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RENDERING WHITENESS VISIBLE IN THE FILIPINO CULTURE
THROUGH SKIN-WHITENING COSMETIC ADVERTISEMENTS

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Communication Studies

by
Beverly Romero Natividad

June 2006

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June 2006


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ABSTRACT

Western colonization has hindered Filipinos from developing a genuine cultural identity by institutionalizing whiteness in the Filipino culture. Whiteness, a discursive practice that reinforces the symbolical association of a white skin tone with superiority, distracts Filipinos from recognizing cultural diversity and immobilizes Filipino women and the working class from resisting oppression. Since Western colonizers left, the Philippine mass media have assumed the role of perpetuating whiteness. Thus, the Filipino cultural identity continuously undergoes a crisis throughout the postcolonial period.

In order to confront Filipino cultural identity crisis, Philippine studies researchers call for reexamining Philippine history and Filipino cultural identity construction. They focus, however, only on Western colonization and overlook the mass media's role. This study seeks to confront current Filipino cultural identity crisis by investigating whiteness within the mass media context. First, this study has conducted a semiotic analysis of skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements to expose whiteness' association with superiority. The results have shown that

these advertisements reinforce colonial legacies by associating whiteness, represented through a white skin tone, with beauty, wealth, power, and purity. Second, this study has conducted a focus group interview of two groups of Filipino women, who have fallen victims to skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements, in order to explore whiteness' damaging effects on Filipino self-concept and cultural identity development. The results have indicated that these advertisements' promotion of whiteness diminishes Filipino women's self-concept, engages them in perpetuating their subordination, and pacifies them from struggling against Western domination of their Filipino culture. By examining skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements, this study has rendered whiteness visible.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Colonialism aided Filipinos in developing their cultural identity. The oppressive conditions of Spanish colonialism (1548-1898) and American colonialism (1898-1945) developed Filipino national consciousness (Dolan, 1993; and Steinberg, 1972). Filipino natives, who belonged to various ethnic backgrounds and social classes, united to fight for their right to ownership and leadership of their homeland (Steinberg, 1972). The Filipinos, in addition, reclaimed their cultural identity by calling themselves "Filipinos" instead of "Indios", a derogatory term Spanish colonizers used to refer to the indigenous inhabitants of the Philippines (Dolan, 1993).

Colonialism, however, also hindered Filipinos from reaching the final stage of cultural identity development. In this stage, called cultural identity achievement, Fong (2004) explains that individuals have already resolved identity crisis. Identity crisis, according to Fong, occurs when individuals' perception of themselves in relation to their ethnicity, culture, or race comes in conflict with others' perceptions. As Filipinos developed

national consciousness and resisted White Western domination during the colonial period, Filipinos also acquired a mentality that idealized whiteness (Illo, 1998; Rafael, 1995; Rimonte, 1997; and Root, 1997). Western colonizers shaped Filipino minds to embrace whiteness by teaching Filipinos to venerate white images, such as the Christian God and light-skinned Hollywood celebrities, that represented beauty, intelligence, wealth, and power (David, 2002; Illo, 1998; Pederero, 2003; Root, 1997). Since Filipinos, as a group, belong to a non-white race, their idealization of whiteness contradicted their perception of themselves. In this regard, Filipinos experienced identity crisis that has persisted throughout the postcolonial period.

Filipinos, at present, continue to adhere to white symbolical meanings. The Philippine mass media have taken over the former Western colonial masters' role in promoting notions that valorize a white skin tone. The Philippine mass media particularly reproduce and reinforce the association of a white skin tone with beauty, as well as nurture Filipinos' desire to be white through skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements (Illo, 1998; and Pederero, 2003).

Although research works on Philippine media and culture cited in this study do not include how skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements represent a white skin tone, Western studies reveal that skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements in African American popular media usually represent a white skin tone in contrast to a dark skin tone (Rooks, 1996; Russell, Wilson, & Hall 1992; and Weems, 2000). For instance, skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements associate a white skin tone with beauty and wealth, but they also associate a dark skin tone with unattractiveness and poverty (Rooks, 1996; Russell, Wilson, & Hall 1992; and Weems, 2000). Skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements, thus, suggest that skin color determines individuals' character and social status. Furthermore, they obscure the inequality issues that perpetuate non-white people's subordination. Skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements attribute the unequal relationship between Whites and non-whites to skin color rather than to white domination.

Studies on skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements contextualized within the United States, also, indicate that these advertisements specifically target people of color, in this case Black women, who historically developed

self-hatred due to their negative representations in the dominant American media. Prior to the mass production and marketing of skin-whitening cosmetics, African American women attempted to get the darkness out of their skin by using lye, acidic products, and "homemade concoctions of lemon juice, bleach, or urine" (Russell, Wilson, & Hall, 1992, p. 50) and swallowing arsenic wafers. Black women's struggle to change their physical appearance manifests Black women's rejection of themselves due to their dark skin tone. At the same time, such behavior manifests Black women's rejection of their racial identity, since skin color demarcates race. In this regard, U.S. studies show that skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements' idealization of whiteness affects both non-white women's self-concept and cultural identity development simultaneously.

In sum, skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements perpetuate the white domination of non-whites by reinforcing the association of a white skin tone with ideal human qualities and a dark skin tone with undesirable human qualities. Skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements' reproduction of images that show the bipolar oppositions between whites and non-whites adversely affect the latter, whose self-esteem diminishes. Black women, however, suffer

from low self-esteem more than Black men do because they are the primary target of skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements.

Filipino women with dark skin tone share African American women's experience of whiteness. The association of white skin tone with beauty in the Filipino culture makes non-white Filipino women feel inferior, especially in interacting with men (David, 2002). Like Black women in the United States, non-white Filipino women display a lack of pride for themselves and their cultural identity. They purchase skin-whitening cosmetics to transform themselves according to the white ideal image of femininity (Pederero, 2003; and Philippine Dermatological Society, 2004).

Filipino idealization of whiteness perpetuates the identity crisis confronting Filipinos in the postcolonial period. Idealizing whiteness obstructs Filipinos from recognizing the diversity that characterizes Filipino cultural identity, liberating Filipino culture from Western domination, and cultivating pride for their culture and identity. While idealizing whiteness affects both Filipino men and women, it has greater implications for the latter. Filipino women struggle to look white because the notion that a white skin tone is the ideal image of femininity is

reinforced in Filipino cultural practices and the Philippine mass media. Since the ruling class has institutionalized whiteness, whiteness has also become equated with wealth and power. In this regard, whiteness intersects with the dominant ideologies of race, gender, and class.

Statement of the Problem

In order to resolve the Filipino identity crisis, Revilla (1997), Rimonte (1997), and Root (1997) suggest reexamining and reconstructing Philippine history and acknowledging cultural diversity. Rimonte (1997) and Revilla (1997) urge Filipinos to review their history in order to find out who they are and enlighten themselves about the root cause of the Filipino identity crisis. While Rimonte (1997) and Revilla (1997) emphasize history's importance, Root (1997) stresses the need for Filipinos to acknowledge the diversity that currently characterizes the Filipino culture.

Reexamining Philippine history and acknowledging today's cultural diversity will help Filipinos to resolve their identity crisis by changing the Filipino mindset. These scholars' propositions are intended to raise Filipino

awareness of the motives of Western colonization in subjugating Filipinos and of the colonization's damaging effects on Filipino culture. At the same time, they are also intended to rectify Filipino racial perceptions. However, these propositions focus only on colonialism, which originally caused an earlier Filipino identity crisis. They overlook the mass media's role in perpetuating Filipino identity crisis in the postcolonial period. Research shows that the mass media reinforce Filipinos' idealization of whiteness in the postcolonial period and subordinate Filipinos' perception of themselves and their cultural identity in relation to whiteness (David, 2002; and Illo, 1998). Therefore, the mass media hinder Filipinos from understanding and appreciating their diversity and their culture's difference from the culture of their former colonizers. Hence, the call for confronting Filipino identity crisis should include examining the mass media.

Whereas colonialism has facilitated the transfer of white ideology to the Philippines, the mass media reinforce the naturalization of whiteness as a superior racial and gendered trait and as belonging to the privileged class through images that associate whiteness with beauty, self-

esteem, and prosperity. Skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements, in particular, explicitly promote these notions of whiteness. This study contributes to research that confronts Filipino identity crisis by investigating how skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements affect postcolonial Filipinos' development of self-concept and cultural identity.

In conducting this study, semiotic analysis and focus group interviews were employed as research tools. First, a semiotic analysis of television commercials and women's magazine advertisements of local and foreign skin-whitening cosmetics in the Philippines was conducted to determine how skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements reinforce the idealization of whiteness in the Filipino culture. Skin-whitening cosmetics are suited for this study because they function as a site where colonialism and the mass media connive in promoting hegemonic notions of whiteness. This function is evident in Philippine cosmetic industry reports that attribute the stable economic growth of skin-whitening cosmetics to Filipino colonial mentality and the mass media (Philippine Board of Investments, 2003). Second, two groups of Filipino women, who were influenced by television commercials and magazine advertisements to use cosmetics

with whitening agents, were interviewed to find out how the idealization of whiteness influences Filipino women's self-concept and cultural identity development. Filipino women, according to the Philippine Board of Investments (2003) and Rimando (2003), are the primary target market and consumers of skin-whitening cosmetics.

While skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements seem superficial, their effects are deep-seated. Skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements' influence on women's self-concept interacts with women's concept of their cultural identity, because skin color, in both the society and the mass media, has been constructed as a racial, gender, and class marker. Since studies contextualized within the United States showed that skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements targeting Black women after the Civil Rights Movement (Rooks, 1996; and Weems, 2000) have reproduced the racial, gender, and class ideologies of White domination of Blacks, this study concludes that skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements in the Philippines have reinforced similar legacies of colonialism. Colonialism, according to David (2002), Illo (1998), Pederio (2003), Rafael (1995), and Rimonte (1997), has long institutionalized whiteness in the

Filipino culture as the representation of beauty, wealth, and power. Thus, the first research question:

Do television commercials and women's magazine advertisements of skin-whitening cosmetics in the Philippines reinforce the colonial construction of whiteness?

Studies of television and women's magazines within the United States have found that cosmetic advertisements' promotion of ideal images of femininity causes women to feel insecure about themselves (Bignell, 1997; Currie, 1999; McCracken, 1993; Silverblatt, 1995; and Twitchell, 1996). Furthermore, studies contextualized within the U.S. found that skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements' valorization of a white skin tone as opposed to a dark skin tone diminishes dark-skinned women's pride for themselves (Rooks, 1997; and Weems, 2000). According to these studies, the negative representations of a dark skin tone in skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements have caused Black women to reject themselves based on their skin color. Thus, these studies show that skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements influence non-white women's perception of themselves. Similarly, the next research question investigates whether television commercials and women's

magazine advertisements of skin-whitening cosmetics in the Philippines would make non-white Filipino women dissatisfied with themselves. The second research question:

Does exposure to skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements cause non-white Filipino women to perceive themselves inferior to light-skinned women and to use skin-whiteners in order to raise their self-esteem?

The mass media alone, however, do not influence people's perceptions. People also gain knowledge and form perceptions of themselves and their cultural identity through socialization (Fong, 2004; Gudykunst, 2001; and Tuan, 1998). When Filipinos were colonized, they were socialized as well into a foreign culture. Filipinos became aware of their otherness primarily based on their skin tone. This study, thus, posits that skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements do not create, only nurture, Filipino women's desire to be white. Their desire comes from the idealization of whiteness in Filipino social and cultural practices. The third research question:

Have Filipino social and cultural practices that idealize whiteness created Filipino women's desire to be white?

Filipino women's use of skin-whitening cosmetics implies that they believe the advertisements' messages about the benefits of using such products. When consumers buy advertised products, they also buy into the advertisements' ideology (Williamson, 1978). Thus, the fourth research question:

Does skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements' promotion of whiteness perpetuate the hegemonic notions of race, gender, and class which the Filipinos have inherited from their Western colonizers?

Skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements, in lieu of White Western colonial masters, perpetuate the ideology that has caused Filipino identity crisis. As long as the Philippine mass media cater to skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements, the Filipinos will continue to believe in and accept the superiority of the White race. In this regard, Filipinos will attempt to form themselves and their cultural identity according to the image of whiteness, instead of focusing their attention on achieving a cultural identity that is anchored on their indigenous culture.

Purpose of the Study

Filipinos' consumption of whitening products, which has increased the growth of the skin care industry in the Philippines by 17% in current value term as of 2002 (Euromonitor, 2003), indicates that the Filipinos lack awareness of and resistance to their ongoing subordination. Thus, Filipino consumers of skin-whitening cosmetics and advocates of the white standard of beauty fail to notice the white ideological meanings embedded in skin-whitening products. Furthermore, they do not see the damage that skin-whitening cosmetics inflict on the Filipino self-concept and cultural identity. By investigating these advertisements' construction of whiteness, this study intends to expose the white ideology incorporated in the production and marketing of skin-whitening cosmetics, and also intends to raise the consciousness of Filipino women, especially dark-skinned women, on their marginalization brought about by the racial and patriarchal standards of beauty.

Although other research has already been conducted on skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements in non-white media, these studies have excluded skin-whitening consumers (Peiss, 1998). This study, however, supplements what has

been lacking. This study incorporates consumers' perception of skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements and, at the same time, investigates their motivation for whitening their skin.

Furthermore, this study contributes to existing studies on whiteness by taking the subject matter beyond the context of a society dominated by Whites, particularly that of the United States, and contributes to the area of research examining global marketing of hegemonic whiteness. According to Shome (2002), the study of whiteness should be contextualized outside a white culture, because whiteness has long traveled abroad, either through colonization or cultural production. Thus, this study, as a whole, expands the field of studies on the internationalization of whiteness.

Definition of Terms

People develop their self-concept in relation to their cultural identity (Chuang, 2004; and Woodward, 2002). They learn about themselves as they undertake their cultural identity search during childhood (Chuang 2004; and Gudykunst, 2001). They form perceptions of themselves

based on their knowledge of their cultural identity and other people's opinions of them.

The self and cultural identity are separate entities that are interconnected by categories people use to group themselves or distinguish themselves from each other. (Wiegert & Gecas 2003; and Woodward, 2002). These categories include race, gender, class, nationality and ethnicity, among others (Chuang, 2004). Although the self has a subject component, which is known only to the self's owner, both the self and cultural identity undergo construction through other people's eyes (Weigert & Gecas 2003; and Woodward, 2002). In this study, the Filipino self and cultural identity are represented through the Filipino woman's body, which intertwines race, gender, and class. The Filipino woman herein is defined as a female human being who has Filipino lineage and resides in the Philippines.

Although socialization primarily influences Filipino women's perception of themselves and their cultural identity, the mass media play a significant role in shaping perceptions (Fong & Chuang, 2004; Gudykunst, 2001; and Wolf, 1991). Children's books, teen magazines, and women's magazines educate women about their stereotypical roles as

housewife and mother and on the values associated with femininity, particularly beauty, from childhood to adulthood (Wolff, 1994). Television transmits dominant ideologies such as whiteness, patriarchy, and capitalism. This study seeks to examine how the mass media's promotion of dominant ideologies affects Filipino women's perceptions of themselves and their cultural, gendered, racial, and class identity. It employs semiotic analysis to identify the dominant ideologies that have been incorporated in the media.

Semiotic analysis is concerned with how meanings are produced through signs. Signs, which represent a concept, do not have a fixed meaning until placed in a context together with other signs. This study limited its semiotic analysis to skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements in women's magazines and on television in the Philippines.

Cosmetics, according to the Philippine Consumer Act or RA 7934, are any "articles (1) intended to be rubbed, poured, sprinkled or sprayed on, introduced into, or otherwise applied to the human body, or any part thereof, for cleansing, beautifying, promoting attractiveness or altering the appearance, and (2) intended for use as a component of any such article, except that such item shall

not include soap" (Philippine Board of Investment, 2003, p. 1). This definition does not include soap. However, skin-whitening cosmetics in this study included soap with whitening ingredients. Soap, which was originally marketed as a cleansing or hygiene product, is now being promoted as a beautifying agent (Vinikas, 1992; and Peiss, 1998). Thus, soap qualifies as a cosmetic product.

A semiotic analysis of skin-whitening cosmetic commercials and advertisements was conducted to find out about the representations of whiteness. Although whiteness denotes belongingness to the White race, whiteness connotes multiple meanings. Whiteness signifies, in most cases, femininity, but can also represent male power (Kang, 2002; and Woodward, 2002). It also connotes belonging to the upper class (Lykes & Mallona, 1997; and Shome, 2002). Furthermore, whiteness is not limited to a cultural category. Shome (2002) said:

Whiteness, thus, is not merely a discourse that is contained in societies inhabited by white people; it is not a phenomenon that is enacted only where white bodies exist. Whiteness is not just about bodies and skin color, but rather more about the discursive practices that, because of

colonialism and neocolonialism, privilege and sustain the global dominance of white imperial subjects and Eurocentric worldviews. (p. 108)

The Philippines exemplifies a non-white society where whiteness is reenacted. Placed under white colonial rule, the Philippines internalized the privileging of whiteness in its social and cultural practices. Whiteness continues to permeate Filipino culture throughout the postcolonial period. The Filipino women's desire for a white complexion and the stable growth of the Philippine cosmetic industry due to skin-whitening cosmetics signify that white domination of the Philippines has not ended. Thus, this study assumes Shome's (2002) definition of whiteness.

In conclusion, colonialism has both a positive and a negative effect on the Filipino culture. It has paved the way for the construction of a Filipino cultural identity, but it has hindered the Filipino cultural identity from being fully developed. Western colonization has left the Filipinos confused about their cultural identity. As Filipinos struggle to assert their independence from their former White colonizers, their mentality and socio-cultural practices continue to adhere to the White culture. Thus, the Filipinos experience identity crisis.

Filipino-American researchers recommend reexamining and reconstructing Philippine history in order to resolve the Filipino identity crisis. According to them, history would help Filipinos identify the root cause of their identity crisis and end the problem. This study seeks to contribute to Filipino-American efforts in resolving Filipino identity crisis by investigating current Philippine mass media. The mass media perpetuate Filipino identity crisis through images that idealize whiteness.

This study will particularly examine skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements to find out how they idealize whiteness. Then, this study will conduct two focus group interviews of Filipino women who use skin-whitening cosmetics in order to determine how this idealization of whiteness influences Filipino women's self-concept and cultural identity development. Through these methods, this study aims to expose the damage that the idealization of whiteness inflicts on Filipino development of self-concept and cultural identity.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Although this study focuses on Filipino cultural identity crisis in the contemporary period, this study still recognizes history's importance in examining this crisis. Thus, this study includes a review of both historical events that have prefaced and recent phenomena that have perpetuated the cultural identity crisis that Filipinos currently experience. The first two sections of this chapter, which review history, argue that Western colonization's institutionalization of whiteness deters the Filipino people, and other formerly colonized non-white people, from constructing a genuine cultural identity. The succeeding sections, then, link history to the present time. In these sections, this study argues first, that the mass media have taken over the role of Western colonial masters in reinforcing whiteness and second, that women have become the bearers of the injustices that resulted from whiteness. Overall, the literature review argues that Filipino cultural identity crisis has thrived from the past to the present because whiteness continues to exist.

Colonial Legacies in the Filipino Construction of Race, Gender, and Class

Prior to Western colonization of the Philippines, the various ethnic groups inhabiting the archipelago were autonomous from each other. Each ethnic group had its unique complex system of race, gender, and class relationships. Through assimilation into one culture, Western colonization brought these ethnic groups together and formed a new system of intercultural relationships that became prevalent throughout the postcolonial period. The system is anchored on hierarchy and, thus, promotes social inequality.

Multiple Ethnicities, One Cultural Identity

Filipinos' social and cultural construction was a product of historical events that occurred in three historical periods. Andres and Ilada-Andres (1987), David (2002), Dolan (1993), Forbes (1945), Karnow (1986), Kroeber (1928), and Phelan (1958) have all indicated that the settling and co-habitation of various ethnic groups in the Philippines from the precolonial to the colonial period created a multi-ethnic and racially-mixed Philippines. However, according to David (2002), Revilla (1997), Rimonte (1997), and Root (1997), Western colonizers

institutionalized racial hierarchy and social inequality in the Philippines that has continued during the postcolonial period.

Kroeber (1928) identified the Negritos, also known as Aetas, as the first inhabitants of the Philippines.

However, he did not regard the Negritos as the Filipino people's ancestors because they looked different physically from the majority of the Filipino people back then and now. He described the Negritos, whom he said resembled Central African black pygmies, as less than five feet in height and black-skinned, with "thick, short, wooly hair" (p. 36).

