE (Svrluga, 2015). These examples, show the colour coded preferences, presented in fraternities in the year 2015. The NAACP President Rachel Dolezal, and part-time African Studies professor at Eastern Washington University has been misleading people about her ethnicity for years, as her parents exposed her (Warren, 2015). Rachel Dolezal engaged in "passing" to appear black opposed to the previously discussed "passing" as white, for socio-economic gain. Rachel Dolezal exercised her white privilege to chose to present herself as a black woman and reaped the benefits of being black in the context of applying to a black University, enrolling as a black student, which granted her a full scholarship, as reported by the Washington Post (June, 2015). Additionally, Dolezal gained employment from the NAACP, an organization historically known to hold biases towards workers with light skin. Connections to skin colour bias in groups such as the African Elite, sororities, and the NAACP can be seen through these organizations. Even



though the “paper bag test” (Kerr, 2005) is not used anymore to measure an individual’s acceptability into a group, doesn’t mean it’s not mentally used.

### **Dencia and Whitenicious**

The previous sections illustrate the emergence of the skin bleaching market, which will be utilized to understand how this “beauty” regime still obtains clout in popularity through the example of Nigerian socialite and Cameroonian pop star Dencia, with a twitter following of 17 000 plus, with acclamations of being a style icon, has launched a cream called, “Whitenicious” in 2014. Dencia’s skin care line also happens to have its own twitter feed @whitenicious and is promoted as an “All natural fast acting dark spot remover, hyperpigmented knees, elbow & knuckles brightening cream, facial cleanser, exfoliating papaya soap etc. IG”. This cream by definition, doesn’t sound at all dangerous or have a pressing agenda, however, Whitenicious has received much criticism from the media, claiming its objective is a bleaching cream promoting “white beauty” (BBC, 2014). After considering the claims of the media, and looking into this skin care regime more, Dencia’s cream is like a wolf in sheep’s clothing, as Dencia is promoting a bleaching cream, but using a “concealment strategy” (Goffman, 1963) by using dermatological jargon such as “hyperpigmentation”, “skin discolouration” and “dark spot remover”. To illustrate the physical representation and aesthetic ideal of light skin, this cream promotes will be shown by the following by comparing two examples: (1) Dencia’s before and after photo, and (2) an advertisement on the TTC in Toronto, using similar words to promote the hidden agenda of white beauty. The examples both show the prevalence of Eurocentric beauty ideals articulating white skin is beautiful and an improvement to those who have darker skin, and accounts of shadeism are still occurring

in mainstream social media, as both accounts were seen in 2014. The first example is a before and after photograph of Dencia, whereas the first picture was without using Whitenicious and the second picture is of her applying her product. Through examining both pictures, it is apparent that more than skin discoloration and hyperpigmentation were treated. An interview with Dencia from channel 4 UK will contextualize the before and after photographs further, alongside discuss her skin care products and motives. When the interviewer asked about the before and after pictures, and the potential dangers for a young women's development and self-esteem, Dencia replied,

Everyone makes their choices on what they think looks good. It's just like bleaching their hair or wearing lipstick. When I was in my early twenties I wanted lighter skin. I did not say this was a whitening cream, but a cream to take away dark spots. People need to you know, understanding something called reading comprehension. You would have to buy lots of my cream to become very white, the bottle only has 30 ml and I don't tell anyone to bleach their skin (March 21 2014).

Illustration 4: Dencia



(Source: Uptown Magazine on Jan 15. 2015)

Illustration 5: LightNaturalSkin.com



(Source: Posted online by Twitter user @EmilyKnits on Dec 14, 2014)

Dencia's narrative on her skin care line stays consistent, as she repeatedly denies the usage for bleaching, but voices her products to remove "dark spots" that "ruin someone's self-esteem". In the same interview, the excerpt was taken from, the interviewer asked why she named her product Whitenicious? She replied, "Because white means pure". Dencia associates white with purity, like monotheistic religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Although Dencia claims white skin looks better, and whiteness is associated with purity, she asserts she does not promote white beauty is better. In the above examples, it was like code words were used to hide the real meanings behind the creams, words that would be acceptable or even medical. The advertisement was located on the TTC, but after a twitter uproar, the advertisement was taken down.

The website, advocating brighter and whiter skin issued an apology,

It has come to our attention that the TTC ads for lightnaturalskin.com have caused offense and concern. The ads were not intended, in any way, to offend. We apologize for any concern, offense or distress the ads may have caused and have requested that the TTC remove them immediately (Nov 2014).

It is interesting to note, this was issued after the uproar on twitter took place, and also the website is still advocated skin lightening with before and after pictures, embedded with the same terminology, while being "safe" and "natural" on the website.

