

## Whiteness

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*An abridged version of Jimmy Yan's original academic paper, Whiteness*

Through immigration and interracial marriage the ethnic composition of Canada has changed considerably. Immigrants from nations where people are homogenous and share the same ethnicity and skin colour may not be conscious of the connection between ethnicity and skin colour in their new home in Canada. Those immigrants may seek explanations for the social inequalities they seek as they try to settle into life in their new communities and try to belong and avoid becoming a "victim".

As Marianne Bray commented in the CNN News article, SKIN DEEP: Dying to be white (May 15, 2002), white preference "has a long history in Asia, stemming back to ancient China and Japan." While referring to a complexion colour in China, according to Bray, "white" is "seen as noble and aristocratic" because only the socially and economically privileged could sustain a life without being even bothered to connect with the outside world.

That may explain why it may be understandable why many immigrants from China or Japan would fail to catch the subtle contextual difference between "white" as a racial term and a racist one. Those immigrants could better understand the society of their new homes if they remember that the white skin colour is always associated with power and privilege even back in the East Asian countries.

White is by no means an objective ethnical term. In South Africa, under apartheid, Japanese people had been regarded as honorary whites. In a 2008 report published in the Wall Street Journal, however, Chinese-South Africans were reclassified as 'black' and subjected to discrimination under apartheid.

As France Winddance Twine and Charles Gallagher pointed out in their 2008 Ethnic And Racial Studies paper, The future of whiteness: a map of the 'third wave', the Latino community is not a monolithic group, rather it is fractured not only along lines of class, education and region but between those who self-identify as 'white' and those who embrace a 'brown', black or multiracial identity."

In his paper, "Who Is White?: Latinos, Asians, and the New Black/Nonblack Divide," George Yancey wrote that people with a minuscule amount of African genetic heritage were still defined as black. He also commented that, through interracial marriage, "Asian Americans can surely experience a movement toward 'whiteness' in the postmodern United States."

Other scholars have said that "Whiteness" is a concept that leads to the consideration of non-Whites as 'other'. Using skin colour based racial terms to refer to people's ethnicity may not only lead to hardening of ethnic and racial stereotypes, but also to a general apathy to the racial hierarchy among different ethnical groups in Canada where white Canadians are at the top.

Skin colour is part of how we are endowed by Mother Nature. It by no means tells who we are and what we do. Social inequality, however, according to Vic Satzewich, and Nikolaos Liodakis. in their paper, 'Race' and Ethnicity in Canada, can be "the outcome of often complex social process ... explained as a consequence of something named 'race' rather than the social process itself."

When racial terms based on skin colour are repeatedly and persistently used as reference to people's ethnicity, it can lead to racial prejudgements and reinforce existing prejudices toward the ethnic communities, as Evelyn Kallen asserted in her book, Ethnicity and Human Rights in Canada.