While he did not describe the later dominant Filipino groups' physical appearance, he implied that majority of the Filipinos are brown-skinned by alluding that this later groups of Filipinos came from the Malays, who once dominated the Philippines. Since the Negritos did not resemble the dominant Filipinos, Kroeber excluded the Negritos from being members of Philippine culture and society. He wrote:

We have then before us a thoroughly separate and apparently ancient type of man which cannot possibly be regarded as a variety or modification

of the race that constitutes the bulk of the
Philippine population. (p. 39)

To understand the Negrito culture, Kroeber (1928) attempted to reconstruct the Negritos. He said the Negritos resembled Central Africa's black pygmies, but their language was not related to African pygmy dialects or Austro-Asiatic language. Instead, Kroeber said, the Negrito language resembled the Malayan Filipinos' language in the Negrito locality. He, also, said that he finds the Negrito culture an imitation of Filipino culture. Thus, he concluded that the Negrito language and culture might have been lost as a result of the Malay domination of Negritos. Since Kroeber could not locate the Negritos' cultural origin, he therefore implied that the Negritos do not have a history and identity.

Other indigenous cultural groups followed the Negritos prior to the Malays. Forbes (1945) identified two of these groups as the Australian-Ainu of Japan and the Indonesians. Forbes did not describe the former, but described the latter as people with "prominent and angular general features, straight black hair, light to dark brown skin, and an average height of about five feet seven inches, some attaining a stature of six feet or more" (p. 259). In this

description, Forbes revealed that the Indonesians resembled closely the Malays in terms of skin color and hair type. This implies that the Indonesians and the Malays could have been a variation of each other.

The Filipinos in general, according to Forbes (1945), vary in skin color and physical appearance. Forbes attributed this variation to assimilation that had occurred among the indigenous groups prior to the colonial period. He also suggested that the Chinese and Caucasian ethnic groups might have assimilated with these indigenous groups through marriage, since a few Filipinos looked either Caucasian or Mestizo. In this regard, Forbes indicated that the term "Filipino" encompasses people of different skin color who have genealogical ties to the Philippines.

While Kroeber (1928) and Forbes (1945) focused on the Philippines' past, Dolan (1993) focused on the present. He named four major ethnic groups that currently make up the Filipinos. These groups were the lowland Christians, the Muslims, the upland tribes and the Chinese. Among these groups, the report said, the Christian Filipinos were the dominant group.

According to Dolan (1993), the Christian and Muslim Filipinos originated from the Malays, who were

predominantly Muslims. However, some of these Malays assimilated Spanish culture and became Christians. The lowland Christians developed a national consciousness as a result of the social oppression and racial discrimination they suffered in the hands of Spanish colonizers. The report said that the lowland Christian intellectual elites, who advocated social reform and assimilation of Philippines with Spain, merged with the peasants, who advocated a revolutionary struggle to gain Philippine independence and freedom from Spain. Labeled "Indios" by the Spaniards, the lowland Christians came up with the term "Filipinos" to refer to themselves.

Although the Filipino development of a national identity during the Spanish colonial period, which has been one of the darkest moments in Philippine history, was a great accomplishment, it also had a downside. The national identity excluded ethnic groups that did not assimilate with the Filipino Christian majority. Hence, the Filipino national identity became a divisive rather than a unifying factor for a diverse Filipino population. The Filipino national identity, in addition, was tainted with Western influence since it was constructed from the perspective of Filipinos who had assimilated the Spanish culture.

speculated, then the Filipinos could look to the upland tribal groups for knowledge about Filipino indigenous cultural identity.

The Filipino Chinese, according to Dolan (1993), are of two types: the Mestizos and immigrant Chinese. The Mestizos are born of Chinese and Filipino parents but "tended to deprecate their Chinese ancestry and to identify as Filipinos" (p. 87). The immigrant Chinese, on the other hand, were those whose parents were both Chinese. They viewed their culture as superior. Thus, Dolan implied that the Chinese had also adopted a hierarchical system based on race.

The Chinese Mestizos were not the only ones who married outside their cultures. Dolan (1993) revealed that some Muslims and tribal groups have also intermarried with each other, the dominant Filipinos, the Western colonizers, and the Chinese throughout the years. As a result, the Filipinos have become a mixture of multiple ethnic identities.

In contrast to Dolan (1993), Andres and Ilada-Andres (1987) cited five major ethnic groups which have exerted a strong influence on Filipino cultural identity. The authors said that the first of these groups, which came

from the Philippines' neighboring countries in Asia, were the Malays, the Chinese, and the Indonesians. The last two groups were the Spaniards and Americans, who institutionalized their influence on Filipino culture through religion, education, and government. While these latter influences seemed beneficial, Andres and Ilada-Andres said that these Westerners also brought customs that were damaging to the Filipino culture. The Filipinos inherited from the Spaniards the tendency to put "emphasis on appearance, reputation, privilege, and status" (p. 13) and acquired from the Americans a mentality that prefers imported goods.

Karnow (1986) placed more value on Chinese, rather than Western, influences on the Filipinos. According to Karnow, the Chinese significantly influenced the Filipinos in terms of racial mixing. Since Chinese merchants intermarried with Filipinos during the pre-Hispanic period, thus, Karnow said, almost every Filipino at present has Chinese ancestry.

In line with Forbes (1945), Dolan (1993), Andres and Ilada-Andres (1987), Karnow (1986), and Phelan (1959) have all suggested that intermarriages have occurred among different cultural groups that settled in the Philippines.

The resulting cultural groups, according to Phelan, have consisted of the Malayan-Polynesian, Chinese, Muslim, and Spanish. Among these groups, Phelan said the Chinese were the largest racial donors, whereas the Spanish were the smallest racial donors.

According to Phelan (1959), Spanish colonizers were not able to turn the Philippines into a mestizaje nation because they were small in number and they were largely concentrated in Manila. Phelan (1959) argued that most Spaniards did not find the archipelago profitable compared to Mexico, where they had discovered minerals and profited from the mining industry they established. While some of the Spaniards residing in the Philippines had taken Filipino women as wives or mistresses, most of them preferred to marry within their race to gain economic or social advantages. Thus, Phelan concluded, only a few Filipinos acquired Spanish blood.

By tracing the roots and routes of the Filipino people, these authors have historically constructed the Filipino cultural identity. The authors have shown that the indigenous Filipino cultural identity is largely rooted in the Malayan culture because the Malays dominated the Philippines before the Westerners came. However, they have

also shown that the settling of other cultures, interracial marriages, and white domination have together produced a complex Filipino cultural identity. With the coming of Western colonizers, Filipino intercultural relationships became more problematic. Other researchers show that Western colonization institutionalized a racial hierarchy, which made the establishment of an inclusive Filipino cultural identity more difficult. Racial hierarchy caused Filipinos to desire the dominant culture and, furthermore, to reject cultural diversity.

Root (1997) argued that Western colonization discouraged cultural diversity in the Philippines by training Filipinos to subscribe to one culture. With the West's assimilationist practice, Root said, Western colonizers taught the Filipino natives to embrace only the White culture. As a result, the Filipinos developed colorism and inferiority complex.

Like other former European and American colonies, Root continued, the Filipinos came up with a term referring to light skin. Mestizo or Mestiza is used to refer to Filipinos of mixed indigenous and Spanish heritage. Later on, the term came to mean mixed Filipino and White American. Such a racial term, according to Root, does not

only connote superiority, but also implies the acceptance of a racial hierarchy, in which a white skin tone is at the top and a black skin tone is at the bottom.

David (2002) demonstrated how Spanish colonization is linked to racial hierarchy in the Philippines in his essay, "The Plight of the Aetas". The dark-skinned Aetas, who are more popularly known as Negritos, were removed from their ancestral lands when the Spaniards colonized the Philippines. The Spanish colonizers institutionalized ownership of these lands through land titles. The displacement of Aetas in the Philippines continued until the postcolonial period. During this time, according to David, Filipino illegal loggers have caused the Aetas' displacement.

Aside from social oppression, David (2002) implied that the Aetas also suffered from racial segregation. David addressed this issue by asking these questions:

Do we consider them a part of us? Are they entitled to partake of the feasts that we have prepared for our family and friends? Shall we ask them why they are not dressed for the party to which they invited themselves? Will the

guards ever allow them inside the megamalls? Is
Philippines 2000 also for them? (p. 66)

Through these questions, David implied that Filipinos treat Aetas as social outcasts because the latter's physical appearance does not resemble the majority of modern day Filipinos. Filipino indifference towards Aetas sprung from Western colonizers' oppression of this ethnic group due to their dark skin tone. In this regard, David showed that Filipinos reenact racism within their culture.

David (2002) further supports his testimony that a racial hierarchy exists in the Filipino culture by citing the mass media's bias towards light-skinned Filipinos. According to David, the Philippine mass media turn white-skinned Filipino only into celebrities. One exception was Nora Aunor, dubbed the Superstar of the whole Philippine entertainment industry, who David described as "dark, short, indigenous, and beautiful" (p. 208). Her popularity, however, was short lived. David traced Filipino obsession with whiteness to Western colonization. He wrote:

I can only suppose that this concept of beauty is
one of the more enduring legacies of Spanish

colonialism, which has been reinforced by
American television. (p. 228)

Like David (2002), Rimonte (1997) holds Spanish colonialism liable for the social ills that most Filipinos in the Philippines currently experience. However, Rimonte said that most Filipinos think otherwise. Filipinos, instead, valorize Spanish colonialism for civilizing and Christianizing the Philippines and blame themselves for their damaged culture. Rimonte concluded that this notion contributes to the victimization of Filipinos and, at the same time, creates confusion about "Filipino identity and obligations to the West" (p. 41).

Rimonte (1997) sought to enlighten Filipino minds by deconstructing Philippine history. She rejected Spanish colonization advocates' claim that Spanish conquests simply aimed to convert Filipinos who are non-Christians and pagans into Catholics. Her article particularly responded to Phelan (1958) who, Rimonte said, argued that Spain did not intend to colonize the Philippines.

Citing Spanish leaders' letters and instructions concerning voyages, Rimonte (1997) provided evidence that Spanish conquerors' primary goals were to possess lands and establish new territories for the King of Spain. Rimonte

said, however, that the Spanish conquerors were also instructed to work with the Catholic Church in their religious mission. Thus, Rimonte implied that Christianization of Filipino natives was simply a secondary goal of the Spanish conquests, but nevertheless, it was used to justify colonization.

Rimonte (1997) added that while the Filipino natives were Christianized, they were dehumanized at the same time. The Filipino natives' conversion only involved Christianizing, but not Hispanizing. Hispanization would bring Filipino natives to an equal status with their colonizers, but Christianization would only transform the natives partly into humans. Thus, Rimonte said, Christianization allowed Spaniards to exploit and dominate Filipinos.

Although Spain did not primarily intend to Christianize the Philippines, Christianization became the Spanish colonizers' main tool in pacifying the Filipino natives. Christianization, according to Rimonte (1997), taught the Filipino converts to worship and obey God without questions. It also instilled in them that the Spanish colonizers were God's representatives. By this

strategy, the Spaniards prevented Filipino resistance to an oppressive colonial regime.

Research showed that cultural diversity has characterized Philippine society since the precolonial period. However, the social construction of Filipino cultural identity does not reflect cultural diversity. Colonialism has influenced Filipinos to recognize only the dominant population, composed of Christianized Filipino Malays, in defining Filipino cultural identity. While Christianized Filipino Malays dominated other cultural groups, they became marginalized as Western colonizers institutionalized white superiority and conditioned Filipinos to adhere to white ideology. Thus, Filipinos' idealization of whiteness has further obscured their cultural identity since they no longer recognize themselves and their culture unique from Western culture and appreciate this uniqueness.

Si Malakas at Si Maganda (The Strong and The Beautiful)

Researchers on Philippine history have revealed contradicting historical constructions between Filipino men and Filipino women. Andres and Ilada-Andres (1987), Dolan (1993), Forbes (1945), Karnow (1986), and Phelan (1959), on the one hand, have argued that Filipino women in the

Philippines occupy a high social position compared to other Asian women and, thus, they share equality with men. On the other hand, Aguilar (1987) and Acupanda-McGloin (1992) have argued that Filipino women remain socially oppressed and, thus, subordinated to Filipino men. These contradictions indicate that Filipino women have been sociohistorically constructed from a Western male perspective but also that some have been made to deconstruct femininity from a Filipino feminist perspective.

Dolan (1993) found that Filipino women occupy a high social position compared with other Asian women. Dolan said that the Filipino women, unlike other Asian women, are unique in possessing the "rights to legal equality and to inherit family property" (p. 96). Furthermore, Filipino women's social and occupational roles are not limited to domestic roles. As evidence, Dolan provides data showing how some Filipino women have occupied high-ranking positions in the government, education, and business sectors.

Dolan (1993), however, also disclosed in 1990 that a majority of Filipino women were still employed in domestic services. Most high positions were still given to men.

These data showed either that Filipino women are still stereotyped as more capable of doing domestic work than professional work, or that only a few Filipino women get a college degree, which is usually a requirement for professional employment. Nevertheless, Dolan concluded that even this small number of Filipino women with professional occupations is a more significant indicator of Filipino women's situation than the large number of Filipino women with domestic jobs. Thus, Dolan largely ignored the sexism that women in the Philippines continue to experience today.

Similarly, Andres and Ilada-Andres (1987) found Filipino women's social position to be higher compared to other Asian women. The authors cited Filipino women's rights to property, to education, and to vote as evidence of Filipino women's high social position. In addition, the authors said that Filipino women enjoy a high social position because they are in charge of the family budget and are experts in business affairs.

Whereas Andres and Ilada-Andres (1987) uplifted Filipino women in comparison to other Asian women, the authors did the opposite when they compared Filipino women with Filipino men. The authors described Filipino men, who

occupy the role of husband and father, as head of the family, breadwinner, disciplinarian, and physically strong. On the other hand, the authors said that Filipino women, as wife and mother, obey Filipino men, budget the money, do housekeeping, and take care of the children. In this regard, the authors relegated Filipino women in a subordinate role and depicted Filipino men in a powerful position.

Andres and Ilada-Andres (1987) further enhanced Filipino men's superiority by revealing the Philippines' double standards for men and women. According to the authors, male promiscuity or infidelity is usually accepted in Philippine society. Filipino men, the authors explained, justify their promiscuous behavior by equating masculinity "with the ability to procreate" (p. 83). Filipino men are initiated into this concept of masculinity through sexual intercourse at the start of their manhood. As a result, this practice encourages single Filipino men to have sexual affairs with several women and some married Filipino men to have one or more mistresses. On the contrary, Andres and Ilada-Andres said that female loyalty is expected in the Filipino culture. Single women are expected to remain virgin until their wedding night.

Otherwise, they would be considered a disgrace to their family. These double standards indicate Filipino male superiority because they show that strict rules apply to Filipino women, but not to Filipino men. This implies, then, that Filipino culture allots freedom to Filipino men at the expense of Filipino women. Since Andres and Ilada-Andres cited these double standards, the authors contradicted their claim that Filipino women enjoy a high social position.

Forbes (1945) is another proponent of Filipino women's high social position compared to other Asian women. His position was based, also, on the Filipino women's role of managing household finances, which involves receiving the family members' wages, budgeting the family income, and deciding on how to spend family income. However, Forbes cited other evidence that supports his position.

According to Forbes (1945), Filipino women's involvement in professions such as medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, and law shows that Filipino women are more privileged than other Asian women. Furthermore, Forbes said that most Filipino women are engaged in social work through leadership and active participation in social clubs and organizations, while some even hold important

government posts. Thus, Forbes perceived Filipino women privileged due to their freedom to perform roles outside the domestic sphere.

Andres and Ilada-Andres (1987), Forbes (1945), and Dolan (1993) argued that Filipino women hold a high social position in relation to other Asian women. They showed that Filipino women have a better domestic role and greater freedom compared to other Asian women. While this comparison supports the authors' standpoint, it does not accurately portray Filipino women because it places Filipino women in a dominant position over other Asian women, but removes Filipino women from issues confronting them within their society. More importantly, comparing Filipino women with other Asian women diverts the cause of Filipino women's marginalization away from patriarchy.

Filipino feminist scholars criticized the previous authors' inaccurate portrayal of Filipino women. According to Aguilar (1987) and Acupanda-McGloin (1992), Filipino women's roles as family treasurers and professional occupations have not liberated Filipino women from oppressive conditions. They only imply that Filipino women have moved from their traditional domestic roles as wife and mother.

Aguilar (1987) debunked the prevailing notion that Filipino women hold a high position in Philippine society because they budget the household income. This hegemony, according to Aguilar, comes from social scientists, who belong to the privileged class and, therefore, overlook women's domestic oppression, economic condition, and marginalization. It also reflects Filipino intellectuals' colonial mentality and lack of critical consciousness.

Aguilar (1987), also, criticized other research works claiming that Filipino women share equality with Filipino men. According to Aguilar, empirical research concludes that gender equality exists in the Philippines because Filipino women are given the freedom to argue their opinions. While this indicates that Filipino women as much as Filipino men participate in family decision-making, Aguilar pointed out that Filipino men always make the final decision. In this regard, Aguilar showed that Filipino women are still subject to patriarchal authority.

Like the previous authors, Aguilar (1987) acknowledged that Filipino women's role, at present, is no longer confined within the domestic space. Filipino women nowadays are also engaged in various professions. Aguilar, however, said that these professions do not liberate

Filipino women from their marginalized position. According to Aguilar, research showed that these professions, such as teaching and nursing for instance, are low paying professions. Women also "have higher unemployment and underemployment rates, are placed in manual and menial jobs, and receive consistently lower cash earnings relative to men" (p. 55). Aguilar, thus, showed that the Filipino culture still regard Filipino women subordinate to Filipino men.

Acupanda-McGloin (1992) shared Aguilar's (1987) argument that gender equality is not manifested through women's occupations or professions, especially those typically reserved for men. She cited former Philippine president Corazon Aquino and first lady Imelda Marcos as examples. Although these Filipino women have achieved a successful career, Acupanda-McGloin said their success could not be solely attributed to their intellectual skills and hard work. Their names, which were still attached to the memories of their husband, also largely determined their political success. Thus, Acupanda-McGloin implied that Filipino women are continuously relegated to the roles of follower and dependent.

Acupanda-McGloin (1992) attributed to Spanish colonization the root cause of Filipino women's subordination. According to the author, Filipino men and women shared gender equality prior to the colonial period. She cited the Philippine folktale of the origin of men and women as evidence of gender equality in pre-colonial Philippines.

In this folktale, Acupanda-McGloin (1992) recalled, man and woman came out of two separate bamboo poles at the same time after a bird pecked each pole. This Philippine folktale implied that Filipino people's ancestors believed that men and women were created at the same time. Acupanda-McGloin suggested that Spanish conversion of Filipino natives into Christians replaced this Philippine folktale with the story of Adam and Eve. Thus, Acupanda-McGloin said, the Filipino concept of gender equality changed to feudal hierarchy during colonial times.

Acupanda-McGloin (1992) blamed colonialism, also, for obstructing Filipino women's struggle for liberation. Colonialism, according to the author's analysis of female characters in Philippine national hero Jose Rizal's novels, "Noli Me Tangere" and "El Filibusterismo", divided Filipino women by creating conflicting identities. One identity

represents the elite, such as Corazon Aquino and Imelda Marcos, who embrace the status quo. The other identity represents the poor, led by Philippine revolutionary heroine Gabriel Silang, who fight for gender and social equality. Thus, Filipino women are placed at odds with each other and caught in a struggle between liberating themselves from gender and class oppression.

Aguilar (1987) and Acupanda-McGloin (1992) argued that Filipino women are marginalized in relation to Filipino men. According to the authors, Filipino women continue to be dependent on men for decision-making, career success, and economic survival despite Filipino women's advancement from their traditional roles. In this regard, the authors placed Filipino women in equal status with other Asian women.

Research has shown that Western colonization changed Filipinos' construction of gender. While Filipino men and women shared equality prior to the colonial period, the former were elevated to a higher status at the beginning of Western colonization as Filipino women were confined to domestic roles. Although some Filipino women, through the years, have been able to break free from domestic bondage,

Filipino women's status in general remain subordinate to Filipino men in the Philippines.

Class: A Social Inheritance

Social classes during the precolonial period were based not on wealth, but on the social roles that members within an ethnic group performed. Western colonization modified the distinction among these social classes by giving the local ruling class access to colonial power while keeping the Filipino masses underprivileged. The local ruling class, at the end of Western colonization, fully inherited their Western colonial masters' political and economic power.

Social classes, according to Phelan (1959), had already existed in the Philippines prior to the colonial period. The Malays, who had dominated the Philippines, had been grouped into small units called barangays. Each barangay, according to Phelan, was composed of four classes - the chieftains and their families, the maharlika or nobles, the freemen, and the servile or dependent class who "the Spaniards misleadingly called slaves" (p. 15). Phelan explained that the dependent class was not a group of slaves subject to harsh labor conditions like those of the European laborers. The dependent class consisted of

barangay members who were not able to pay debts or fines and thus shared their crops with their debtor. Some of these members were also prisoners of war or criminals and thus were made to labor in the fields for free.