Natural beauty or green beauty have become a popular beauty trend (Harper's Bazaar, 2015), alongside with persuasive advertising has the ability to "affect sales by leading customers to change their mind" (Schudson, 2013), which makes these examples especially appealing to those with skin colour issues, as the before and after pictures are significantly different in skin colour. Skin whitening creams are often marketed as easily attainable beauty products "...to women to increase their beauty, by increasing their whiteness" (Hunter 2007). Karl Marx's "false consciousness" offers an explanation into Dencia's acceptance of the relationship between skin colour and physical attractiveness, as the working class accepts, the dominant ideologies of the capitalist class without knowing their position. Skin bleaching and why individuals are more inclined to engage in such a practise will be discussed more in the next section.

### **Why do those affected by shadeism bleach?**

Goffman in his book *Stigma* (1963), discusses what it's like to be a stigmatized person. The literature discusses those who are not seen as "normal", and the are taken to adjust their social identities to obtain acceptance (Goffman, p. 43). The postcolonial scholar, Frantz Fanon said in, *Black Skin, White Masks*, "In the World through which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself" (Fanon, 1967, p. 229), correlates to the research on the nature of shadeism unveils the disadvantages darker skinned individuals face when going through everyday life, working through self-esteem related issues (Coard, Breland & Raskin 2001; Thompson & Keith 2001), causing the individual experiencing shadeism to create themselves differently depending on their circumstance to feel accepted. A narrative from the blog, *The London Curls*, entitled, *My Sister, Osaorion: Learning to Love the Chocolate Skin I'm In*, voices the insecurity and desperation to have light skin

and look as Goffman would say “normal” and feel “accepted”,

I always kept thinking to myself, “what if I had a white dad or a white mother, would I be more beautiful?” towards the end of year 10, I remember there was a boy, telling me this “You’re pretty for a black girl”. At the end of year 11, there was prom, and in the months running up to it, I am ashamed to say, I had tried soaps, creams and toners to lighten my skin tone, especially on my back. I didn’t realise that with someone of my skin tone and lighter or darker, there are areas of the body that are naturally dark and light. (Jan 2015)

As Goffman explains, we try to adjust our social identities, when stigmatized there are reactions and solutions that people engage with to cope. In many cases those who are affected by shadeism use topical remedies such as skin bleaching. Skin bleaching is a fast growing market, with a great deal of advertising (Glenn, 2008). Public endorsements by celebrities are also used to push these products to a population, as a way to fix their “problem”. Many mainstream beauty companies such as L’Oreal, Estee Lauder, Lancôme and Elizabeth Arden, have launched whitening products specific to India’s beauty market (Karan, 2008). Families and friends encourage their loved ones facing this dilemma to lighten their skin (Hunter, 2013). In a YouTube video entitled, *Caribbean Fashion Week - Dance Hall and Skin Bleaching*, how dancers and models bleach their full bodies, to obtain the lead positions in the fashion and arts related industry. Employers often have special “salons”, where they are wrapped with special “concoctions” to make them more “presentable” (Vice, 2012). In conjunction to the whitening of the skin, many make special efforts to compensate for the stigma (Goffman, 1963, p.73). For instance, I tried to perfect my body to compensate for having darker skin, so I could obtain social acceptance from others, however overcompensating for having dark skin is not exclusive to me, as Sue mentioned in her book, *Land of the Cosmic Race: Race Mixture, Racism and Blackness in Mexico*, “. . . Lupe herself shared

with me that people often make comments suggesting she is with Mike for financial reasons. These assumptions are illustrative of a broader societal perception – that, interracial relationships the darker individual needs to somehow ‘compensate’ for his or her darker tone” (Sue, 2013, p. 89). Also, dressing well, and perceptions have been linked to class (Crane, 2012, p. 4), which can be seen as another way the affected cope.

However, even though these measures are engaged in, the risk of being exposed it still a real consequence (Goffman, p. 91). According to Goffman, those with a stigma can see their issue as an excuse for their lack of success, they can see it as a learning experience, or they can use it to criticize “normals.” However, those who are stigmatized also feel isolated (Goffman, 1963, p.137), according to Goffman and his responses to stigma, this can lead to further isolation, depression and anxiety. These events making the stigmatized person feel more self-conscious in public (1963, p. 130). Stigma related problems are deep seated, which is why Dencia’s product and marketing strategy plays on a vulnerability, parallel to that of the early American Beauty Market. However, all because Dencia’s cream is available for purchase, doesn’t mean that everyone has the ability to purchase it. Bleaching is expensive, and depending on one's intersectionality which is another layer to this issue, those can afford to bleach, have the opportunity to do so.

Dencia’s argument for her cream not being a bleaching cream is because “it's expensive and comes in a small bottle, in order to bleach your whole skin, you would need a lot”.