When the Spaniards colonized the Philippines, Phelan (1959) said the chieftains of the barangays remained the Filipino ruling class. They were coerced by the Spanish magistrates into exploiting Filipino labor. While the chieftains struggled to fulfill their Spanish rulers' demands for material things, they also forced their Filipino constituents to do the hardest work. Some of the chieftains also became the local magistrates, who were spared from paying taxes and laboring in the fields. Their political power was passed on to the next generation.

Dolan (1993), on the other hand, argued that Philippine society was initially stratified during the Spanish colonial period. Dolan identified only two, instead of four, social classes, that had emerged under the Spanish regime. One was the bourgeoisie, which was comprised of the Principales, traditional local leaders, and the Chinese Mestizos, who acquired landed estates from Spanish friars. The other was the proletariat to which the rest of the Filipinos belonged. The Principales were

European-born Spaniards who became the ancestors of the Ilustrados, educated Philippine nationals who later on formed the Philippines' socio-cultural elite. The Ilustrados had functioned as arbiters between colonizers and colonized. Eventually, the Ilustrados inherited the Principales' political leadership as it was passed on from generation to generation.

The Ilustrados' successors assumed their position onto the American colonial period. During this period, Rafael (1993) said that the local elite remained in power by being employed as supervisors for the US Census Bureau. At the same time, the Filipino masses were kept in their subordinate position working as numerators for the same government agency. Thus, Rafael showed that Western colonization became involved in transferring political power from Western colonial masters to the local Filipino elite.

Western colonization created the economic conditions that, since then, determined class relationships in the Philippines. It expanded the political power of the local ruling class to include control of Philippine economy. As Western colonization came to an end, the local ruling class

fully rose to power while the Filipino masses remained in their oppressed condition.

Historical research has shown that white domination, through Western colonization, has permeated race, gender, and class relations in the Philippines. White domination established a racial hierarchy that placed Filipinos of Spanish, American, and Chinese Mestizo descent in a privileged position because of their white skin color. White lit perpetuated Filipino local elite in power through inheritance. It relegated Filipino women to second class citizens. Although Filipino women have started gaining victory in their fight against white domination's effect on them, their positions in the racial and social hierarchy remain to be resolved.

Whiteness as the Foundation of Colonial Legacies

The white ideology transmitted to the Philippines via Spanish and American colonization was a product of Eurocentric notions that circulated in the West prior to and after the European conquests. Whereas colonialism facilitated the transfer of white ideology to the Philippines, current social institutions such as the school, the elite, and most of all, the mass media

reinforce colonial legacies that idealize whiteness in former colonies or non-white societies influenced by the West. As whiteness traveled on from one period to another, it assumed the various ideological meanings associated with race, gender, and class. Whiteness, regardless of its meaning, occupied a privileged position like it did during the colonial period.

The Beginning of Whiteness

The Spanish colonizers' reenactment of whiteness in the Philippines had its roots in pre-colonial Europe, where a skin tone reflected the class to which an individual belongs. In pre-colonial Europe, according to the Philippine Dermatological Society (2001), a white skin tone was associated with the leisure class, who didn't work outdoors and stayed under shady umbrellas. On the contrary, the Philippine Dermatological Society said, a dark skin tone was associated with the working class who labored out in the fields. When the Spaniards came to the Philippines, they brought with them these stereotypes and perceptions towards skin tone and passed them to their descendants. Thus, according to the Philippine Dermatological Society, "in white colonial countries, white skin became identified

with the conquerors, those with power, the rich, and the beautiful" (Philippine Dermatological Society, 2001).

The American colonizers' privileging of whiteness, on the other hand, was a reflection of the republican ideology that pervaded the United States in the early 19th century. The republican ideology, according to Takaki (2000), advocated a pure, White American society. Blacks were perceived as savages due to their dark skin tone, while the darkness of their skin was perceived to be a kind of leprosy. Not all shared these perceptions, Takaki said. Benjamin Rush, who led White Americans in envisioning a republican society, believed that Blacks had the potential to become members of a White republican society, but only if they could make themselves look white. While Rush fought for the emancipation of Blacks and abolition of slavery and appeared to be sympathetic to them, he also called for their symbolical annihilation. He recommended that Blacks whiten their dark skin through medication. Only then would they become eligible members of a White American society.

Rush's discourses and actions show that in the early 19th century America, whiteness represented health while darkness represented disease. These bipolar oppositions

motivated Whites to segregate Blacks. White Americans wanted to preserve the purity of the White race and intermixing with Blacks would contaminate this purity.

White efforts to keep their purity from being contaminated were also reflected in the citizenship politics of the early 20th century. According to Kang (2002), these efforts were manifested through new naturalization and immigration laws. During this period, however, Blacks were no longer perceived as carriers of a deadly disease, as they had already been assimilated into the dominant culture. U.S.-born and immigrant Asians were the new lepers. Whiteness was now translated as Americanness. Whites regarded Blacks as one of them but excluded Asians.

Colonialism exported white symbolical meanings to the Philippines through cultural icons. Pedero (2003) said the Filipinos' pride for their race was subjugated when the Spaniards came and converted "the natives" to Catholicism. As a result, the "pagan" images worshipped by the Filipinos were replaced with the statues of Jesus, Mary, and saints who were mostly white-skinned. At that point, Pedero (2003) said "the natives began worshipping icons of a white race" (p. 1). The Filipinos' worship of white icons was

reinforced with the coming of Americans, who portrayed themselves as heroes and introduced Hollywood stars who were mostly white. The Americans also brought to the Filipinos white dolls in the form of Barbie and Ken.

When the Western colonial period ended after 350 years, white domination of non-whites persisted in formerly colonized countries. Social institutions replaced White colonizers as agents of white ideology. While whiteness in the colonial period signified racial superiority, whiteness in the postcolonial period has become equated with aristocracy.

Whiteness in the Postcolonial Period

The end of Western colonization in 1945 did not signify the end of white domination. Didillon, Bounsana, and Vandewiele (1988), Duster (2001), Fine (2002), Gladwin & Saidin (1980), Kidder (1997), and Shome (2002) showed that whiteness was kept alive through social institutions, particularly educational institutions and the elite. They argued that these social institutions took the place of White colonial masters by giving individuals access to wealth and power.

Gladwin and Saidin (1980) argued that the elite, in all formerly colonized non-white societies, perpetuate this

privileging of whiteness. In contemporary Third World countries, the brown elite have replaced their White masters in control of their countries' economy. However, they still look up to their former White masters for economic guidance and assistance.

Education, Gladwin and Saidin (1980) argued, has been an essential support to the brown elite's newfound role and power. It has provided Third World men the privileges their former White masters used to enjoy, particularly, the access to wealth and power. The authors concluded that education functions as an institution for reinforcing elitism and racism.

Through her accounts of her experience studying in a Catholic school in India, Shome (2002) showed in detail how educational institutions reinforce Western beliefs and values in a Third World country. The Catholic school, Shome said, socializes younger generations into the Western culture by teaching them to worship whiteness in the image of a white god. In addition, the Catholic school reinforces Western superiority through the English language. Both the Catholic school and the English language, according to Shome, connote modernization and civilization in the Indian nationals' mind. The English

language particularly signifies belongingness to an elite class and high culture. Since fluency in English is a requirement for securing high-paying jobs, Shome explained, the English language in India is equated with economic advancement.

In addition to education, Shome (2002) said skin color is used to legitimize the privileging of whiteness in India. Since a fair skin in India signifies beauty, according to Shome, skin color inflicts violence on non-white women. However, Shome implied that education rather than skin color provides Indian nationals access to white privileges. Despite her skin tone, Shome said, she is still identified with the privileged class. Her ability to use the English language brought her closer to whiteness.

Kidder (1997), in like to Shome (2002), discussed how the elite perpetuate white superiority in a former White Western colony such as India. In his article, expatriates who were mostly White North Americans and Europeans represented the elite. They were the physical manifestation of whiteness' association with the West and wealth in the Indian mind. Thus, according to Kidder, these expatriates in India assume the position of postcolonial masters and madams. More privileged than the

Indians and the people in their country, Kidder said, the expatriates' privilege is manifested in various ways. One is through their status, which confers on them the power to, first, claim success for the work of their subordinates and, second, acquit themselves of guilt for living in privilege and having "imperialist motives" (p. 165). Thus, whiteness has transformed from a racial marker to a social class delineator.

Didillon, Bounsana, and Vandewiele (1988) also attributed the perpetuation of white superiority in Brazzaville, Congo to the elite. This minority group is composed of young Congolese students, who went to France and returned to Congo with yellowish skin tone. They promoted whiteness by popularizing the maquillage practice or skin-whitening and those who chose to whiten their skin associate a bright complexion with both beauty and high social status. The authors said:

The maquillage practice is fostered by the belief that bright complexion is part of the physical attributes of socially and sexually highly regarded people (p. 309).

Participants in this study also expressed this belief. Just as Didillon et. al. (1988) found, the participants who

whiten their skin say they are motivated by their expectation that a white skin tone will give them a beautiful, youthful, and natural appearance. In addition, maquillage practice signifies social status, because only those with money can afford to beautify themselves in this way.

Although Didillon et. al. (1988) argued that both Black African men and women engage in maquillage, their research findings indicate that a bright complexion is perceived as a feminine characteristic. Furthermore, their findings reveal that Black African women have internalized this notion. The majority of their respondents who use or are in favor of using skin-whitening cosmetics are women. Their female respondents also "locate themselves at a brighter zone of the scale than they actually appeared to be to the interviewers" (p. 311).

Didillon et al. (1988) found that Congolese women are motivated to achieve a bright complexion by three factors. First, Congolese women seek to please men. Second, Congolese women seek to seduce men. The authors say these factors suggest that narcissism accompanies the search for a white skin tone. Third, according to those who reject maquillage, Congolese women who practice skin-whitening

aspire to a high social status. Didillon et al.'s (1988) research findings indicate that a white complexion in Brazzaville signifies beauty and upward mobility.

Duster (2001) argued that the transformation of whiteness, from being a marker for race to being an indicator for social class, became possible without being noticed because of the morphing properties of whiteness. Duster compared whiteness to water, which occupies liquid or fluid and solid states. When water is transformed from liquid to solid and vice versa, the process is not visible. Furthermore, when water's physical form changes, its solid state is called by a different term even though water's chemical components remain the same.

In the United States, Duster (2001) argued that whiteness has been synonymous with race and has been institutionalized through laws that sustain the privileging of Whites. Throughout the years of enslaving Blacks, Whites accumulated wealth and placed themselves at the top of the social strata. Now, whiteness has become a social class marker since the United States is no longer stratified by race. Nevertheless, whiteness stays in its privileged position.

Through interviews with American high school students from different racial groups, Fine (1997) showed that educational institutions in the United States perpetuate white domination by encouraging White students to reach for higher goals, while training Blacks to accept their fate. She found that the school does not make an attempt to extinguish dominant racial stereotypes operating in the minds of Black and White students. Later on, such racial stereotypes influence Black and White students in the academic decisions they make. White students, for instance, choose to be in the advanced track because they know they are bound for college. On the other hand, Black students choose the standard track because they think they cannot handle advanced classes.

Fine (1997) explained the reason why Whites in school keep Blacks in their oppressed condition:

Whiteness was produced through the exclusion and denial of opportunity to people of color. In other words, giving Blacks access to White opportunities would threaten to stain, indeed blacken, that which is white. Access is a threat to whiteness when whiteness requires the exportation and denigration of color (p. 60).

By means of the education system's denigration of Blacks, Fine said, Whites are able to affirm their superiority. Thus, Fine revealed that education reinforces the economic conditions that determine race relations among individuals.

Perpetuating Whiteness through the Mass Media

While colonialism has thrived through the centuries because of the institutionalization of whiteness, whiteness has maintained its privileged position due to social institutions that perpetuate its domination. Among these social institutions, as previously mentioned, were the school and the ruling elite. However, the mass media, overshadow these social institutions in perpetuating whiteness. Lakoff and Scherr (1984), Shohat (1997), and Illo (1998) have argued that the mass media also reinforce white domination in postcolonial societies by representing whiteness as the ideal image of feminine beauty. Furthermore, they have shown that whiteness intertwines beauty with aristocracy. A white skin tone is a criterion for becoming a celebrity and, thus, white-skinned women enjoy greater opportunity for upward mobility.

Lakoff and Scherr (1984) said that the mass media in the United States represent a white skin tone as the standard for American beauty by transmitting images of

people with fair skin, blond hair, and blue eyes. By reinforcing these images, the mass media influence non-white women's perception of themselves. The mass media also perpetuate the reenactment of a white standard of beauty by reinforcing certain cultural practices of non-whites in the U.S. Furthermore, they create a social hierarchy similar to a caste system. They valorize the individual with a skin color closer to the dominant color by granting that person a higher social status.

In addition, Lakoff and Scherr's (1984) research findings revealed that minority women, whose physical appearance does not resemble the white ideals of beauty in the media, suffer low self-esteem. Aside from judging their physical appearance based on the idealized feminine image in the media, minority women were often times perceived unattractive and ridiculed by their peers.

They wrote:

Ethnocentric definitions of beauty as much as anything else, create barriers between peoples and worse, create feelings of confusion, self-doubt and inferiority among those who find their way of looking at the world and at themselves not appreciated (p. 48).

Similar to Lakoff and Scherr (1984), Shohat (1997) said that the mass media's promotion of a type of beauty based on white standards is not limited to First World countries such as the United States wherein the majority of the population are Whites. The First World media also promote the white standard of beauty in non-white Third World societies. Through their collaboration with Third-World media, First World media are able to continue to export white ideology.

Shohat (1997) criticized both the First World media and Third World media for promoting this white standard of beauty. She said the mass media's promotion of white beauty has reinforced colonial legacies and, at the same time, has alienated non-white women. She wrote:

The dominant media have long disseminated the hegemonic white-is-beautiful aesthetic inherited from colonialist discourse, an aesthetic which exiled women of color from their own bodies. Until the late 1960s, the overwhelming majority of Anglo-American fashion journals, films, TV shows, and commercials promoted a canonical notion of beauty within which white women (and

secondarily, white men) were the only legitimate objects of desires. (p. 199)

Thus, Shohat concluded, the media reproduce this earlier valorization of whiteness and denigration of colored people that had been made popular through colonial exhibits and world fairs, wherein colored people were presented as barbaric and freaks. Today's promotion of Eurocentric features as the ideal characteristic of feminine beauty also leads Third World audiences to alter their image to achieve the likeness of whiteness, by sporting a blond hair or undergoing cosmetic surgery.

Illo (1999) provided evidence for Shohat's (2002) argument that the Third World media collaborate with the First World media in promoting the white standard of beauty in predominantly non-white societies. Illo cited Philippine print advertisements, television, and film as examples of Third World media that transmit images of white beauty. Print advertisements, for instance, reinforce the Mestiza as the ideal image of Philippine beauty by employing only fair-skinned female models. Philippine magazines, comics, and films usually feature light-skinned characters whether their roles are either that of

protagonists or villains, while television fills its screen with Mestiza/Mestizo celebrities.

The Western images of beauty projected by the Philippine mass media, according to Illo (1999), influences Filipino women's perception of beauty. Illo examined how Filipino women, in various age groups from both a Metro Manila mixed-class neighborhood and Ilocos village, perceive beauty. She found that the Filipinos' perception of beauty is based on physical qualities such as fair complexion and a tall, slender figure. These Western images of beauty denigrate dark-skinned women. More importantly, Illo said that "these notions of the beautiful devalue the sun-scorched, rough-skinned and dark figures of peasant women" (p. 51).

Illo (1999) attributed the popularization of whiteness as the standard of beauty in the Philippines not to colonialism but to post-World War II. According to Illo, Filipino poets, who resisted the Spaniards and Americans, attempted to define the Filipino identity through reference to color in their poems. The terms *morena* and *kayumanggi*, which are descriptions of brown skin color, were poetic musings during the colonial and postcolonial period. Although identifying Filipinos by their brown skin tone

excluded Filipinos with other skin colors, Filipino poets, Illo implies, took pride in their indigenous culture. After WWII, however, the images of beauty changed. Illo said that fair or Mestiza became the idealized image of beauty.

In sum, whiteness, in any form, has remained in its privileged position in former colonizing and colonized countries because social institutions perpetuate its association with superiority. Whiteness has appeared as a racial marker in the colonial period through Western colonizers, who constructed white as a symbol of civilization and black as a symbol of barbarism in order to justify their domination of people of color. In the postcolonial period, it has become more visible as an indicator of social class through educational institutions and the ruling elite, which give individuals under their care access to power and wealth, and of femininity through the mass media, which depict light-skinned women as the epitome of beauty.

The Rise of Advertisements, the Fall of Women

Previous studies have shown that the mass media do not just reproduce dominant ideologies. More importantly, they

are agents of socialization that shape audiences' self-concept by presenting images of the ideal self. Particularly, the mass media exert influence on audiences' self-concept through advertisements.

The rise of advertisements as an influential medium of communication in the U.S. coincided with the change in Americans' perception of the self by the end of World War I. Americans' centered their attention on the self, as it became the source of esteem. Advertisements capitalized on this change by associating products with social values that will boost consumers' image.

Advertisements' growth, however, decreased American women's self-esteem. Advertisements primarily targeted women as consumers. In order to motivate female consumers to spend, advertisements appealed to women's insecurity. They constructed the ideal image of femininity, which women at present attempt to embody.

Transforming Advertisements for Self Transformation

Advertising in the United States, according to Vinikas (1992), originally functioned as a medium for informing possible customers of the existence or availability of a product. Thus, advertising's earliest role was to meet existing needs of the public. However, World War I altered

advertising's role after the American market overproduced an abundance of goods. In order to sell these goods, companies needed to create demands. Advertising, then, was used to create new needs or desires, and, instead of focusing on product use, advertising associated products with social values. In the late 20th century, the author said, this strategy worked well because, during that period, Americans experienced a reinterpretation of the self. Their external self became the focus of others' perceptions, which then became the main basis of the self's sense of esteem and worth. Advertising, thus, became a greater source of knowledge about the self.

Advertising's role in persuading audiences to spend strengthened after the World War II. According to Watson (1998), advertising encouraged consumerism in the United States as the United States' economy moved from depression to expansion after World War II. Advertisers not only sold products, but also the values they associated with products. In particular, they attached social values that give humans satisfaction to brand names. Watson wrote:

So, successful TV advertising campaigns didn't focus solely on product claims. Rather, they strove to associate a brand name with a deep

human need or satisfaction - prestige, security,
lovability. (p. 161)

Like Vinikas (1992), Watson concludes that advertising shifted its focus on product use to the product's effect on the individual's self-image.

Aside from associating product brands with social values, advertisements attempt to influence audiences' self-concept by promoting the ideal human image. Twitchell (1996), who conducted research on television advertisements, said the idealized image makes audiences feel insecure about themselves. Television advertisements appropriate the desired qualities to commodities and show audiences that purchasing these commodities will give them the qualities they desire. In this regard, Twitchell concluded that television advertisements create in the audiences the desire to possess the qualities of advertised images.

Women as Seen on Advertisements

Whereas Twitchell (1996), Vinikas (1992), and Watson (1998) generalized about advertising's effects on both the masculine and feminine self, Bignell (1997), Currie (1999), and McCracken (1993) focused in on how advertisements influence women's self-concept. Also, Bignell, Currie, and

McCracken focused on advertisements in women's magazines. These authors argue that women's magazines primarily carry advertisements that make women feel insecure and encourage them to spend on products that promise to eliminate their insecurities.

Currie (1999), through content analysis, found that women's magazine advertisements in the United States appeal to women's insecurity in order to persuade them to purchase advertised products. Currie said advertisements promise that their product will make women complete. In this regard, Currie suggests that women's magazine advertisements turn women into consumers.

Currie (1999), in addition, found that these magazines' dichotomous representation of women "is based on the otherness of older non-white, non-heterosexual woman" (p. 39). They depict women, who are usually young, beautiful, and white. Thus, his findings indicate that women's magazines' representations of the ideal women are founded on racist and sexist ideologies.

In line with Currie (1999), McCracken (1993) showed how women's magazine advertisements cause women to feel inadequate. They build on women's insecurities by bombarding female readers with ideal faces and figures of

women. As female readers see these images over and over again, they view themselves in a negative way and aspire to look like the women in the magazine. Thus, McCracken implies that women's magazines condition women's minds to look at themselves in a certain way. Advertisements bring female readers' attention to their flaws and, at the same time, to the perfect feminine image. McCracken concluded women's magazine advertisements teach women to become self-critical.

McCracken (1993) furthermore argued that women's magazine advertisements make women feel inferior in order to engage them in consumerism. The advertisements capitalize on their feelings of inadequacy in order to encourage them to buy their products. The magazines associate advertised products with social values that will give women a sense of fulfillment and wholeness.

Similarly, Bignell (1997) argued that women's magazines constantly stimulate women's desire for something which they lack. In particular, women's magazines stir in women the desire for beauty by portraying female readers as less attractive than the female models depicted as desirable. Through these bipolar oppositions, women's

magazines influence women's perception of themselves and their identity.

While Bignell (1997), Currie (1999), and McCracken (1993) analyzed media texts to illustrate how advertisements construct meanings that influence women's self-concept, Richins (1991) conducted an audience analysis to find out which specific meanings in feminine images shape women's perception of themselves. In general, his study also indicated that advertisements shape women's self-concept by causing women to compare themselves against women in advertisements.

Richins (1991) conducted an exploratory study in the United States and found that female college students compare themselves to attractive models in advertisements. As a result, the participants perceive themselves to be less attractive than what they have perceived themselves prior to the study. In addition, Richins found that they raise their standard of physical attractiveness as they feel increasingly less satisfied with themselves.

Research has shown that women's magazines perpetuate stereotypes that value women for their beauty and reinforce the white standards of beauty. The sexist and racial stereotypes toward beauty lower the self-esteem of women

whose physical features are not consistent with these stereotypes. Thus, women's magazines contribute to women's oppression.

Looking through the Eyes of Ads

As Bignell (1997), Currie (1999), and McCracken (1993) argued, advertisements cause women to feel insecure in order to persuade them to purchase advertised products. The succeeding studies show that advertisements' appeal to women's insecurity is indeed persuasive. Lakoff and Scherr (1984), Miller and Cox (1982), Theberge and Kernalegeun (1979), and Wright, Martin, Flynn, and Gunter (1970) also documented that women's use of cosmetics is related to their desire to gain or raise their self-esteem and self-confidence.

In examining cosmetics' direct effects on women's self-concept, Wright, et al. (1970) found that women who use cosmetics believe these products helped them improve their self-confidence and self-concept. The participants in this study, "42 young women with varying degrees of facial blemishes" (p. 12), were given facial cosmetics and instructions on how to use them. Afterwards, the participants were asked to determine their self-concept by means of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory

(MMPI) scales. Out of the nine scales, the Depression scale and the Psychastheria scale were chosen to be the units of measurement. Depression is characterized by feelings of uselessness and pessimism, while the latter, lack of confidence. According to the authors, the results showed that cosmetics improved the women's self-confidence and self-concept.

Likewise, Miller and Cox (1982) conducted a study on cosmetics' effects on women's self-concept, which yielded results similar to Wright et al.'s (1970) research work. Their works showed that women with high public self-consciousness tend to wear more make-up compared to women with low public self-consciousness. The former, according to the authors, are convinced that wearing make up improves their physical appearance. In addition, Miller and Cox's research findings showed that women who wear make-up are judged by others to be more physically attractive than those who don't wear make up. Thus, Miller and Cox concluded that cosmetics positively affect women's self-confidence.

While Miller and Cox (1982) indicated that public self-consciousness is a significant factor in the degree of women's cosmetic use, Theberge and Kernaleguen (1979)

correlated women's level of satisfaction about their bodies with the degree of cosmetic use. Theberge and Kernaleguen found that women with high level of body satisfaction give less importance to cosmetics. By contrast, Theberge and Kernaleguen found that women with low level of body satisfaction depend more on cosmetics. The authors also found that women who are highly satisfied with their bodies have a positive self-image in contrast to women who are less satisfied with their bodies. Although these authors showed a correlation between women's level of body satisfaction and attitude towards their self-image, they said their findings did not indicate whether women who are not satisfied with their body use cosmetics to develop a positive self-image. Nevertheless, their study suggests that cosmetics increase women's level of body satisfaction.

Generally, the studies of Miller and Cox (1980), Theberge and Kernalegeun (1979), and Wright, Martin, Flynn, and Gunter (1970) showed that women use cosmetics to make themselves physically attractive. Their findings indicated that women at the end of the 20th century value physical attractiveness. Whether men value women for their beauty and also value themselves for physical attractiveness could not be determined from these findings, since these authors'

research work only involved women. Lakoff and Scherr (1984), however, showed a few years later that both men and women value beauty. They conducted psychological research to examine why people highly value beauty and found the answer on people's perception of beauty. People perceive that beauty elicits positive responses as people tend to act favorably towards those who are attractive. For instance, Lakoff and Scherr cited other research that found parents reward physically attractive children for good behavior, teachers show more interest in educating physically attractive students, and employers usually hire applicants who are physically attractive. Since attractive people receive rewards most of the time, Lakoff and Scherr argued that attractive people develop high self-esteem and self-acceptance and are happier with their lives. Thus, most people are fixated on making themselves attractive.

Although both men and women value beauty, Lakoff and Scherr (1984) argued that physical attractiveness is perceived as more significant for women than for men. They said women are valued for their looks while men are valued for intelligence. Attractiveness compensates women for their lack of intelligence. Attractive women do not have to work hard to hone their intellectual skills. In

contrast, unattractive women have to compensate for their lack of beauty by developing intellectual skills. On the other hand, men are not compelled to compensate for either lack of attractiveness or of intelligence. Lakoff and Scherr thus concluded that attractiveness is a product of patriarchal ideology.

In sum, research shows that, due to the rise of American capitalism, advertisements evolved from being a medium for disseminating information to being an agent of socialization. Advertisements answered American capitalists' need to market overproduced goods locally and globally. The First and Second World Wars yielded new U.S. colonies that provided new markets for American surplus goods. Thus, advertisements required an innovative approach to persuading new groups of people to purchase goods. Advertisements since the 1920 have appealed to people's psychological and social needs rather than to their physical needs alone.

Advertisements, as agents of socialization, influence primarily women's perceptions of themselves. Advertisements promote and reinforce the global sexist, racist, and classist construction of femininity through the representations of beauty. Since advertisements promote

beauty based on white ideals, women who do not possess the qualities of the ideal women feel inferior and compensate by struggling to conform to their idealized images of women.

While globally distributed advertisements answer American capitalists' needs for mass distribution of commodities, they also fulfill women's desires to possess qualities that define beauty. Advertisements cause women to feel inadequate and, at the same time, offer cosmetics as means to make women feel fulfilled. In this regard, advertisements show that women's sense of being and pride is tied to commodities.

Women, however, unwittingly conspire with advertisements by voluntarily commodifying themselves. By using cosmetics to improve their looks, women adhere to advertisements' messages that women's self-worth is rooted in beauty. They reenact the social construction of women as display objects. Nevertheless, advertisements reinforce and naturalize their willing subordination.

Women at the Crossroads of Gender, Race, and Class Struggle

While advertisements show that beauty liberates women from personal insecurities and social inequality, a number of feminist researchers contradict these advertisements. The latter argue that the hegemonic notions associated with the construction of beauty perpetuate women's oppression. Barthel (1988), Bartky (1998), Franzoi (2001), and Millum (1975) imply that women reenact rather than resist sexism towards themselves through their beauty rituals. According to these researchers, beauty reproduces patriarchal ideology because most women who make themselves attractive aim to please not themselves, but the opposite sex. Furthermore, Chow (1991), Kang (2002), Kaw (1998), and Pyke and Johnson (1992) show that beauty adds burden to non-white women's struggles against oppression. They illustrate for instance how Asian American women experience other forms of sexism within their culture aside from beauty and, in addition, how they deal with global racism and classism.

Women versus themselves

Millum (1975) illustrated how women participate in the construction of their bodies as objects by exposing the

patriarchal notion embedded in their use of cosmetics. According to Millum, women are the primary consumers of cosmetics because women perceive cosmetics a part of female sexuality. In using cosmetics, "the woman expects to be looked at in a way that the man does not. She is the passive 'looked at' rather than the active 'looker'" (Millum, 1975, p. 6). Thus, despite that the social construction of beauty subjugates women, women continue to desire beauty and rely on cosmetics to make themselves beautiful.

Franzoi (2001) supported Millum's (1975) argument that women who use cosmetics participate in perpetuating sexism against themselves. Through his research, Franzoi found that women benevolent to sexist beliefs are more likely to engage in personal grooming and use cosmetics to enhance their physical appearance. Franzoi defined benevolent sexism, as a cultural ideology that "idealizes women in traditional gender roles while simultaneously subordinating them to subservient positions in society" (p. 177). In line with this definition, Franzoi argued that beauty as a feminine quality should supposedly empower women over men. However, men use beauty to exert social control over women.

Bartky (1998), a feminist researcher, illustrated how women's bodies are constructed as objects, using Foucault's Panopticon. Like the prisoner in the Panopticon cell, the woman's body is subject to disciplinary practices and the control of the person who watches over prisoners in the Panopticon tower. Since the woman's body is treated as an ornamented surface, Bartky said that women therefore must go through disciplinary practices of keeping their bodies clean, smooth, flawless, and painted. While women are immersed in rituals of beautifying themselves, they have within their consciousness the panoptical male gaze and judgment. In this regard, Bartky argued that the "woman lives her body as seen by another, by an anonymous patriarchal other" (p. 34).

Bartky (1998), in addition, elaborated on Millum's (1975) argument about why women value themselves in terms of beauty. Bartky too argued that the disciplinary practices applied on the feminine body contribute to the marginalization and oppression of women. Despite these disciplinary practices, Bartky noted that not all women turn to feminism in order to liberate themselves. The reason, Bartky argued is that "To have a body felt to be 'feminine' - a body socially constructed through the

appropriate practices - is in most cases crucial to a woman's sense of herself as female and, since persons currently can be only as male or female, to her sense of herself as an existing individual. To possess such a body may also be essential to her sense of herself as a sexually desiring and desirable subject. Hence, any political project that aims to dismantle the machinery that turns a female body into a feminine one may well be apprehended by a woman as something that threatens her with desexualization, if not outright annihilation" (p. 39).

Bartky (1998) tells us that beauty is at the core of all women's self-concept. Women perceive beauty as a characteristic that sets them apart from men and underlies their existence. Thus, women are not conscious of beauty's oppressive effects on them.

In addition to sexism, Barthel (1988) showed that the patriarchal construction of women's bodies as objects incorporates classism. According to Barthel, the notion that attractive women do not need to work hard to improve their economic condition because beauty alone aids them in marrying a rich man shows that beauty liberates women from class oppression. However, this notion implicitly perpetuates the association of women with objects. Barthel

stated that because beauty attracts rich men's attention, these men help women become associated with expensive artifacts that only they can afford.

Historian Weitz (1998) also showed that the notion of women's bodies as objects has racial implications. Weitz argued that all women are dehumanized because of the more or less globally held patriarchal notion that the women's body is a man's property. In this regard, Weitz said the women's body is always treated as inferior to men. Non-white women, however, are treated more inhumanely than white women. Weitz cited past trends in the United States' judicial system to illustrate that racism also accompanies sexism. Prior to the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S., Weitz said the law inflicted punishment on White men who raped White women, while it allowed the possibility of non-punishment for White men who raped non-white women. On the other hand, Black men convicted of raping White women were sentenced to die immediately.

From their perspectives on the social construction of women's bodies, feminist researches imply that the social valuation of women based on beauty reinforces sexist, racist, and classist beliefs that all contribute to women's oppression. Some women, however, are adamant to these

notions' oppressive effects on them because they perceive beauty a natural characteristic of femininity. Thus, they willingly, but unwittingly, oppress themselves.

Asian Women: Their Liberation, their Oppression

The difficulty in unifying women to liberate themselves from oppression is further aggravated by women's race and class differences. Non-white women such as Asian American women are often times placed in a situation that forces them to choose to fight for their people, some of whom adhere to their cultural practices that subjugate women, or for their female sexuality at the expense of their culture. Whichever battle Asian Americans choose, research shows that their liberation from one oppression leads to the perpetuation of the rest.

Chow (1991) illustrated the dilemma that Asian Americans face in struggling against oppression. She said that Asian American women, who have developed feminist consciousness, often tend to liberate themselves from racism and classism rather than sexism. The reason that Asian American women choose to adhere to their stereotypical role, Chow argued, is to preserve harmony in their community. However, Chow implied that this option turns Asian American women with feminist consciousness

passive in their fight for gender equality. As Asian American women join their community in fighting for racial equality, Asian American women reenact the submissive role expected of them within the Asian American community and within the United States in general.

Compared to Chow (1991), Pyke and Johnson (1992) showed that some Asian American women opt to liberate themselves from gender oppression by deviating from the stereotypical Asian feminine roles. However, these women do so at the expense of their cultural identity. Pyke and Johnson, who examined racial stereotypes' effects on women's performance of femininity, found that the association of White femininity with freedom and gender equality and Asian femininity with passivity, submissiveness, and gender oppression has led Korean and Vietnamese American women to embrace Whiteness and reject their Asian cultural identity in order to liberate themselves from gender oppression. The authors said that Korean and Vietnamese American women reenact Whiteness by behaving according to stereotypes of White women in social interactions with Whites. However, the authors, also, said that Korean and Vietnamese American women still conform to stereotypes of Asian women when interacting with Asians.

Korean and Vietnamese American women's negotiation of their cultural identity, in this regard, implies that they have not achieved liberation from gender oppression. The authors said that Asian American women have only internalized the racialized construction of femininity, which perpetuates white domination and non-white subordination. Thus, the authors wrote:

. . . our findings illustrate how the resistance of gender oppression among our respondents draws ideologically on the denigration and rejection of ethnic Asian culture, thereby reinforcing white dominance...These findings underscore the crosscutting ways that gender and racial oppression operates such that strategies and ideologies focused on the resistance of one form of domination can reproduce another form. (p. 51)

Kaw (1998) illustrated another means by which Asian American women sacrifice their cultural identity in order to achieve freedom from gender oppression. According to Kaw, a growing number of Asian American women are opting for cosmetic surgery that would make them look white and less Asian. The most popular physical features that Asian

American women are obtaining through cosmetic surgery are double eyelids and a prominent nose.

In her interviews of Asian American women who had already undergone cosmetic surgery, Kaw (1998) found that the association of Asian racial features such as their slit eyes or flat nose to negative behavioral traits such as passivity and a lack of sociability motivate Asian American women to acquire features similar to Whites. While cosmetic surgery indicates rejection of cultural identity and embracing the dominant racial ideology, Kaw said that Asian American women who have changed their physical appearance perceive cosmetic surgery as the fulfillment of their desire to look their best, which implies looking less Asian. Kaw added that these women, also, believe that achieving the dominant racial features would increase their chance of gaining social and economic status. However, Kaw explained, altering their physical appearance doesn't transform Asian American women. Instead, cosmetic surgery normalizes Asian American women by conforming their physical appearance to the patriarchal and white standards of beauty. Thus, Kaw implied, Asian American women who reject the Asian cultural identity through cosmetic surgery

perpetuate white domination and, at the same time, the subordination of women.

Kaw (1998) said that cosmetic surgeons and Asian-American women who patronize cosmetic surgery both participate in supporting the dominant racial and gender ideology that value women for their whiteness and beauty. She said, "With the authority of scientific rationality and technological efficiency, medicine is effective in perpetuating these racist notions. The medical system bolsters and benefits from the larger consumer-oriented society not only by maintaining the idea that beauty should be every woman's goal but also by promoting a beauty standard that requires certain racial features of Asian American women to be modified (p. 168)".

Asian American women's struggles also exist even in fiction. Kang (2002) analyzed three interracial romantic films that paired Asian/American women with Caucasian males. In each film, Kang said, the Asian woman is always involved in a struggle and experiences conflict. She is placed in a situation wherein she has to choose between her ethnic community and her white romantic partner. In the end, she always chooses to be with the latter. This

representation implies that Asian women tend to embrace whiteness rather than their culture.

Chow (1991), Kang (2002), Kaw (1998), and Pyke and Johnson (1992) illustrated the difficulties that Asian American women experience in struggling for liberation from gender, race, and class oppression. Asian American women also, according to the authors, are more oppressed because their cultural identity as non-whites places them in a repressed condition compared to White women, whose whiteness Asian American women equate with freedom. In this regard, the studies indicated that Asian American women perceive their Asian cultural identity oppressive to women. This perception causes Asian American women to reject their Asianness and embrace whiteness in order to free themselves from gender oppression.

Women's gender oppression, feminist researchers have implied, intertwines with race and class oppression. Although women globally experience similar manifestations of sexism, the race and class to which they belong make a difference in their perspectives on social practices that subordinate them as women and level of commitment to women's liberation. In this regard, women are faced with

the challenge of raising the consciousness of their cohorts to and uniting them against all forms of oppression.

The literature review showed that Western colonization changed the structure of gender, race, and class relations in the Filipino culture. Prior to Western colonization, Filipino men and Filipino women perceived themselves equal, despite their differences in domestic and social responsibilities, while they ranked individuals within their ethnic group based on their occupation. Although ethnic domination occurred, it was due to one ethnic group outnumbering the rest. Race was not the foundation of social hierarchy. Western colonization, however, institutionalized gender, race, and class hierarchy in the Philippines by incorporating whiteness into the Filipino culture.

The Western colonial construction of whiteness in the Philippines resonates with early Eurocentric views that associated a white skin tone with aristocracy, purity, and intelligence. From the colonial period to the present, whiteness has assumed various properties. It is now a racial marker, a social class indicator, and a gauge for femininity all at the same time.

Through the Philippine mass media, whiteness' representations in the Philippines during the Western colonial period have been carried over to the postcolonial period. One of the social institutions that has replaced Western colonizers, the Philippine mass media currently reinforce white ideology by promoting the white skin tone as a source of beauty and pride. Since the Filipinos have varying skin tones, the mass media's valorization of a white skin tone perpetuates Western colonizers' institutionalization of gender, racial, and social hierarchy in the Philippines.

The mass media in both the Philippines and other countries function as a socializing agent and ideological apparatus. Their representations of cultural identities influence to a certain degree people's worldviews. In the Philippines, the literature review has indicated that the mass media's association of whiteness with beauty and pride has influenced primarily the Filipino women. It has caused Filipino women to judge their and other women's level of attractiveness based on white standards. Furthermore, it has caused Filipino women who perceive themselves in contrast to the media's representation of beauty to develop a negative self-image.

Television commercials and women's magazines particularly promote dominant ideologies affecting women's self-concept. Western research has shown that these media appeal to women's insecurity by reinforcing the hegemonic ideal image of femininity. At the same time, they persuade women to improve their looks and gain self-confidence through cosmetics.

Thus, this literature review shows that whiteness was primarily constructed from a white patriarchal perspective. While whiteness oppresses non-white men and white and non-white women globally, it further marginalizes non-white women. For instance, feminist studies on Filipino women and Asian women show that all Asian women are in a subordinate position regardless of their location. They are subordinated first, to men, second, to White women and third, to economically privileged White or non-white women. Asian women's threefold subordination places them in a dilemma as they tend to liberate themselves from one form of oppression while they unwittingly contribute in perpetuating the rest.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Research has shown that colonialism instituted the idealization of whiteness in non-white societies (Dela Cadena, 2000; and Pederero, 1998). After the colonial period, the idealization of whiteness in these societies has continued to persist as social institutions took the place of former White Western colonial masters (Gladwin & Saidin, 1980; Kidder, 1997; and Shome, 2002). Among these social institutions are the mass media (David, 2002; Illo, 1998; and Shohat, 1997). This study now seeks to expose the continuous idealization of whiteness in such as non-white society as the Philippines, where women were previously subjected to White Western colonial rule. It also investigates the mass media's contribution in perpetuating the privileging of whiteness in this society, and, by extension, other non-white societies.

As stated earlier, this study specifically focuses on the Philippines. The Filipinos, who were colonized by Spain and the United States for a total of 350 years, have developed a colonial mentality that makes them vulnerable to white domination. In this case, the Filipinos fail to

recognize their subordination and to challenge the white domination of their culture.

In order to meet the research objectives, this study relied on two qualitative research tools. A semiotic analysis of the five skin-whitening cosmetic commercials on television and the seven skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements in women's magazines in the Philippines was used to reveal the nature of the whiteness ideology. In addition, thematic analysis was used to analyze two focus group interviews conducted with 16 Filipino women presumed to be influenced by TV commercials and women's magazine advertisements to use skin-whitening cosmetics. The purpose was to find out how they were affected by skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements, particularly in regard to their self-concepts in relation to race, gender, and class. The focus group interviews selected Filipino women for two reasons. First, they are the primary group of consumers of skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements. Second, according to Flores (2001), the Filipino women also "can very well speak for both men and women. They are truly the bridge between two genders and between two worlds" (p.35).