Dencia brings up a good point, as bleaching is an expensive means to engage in, especially if you want to look or pass as “normal”, however when looking at bleaching from the matrix of domination, it is a means the poor can not easily engage in, as it cost money to do so. Stigmatized people often use symbols in order to try to pass as a

“normal” (Goffman, 1963, p.73). If we unpack this, we can see that someone that is experiencing shadeism may engage in telling dark skin jokes, which would serve to cover their feelings, otherwise known as passing. Having close relationships with friends and coworkers could also be difficult, because the stigmatized person is also on heightened alert, checking themselves and their belongings for signs of stigmatization, but specifically, the stigmatized person was engaging in the concealment strategy (Goffman, 1963, p. 92). This strategy involves the affected person taking precautions to prevent others from seeing the person’s characteristics, which could expose the person’s stigma from this narrative, it can be deduced alongside Goffman’s idea of the stigma, that when someone experiences shadeism – a hard balancing act with self-perception needs to be engaged with.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, the historical background of colonialism was discussed. This being, because authors at this juncture cite colonialism as the start of the phenomena of shadeism. However, this only gives a simple answer to a complex problem, which affects shaded women. This chapter, however, does discuss some of the outcomes that colonialism promoted. But, what needs to be addressed is why these individuals believe these ideologies; the implantation must have been there already. As after emancipation, the black American beauty market skyrocketed and became an influential and powerful business. Black women found the idea of whiteness and class linked, through examples such as the African American Elite, which the beauty market facilitated the idea that this could be achieved through Eurocentric beauty products. Goffman’s use of the stigma and symbols bring a deeper understanding to why those suffering from shadeism seek to

mend themselves to feel accepted



CHAPTER 8  
SOCIO-CULTURAL VALUES AND THE ROLES OF SOCIALIZATION AROUND  
SHADEISM AND WHITENESS

Culture + social = shadeism. The family implements the socio-cultural roles of shadeism and whiteness as early as childhood (Belsky, Lerner & Spanier 1984). Although the family structure may do an exceptional job in teaching their children about racism, and shielding and buffering their children from the repercussions of it, the family can act as both a covert and overt institution for internalized skin tone bias. It is important to note, the role of the family is more on an emotional level in comparison to colonization as it is more structural. The media has influence in socializing and implementing what is “good” and what is “bad”, as our culture is visually based, (Rice 2014). Living with messages that perpetuate ideas attached to beauty, worth and skin colour promotes “othering”, by promoting Eurocentric ideals. These colour-coded messages have been linked to a person’s self-worth, intelligence and success (Neal 1989; Hunter 2007; Banks 1999), creating a need to lighten one’s skin. The actor may not be aware of their preference for light skin, as it is subconsciously learnt or taken on as their own, Karl Marx calls this the ‘false consciousness’, which the working class accepts the dominant ideologies of the capitalist class without knowing their position. For example, Ashwariya Rai is one of India’s most recognized leading ladies and was named one of the most beautiful women in the world (CBS, 2004). Comparably, Halle Berry has received similar beauty acclamations. What is interesting about these two examples, are they both could “pass” as white. I’ve heard in conversations, that Ashwariya Rai doesn’t even look Indian, and that’s what makes her beautiful. This is not surprising, because in conducting a Google search on “beautiful women”, the result listed a majority of fair skin women,

with Anglo-Saxon facial features. The chapter is about exploring how these ideas and perceptions on skin colour sustain its presence and keep on being reproduced.

The family represents a powerful social institution that in many ways are responsible for shaping an individual's identity, perspectives, and life experiences through the process of socialization (Boyum, & Parke 1995; Morris 2007). In this social institution, many families share narratives, about their lived experiences and heritage (Hill, 2003). These stories can identify build, which can strengthen someone's self-acceptance (McAdoo, 1985, p.86). However, narratives on skin tone biases are embedded in film, literature and lived experiences that can be passed down consciously and subconsciously to family members, contributing to a behaviour that is learned (Golden 2007; Wilder 2010). These learnt behaviours about skin embed biases within the family, which can cause a divide among family members (Simpson, 2015). I have personally seen this divide through familial relations. Skin colour carries a heavy weight among people, and dictates ideas about your self-worth and identity, these repercussions could result in the family naming you the favourite child, or encouraging the fairer child for success. According to Love, InshAllah @loveinshallah tweeted, "You were the fairest baby in the hospital...Now? Kanna, you look like a beggar child #shadeism #desi" (Oct 2014), which was a twitter response to The Michigan Daily's article entitled, *Michigan in Color: The Unbearable Weight of Sunlight*, where the author speaks of her mother's daily mantra of "stay out of the sun". The tweet and story alike speak to the connection of class and colour, where the child was called a beggar because of the colour change. The thoughts and beliefs behind that tweet are consistent within familial circles from brown and black families (Wilder & Cain), as research and social media dictates, Frantz Fanon