Semiotic Analysis

Semiotic analysis brings out the ideological meanings encoded in a media text. It has been used numerous times in Western mass media studies to illustrate that television functions not only as an entertainment medium, but as an ideological apparatus (Fiske, 1987; Himmelstein, 1984; Spigel, 1992; and Watson, 1998). It has also aided Western mass media researchers in revealing race, gender, and class ideologies incorporated in women's magazines and advertisements (Cortese, 1999; McCracken, 1993; and Williamson, 1978).

Spigel (1992) was able to decode the representation of television as the other woman through a semiotic analysis of advertisements that featured television. According to Spigel, these advertisements usually depicted men watching television and ignoring the women. Spigel said that this implies women compete with television in attracting the male gaze. Thus, advertisements of television reduce women to the status of objects that are meant to be viewed.

Williamson (1978) showed how women are constructed as objects in her semiotic analysis of cosmetic advertisements in women's magazines published in the United States. These advertisements turn women into objects by separating

women's body parts, such as the eyes, face, and skin, from women and presenting these body parts as desirable objects. In this way, Williamson said, advertisements act as a mirror that reflects and improves upon a person's image. Advertisements, also, entice women to purchase products in order to possess a better image of themselves. Thus, Williamson said advertisements turn women's selves into objects, which women lack and, therefore, desire.

The skin-whitening cosmetic commercials and advertisements analyzed for this study were obtained from a sample of 20 television commercials and 10 women's magazine advertisements in the Philippines. A colleague in the Philippines recorded all commercials shown on the two major Philippine television stations, ABS-CBN Channel 2 and GMA Channel 7. She recorded commercials aired throughout the month of July 2003. Most of these advertisements sponsored locally produced daytime soap operas, which followed noontime game/boudeville-like shows, and also nighttime television dramas, which followed six o'clock news programs. According to my colleague, skin-whitening cosmetic commercials were scarce during that month compared to April and May, which are the summer months, but were representative of those aired in the rest of the year.

However, the skin-whitening advertisements that appeared in July introduced new skin-whitening cosmetics, and it was anticipated that focus group participants would have paid them greater notice.

While she recorded television commercials of skin-whitening cosmetics, the same colleague also purchased women's magazines that contained skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements and cut out these advertisements. She was instructed to select magazines that cater to the middle and upper class Filipino women, who are the target market of skin-whitening cosmetics. The magazines she found containing skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements were *Mod*, *Women's Journal*, and *Women Today*, which were all published in July 2003. In addition, I collected samples of skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements from the same magazines in October 2003. These magazines, which were published monthly by Filipino-owned publishing companies in the Philippines, use the English language as medium of communication. Thus, these magazines cater to the elite women, whose first language is English, and the college educated middle class women, some of whom do not speak English articulately, but write and read English well.

After gathering the data for my semiotic analysis, my colleague sent me two videocassette tapes of various commercials and ten pages of skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements. I selected from all these commercials and advertisements the ones that would be included for the semiotic analysis. In order to be selected, the commercial or advertisement should feature at least one cosmetic product that either contain skin-whitening ingredients or explicitly state its skin-whitening function. The advertisement did not have to feature a human being.

I looked at the magazine advertisements first. Out of the ten skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements, six qualified for the semiotic analysis. These were of Pop lotion and cream products, Johnson's baby milk lotion, DeoWhite deodorant, Likas papaya whitening herbal soap, Vaseline intensive care lotion, and Maxi-Peel exfoliant. After screening to select these advertisements, I began my analysis.

Next, I watched the television commercials and identified those that promote skin-whitening cosmetics. Each time a skin-whitening cosmetic commercial appeared, I took note of the scene, the slogan, the dialogue, and the commercial jingle and wrote them down. Only five out of

the twenty skin-whitening cosmetic TV commercials were recorded and all of these qualified for semiotic analysis. These were Silka papaya soap, RDL skin care products, Secret deodorant, CY Gabriel papaya soap, and Vaseline intensive care lotion. I proceeded with my semiotic analysis of each skin-whitening commercial after I viewed both videocassette tapes.

I analyzed both verbal and visual images in relation to each other in order to reveal each skin-whitening cosmetic advertisement's representation of whiteness. McCracken (1993) said "most purchase advertisements communicate through the interaction of verbal and photographic texts" (p. 100). Advertisement slogans and copy "form a montage with the photograph", which create a new meaning in the reader (McCracken, 1993, p. 100). Since advertisements do not rely on words alone in persuading consumers to purchase advertised products, analysis of advertisements should also include visual text (Millum, 1975). Thus, this study examined both the verbal and visual components of selected skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements.

The verbal images included the advertisement's headline, slogan, and copy, commercial jingle, and dialogue

as well as the product's label. I categorized the verbal images into the three levels of meaning: denotation, connotation, and ideological meaning. Then, I linked the verbal images' ideological meaning to the visual image in order to create a coherent meaning.

The visual images included the models, products, other material objects used, and colors. However, I focused more on the model in advertisements where models appeared. According to Millum (1975), the meanings of visual images are expressed primarily through the model's face, which represents the whole person, and next, the model's body. Particularly, I looked at the model's appearance, movements, gestures, and affective displays because these are all signs and, thus, they convey information and meaning (Millum, 1975). Appearance refers to the model's "age, sex, racial characteristic, size and looks"; manner, to "expression, pose, and clothing"; and gestures, to the model's physical activities in the advertisement (Millum, 1975, p. 56).

As McCracken (1993) mentioned, the reader creates meanings from the interaction of words and visual images in advertisements. This implies that the reader is not a passive receiver of messages. Mass media studies in the

West have shown that readers or audiences create meanings which may or may not be the same as the meanings producers encoded in textual messages (Bodroghkozy, 1992; D'Acci, 1992; Fiske, 1987; Hall, 2001; and Radway, 1985).

Audiences may not initially get the meaning of juxtaposed images, but exposure to the same advertisement over and over again will lead them to discover its intended meaning (Messaris, 1997). Then, audiences can decide whether to accept or reject the dominant ideology that the advertisements are promoting. The second phase of the research methodology; thus, involved audience analysis of skin-whitening advertisements.

Focus Group Interviews

Both focus group interviews were intended to find out the cultural implications of television commercials and women's magazine advertisements of skin-whitening cosmetics in the Philippines. However, I avoided assuming that advertisements have absolute power in influencing audiences' mindset and behavior. The participants were simply asked whether advertisements influenced them in purchasing skin-whitening cosmetics during the screening survey. The participants, then, were asked to explain how

skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements represent a white skin tone.

The focus group interviews started with participant recruitment. Since this study was contextualized within the Philippines, the participant recruitment and the focus group interviews were both held in the Philippines. The participants for the focus group interviews were recruited from among Filipino women who use skin-whitening cosmetics. These women predominantly come from the A and B classes, or upper class, and the C class or middle class (Robles, 2003). While upper class Filipino women usually purchase imported cosmetic products, middle class Filipino women usually purchase Philippine-made cosmetics but occasionally buy imported ones. The D class or lower class Filipino women, on the other hand, only buy talcum powder and/or lipstick (Robles, 2003). Although talcum powder also comes in white color, it does not have skin-whitening ingredient and does not intend to have a lasting skin-whitening effect. This study is limited to Filipino women who use cosmetics with skin-whitening ingredients. Since lower class Filipino women only rely on talcum powder to whiten their skin, they were excluded from the focus group interview. Thus, the participant recruitment was conducted

in locations where a combination of upper and middle class Filipino women can be found.

In recruiting participants, I conducted a screening survey (see Appendix C) of 200 Filipino women. The screening survey aimed to recruit participants who share a common background and behavior. Through the screening survey, we were able to obtain information on prospective participants' age, familiarity with cosmetic advertisements, cosmetic buying behavior, communication skills level, skin tone, willingness and availability to participate in the focus group interview, and contact information. While I conducted my screening survey in Calocan City, my colleague conducted her screening survey in Dagupan City.

The participant recruitment was supposed to be held only in Dagupan City. Particularly, the screening survey was to be conducted inside the cosmetic section of CSI Department Store, Dagupan City's major department store. However, my request for permission from the CSI Department Store Management to conduct my screening survey within their store premises was denied. Thus, I modified my participant recruitment process.

I asked a colleague, who is a resident of Dagupan City, to conduct half of the screening survey in Dagupan City's Bonuan District. This district is a hub for higher education institutions and various types of business. Thus, most of the people who walk on the streets of this district are college students, professionals, and general employees. She conducted the survey on October 12 and 13, 2003.

I conducted the second part of the screening survey in front of Ever Department Store, which is located within the Grand Central Mall in Caloocan City, on October 13. Since Caloocan City is more developed and liberal compared to Dagupan City, there is a possibility that Ever Department Store's managers are more open-minded. At first, I conducted the screening survey within the store's cosmetic section without permission from the manager. I was able to survey three Filipino women, who I spotted selecting skin-whitening products, until the security guard stopped me and asked me to obtain permission to conduct the survey from the manager. The manager, however, referred me to the mall's security administration office. I handed the security official a letter (see Appendix D) requesting permission to conduct a survey and a copy of the California

State University San Bernardino IRB approval to use human subjects (see Appendix D). He approved my request, but allowed me to do the survey in front of the department store for three hours only. Nevertheless, I was able to survey 100 Filipino women.

Instead of handing the screening survey to the respondent, we asked the questions and noted the respondent's answers on the questionnaire. In this way, we were able to terminate the survey immediately when the respondent was under 18 or over 45 years old, did not use skin-whitening cosmetics, and were not influenced by TV commercials or women's magazine advertisements to use skin-whitening cosmetics. We asked the questions in English, but occasionally translated the questions to Tagalog for respondents who had difficulty answering the question. We also allowed respondents to express themselves in Tagalog.

After the screening survey, I solely determined who among the respondents in Caloocan City and Dagupan City using skin-whitening cosmetics and between the age of 18 and 45 were eligible to be included in the focus group interview. I read the responses and made the decision as to whether a prospective participant meets the focus group interview selection criteria. The participant was

considered eligible for the focus group interview if she is familiar with television commercials and women's magazine advertisements of skin-whitening cosmetics, is influenced by these commercials and advertisements in purchasing skin-whiteners, has a medium-to-high level of communication skills, and is willing to participate in the focus group interview.

Out of the 200 prospective participants in the screening survey, 20 participants were selected for the focus group interview. My colleague and I each contacted ten participants from our respective areas either by phone or by text messaging. All 20 participants were informed of the incentives, date, time, and location of the interview and were asked to confirm their attendance.

The first focus group interview was held in Caloocan City. It was held at 9:30 in the morning at Shakey's Pizza Restaurant, also located in the Grand Central Mall. Only six of the ten participants were able to make it to the focus group interview. The second focus group interview was conducted at 2:00 in the afternoon at a colleague's residence in Dagupan City. In contrast to the first focus group, all ten participants from Dagupan City attended the

second focus group interview. Each focus group interview lasted two hours.

In conducting each focus group interview, I began by introducing myself, by giving an overview of my research, and by stating the purpose of the interview. I explained that the interview would be recorded and transcribed for their responses to be used as data for my research. Furthermore, I informed the participants that their names and responses would be published as part of my thesis. However, I stated that I will use a name that sounds like theirs, instead of their real names, if they choose to remain anonymous. The participants opted to conceal their identity.

Then, I asked the participants if they had any questions about or objections about the research. When none of the participants answered, I gave each participant two copies of the informed consent form (see Appendix D), which the California State University San Bernardino Institutional Review Board (CSUSB IRB) Committee approved. I read aloud the informed consent and, afterwards, I asked them to sign the form if they agree to the terms and conditions stated in the form. If they do not agree, I gave them the option to leave the form blank and exit the group. I collected

one copy of the form from each participant and left each participant a copy for her records, after the forms were signed.

Next, I gave each participant two copies of the "Sample Photograph/Video/Audio Use Informed Consent Form For Non-Medical Human Subjects" (see Appendix D), which the CSUSB IRB Committee approved and provided. I asked them to check the box for audiotape. Afterwards, I read aloud each term stated in the form and asked the participants to place their initial beside each statement to indicate their consent. Again, I collected one copy of the form from each participant and left each participant a copy, after the forms were initialed.

At this time, I turned on my audiocassette recorder. I stated the number of the focus group interview, whether it was the first or second group, the title of my research, and the date, time and location of the interview. Afterwards, I asked each participant to introduce herself. The introduction included the participants' name, occupation, single or married status, and hometown. Introducing themselves helped the participants feel at ease with each other. Then, I asked the first question from my

guide questions (see Appendix C) to formally start the discussion.

The first focus group interview was more structured than the second focus group interview. Although the first one involved only a small number of participants, all expressed their views concerning each question without hesitation. However, the participants would only give answers pertaining to the question specifically asked.

The second focus group interview went smoothly. Most of the participants were willing to share their thoughts without waiting to be called. Each of these active participants would interject one after the other. Often times, their views would address more than one question in my list. However, some of the participants had to be prodded to talk. Once they did, they copied each other's statements or the active participants' statements. In this regard, the first focus group interview produced a greater variety of data.

After both focus group interviews ended, I transcribed the discussions from each group verbatim. Then, I organized both groups' responses into themes using a wholistic approach. Themes are summaries of central ideas that a researcher has discovered from the text of lived

experiences (van Manen, 1990). The wholistic approach looks for the meaning that would generally explain a collective narrative.

In conducting the thematic analysis of my focus group interviews, I followed Moustakas' (1994) steps in analyzing transcribed interviews. First, I listed all the participants' expressions, even if these expressions consisted only of one word such as "yes" or "no". Second, I selected the expressions that are relevant to my research questions and eliminated those that are not. Third, I reviewed the selected expressions and determined which ones convey similar ideas. Last, I formulated a theme that best conveys the meaning of each collective ideas.

Both semiotic analysis and focus group interview methods are popularly used in qualitative research involving women (Madriz, 2000; and van Zoonen, 2000). Semiotic analysis brings out the deeper meaning of a text as it goes beyond quantifying stereotypical images of women in the media (van Zoonen, 2000) while a focus group interview creates a collective testimony of women's experiences and individual lives (Madriz, 2000). Thus, semiotic analysis and focus group interview were appropriate and effective tools in conducting this study.

Limitations of the Study

Various social institutions such as the school, the ruling elite, and the mass media have replaced Western colonizers in promoting whiteness in the Philippines. This study, however, limits the investigation of whiteness to the Philippine media. Since whiteness incorporates race, gender, and class ideologies, investigating its representations could be best done in examining the apparatus that promotes ideology. The mass media were selected for this study because they particularly function as an ideological apparatus.

In examining the influence of the Philippine mass media's promotion of whiteness on Filipino audiences, this study only included Filipino female audiences. Although Filipino men are increasingly using skin-whitening cosmetics, whiteness does not oppress them in terms of gender relations. Whiteness is associated with beauty. Women are valued for their beauty while men are valued for their intelligence. Thus, having a white skin tone does not place Filipino men at the top of the social strata. Future research could investigate why Filipino men use skin-whitening cosmetics and how Filipino women perceive this behavior.

As a result of migration and economic opportunities abroad, Filipinos have been scattered in different world regions. Both Filipino men and women have become mobile in search of a better life and their dislocation goes beyond the Philippine national borders. This study, however, is limited to Filipino women residing in the Philippines. Filipino women's experiences of whiteness are not the same as Filipino women's experiences abroad, particularly in Western societies. In the U.S., for instance, light-skinned Filipino women are not in a dominant position along with Caucasian women. All Filipino women are part of the minority groups in the United States and categorized as women of color regardless of the lightness or darkness of their skin. Whereas Filipino women in the Philippines openly engaged in lightening their skin tone, Filipino women in the U.S. are inhibited to do so (Root, 1997). Skin-whitening in the U.S. would signify denial of one's racial identity (Root, 1997). This does not necessarily mean that Filipino women who migrated to the U.S., or to any Western country, have lost their prejudices against a dark skin tone. Future research could explore whether Filipino women who were raised in the Philippines and migrated to a Western country, where racism is an issue,

would still adhere to a white ideology. In addition, future research could investigate whether Filipino women in the U.S. would raise their children to idealize whiteness or appreciate themselves and their cultural identity.

CHAPTER FOUR
BEHIND THE WHITE MASK

Findings of the semiotic analysis of the six skin-whitening cosmetic magazine advertisements and five television commercials containing explicit skin-whitening reference have addressed the first research question (see Appendix A, Tables 1 and 2). This study found that these advertisements equate whiteness with beauty, aristocracy, and power. In addition, it promotes early 19th century American republican ideology that whiteness is tantamount to purity. Thus, skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements legitimize colonial legacies that idealize whiteness in postcolonial Philippines.

Although whiteness represents various ideological meanings, the association of a white skin tone with beauty always emerges in each skin-whitening advertisement analyzed for this study. The hegemonic notion of white-is-beautiful intersects the other representations of whiteness. This implies that skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements represent whiteness and beauty as interchangeable and synonymous with each other. As a whole, the skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements promoted

whiteness as the secret to everlasting beauty, the antidote to poverty, the epitome of purity, and the cure for insecurity.

The Secret to Everlasting Beauty

Since cosmetics are produced and consumed for aesthetic purposes, commercials and advertisements position cosmetics with skin-whitening agents as products that would satisfy female consumers' desire to improve their looks. They promise to make women beautiful by whitening their skin. In this regard, skin-whitening cosmetic commercials and advertisements associate a white skin tone with beauty. Among these, RDL, Silka, Pop, and Likas particularly promoted their product's ability to make female consumers look white and beautiful.

RDL's commercial did not explicitly claim that RDL products whiten the skin. The sign "whitening" was simply written on product labels, which signified that RDL products function as skin-whiteners. Instead of emphasizing RDL products' capacity to whiten the skin, however, the television commercial focused on the aesthetic benefit that female consumers would gain from using RDL skin-whitening cosmetics. The commercial's slogan, "With

RDL, beauty is yours to keep", informed women that RDL will help them maintain their beauty by keeping their skin white. In this regard, RDL's commercial linked beauty to a white skin tone.

RDL further reinforced the white ideology embedded in beauty through its commercial models who are all Filipino women with light skin tone. However, the camera closed in on the models' faces only. This implies that the advertisements place the significance of whiteness on women's faces. In addition, the advertisement turns white women's faces into desirable objects.

Similar to RDL's commercial, Pop's advertisement in a women's magazine subtly promoted the association of a white skin tone with beauty. The slogan that appeared on the magazine page, "We enhance the loveliness of women," only claimed that Pop products will make women more beautiful. It does not give a physical description of the women whom Pop considers beautiful. However, the labels on the advertised Pop products, "NUTRIENT PEARL WHITE LOTION" and "Beauty white with pearl nutrient", signified that Pop associates a white skin tone with beauty. The label implies that Pop products do not whiten a dark skin. Pop only nourishes skin that is already white in order to

enhance its loveliness. Combining both slogan and label, the advertisement creates the message that Pop products are for women whose skin tone is already white. Thus, light-skinned women are the women who Pop considers lovely and whose loveliness Pop wants to enhance.

While Pop's advertisement promotes that white women are beautiful, the advertisement, at the same time, suggests that white-skinned women could still improve their physical appearance. Pop's slogan, which was cited earlier, indicates that white-skinned women could look better. Juxtaposed against the slogan is an image of a Caucasian woman with rosy, glowing skin, dark hair, and green eyes. In this case, the slogan functions as the signifier while the image, the signified. The signified represents the better image of light-skinned women. As a whole, the advertisement implies that Pop would enhance light-skinned women's loveliness by making their skin tone as white as Caucasian women's.

Looking at this image, Filipino readers who are familiar with the Philippine entertainment industry would surely be reminded of Bing Loyzaga, a popular Filipino singer and actress in the 90's. Pop's featured model and Loyzaga share similar facial features except for the color

of their eyes. The association between these two female figures makes Pop's advertisement more persuasive. Pop shows that the Caucasian woman is the better image of feminine beauty and whiteness. The advertisement, also, promotes White women in the West as superior over white-skinned women in a former colony and the gauge against which whiteness and beauty should be measured. Thus, Pop not only reinforces the association of whiteness with beauty but perpetuates the colonial relationship between the West and the Philippines in a postcolonial era.

Pop, which is a non-Filipino brand of cosmetics, included in their advertisement the cities wherein their products are distributed. These cities, Paris, London and New York, are known for their haute couture. Thus, the advertisement indicates that Pop products are geared towards White Western elite.

While RDL and Pop simply indicates that a white skin tone signifies beauty, Silka showed the social values that the Filipino culture attaches to a white skin tone. Among these values are the physical attractiveness and sexual desirability that Filipino men find in light-skinned Filipino women. In the television commercial, which featured Filipino characters, Silka showed a young man

smelling the exposed white shoulders of a young woman standing in front of him. Unable to resist his urge, he kisses the young woman's shoulders, after which, he hears a female voice that ends his fantasy. He finds himself face to face with the dark-skinned female cashier. Here, the advertisement shows that a white skin tone is important for women, as it is important to men. The whiteness of a women's skin, according to the commercial, turns men on. Silka attempts to persuade Filipino female audiences to purchase its skin[whitening soap by showing that light-skinned women could easily find a man. Thus, Silka shows that race ideology intertwines with gender ideology.