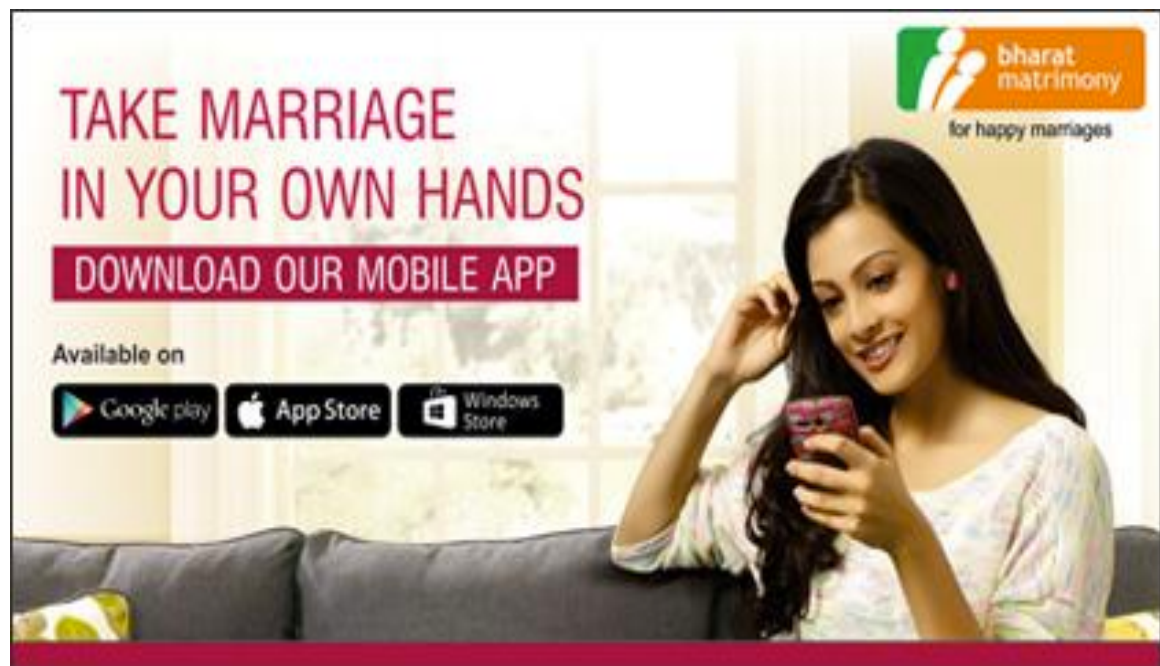
calls this lactification, or having those who are not white, whitened (1952, p.33). Fanon goes on to discuss the women of Martinique, and the internalization of whiteness, and what is said and repeated, “ ‘Whiten the race, save the race, but not in the sense that one might think not “preserve the uniqueness of that part of the world in which they grew up,’ but make sure that it will be white” (1952, p.33). The saving of the race, or the whitening of the race practice have been tried, as those of Aboriginal descent were placed in residential schools to assimilate and “civilize” children (Regan, 2010). This mentality of lactification inflicts self-hatred on an individual that is pigmented, but also places pressure through life milestones such as marriage as referenced in chapter 4. Skin colour is a symbol that represents status and power, whereas light skinned women are at an advantage, being most sought out after from high status’ spouses of any ethnic group (Hunter 2008: 2002). In the marriage market having light skin and Eurocentric phenotypes helps one’s chances of getting married (Hunter, 2002; Hamilton, Goldsmith & Darity, 2009). Also, light skin affects the quality of partner i.e.: handsome, successful (Landor 2012; Udry, 1971). Many dark skin males often marry down in status to obtain a partner of lighter skin. In the Indian matrimonial and mate seeking websites, fair skin was at the core of finding an eligible partner (Jha, & Adelman 2009). 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 (Elder 1969; Webster and Driskell 1983). In observing two of India’s leading dating sites Shaadi.com, and Bharat Matrimony both have “lifestyle and appearance” sections, which includes a rating for skin colour preference: 1. Doesn’t matter 2. Fair 3. Wheatish 4. Dark. The examples to follow are ad’s used to promote the websites,

Illustration 6: Shaadi.com



(Source: Shaadi.com)

Illustration 7: Bharat Matrimony



(Source: BharatMatrimony.com)

Clearly, these ads are advocating fairness in a spouse among other attributes. In India skin colour alongside religion is an important attribute in a spouse (Joshi & Kumar 2012). When a matrimony criterion was surveyed in four American mosques among Islamic American families, spouses, and their families still wanted fair skin girls because it was seen as being or a higher class (Grewal, 2009), fair skin in this examples was symbolic not only of beauty but status. This symbolism is not only prevalent among those of Muslim origin but those who practice Hinduism. Parallel to the earlier example, is an ethnographic survey of several Hindu temples were conducted and an asset wanted for matrimony was fair skin spouses (Nimbark, 2004, p. 102). Another study (Ghasarian, 1994), cited that high caste Hindus (i.e. Brahmin) from respected families, wanted “fair” or “very fair” spouses from “good families”. All of these examples from your skin colour, religion, class, status, and marriage all tie in together. Shadeism is a product of histories, and the ideas and practices behind it are not self-sustaining but have to be constantly reinforced and reenacted for it to continue to permeate everyday life. Families through social institutions such as and marriage help and encourage this process.

### **Light Skin = Beauty, Marriage, and More!**

Having Light skin works as social capital for many young women (Hunter, 2002), because of all the benefits that come with it. I started to really understand privilege associated with light skin in my late teens when I worked at a department store in downtown Toronto. The ideas of light skin being a symbol of beauty and success can be seen in places such as on television and the casting of certain roles, or magazines and those on the front page, scholars note (Hill 2002; Patton, 2006; Sekayi, 2003), beauty

ideals are based on Eurocentric beauty standards, whether body type or phenotypes.

Since beauty is based on Eurocentric beauty standards, females are often compared to this ideal of beauty, which is challenging to live up to because of one's biology.

### **Skin Colour in Schools**

School is seen as an important place for children to learn, and gain social skills, which can help promote a better adult life (Kohn, 2000). According to Bill 52, by law in Canada children below the age of 18 have to attend school, which is an example how important school is. Therefore, why are children forced into an institution that promotes skin – colour stratification? Studies have shown that paradigms of inequality pertaining to skin colour are present inside schools (Tyson, 2003; Robinson and Ward 1995). In fact, dark-skinned black women were more likely to get suspended in comparison to those with light skin (Hanon 2013). Skin colour gets trickled down into schools by the larger kept narrative on what that colour entails, for instance, class and behaviour (Tummala-Narra, 2007). Whiteness and a Eurocentric look promotes a positive look, but blackness the opposite (Hunter 2007). If we look to the legal system, in which in western societies emphasis is placed on the law, the symbol “lady justice” is bias, as she is a white maiden that represents fairness and equality. Symbols and images are powerful as they can subconsciously sway the way we think about people or situations (Rice, 2014). Examples such as this promote the idea that white is superior. Educators in school may act accordingly by encouraging light skinned children, which may allude to more light skinned children attending institutions of higher education (Ryabov, 2013). Also,

Student in the classroom expresses their cultural beliefs for the preference of light skin (Thompson and Keith, 2004).

### **Skin Colour and Employment**

Skin colour is also in the workplace, as research has found that light-skinned individuals earned more than those with darker skin (Hughes, 1990), even when socio-economic background is assessed (Keith and Herring, 1991). When a raise is in order, an employer would have to assess how much an employee is worth, which can take into consideration their appearance (Thompson and Keith, 2001). Also, physical attractiveness is an element in obtaining a job (Hoosoda, 2003), and attractiveness is constructed through Eurocentric phenotypes (Rice 2014). This could promote light skinned individuals obtaining more jobs more often. Research shows that beauty matters for women, especially in jobs that require women on the front lines such as receptionist, restaurant hostess.

**Emmanuel@Pasta\_Mac**

At my new doctor office. These receptionist are cute. Light skin petite and young wow.  
(Aug 2011)

**J Air Us@Jtford2**

Us light skin dudes got better credit, got legit & good jobs, better looking wifeys, and got lower prison attendance then dark skinned dudes  
(Dec 2011)

**C.R.E.A.M@Extravagant\_Kid**

Ppl only slander lightskin niggaz cuz they low key envy us. We're known for getting better treatment. We get better jobs & better pay!  
(Jan 2013)

**Bougie Black Girl@BougieBlackGurl**

Light skin privilege is: You have better opportunities for education and jobs prospects.  
(Aug 2014)

The above tweets show the privilege associated with light skin and employment. Also, the excitement “wow” shown when light skin persons are in front line jobs, as well as the adoration of their light skin. This stretches to television personnel working on the front line, as mentioned in the tweet, light skin gets this individual more opportunities in their field.