Silka's television commercial also incorporates the male gaze embedded in the white standardization of beauty. In the next scene, Silka reveals that the young man and the young woman have no relationship with and are strangers to each other. Both are customers standing in line to place their order. However, Silka constructs a distinction between these two customers based on their gender. While the commercial positions the man as the looker, it positions the woman as the object being looked at and desired. Thus, Silka's television commercial reinforces another White Western colonial legacy - the domination of

Filipino men over Filipino women.

Silka also reproduced the bipolar oppositions between blackness and whiteness. The young woman, who is a customer, signifies whiteness while the female cashier signifies blackness. The young woman, who has a dark straight hair that falls down to his shoulders and a slim figure, is shown wearing a sleeveless orange top, that exposes her arms and shoulders. On the other hand, the female cashier is dressed up similarly to a Black mammy, which became the dominant representation of Black women in the American media prior to the civil rights movement (Weems, 2000). In the American media, the Black mammy was depicted as a heavysset woman who always tucked her curly hair under her stocking caps and wore an apron. In Silka's advertisement, the female cashier has a round figure and wears a hair net, instead of stocking caps, and also an apron. Silka's contrasting depictions between a light-skinned and a dark-skinned Filipino woman, thus, also reflect the intertwining of racial and class ideologies. While the advertisement associates a white skin tone with the bourgeoisie, it associates a dark skin tone with the working class.

The next advertising text also showed the interrelations among race, gender, and class ideologies in the white standardization of beauty. The advertisement for Likas, which is a well-known brand name of skin-whitening soap in the Philippines, associates a white complexion with beauty and wealth. Instead of relying on visual images to transmit its message, Likas' advertisement used more verbal images.

Likas equates whiteness with beauty by combining the signifiers "fairer", which denotes whiter, and "beautiful" in a statement that describes the benefits female consumers will gain from using Likas papaya soap. Here is an excerpt from Likas' advertisement copy:

In essence, Likas papaya is made of true, organic, all-natural botanical ingredients and even enriched with papaya extracts & enzymes to produce that smoother, undeniably fairer, beautiful skin.

The ad copy placed whiteness and beauty within the same context and category. Thus, Likas implies that whiteness and beauty are synonymous with each other.

Through the ad copy, Likas also expressed that the white standardization of beauty has economic implications. The first paragraph said:

If it's beauty, never take chances. The small difference in amount that you may find in other brands does not guarantee you of a more effective, more satisfying result.

Here, Likas tells female consumers that beauty also has a social hierarchy. The price of a skin-whitening soap determines the level of whiteness a female consumer will achieve. This means that a skin-whitening soap with a higher price will lead to a whiter, beautiful skin. Thus, the advertisement implies that light-skinned Filipino women in the upper class are more beautiful than those in the middle or lower classes since the former can afford the high price of beauty. In general, the advertisement implies that the white standard of beauty connotes social status.

Since the advertisement associates a white skin tone with the elite, the advertisement associates a dark skin tone with the middle and lower classes. Thus, Likas' advertisement targets middle and lower class Filipino women who desire to be white, but would choose to purchase a low-

priced brand of skin-whitening soap in lieu of their family's needs. The last paragraph of Likas' ad copy, tells these women to give more importance to their physical appearance and encourage them to spend their money on luxuries rather than on necessities:

Choose the right investment when it comes to maintaining your beauty. Choose only the trusted, the proven effective...Likas Papaya Organic Herbal Whitening Soap.

At the same time, it reinforces the patriarchal notion that women are valued for their beauty while men are valued for their intelligence.

RDL, Pop, Silka, and Likas show that the construction of a white skin tone as the standard of beauty incorporates dominant race, gender, and class ideologies. These ideologies usually overlap. However, in this study, gender ideology dominates the association of a white skin tone with beauty, since beauty is attributed to femininity.

The Antidote to Poverty

Skin-whitening cosmetic commercials and advertisements measure Filipino women's success in terms of career and marriage. CY Gabriel and Maxi-Peel show that a white skin

tone enables Filipino women to achieve success. In these advertisements, a white skin tone represents beauty, which gives women opportunities to become rich and famous as well as have a husband and child.

CY Gabriel showed the association of a white skin tone with success by employing a reigning Filipino beauty queen, who is light-skinned like the previous beauty queens of the Philippines, to endorse its papaya soap in a television commercial. Although the television commercial does not promote that CY Gabriel whitens the skin, the signifier "papaya" indicates that CY Gabriel has the ability to whiten the skin. Papaya, a tropical fruit, is a popular whitening agent that most cosmetic corporations in the Philippines commonly use in manufacturing skin-whiteners. By choosing a Filipino beauty queen to promote a skin-whitening cosmetic, CY Gabriel institutionalizes Filipinos' perception of beauty based on a white skin tone. At the same time, CY Gabriel links whiteness and beauty to aristocracy and power.

Wearing a white towel wrapped around her body, the Filipino beauty queen manifests simplicity. While this virtue contradicts the lifestyle associated with her

position, it complements her beauty secrets, which she shares with her audiences. She said:

As a beauty queen, my beauty secrets are simple:
clean living and healthy lifestyle.

Looking straight at the camera as she spoke these words, she appeared to be a queen addressing her people. In this case, she was addressing the Filipino masses composed mainly of the middle and lower classes.

The Filipino beauty queen, in this commercial, offers hope of upward mobility to Filipino women with simple lives. Her message implies that underprivileged Filipino women have the opportunity to achieve a high social position. Filipino women only need beauty in order to gain such opportunity. They can achieve beauty simply by keeping themselves clean and healthy.

The Filipino beauty queen, afterwards, mentioned that she uses CY Gabriel papaya soap to help her maintain her beauty. Here, the commercial implies that beauty comes from having a white skin tone. Since the commercial links clean living and healthy lifestyle to beauty, CY Gabriel, thus, associates cleanliness and health to a white skin tone. Moreover, the commercial perpetuates Mestizas as the ideal image of Philippine feminine beauty.

Like CY Gabriel, Maxi-Peel featured popular Filipino Mestizas in the Philippines to promote its skin-whitening astringent in print advertisement. Kristine Hermosa and Claudine Barretto are both well-known young dramatic actresses in contemporary Philippine showbusiness. Synovate, a global market research, revealed that Hermosa ranked first and Barretto, second among the favorite actresses of the Philippines (Asian Pacific Post, 2001). Through these female celebrities, the advertisement shows that a white skin tone is the Filipino women's key to fame and fortune.

Maxi-Peel exfoliant works as a skin-whitener by peeling off the skin's outer layer, which tends to turn dark due to sun exposure. As the skin's outer layer peels off, the skin's inner and whiter layer is exposed. In this way, Maxi-Peel exfoliant whitens the skin. However, the advertisement promotes Maxi-Peel exfoliant as a beauty product rather than a skin-whitener. The advertisement uses synonyms for whiteness to conceal the white ideology embedded in Maxi-Peel exfoliant.

The advertisement's headline, "What Keeps Kristine and Claudine Peeling Beautiful?", already gives readers the hint that the advertisement is about a beauty product. In

addition, the signifier "peeling" reveals the answer to the question asked at the beginning of the advertisement. The advertisement implies that skin peeling keeps the two female celebrities beautiful. Thus, the advertisement emphasizes skin peeling as a process of beautifying rather than whitening the skin.

The advertisement, also, avoided using the signifier "white" to describe Kristine and Claudine's complexion. For instance, the advertisement described Kristine's skin smooth and milky. The adjective "milky" embodies the qualities of milk, particularly the milk's white color. On the other hand, the advertisement described Claudine, who also has a natural white skin tone, luminous beauty. Hence, the advertisement uses milk and beauty as synonyms for a white skin tone.

Both CY Gabriel and Maxi-Peel showed that a light skin tone gives Filipino women access to wealth and power. Since a light skin tone signifies beauty, the advertisements imply that Filipino women do not need hard work, intelligence, and skills in order to reach the top of the social ladder. Skin-whitening cosmetic commercials and advertisements showed that beauty is not enough for middle or lower class women to move to the upper class. Thus,

they perpetuate not only the association of whiteness with class superiority, but also the patriarchal notion of women as display objects.

While CY Gabriel and Maxi-Peel depicted a light-skinned woman successful in her career, Vaseline portrayed a light-skinned Filipino woman successful in her married life. Vaseline, however, shows that having a white skin tone does not necessarily spell success. A light-skinned woman, according to Vaseline, should not even have dark spots at all on any part of her body to guarantee that she would find a husband.

Vaseline used analogy in order to convey its message. In the commercial, three Filipino Mestizas are compared. The commercial begins with a woman reading a book by herself on a park bench. She has short curly hair and wears a floral, short-sleeved lavender dress that is matched with a lavender scarf around her neck. The camera zooms in on her elbow and reveals a slight brown spot. Then, the camera shifts to another woman who comes in with a Dalmatian and sits beside the first woman. She has short straight hair and wears a white dress with black polka dots. The camera zooms in on her knees and reveals a light brown spot. Another woman, who has straight black hair

arranged in a chignon and wears a colorful dress with thin straps, joins the two women. The camera, also, zooms in on her elbows and knees, which are as white as the rest of her skin. A few minutes after she sits down, her husband and her son come out from behind the bench and embrace her. In this regard, the advertisement depicted the third woman in contrast with the other two. The ad suggests that an even white skin tone makes a woman complete and gives a woman an edge over other women.

The commercials show that all three female characters have something in common. Aside from having a light skin tone, they have outfits that match their accessories. They are well-coordinated in their physical appearance. Their appearances, also, complement their personality. The first character, for instance, seems reserved. She represents an intellectual woman who spends her time buried in a book. In contrast, the second character is outgoing and enjoys physical activities. The third character, meanwhile, appears conservative but sophisticated. While all three look similar, the advertisement reveals that the third character is different. She has an even white skin tone and, furthermore, a happy married life compared with the other two women, who are both single.

CY Gabriel, Maxi-Peel and Vaseline suggest that a white skin tone is the key to Filipino women's success. According to them, a white skin tone gives women beauty, which leads them to achieve a glamorous profession and a high social status. However, they also suggest that having a white skin tone does not guarantee women success. Women must compete against each other. In order to come out the winner, Vaseline suggests that women's skin tone must be perfect.

The Guardian of Purity

The republican ideology that perceives the white race pure (Takaki, 2002) has been resurrected in skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements. Johnson's and Vaseline both echo the republican spirit, which Jefferson popularized in the 19th century (Takaki, 2002), into the 21st century by associating a white skin tone with purity. These advertisements defined purity as innocence and flawlessness.

Johnson's advertisement symbolized purity through an infant. Johnson's featured a young Filipino Mestiza holding a Mestiza baby close to her shin. The tip of their noses was touching and both models were laughing. Through

this image, the ad suggests that Johnson's baby milk lotion will turn an adult woman's skin as soft and smooth as a baby's skin. This is further complemented by the headline and the ad copy. The headline, "Baby your skin", tells women to pamper their skin, to take care of their skin the way they would take care of a baby. According to the ad, women can baby their skin by using Johnson's baby milk lotion because "it contains natural milk proteins which moisturize and help maintain the skin's natural fairness". In this case, the ad positions Johnson's baby milk lotion as nourishment for the skin.

Although the ad does not explicitly claim that Johnson's baby milk lotion whitens the skin, it positions the product as a skin-whitening cosmetic because it tells the readers that by using Johnson's baby milk lotion, they "can have the baby smooth, baby fair and baby beautiful skin" they were born with.

Vaseline defines whiteness as being free from impurities. Vaseline's advertising headline

New Vaseline White & Clear Lotion

the only one enriched with Mela-Lipids:

equates whiteness with clarity by placing the adjectives white and clear together to produce the same meaning. In contrast, the advertising copy,

Targets your dark spots

While actively whitening your skin

Provides Double UV Protection

From the sun and further skin darkening

equates darkness with impurities that damages a white skin tone and, therefore, must be eradicated. Vaseline tells female consumers that by keeping the skin white at all times, whiteness will prevail over darkness. In this case, Vaseline represents darkness as an infection that must be prevented from contaminating whiteness.

By associating whiteness with innocence and purity, Johnson's and Vaseline reproduce the traditional representation of whiteness as good. Since the opposite of whiteness is darkness, these advertisements also represent darkness as evil. Johnson's and Vaseline claim that their products will prevent and eliminate darkness by whitening the skin. In this regard, these advertisements represent whiteness as the guardian of purity.

The Cure for Insecurity

A deodorant, as the term suggests, eliminates odor, particularly a foul odor. Skin-whitening cosmetic commercials and advertisements, however, have given deodorant a new meaning and, therefore, a new function. DeoWhite and Secret primarily promote their deodorant product's ability to whiten underarms. They tell female consumers that white, instead of odor-free, underarms will give them self-confidence.

DeoWhite places more importance on white underarms by citing first its product's skin-whitening function in the ad copy. The ad copy stated:

Your white underarms with DeoWhite are to die for. It's because DeoWhite is the one with Axillume Plus that whitens dark underarms. DeoWhite also kills odor-causing bacteria and helps control sweat.

The signifier also, which appears in the last statement of the copy, indicates that DeoWhite regards its product's anti-bacterial and anti-perspiration functions as additional perks only. Hence, DeoWhite implies that whiteness comes first before hygiene.

While DeoWhite's ad copy informs consumers of DeoWhite deodorant's skin-whitening function, DeoWhite's heading and visual image show the value of having white underarms. The heading, "Dying with envy...use DeoWhite", suggests that DeoWhite can cure women of insecurity by whitening women's underarms. The visual image, in turn, illustrates why women with dark underarms envy women with white underarms. DeoWhite used contrasting images in conveying its message. The advertisement featured one female college student, who is wearing a sleeveless top, sitting on one side of the bench while five male college students are looking at her. The female student seems to be unfazed and enjoying the attention.

On the other side of the bench, the advertisement showed two brown-skinned female college students, who are wearing blouses with sleeves, watching the scene at the other side. They have sad faces. These contrasting images have two implications. First, the advertisement implies that a woman with white underarms is privileged to wear clothes that expose a private body part. In the Filipino culture, dark underarms are embarrassing because the dark color makes underarms look unwashed and unshaven. Thus, Filipino women who wear clothes with sleeves all the time

are more likely concealing dark underarms. Second, the advertisement implies that women with exposed white underarms attract men. Thus, having white underarms make women physically attractive and sexually appealing:

Through contrast, DeoWhite reproduces bipolar oppositions between black/darkness and white/whiteness. The advertisement associates black/darkness with repression, insecurity, non-aggressiveness and repulsion. On the other hand, the advertisement associates white/whiteness with freedom, self-confidence, aggressiveness, and attractiveness.

Similarly, Secret shows that whiteness gives Filipino women confidence to expose their underarms which, in the Filipino culture, are considered private body parts. The commercial, also, emphasizes Secret deodorant's ability to whiten rather than deodorize underarms. According to the ad, Secret "keeps your skin naturally light." It demonstrated how Secret saves women from embarrassment. A fair-skinned woman wearing a blue, sleeveless is stretching her arms upward and backward, thus, exposing her white and dry underarms. A male model comes up to her and helps her stretch her arms. His face gets close to her underarm. She frowns. The word "Exposed?" comes up. Then, she

smiles. Her reaction showed that she was embarrassed at first, then became at ease, after remembering that her underarms are white. Thus, Secret shows that white underarms relieve women of insecurity. At the same time, men are attracted to women with white underarms.

DeoWhite and Secret both show that a dark skin tone is a source of women's shame and insecurity. These uncomfortable and negative feelings oppress women. In order to be liberated, DeoWhite and Secret call for the elimination of dark spots. They urge women with dark skin tone or dark spots on their skin to become white. Thus, DeoWhite and Secret associate whiteness with confidence.

Discussion

Consistent with discourses on the colonial construction of whiteness, this study found that television commercials and women's magazine advertisements of skin-whitening cosmetics in the Philippines reinforce colonial legacies that idealize whiteness. They show that whiteness, visibly represented through a white skin tone, is associated with beauty, wealth, power, and purity. Although both Filipino men and women reenact whiteness, the commercials and advertisements indicate that whiteness is

more significant for the latter because beauty and purity are both stereotypes of femininity. A white skin tone, according to the commercials and advertisements, bestows women the beauty that they need in order to gain access to wealth and power. While they define wealth in terms of having a lucrative career, they manifest power through self-confidence.

Since the skin-whitening cosmetic commercials and advertisements analyzed for this study echo the colonial construction of whiteness, this study concurs with other research that concluded the mass media was an ideological apparatus and neo-colonizer. Although whiteness most prominently exudes racism, the semiotic analysis of skin-whitening cosmetic commercials and advertisements illustrates that whiteness equally promotes sexism and classism. Their stereotypical association of a white skin tone with femininity shows that the male gaze is embedded in the socio-cultural construction of whiteness. The male gaze, according to Bartky (1998), Franzoi (2001), and Millum (1975), dictates how women should look like as well as how women should look at themselves and at each other.

Skin-whitening cosmetic commercials and advertisements, also, signify that a white skin tone, instead of good conduct, makes women pure. Their association of a white skin tone with purity reverberates with the 19th century perception that the White race symbolizes purity and the Black race symbolizes filth. Thus, skin-whitening cosmetic commercials and advertisements' promotion of whiteness establishes the white skin tone as an ideal component of the image of femininity and the standard by which women evaluate themselves.

CHAPTER FIVE

WHITENESS UNVEILED

The results of the semiotic analysis of skin-whitening cosmetic television commercials and women's magazine advertisements in the preceding chapter has addressed this study's first research question, do skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements reinforce the colonial construction of whiteness. It has shown that these commercials and advertisements perpetuate colonial legacies that associate whiteness with beauty, wealth, and power. However, the semiotic analysis deals only with one objective of this research, which is to expose how the Philippine mass media promote whiteness. The other objective of this study is to investigate how the mass media's promotion of whiteness contributes in perpetuating current Filipino cultural identity crisis. This chapter presents findings on the three research questions asked through group interviews of Filipino women who have been influenced by television commercials and women's magazine advertisements to use skin-whitening cosmetics. Following the focus group interviews was the thematic analysis of the participants' collective narratives. This study found that the following

three themes emerged from their discussions: skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements' representations of whiteness have caused them as Filipino women to perceive themselves as inferior; have engaged Filipino women in unknowingly perpetuating their subordination; and have pacified Filipino women to keep them from struggling against Western domination of their Filipino culture. In the following sections is evidence to support these three findings.

Whiteness Diminishes Filipino Women's Self-concept

Advertisements, according to Western mass media studies (Twitchell, 1996; Vinikas, 1992; Watson, 1998; Bignell, 1997; Currie, 1999; and McCracken, 1993), attempt to persuade audiences to buy their products by associating products with social values and images that appeal to human desires. Advertisements that target women in particular often make women feel insecure through feminine images that represent the hegemonic notion of beauty, sexual desirability, and self-satisfaction. Advertisements' influence on audiences, however, is determined by other factors crucial to audiences' internalization of

advertising messages. First, audiences must have considerable amount of exposure to advertisements. Second, audiences must be able to decode the same meaning that advertisers encoded in the advertisements.

Focus group interview participants in this study demonstrated heavy exposure to skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements by reiterating what these advertisements say either about skin-whitening cosmetics or a white skin tone. At the same time, the participants' perceptions about themselves in relation to advertisements were shown to have motivated them to use skin-whitening cosmetics. Thus, the focus group interview has addressed the second research question:

Does exposure to skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements cause non-white Filipino women to perceive themselves as inferior to light-skinned women and to use skin-whiteners to raise their self-esteem?

Participants from both focus groups recalled primarily the skin-whitening cosmetic commercials and advertisements' association of whiteness with beauty.

Focus Group 1

Amy: If you're consistent in using the product, you will be able to maintain your good looks.

Linda: If you use the product, you will be more beautiful.

Olivia: If you're white, it (the product) adds to your beauty because it (the product) reduces the skin melatonin. They (advertisements) also say that guys will be attracted to you.

Focus Group 2

Daisy: It attracts guys.

Rosa: Boys will be attracted to you if you have a smooth skin.

Jackie: He (husband or boyfriend) will always be by your side.

Mercy: Involving boys is popular in (skin-whitening cosmetic) commercials at present. Do you recall that commercial showing a girl with dark armpits? What a turn off.

Myla: Block & White.

Rosa: That's true. Dark armpits are really a turn off. You can't wear sleeveless.

Mercy: That's why the model clipped her arms to her side.

The participants' reading of the skin-whitening advertisements they were exposed to resembled my findings

of skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements' representations of whiteness. The similarity of our findings, however, should not be taken as an indication that the focus group participants were trained to read media texts using semiotic analysis. Some skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements explicitly show that a white skin tone represents beauty. The Block & White TV commercial, which the second focus group participants cited in their discussion, exemplifies the blatant way skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements promote whiteness.

Block & White has not been included in my textual analysis of skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements, but I am familiar with this commercial. The commercial features a light-skinned female server wearing a sleeveless top. As she approaches three male customers, she overhears these men talk about women. Each male customer mentions that women with dark underarms turn them off. The server, then, clips her arms and backs into the dark section of the restaurant, which implies that she has dark underarms.

Similar to my semiotic analysis of Vaseline skin-whitening lotion, Block & White emphasizes the importance of having even light skin tone. Thus, Block & White reproduces the anti-miscegenation views of 19th century

White Americans, which proposed that the intellectual, entrepreneurial, and virtuous White race be protected from the barbaric, lazy, and sensual non-white races (Takaki, 2001). These views dichotomized the relationship between Whites and non-whites. Through them, White Americans in the 19th century were able to justify their domination of non-whites. However, Block & White has concealed its racist message by prominently showing whiteness as a gender issue.

Since ideological meanings are latent and focus group interview participants are not trained in semiotic analysis, the participants are not able to decode the racial and patriarchal ideology in Block & White and other skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements they were exposed to. The participants know that skin-whitening cosmetic commercials and advertisements associate a white skin tone with beauty because this relationship is shown in the denotative level. This awareness indicates that the participants are exposed to these commercials and advertisements. However, based on their group discussions, this study inferred that exposure to advertisements does not eventually persuade the participants to purchase skin-whitening cosmetic products. The participants do not find

advertisements convincing immediately because they believe that advertisements only inform consumers of the product's benefits. They stated:

Focus Group 1

Olivia: Advertisements do not convince me because I know advertisements only show the product's good effects.

Annie: At first, ads sound convincing because, of course, they have to sell the product. Most of the time, I kinda lose my trust in advertisements because most companies, when they advertise, they sound really good and true. But after using the product for a while, the product turns out to be ineffective. So, ads kind of trick or deceive people.

Linda: Advertisements convince me to try the product if they show the product's whitening effects through a model.

Amy: The same thing; If I see the effects of the product in the commercial, then I will be convinced.

Focus Group 2

Mercy: I believe in the product's effectiveness if the ad says dermatology-tested.

Jane: I don't trust ads. If my friends tell me that the advertised product is effective, then I try the product.

These statements imply that the participants are only partly suspicious of advertisements. However, they consider testimonies from experts in the field of dermatology, actual users of the product being advertised, and people they know as more reliable sources of information. Their reliance on personal recommendation reflects the collectivist nature of the Filipino culture. Filipinos think in terms of what is acceptable to their in-group. In this case, the participants' in-group included consumers of skin-whitening cosmetics and the out-group included skin-whitening cosmetic advertisers.

Although commercial models work for the advertisers, in the participants' minds, they represent the consumers' interest. The participants believe that commercial models risk their face and their body when they agree to try the advertised products. Furthermore, the participants deem that commercial models, particularly celebrity endorsers, risk their reputation when they guarantee the effectiveness of the advertised product. Thus, the participants find

commercial models' testimonies credible. These perceptions were revealed in the following statements:

Focus Group 1

Amy: I think models have sensitive skin. If the product is effective on them, it is effective as well on ordinary people like me.

Olivia: Actresses, who are also commercial models, such as Kris Aquino and Christine Hermosa, and Christine Bersola are convincing. I read in a magazine that Christine Bersola doesn't endorse a product that is not effective on her. So, I think the model tries the product first before endorsing it.

Annie: If they can make a woman pretty, like the woman in the advertisement, then I would believe. It helps especially if they use commercial models who are really pretty, with fair, clear skin. If they can turn me into one of these women, then I would love using the product.

Focus Group 2

Myla: Through the model, especially in TV commercials, you will see the product's effect; if the model's skin becomes smooth and white in two weeks.

Liz: The model has a stronger impact than just a slogan. Advertisements usually employ models who are naturally beautiful and have good skin in order to convince people to buy the product. People get attracted to the commercial model, but do not believe in the slogan right away. People would like to see the product's effect.

While the participants perceive female commercial models as credible witnesses to skin-whitening cosmetics' effectiveness, they also see in these models the ideal image of femininity. The commercial models exemplify the physical qualities of women who are perceived desirable in the Filipino culture. Thus, the light-skinned female commercial models represent Filipino women's desired selves. In contrast, they represent female audiences as undesirable.

While exposure to skin-whitening cosmetic commercials on television and advertisements in women's magazines has instilled in the participants' mind the white standard of beauty, it has also diminished the participants' self-esteem. Their motivations for using skin-whitening cosmetics reflect their acquired inferiority complex. They said:

Focus Group 1

Amy: For us women, we have to be presentable to everybody, in everything...that's why we need to use skin-whitening products like astringent or soap.

Olivia: I use whitening products because they add to my personality. When I apply for a job, although I am only a student, I know that first impressions last. They will look at your personality. If you're white, that adds to your personality.

To be more specific, I asked Olivia who she was referring to when she said "They". She answered:

Olivia: Of course, the managers, human resources department, those in charge of hiring.

In this discussion, Olivia indirectly linked whiteness with personality and greater chance of employment opportunity. When Olivia was directly asked if employers prefer applicants with light skin tone, she downplayed the importance of a light skin tone in the employment hiring process. She said that employers will primarily look at the applicant's job skills. The skin color is only secondary.

Linda, who works as a secretary, supported Olivia's testimony. She said:

Linda: Sometimes, I accept employment applications. For the management position, with pleasing personality is one of the qualifications. However, it is placed at the bottom of the application form. It is included, although it is not necessary.

Focus Group 2

Toni: I am a mother. I don't want people to think that I am neglecting myself just because I have kids already. Also, I go to work. I want to look presentable.

Myla: So people would say that I look good although I just stay home and I am only a housewife. Also, so my husband would always find me attractive whenever he comes home.

Mercy: So your husband would not replace you.

Nina: To be confident; when you're white, you can carry yourself well regardless of what clothes to wear.

Through these statements, the participants revealed that they associate whiteness with looking presentable, having a pleasing personality, and possessing self-confidence. In addition, they showed that the participants are deprived of such qualities because of their dark skin.

Thus, the participants have perceived themselves inferior in relation to skin-whitening cosmetic commercials and advertisements' representations of whiteness.

While it appears that the participants' desire for whiteness is aimed towards satisfying themselves, it is actually geared towards pleasing others. The participants regard whiteness as an integral part of female sexuality because of its significance to the opposite sex and to the general public. They desire to be white because Filipino men find light-skinned women attractive and that most Filipinos find light-skinned women amiable. In this regard, whiteness has become a guarantee for Filipino women of a successful heterosexual relationship and a career.

The skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements' direct influence on Filipino female audiences' self-concept is manifested through the participants' comparison of themselves with the commercial models in the advertisements. Some of the participants feel frustrated in knowing that they would never achieve the models' white skin tone. Others, on the other hand, remain hopeful.

Focus Group 1

Amy: Sometimes I would compare myself to the models. I would tell myself that someday, I would be as white

as they are. That's why I use not just one, but several skin-whitening products.

Linda: Since they are models, you want your skin to be like theirs. You expect your skin to resemble the model's skin.

Amy: Although we know that Kris Aquino has natural white skin tone, we seem to desire to be as white as she is because we will be more attractive to people.

Linda: The reality is, Kris already has a white complexion. Since she still uses skin-whiteners, you'll not be able to achieve her whiteness. It also depends on your complexion.

Focus Group 2

Esther: I just want to have a fair skin tone.

Daisy: We don't expect to be as white as commercial models or actresses because those people always have air-conditioning and visit their dermatologist.

Mercy: I use skin-whitening cosmetics just to keep my skin tone light.

In sum, the focus group interviews have shown that skin-whitening cosmetic commercials on Philippine television and advertisements in Filipino-owned women's magazines' promotion of whiteness have denigrated Filipino

women's self-concept. Through light-skinned female commercial models, skin-whitening cosmetic commercials and advertisements represent the ideal image of femininity in the Filipino culture. This representation establishes a bipolar opposition between female commercial models, who signify the desired self and female audiences, who signify the undesired self.

Whiteness Engages Filipino Women in Perpetuating their Subordination

Although skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements perpetuate Filipino women's adherence to whiteness, they only nurture Filipino women's desire for white complexion. Their desire is rooted in Filipino social and cultural practices that valorize whiteness. This section addresses the third research question:

Do Filipino social and cultural practices that valorize whiteness initially cause Filipino women to want to be white?

Based on the participants' narratives, this study concludes that Filipinos' reenactment of whiteness has initially triggered Filipino women's desire to be white. Filipino men's preference for light-skinned women has

particularly encouraged Filipino women to use skin-whitening cosmetics. The participants said:

Focus Group 1

Amy: I desired to look white when my husband urged me to use skin-whiteners. Now, everytime I want to try a product that I saw on a TV commercial, I ask for his opinion. He will really promote the product and push me to use it because in our business, I need to be presentable to our customers. We own a shop and I am the one who deals with our customers face-to-face.

Olivia: I desired to look white when I transferred to Fatima College. It was because most of my classmates were light-skinned. I was different. Sometimes, they mocked me. I felt being discriminated against because of my dark skin.

Linda: I just want to be white because people admire those who are white.

Marylou: I have noticed that when a very white-skinned girl passes by, heads turn to her. Guys are more attracted to a very white-skinned girl.

Annie: I remember when I was growing up, people would say 'Oh, she's so white' or 'Oh, she has a light skin tone'. I found that a compliment. Ever since then, I

thought that a light skin tone is good and beautiful. So, I try to keep and maintain my skin color because of what people had said about me when I was growing up.

Focus Group 2

Marcia: I think boys prefer light-skinned girls. There were a lot of lovely girls at the University of the Philippines and all of them are light-skinned. There were also a lot of cute guys, but they only pay attention to light-skinned girls.

Mel: Same here. I got envious of others who are light-skinned, although the Filipinos' natural skin color is dark brown.

Colonialism, earlier studies showed, greatly influenced the Filipinos' racial perceptions and relations. It created in them a mentality that valorizes a white skin tone and naturalizes racial hierarchy. However the association of whiteness with beauty permeated gender relations as well. Whiteness was stereotyped as a feminine quality and stratified relationships among women, with those who have light complexion at the top of the social strata. Whiteness, in this regard, became both a race and gender category.

The participants' responses to this theme illustrate what Duster (2001) calls the morphing properties of whiteness. White domination, which is manifested through discrimination against non-whites, is whiteness' racial property. On the other hand, male admiration of light-skinned women displays whiteness' gender property.

The participants' experiences of whiteness further demonstrate the sexist ideology of whiteness. Most of the participants stated that they desire to look white because men are more attracted to women with a light skin tone. These statements imply that women's desire for whiteness aims to please men primarily. Women evaluate themselves and other women based on a criterion that men use in evaluating women. Hence, women view themselves in the same way that men look at them. By adhering to the white standard of beauty, Filipino women also submit themselves to patriarchy and participate in their subordination. In addition to Filipino men, the older generation of Filipinos also contributes in perpetuating whiteness. Filipino elders instill hegemonic notions of whiteness in the minds of young Filipino people early in life. The young generation, then, transmits these notions to the generation that follows them.

While the white standards of beauty cause light-skinned women to perceive themselves positively, they make dark-skinned women feel inferior. Annie, for instance, developed positive perceptions about herself because she received numerous compliments due to her skin color when she was a child. Olivia, on the other hand, has experienced discrimination from her light-skinned classmates and, thus, has suffered from low self-esteem. The discrimination was painful that she did not want to describe it specifically.

Instead of criticizing whiteness, the focus group interviews have shown that marginalized Filipino women struggle to conform to the white construction of Filipino femininity. Filipino women's lack of resistance to whiteness' oppressive effects on them is a trademark of Western colonization. As cited in the literature review chapter, the Filipino elite during the Spanish colonial period aimed to assimilate the Philippines into Spain. Such colonial mentality has been incorporated in the social constructions of whiteness. Thus, by reenacting whiteness, the Filipinos in general subject their gender, race, and class identities to white domination.

Whiteness Pacifies Filipino Women to Keep them
from Struggling against Western Domination of
their Filipino Culture

Earlier, this study established the interconnection between colonialism and skin-whitening cosmetic commercials and advertisements in building Filipino women's desire for whiteness. Colonialism and skin-whitening cosmetic commercials and advertisements' association of whiteness primarily with beauty motivate Filipino women to look white and use skin-whiteners to fulfill their desire. As women become more involved in making their skin white, the more they believe in the gender, racial, and class ideology that whiteness represents. The theme that has emerged from the following discussions addresses the fourth research question:

Does skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements' promotion of whiteness perpetuate the hegemonic notions of race, gender, and class which the Filipinos have inherited from their Western colonizers?

The colonial construction of whiteness, which television commercials and women's magazine advertisements of skin-whitening cosmetics currently reinforce, dichotomized gender and racial relationships at the same time. Whiteness was associated with femininity and, in

contrast, darkness was associated with masculinity.

Filipino women have also internalized this dichotomy. The participants stated:

Focus Group 1

Amy: I already proved that that's the nature of men. My husband and I have been married for five years. He always takes me with him to the race. I'd noticed that men really value beauty, women's physical appearance, white complexion. They look for beauty. They don't get attracted to dark-skinned women.

Olivia: That's really how men are. If they will court a woman, they look at her physical appearance first. Women are different. Although we also look at a man's physical appearance, it doesn't matter to us. All we care for is that our man loves us.

Linda: Men give importance to personality, the physical appearance. But, they're not only after beauty. They also look at other characteristics. Not all men look at physical appearance. Not all men like white-skinned women. I accept the fact that men consider a girl's physical appearance first. But I can't blame them because they're men. It seems they were born to be like that.

Focus Group 2

Mercy: In my opinion, boys do prefer light-skinned women.

Jackie: That's how men are.

Liz: A light skin tone looks good on women.

Since most participants perceive that men naturally find light-skinned women attractive, they therefore perceive that women naturally desire to be white. The participants said that Filipino women particularly strive to achieve a white complexion because they are brown-skinned. However, some participants from both focus groups argued that skin color is not a fixed gender category. While some of them based their argument on their observation that some light-skinned men prefer dark-skinned women, others cited their own preference for light-skinned men to support their argument.

While the participants are aware that Filipinos descended from the brown race, as indicated by their brown skin, they are also conscious of Filipinos' multiracial identities, which they know occurred through interracial mixture. Furthermore, they are aware that the whiteness of some Filipinos originated from their Spanish and American colonizers. Despite this consciousness that Westerners

subjugated Filipinos in the past, the participants do not hold former colonial masters responsible for creating in Filipino women the desire to be white. Instead, they blame this desire to themselves, whom they perceive inferior. To illustrate:

Focus Group 1

Olivia: Filipinos just hate themselves. Other races don't hate the Filipinos. Maybe they (other cultures) hate the Filipinos because we're not as intelligent as they are. There are Americans who prefer a morena wife, and so, I don't think they look at the skin color.

Annie: Yes, Filipinos have colonial mentality. They always want to follow people in the West. Anything that's from the West, they want to copy it. Since the West is white, then the Filipinos want to be white. The Filipinos have always been like that. They always want to be white.

Similarly, the second focus group perceives Filipino women's desire for whiteness as a natural reaction of an inferior culture to a superior one. Since they said that the West is superior, they therefore imply that their Filipino culture is inferior. Thus, the participants

willingly submit their femininity and their Filipino culture to white domination. Evidence of this colonial mentality is embedded in these statements:

Focus Group 1

Linda: Discrimination exists only in our minds. We just want higher appreciation.

Focus Group 2

Mercy: The truth is that white, and not black, is beautiful. That's the reason we women desire to have a white complexion.

Discussion

The findings of the focus group interviews indicate that television commercials and women's magazine advertisements of skin-whitening cosmetics in the Philippines influence Filipino women's development of self-concept and cultural identity in relation to gender and race. While these commercials and advertisements' promotion of whiteness denigrates Filipino women, whose skin color is either dark or less white, it also perpetuates their subordination and Western domination of their Filipino culture. The commercials and advertisements naturalize the hegemonic notions of gender and race in the

Filipino culture. In this case, Filipino women perceive hegemony as fixed and, therefore, cannot be challenged.

While the semiotic analysis of skin-whitening cosmetic commercials and advertisements have found that whiteness is promoted as an indicator of social class, the focus group interviews have invalidated the relationship between whiteness and social class from the audiences' perspective. The focus group findings indicate that most participants do not find in the commercials and advertisements the association of whiteness with wealth and darkness with poverty. Thus, the findings imply that white ideology in the Philippines permeates only gender and race relations.

In general, the focus group interview findings show that skin-whitening cosmetic commercials and advertisements contribute in perpetuating Filipino cultural identity crisis. Through Filipino women, who also embody Filipino men in the patriarchal construction of their femininity, these commercials and advertisements' promotion of whiteness reinforce colonial legacies that created the crisis. The association of whiteness with superiority continues to diminish Filipinos' sense of pride and to uphold social inequality in Philippine society. Instead of struggling to liberate themselves from white domination,

Filipinos strive to look white because they perceive that whiteness will make them part of the dominant culture and will give them access to power.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

The Spanish and American colonization of the Philippines, which occurred from 1698 to 1945, has created current Filipino cultural identity crisis by instilling in the Filipinos a mentality that idealizes whiteness. The current Filipino identity crisis is particularly manifested in Filipinos' preference for a white skin tone. Since Filipinos have descended from the brown race, their preference for a white skin tone signifies rejection of their racial identity. Furthermore, it marginalizes lower class, non-white Filipino women because Western colonization has associated a white skin tone with beauty, wealth, intelligence, and power.

Whereas Spanish and American colonization has institutionalized whiteness in the Filipino culture, the Philippine mass media perpetuate this ideology in the postcolonial period. The Philippine mass media reinforce whiteness' symbolical meanings by glamorizing light-skinned Filipino men and women. Since the mass media also function as an agent of socialization, their ideal representations of whiteness influence Filipino audiences' perception of

themselves and their cultural identity in relation to race, gender, and class. In this regard, Filipinos with a dark skin tone perceive themselves inferior to those with light skin tone.

In order to resolve Filipino cultural identity crisis, Philippine studies researchers call for a reexamination and revision of Philippine history and acknowledgement of Filipino cultural diversity. However, these proposals focus only on Western colonization's role in institutionalizing whiteness, which originally caused an earlier Filipino cultural identity crisis. Research has shown that social institutions such as the school, the elite, and the mass media have taken over from former Western colonial masters in promoting whiteness in the postcolonial period. Thus, these social institutions should also be investigated for their role in perpetuating current Filipino cultural identity crisis.

This study contributes to research that attempts to resolve the Filipino cultural identity crisis by investigating the Philippine mass media's promotion of whiteness. Particularly, this study seeks to find out how the mass media represent whiteness through a white skin tone and how these representations of whiteness affect

Filipinos. In order to meet these objectives, this study has employed two qualitative research methods.

First, this study has conducted a semiotic analysis of television commercials and women's magazine advertisements of skin-whitening cosmetics in the Philippines in order to expose the representations of whiteness. The commercials were aired on the two major Philippine television stations, ABS-CBN Channel 2 and GMA Channel 7, in July 2003. They sponsored daytime soap operas as well as nighttime dramatic programs. Out of the 20 cosmetic commercials recorded, five promoted their products specifically as skin-whiteners. These commercials were RDL, Vaseline, Secret, CY Gabriel, and Silka. On the other hand, the advertisements were featured in the July and October 2003 issues of *Mod*, *Woman Today*, and *Women's Journal*, all Filipino-owned monthly women's magazines that are published in English. Six cosmetics were selected for this study. These were Likas papaya soap, Johnson & Johnson's baby milk lotion, Pop skin care products, Maxi-Peel exfoliant, Vaseline intensive care lotion and DeoWhite deodorant.

Second, this study has conducted a focus group interview of two groups of Filipino women, who have been motivated by television commercials and women's magazines

to use skin-whitening cosmetics, in order to explore how the mass media's promotion of whiteness influences Filipino audiences' development of their self-concept and cultural identity in relation to race, gender, and class. The focus group interview participants were recruited through a screening survey of 200 Filipino women. While half of these women were surveyed in Dagupan City, the other half were surveyed in Calocan City. Ten Filipino women from each surveyed group were selected and contacted for the focus group interviews. Only six participants came to the focus group interview in Calocan, but all ten came to the focus group interview in Dagupan City.

This study involved Filipino women only because they are the primary target of skin-whitening cosmetic advertisements. In addition, Filipino women fairly represent men since their femininity was constructed from the male perspective. The women selected for the focus group interviews all belong to the middle class and are between the age of 20 and 40. They also represent a diverse social sector and possess varying skin tones.