### **Confidence: A Shaded women’s battle in Everyday Life**

Unfortunately, women experiencing shadeism, have a long history that hangs over her neck and is present everywhere she goes. Du Bois discusses the concept of double-consciousness, which is the self as its divided into two. This concept can help understand that of shaded women as it discusses one shaded body, but two thoughts, two souls, two worlds - the conflict here is that the shaded woman wants to become well in her skin without losing herself, and without criticism from others. The shaded woman knows she is different and is constantly striving to fit in. This is a struggle of identity a shaded woman needs to go through. This perception of the shaded woman and history are intertwined. During an interview on the view, Viola Davis, star of the show *How to get away with Murder*, shares what it means to be lead of the show,

I’m glad that Shonda Rhimes saw me and said “Why not?” That’s what makes her a visionary. That’s what makes her iconic. I think that beauty is subjective. I’ve heard that statement [less classically beautiful] my entire life. Being a dark-skinned black woman, you heard it from the womb. And “classically not beautiful” is a fancy term for saying ugly. And denouncing you. And erasing you. Now ... it worked when I was younger. It no longer works for me now. It’s about teaching a culture how to treat you. Because at the end of the day, you define you.  
(Callahan, 2015)



Viola Davis was insecure about her skin colour, as all her life she was called “less classically beautiful” because of her dark skin. Davis was made to feel ugly all her life and was meant to feel that her colour was the narrative of who she was. Another example of colour dictating narratives of who you are was featured in *Time Magazine* under the hashtag #teamlightskin. Originally Time magazine meant for this article to be cute and funny, but the underlining message of it shows a different story. The article shows a young girl tearing up in a YouTube video while watching the movie the lion king, her father tweeted, “my you girl teaching her to be “Lightskin”. This statement alludes to the idea that light skin children have more empathy and intelligence in comparison to their dark skin counterparts.

### **Social Media and Narratives about Colour**

Social media is a powerful measure, as the impact of a tweet or Facebook post can bring worldwide attention. One might not believe that social media is powerful enough to overreach their personal life, but that is but a lie. Employers check social media agents such as twitter and Facebook, before even considering a candidate for a job (Joos, 2008). An example of this is seen when a teenage girl gets a job at a pizzeria and is fired before her shift for tweeting, “Ew I start this Fu\*\* Job tomorrow” followed by a thumbs down symbol, in which the owner saw and replied, "And...no you don't start that FA job today! I just fired you! Good luck with your no money, no job life!" Other examples can be through social justice as exposing racial and discriminatory acts by the police system, though their research in this area (Lawrence, 2000; Skolnick and Fyfe, 1993), seeing the acts via social media makes all the difference. An example of this can be seen as a video was surfaced on social media after a white police officer (Michael Slager) shot a black

man (Walter Scott) eight times. Under the hashtag #blacklivesmatter, awareness and protests arose contributing to the murder charge of the officer (CBC, Apr 2015). These examples all show the power and importance of social media, therefore, when narratives about skin colour are spoken about in a negative way and manner, many will listen and feel. On twitter negative messages on skin colour can be seen through tweets such as:

Rich Homie Riss @imodelsike  
My kids will be #TeamDarkSkin after today  
(July, 2015)

S @WomblelikitsHot  
Everyone keep telling me how dark I am lmao #TeamDarkskin  
(July, 2015)

DOM@damnitdom  
today in filipino class i learned that in philippine culture i am considered ugly because i'm dark. #welp #filipinoproblems #teamdarkskin  
(July, 2015)

### **Can those who are Shaded be Healed?**

According to the Blog *Colorism Healing* (an activist blog to combat shadeism),

There are many ways that could prohibit healing from taking place;

Not everyone wants to be healed. I sometimes observe that people seem completely content with colorism. In some cases, this is because they've enjoyed the benefits of colorism and don't care to lose those. In other cases, they've so fully subscribed to colorism that they believe it's the natural order of things. It almost becomes an enjoyable pastime, like the memes and hashtags on social media suggest. And in other cases, they've been so complicit in perpetuating colorism that they don't want to deal with the guilt they might feel if they awaken their consciousness about colorism.

This is a layered excerpt from the blogs because it addresses many issues here; (1) Individuals are completely ok living with colorism or shadeism because the ground work of changing is a process, that could evoke shame, guilt, and pain (2) For those who are

lighter in most cases, being lighter grants them much privilege and going against those notions could possibly change the way 'they' are viewed (3) Some are so accustomed being the latter, that it doesn't matter to them.

Realization of how shadeism came into being, and understanding there is no substantial evidence for those who are shaded and how they came to be different and inferior. This occurs when looking at which colour and symbols were cultivated and implanted and taken to the world, such as when emperors would take symbols and given meaning.

### **Summary**

This chapter talks about the socio-cultural values and roles of socialization around shadeism and whiteness. This chapter discusses how the awareness and importance of colour are implemented at an early stage in life. The ideas are shared through familial connections through stories and lived experiences, and every day talk. Also, shadeism is present in mainstream culture and folklore, which subconsciously affects the individual. These narratives are weaved into an individual's life and passed on. Also, skin colour works as social capital, as light skin is a symbol of beauty, as beauty is measured up to Eurocentric beauty ideals. Skin colour is also seen in educational institutions, this is facilitated by the larger narrative colour represents. Which may be why educators are more supporting of children with lighter skin. The colour of one's skin has also been connected to employment, where the employer assesses the worth of the worker, which research has shown beauty and physical appearance matters when looking for a job. The ideologies constructed as early as childhood has the ability to trickle down into everyday life through early socialization.

## CONCLUSION

This study measured how skin colour is placed within one's everyday life that gives meaning to identity representation within society. The strength of this thesis came from social media and blogs which helped expose the many problems attached to skin colour. The primary aim of this inquiry was to determine the extent of how whiteness is viewed as superior and blackness is viewed as inferior, and if these meanings could be found in Christianity through the Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament, Islam or Hinduism. In examining the socio-cultural values, the roles of socialization around shadeism with attention paid to race, gender, as well as the involvement of the construction of identity I found my auto-ethnographic segment collide with 'my research.' My early identity had been measured in terms of my pigment and not my total self. Feelings of ugliness and a lack of control over my identity came to the forefront while engaged in the writing of this thesis. Looking into the mirror, I decided to throw off early messages and rude comments made by 'friends and family' within my diaspora and use the lens of new messages I learned during this research. I examined who these women were that made these comments and how they dealt with their own identity. I gradually became aware of my self-worth and my total self; not just my outer skin. Knowledge for the sake of knowledge does not produce change; knowledge, when understood and accepted, can produce change. As this change occurred in my life I became more engaged in this thesis and the discoveries that were realised through this investigation. As I look at my skin today, I view it as something that is part of me and does not make me who I have become. Perhaps, children in schools could be encouraged

to engage in this topic as part of their social studies and may benefit in changing norms and values around colour.

### **Pigmenting**

This term is one that I coined to address the issues around skin tone. Pigmenting is about looking more closely at skin colour itself. Skin colour as a symbol can define a person's identity and how they are viewed within their community and the larger society. The pigment is the ingredient whose presence in cells of humans that colors them. To take the colour of one's skin and to change the colour by external means is to engage in "Pigmenting". Pigmenting can occur both, when tanning and bleaching as it is changing the colour of the skin to another colour. The material used to change the colour of one's skin is a physical process, a psychological and social process. Women use cosmetics to change how they look at a more superficial and not permanent; I differ by using the term pigmenting to point to the change of skin colour, the coloring of skin cells by lightening them permanently like fabric dye. The use of chemical substances in to lighten skin tone or darken skin cells is pigmenting. The uses of these toxic and unsafe chemical profiles are used by darker skin women to inhibit their melanin production. Shadeism in its connection to identity uses pigmenting to change that identity. The discussion of white skin as social capital leads to women of colour, like pop star Dencia, to use pigmenting to achieve status as a white skin woman. The idolization of white promoted by Dencia is what Hunter (2004, p. 23) discusses as "light skin as more beautiful, and more desirable than dark skin, particularly in women". The term Pigmenting can also be used for the continuous tanning to achieve dark skin or the ingesting of plant or chemical products to permanently darken white skin. These are not beauty products but products that change

pigments to produce a different social location. The view of changing one's social location supports Frantz Fanon when he states "in the World through which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself" (Fanon, 1967, p. 229). This correlates to this research on the nature of shadeism and the disadvantages darker skinned individuals think they face when going through everyday life.

When shadeism or colorism is discussed socially, academically or on social media, recognition to phenotypic markers such as skin colour, facial features, eye colour, and hair texture are variables discussed interchangeably to mean shadeism or colorism (ex. Fears, 1998; Kerr, 2006; Thompson & Keith 2004; Wilder, 2006). In the West, tanning is a multibillion-dollar industry; the American Academy of Dermatology reported in 2010, "the indoor tanning industry revenue was estimated at 2.6 billion dollars" (AAD, 2010). Additionally within this multibillion-dollar industry, 7.8 million women and 1.9 million men have been reported to tan indoors (Holman et al., 2015). Although there has been significant research done on the dangers and risks of tanning (Levine, Sorace, Spencer & Siegel 2005; Schulman & Fisher 2009; Spencer & Amonette 1995), tanning is still carried out. The aforementioned statistics show tanning as a large industry recruiting many, but the side effects negative, the question arises why? Tanned skin to those who engage in this practice is a symbol for value and or wealth. In Western countries, the assumption is if you have disposable income, you have the ability to vacation in warm climates. Also having a healthy "glow" has been linked to health and youth, for examples fitness centers tend to have tanning beds in addition to the other wellness areas, which gives a sense of what health is supposed to look like (Nickel, 2014). In the area of bleaching, a similar principle surfaces as the individual is trying to achieve a lighter skin

complexion to obtain the symbol of wealth and value too. As research on those with lighter pigments are attached with higher social and economic capital (Hunter 2013). The verb to pigment in the world of art is to change colour. Therefore, in the cases of tanning and bleaching, changing of pigment was established to refrain from stigma or to obtain status.

### **Religion and Shadeism**

“Jesus is white” said my aunt to my mother. Although there is no mention of colour in the Bible about Jesus, many Christians will argue that Jesus could not be black or brown even though themselves are black or brown. As discussed in this thesis Jewish is not only Jewish but lived in the Middle East and not Europe. When Christianity took on a European flavor it took on European norms and values. The meaning of colour is part of their artifacts and when one enters a church in North America the Jesus on the cross is white, this impacting those of the diaspora that attend church, as this idea of Jesus appearing white is taken as truth.

The goddesses Kali and Sita present a great divide as they symbolically represent black and white or good and evil. I’ve long heard my cousins and others in the diaspora comparing themselves to Sita’s beauty. They would say things like “I am fair like Sita, I can be a Bollywood Stargirl”. However, when it came to the goddess Kali, comparing you to Kali is seen as an insult. I often heard the words “bahut kali hai”, which in English means very black. These notions about dark and light skin are also seen in rituals, for instance, in the idea of the Uptan. Before a bride is to be married a skin mask containing lemon, turmeric and sandalwood oil is applied to the skin to make it lighter.

These traditions still hold weight because many family members and friends still adamantly engage in this ritual to look like “Sita”. Which is why companies such as Lancôme can get away with products such as “Blanc Expert”, or L’Oreal with “White Perfect,” because it is geared towards those who want to obtain lighter skin.

These two examples provide the power that religion has when it comes to colour although not discussed within sermons or publicly. Before colonialism, it was religion that has helped document understandings around shadeism, which made men look for whiter skin women to marry. Like in the instance of Ravaana in the *Ramayana*, who was of a darker hue and sought after the fairness of Sita, which led to her being kidnapped by Ravaana. Leading to the colour prejudice found in Bollywood in the gaze of the male actor looking to marry and rescue the fair actress. Or in the idea of the Houri, the promise of the white skinned virgin, because it symbolizes purity and beauty, which fairness has become a prerequisite for marriage and beauty.

### **Awareness and Change**

Awareness needs to occur in order for this issue to be lessened and changed. The issues surrounding change can be measured through Fanon’s consciousness (1952), in which the subject needs to embrace two identities concurrently, which can lead to confusion of one's identity. This study has shown how deeply entwined skin colour is within history and culture, and to unravel it will take a great deal of effort. This being said rethinking how we talk to children as early as childhood is needed within in the family. Paying close attention to what we call beautiful and successful, and for sharing



with the child no matter what colour they are, it does not depict their self-worth and identity.

Education is the key to change. Our classrooms are a microcosm of Canada. An emphasis of multicultural activities has not helped in bringing awareness to the issues of shadeism. There should be more of a governmental presence on this issue, with ad campaigns much like how they do for bullying. There are similar campaigns on social media sites such as twitter, such as #Notdarkandlovely, #darkandbeautiful and #colorismhealing. These campaigns promote awareness about the biases against skin colour and challenges that promote skin colour based beauty and merit. More awareness like this should be present in education and employment. When knowledge is shared and implemented then the ideas of the past can start to be rewritten for the better.

The above ideas in trying to change a deep-rooted identity relating to shade will be difficult to achieve within government systems. It would have been remiss of me not to try and voice them but it will also be meaningless if I do not point out the social environment which will help keep these self-worth ideals alive and well. Not to bash mothers, it is their role in gender relations to help their daughters and sons to be aware of their total selves, that colour is not who they are but it who they are and how to relate to the many different cultural, social and societal experiences. In teaching children self-reflection at home and rejecting the myths around colour, parents, family members, and friends become agents of change within the diaspora.

Through the lens of power, shadeism can be uprooted when it is named in public discourse and within families. Individuals in power within religious institutions, schools, government and business must make sure to set a tone where this issue is no longer

hidden. Racism at first was the norm, then hidden and not viewed as a major societal issue as it is today where #Blacklivesmatter is part of our everyday discourse. Racism is now discussed in some churches (religious institutions), schools, government, and business. Although systemic racism is slow to change, it is changing. Likewise, Shadeism, when viewed as problematic to full acceptance of the self, can be addressed and changed. The attempt to explain shadeism carries with its implications for those who are not white as it means their acceptance to changing their attitudes towards colour. To correct the circumstances of harassment and low morale requires changes to what currently exist. Role models are needed for minority girls and women within schools, university and business as there is a lack of minority leaders in Canada who I can point to that influences the next generation that colour does not matter.

The research I undertook did provide answers to the questions I posed at the start of my research. However, the list of what a researcher could study within shadeism could be endless, depending on what area the researcher saw as an area that needed further discussion. This study has already created questions I did not answer within this inquiry on shadeism. It has generated my future research agenda that I hope to undertake when furthering my education.

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APPENDIX A  
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