The first focus group was composed of four working women, who are all white-skinned, and two students, who are both dark brown-skinned. Out of the working women, only

one is married. One of the two students is majoring in nursing, while the other one is taking her Master's degree in Nutrition. On the other hand, the second focus group consisted of three married working women and seven students majoring in Computer Science. Four of them are light-skinned, while the others' skin color ranges from tan to dark brown.

In conducting this study, there were four research questions asked. First, do television commercials and women's magazine advertisements of skin-whitening cosmetics in the Philippines reinforce the colonial construction of whiteness? Second, does exposure to television commercials and women's magazine advertisements of skin-whitening cosmetics and their representations of whiteness diminish Filipino women's self-esteem? Third, have Filipino social and cultural practices created in Filipino women the desire to be white? Fourth, does Filipino women's idealization of whiteness perpetuate their hegemonic notions of race, gender, and class?

Findings and Recommendations

The results of the semiotic analysis of skin-whitening cosmetic commercials on television and advertisements in

women's magazines in the Philippines have shown that the Philippine mass media reinforce colonial legacies by associating a white skin tone with beauty, wealth, and power. At the same time, the results of the focus group interview of two groups of Filipino women who use skin-whitening cosmetics have shown that the Philippine mass media's representations of whiteness negatively influence Filipinos' self-concept and cultural identity development. They have also shown that the Filipinos' reenactment of whiteness largely shapes Filipino mentality.

However, the focus group interview results do not strongly indicate that Filipino participants perceive whiteness as their access to wealth and power.

The semiotic analysis reveals particularly the Philippine mass media's promotion of whiteness as the standard of beauty and the key to achieving wealth and power. This study found that beauty is defined through a white skin tone. Since beauty is stereotypically attributed to femininity, whether in the Philippines or abroad, whiteness has more marginalizing effects on Filipino women. These effects were found through the focus group interview analysis. While the semiotic analysis shows that white-skinned women are superior to non-white

women, it also shows that a hierarchy exists within the dominant white group. The hierarchy is dictated by the degree of women's whiteness. The advertisements imply that Filipino Mestizas who acquired their light skin tone through their Spanish, Chinese, and White American ancestry, are superior to dark-skinned Filipino women, but are inferior to Caucasian women, who descended from a pure white race. Thus, skin-whitening cosmetics also target already light-skinned Filipino women and encourage them to improve their looks. In addition, skin-whitening cosmetic commercials and advertisements tie whiteness in the Philippines to a global issue.

In relation to beauty, the semiotic analysis findings indicate that the white standard of beauty gives light-skinned Filipino women opportunities for upward mobility. Whiteness, according to the commercials and advertisements, will bring women fame and fortune because a white skin tone is used as a qualification for becoming a celebrity, a fashion model, or a beauty queen. Thus, the findings indicate that whiteness is strongly tied to class issues.

The commercials and advertisements demonstrated power through self-confidence. If women are confident, then they will have the power to expose parts of their bodies such as

their shoulders and underarms. Furthermore, like a magnet, they will have the power to attract men. However, the commercials and advertisements showed that power can only be achieved by having a white skin tone.

The skin-whitening cosmetic commercials and advertisements' association of a white skin tone with beauty primarily intensifies Filipino women's desire for a white complexion. The focus group interview results show that most Filipino women who are engaged in whitening their skin expect to improve their looks. While improving one's physical appearance is a legitimate desire, the association of whiteness with the desired look and darkness with the undesirable is unwarranted. However, the focus group shows that skin-whitening cosmetic commercials and advertisements reinforce this bipolar opposition between a white and a dark skin tone and diminish Filipino women's self-esteem. Most Filipino female consumers of skin-whitening cosmetics perceive themselves inferior in comparison with commercial models. While they expect that continuous use of skin-whitening cosmetics will fulfill their desire for a white complexion, they also face the reality that they will never achieve the skin-whitening cosmetic endorsers' natural whiteness.

Although skin-whitening cosmetic commercials and advertisements reinforce the Western colonial construction of a white skin tone as the standard of beauty in the Filipino culture, they only contribute to Filipino women's desire to be white. The Filipino social and cultural reenactment of whiteness mainly creates in Filipino women the desire for a white complexion. The focus group interview results show that most Filipino women who are engaged in whitening their skin have observed that a white skin tone attracts the opposite sex, earns compliments, and boosts self-confidence.

As Filipino women using skin-whitening cosmetics perceive themselves inferior to naturally white Filipino women, they also perceive their cultural identity subordinate to the West, which in their mind represents the White race. The focus group interviews' results indicate that most Filipino women who whiten their skin have internalized the hegemonic notion that the Western culture is naturally superior to the Filipino culture. In this case, they acknowledge as a fact that the West sets aesthetic standards which the Filipino culture, because of its subordinate position, inevitably follows. Thus, these

women willingly submit their cultural identity to white domination.

Since Filipino women who look up to the West adhere to a white skin tone as the standard of beauty in their culture, they expect that Filipino men naturally are attracted to light-skinned women. The focus group interviews show that Filipino women conform to existing stereotypes of gender in the Filipino culture based on skin color. For instance, they associate darkness with masculinity and whiteness with femininity. Hence, Filipino women's idealization of whiteness reinforces their culture's hegemonic perceptions of gender.

While the focus group interviews' results demonstrate that whiteness intersects with Filipino female skin-whitening cosmetic consumers' perceptions of gender and race, they show that whiteness has a weak influence on these women's notions about class. The focus group interviews reveal that Filipino women perceive a white skin tone insignificant to women's upward mobility. Filipino women view that a white skin tone makes up a pleasing personality and, thus, increases their chance for employment. However, they believe that employment does not automatically translate to economic advancement.

Furthermore, they perceive that employers give more importance to job skills than a pleasing personality.

In sum, the findings of the semiotic analysis of skin-whitening cosmetic television commercials and women's magazine advertisements in the Philippines and of the focus group interviews of Filipino women who use skin-whitening cosmetics show that Western colonization's legacies of whiteness intertwine with the Philippine mass media in perpetuating the current Filipino cultural identity crisis. According to the findings of this study, the Philippine mass media nurture Filipino women's idealization of whiteness by reinforcing the white ideology that former Western colonizers incorporated in Filipino race and gender relations. The Philippine mass media, through skin-whitening cosmetic commercials and advertisements, influence Filipino women's development of self-concept first. They have diminished Filipino women's pride for themselves and pushed Filipino women to submit themselves to male domination. Since the self is made up of cultural categories such as race and gender, the mass media's influence how Filipino women's development of self-concept trickles down as well to their cultural identity.

Filipinos who experience the current cultural identity crisis are composed of various cultural categories. This study has limited its investigation to middle class Filipino women who are actively engaged in whitening their skin because they most visibly manifest how whiteness obstructs the development of self-concept and cultural identity of formerly subjugated non-white people. Their marginalized position in the Filipino culture also has made them a site for the intertwining of gender, racial, and class oppression as a result of white domination. Although they justly represent the Filipino population, their experience of cultural identity crisis may be different from other Filipinos in terms of gender, race, and class. Future studies should explore whiteness and cultural identity crisis in the Philippines as experienced by Filipino men who increasingly use skin-whitening cosmetics, Filipino women who cannot afford skin-whitening cosmetics due to their economic condition, and Filipino women who the Philippine mass media represent as the ideal image of femininity.

APPENDIX A
TABLES

TABLE 1

Skin-Whitening Cosmetic Commercials
on Philippine Television

Summary of Semiotic Analysis

| PRODUCT | IMAGE (Visual) | GRAPHIC (Verbal) | SYMBOLICAL MEANING of A WHITE SKIN TONE |
|------------|--|---|---|
| RDL | Various cosmetic products and light-skinned Filipino women's faces | Whitening With RDL, beauty is yours to keep | A white skin tone keeps women beautiful. |
| Silka | A young man smelling the exposed white shoulders of a young woman The young man kissing the young woman's shoulders | | A white skin tone is sexually desirable to men. |
| CY Gabriel | Filipino Mestiza beauty queen addressing television audiences | As a beauty queen, my beauty secrets are simple: clean living and healthy lifestyle | A light skin tone, which is associated with cleanliness and health, guarantees women with high social status. |
| Vaseline | 3 Filipino Mestizas: 1. single, w/ brown elbow 2. single, w/ brown knees 3. married, w/ even white skin tone | | An even white skin tone signifies perfection. |
| Secret | A man volunteering to assist a light-skinned woman, whose underarms are exposed | Exposed? Keep it light...Keep it fresh | White underarms give women confidence in exposing an intimate part of their body. |

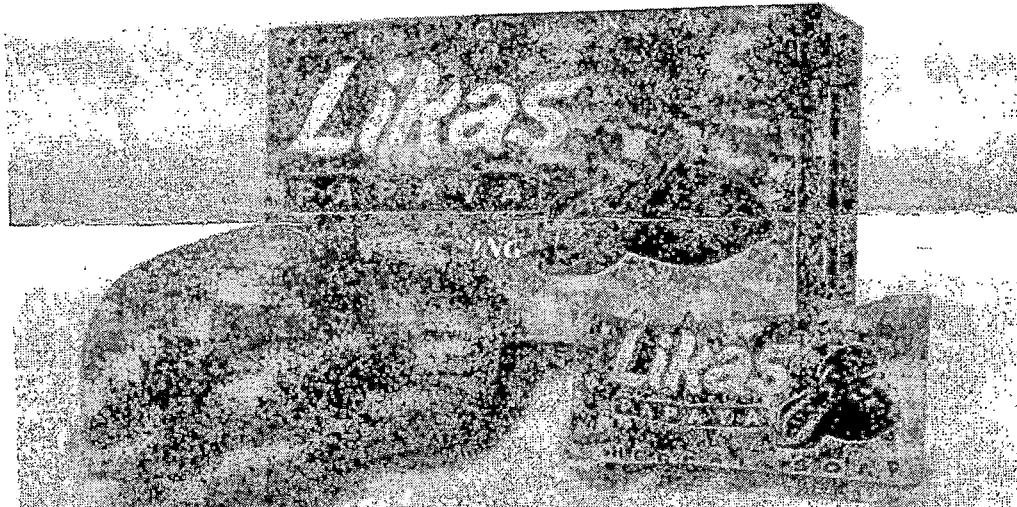
TABLE 2

Skin-Whitening Cosmetic Advertisements
in Philippine Women's Magazines

Summary of Semiotic Analysis

| PRODUCT | IMAGE (Visual) | GRAPHIC (Verbal) | SYMBOLICAL MEANING OF A WHITE SKIN TONE |
|-----------|---|---|--|
| Pop | Caucasian woman with black hair and green eyes juxtaposed with skin-whitening cosmetics | We enhance the loveliness of women. | Caucasian woman represents the improved image of light-skinned Filipino women. |
| Likas | | Choose the right investment when it comes to maintaining your beauty. Choose only...Likas Papaya Organic Herbal Whitening Soap. | Beauty leads women to upward mobility. A white skin tone maintains a woman's beauty. |
| Maxi-Peel | Filipino actresses Kristine Hermosa and Claudine Barretto | | A white skin tone gives women access to fame and fortune. |
| Deo-White | | Dying with envy...use Deo-White | White underarms will cure women of insecurity |
| Johnson's | Light-skinned mother and baby with black hair | With Johnson's baby milk lotion, you can have the baby smooth, baby fair, and baby beautiful skin you were born with | Whiteness signifies innocence |
| Vaseline | Filipino Mestiza with dark hair | New Vaseline White & Clear lotion...Targets your dark spots by whitening your skin... Provides double UV protection from the sun and further skin darkening | Whiteness signifies purity |

APPENDIX B
SAMPLE ADVERTISEMENTS



Never take risks when it comes to Beauty.

If it's beauty, never take chances. The small difference in amount that you may find in other brands does not guarantee you of a more effective, more satisfying result.

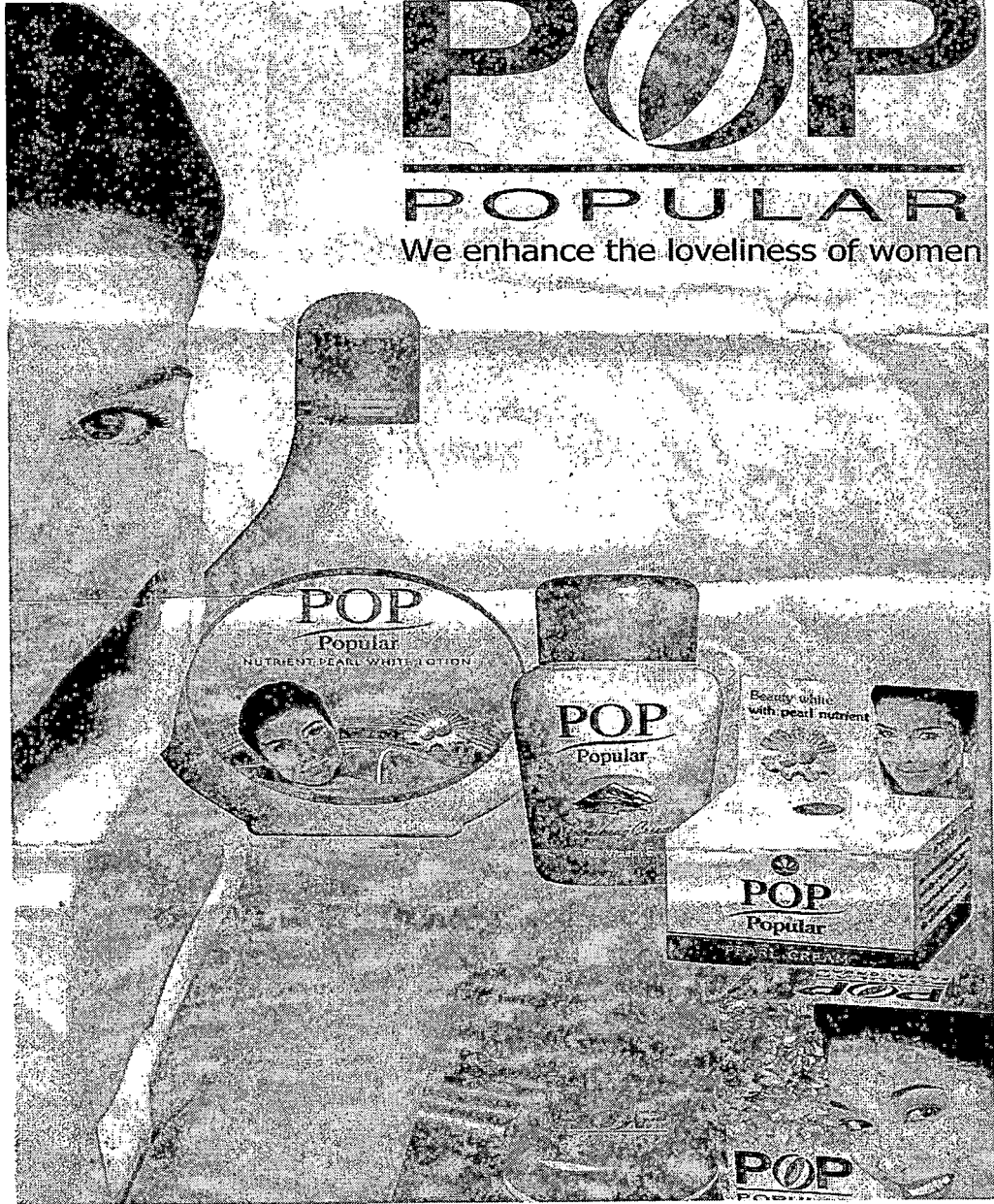
In essence, *Likas* Papaya is made of true organic, all-natural botanical ingredients and even enriched with papaya extracts & enzymes to produce that smoother, undeniably fairer, beautiful skin. That is why, it has been trusted by millions of Filipinos nationwide and abroad.

Choose the right investment when it comes to maintaining your beauty. Choose only the trusted, the proven effective...
Likas Papaya Organic Herbal Whitening Soap.

POP

POPULAR

We enhance the loveliness of women



APPENDIX C
SCREENING SURVEY AND FOCUS GROUP
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

SCREENING SURVEY

1. Which of the following groups includes your age?

Under 18 terminate
18-23
24-29
30-35
36-41
42-45
Over 45 terminate

2. Which of the following categories do you belong?
(Please check all that apply.)

Student Mother/housewife Working woman

If student and/or mother/housewife, proceed to A.

A.

1. Do you receive allowance from your
parents/husband?

Yes proceed to 2
No

2. How often do you receive your allowance?

Daily Weekly Bi-Monthly Monthly
Others _____

3. How much allowance do you receive?

Less than P100
P100-500
P600-1000
P1600-2000
More than P2000

B.

1. What is your occupation? _____
2. How much do you make a month?
Less than P2000

P2100-3000
P3100-4000
P4100-5000
P5100-6000
More than P6000

3. Do you use cosmetics and/or skin care products

Yes continue
No terminate

4. Which brand of cosmetics or skin care products do you use? (Please circle all that apply.)

| | |
|-------------------|--------------|
| Avon | Godiva |
| Johnson & Johnson | Pond's |
| Max Factor | Jergen's |
| Neutrogena | Nivea |
| Eskinol | Cover Girl |
| Kao | Kissa |
| Likas | Pop |
| Hiyas | Others _____ |

5. Which line of whitening cosmetics do you use?

| | |
|-------------|------------|
| Face powder | Foundation |
| Concealer | Blush on |

6. Which line of whitening skin care products do you use?

| | | |
|------------------|------------|--------------|
| Lotion | Astringent | Facial wash |
| Body Moisturizer | Soap | Facial cream |
| Others _____ | | |

7. Why do you use skin-whitening cosmetics and/or skin care products?

8. How did you learn about whitening cosmetics or skin care products?

| | |
|----------------------|-----------|
| TV ads | continue |
| Women's magazine ads | continue |
| Newspaper ads | terminate |
| Others _____ | terminate |

Invitation to Participate in a Focus Group Interview

May I please contact you to participate in a focus group interview? You will be paid P100 for your time and P100 for your transportation expenses. You will also be provided with refreshments during the interview session, which will approximately last two hours. I will let you know of the date, time, and location of the interview by phone, mail, or text messaging. If you are willing to be contacted and to participate, please fill in the blanks with the required information.

Yes

No

Name: _____

Home Address: _____

Permanent Address (if different from above): _____

Daytime Tel. No.: _____

Nighttime Tel. No.: _____

Cell No.: _____

THANK YOU!

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

On Advertisements

- 1) What was the first whitening cosmetic or skin care product you saw advertised in television or a women's magazine?
- 2) How did you react to the concept of a cosmetic or skin care product that whitens the skin?
- 3) Did the advertisement convince you that the product whitens your skin? If yes, in what way? If not, why?
- 4) Whenever you see current advertisements of skin-whiteners, what makes them catch your attention?
- 5) What do current skin-whitening advertisements say about having a white complexion?

On Whitening Cosmetics and Skin Care Products

- 1) How long have you been using skin-whiteners?
- 2) What made you use skin-whiteners?
- 3) Has your skin color or texture improved since you started using skin-whiteners? What made you think so?
- 4) Did your skin-whitener meet your expectation? How?

On Whiteness

- 1) Since when have you desired to look white?
- 2) What were those instances or events in your life that made you want to have a white complexion?
- 3) If not for those instances or events, would you still want to have a white complexion? Why or why not?
- 4) How white do you want to be?
- 5) What do you expect to achieve from having a white complexion?
- 6) Do you think there are advantages in having a white complexion for women living in the Philippines? If yes, what are those advantages? If not, why do you think so?

On Self-Image

- 1) Before skin-whitening products were introduced to the Philippine market, how did you feel about yourself in terms of your skin color?

- 2) Before you started using skin-whiteners, how did you feel about yourself compared to white-skinned women you see either in TV and magazine advertisements or in person? What made you feel that way?
- 3) Since you started using skin-whiteners, how do you feel about yourself now compared to those women?

On Cultural Identity

- 1) Why do you think there is a skin color distinction among Filipino women?
- 2) What do you think is the natural skin color of Filipino women? Why?
- 3) Since white is the skin color of Americans and Europeans, do you think advertisers or manufacturers of skin-whiteners are trying to make Filipino women look like Americans and Europeans? Why?
- 4) Have you been criticized for using skin-whitening products? If so, what were the criticisms? How did you react to the criticisms?

APPENDIX D
CSUSB IRB APPROVAL, INFORMED CONSENT, SAMPLE
PHOTOGRAPH/AUDIO/VIDEO USE INFORMED CONSENT
FORM FOR NON-MEDICAL HUMAN SUBJECTS,
PERMISSION TO CONDUCT SCREENING
SURVEY



**CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SAN BERNARDINO**

5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA 92407-2397

09/26/2003

Ms. Beverly R. Natividad
c/o: Prof. Robin Larsen
Department of Communication Studies
California State University
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

**CSUSB
INSTITUTIONAL
REVIEW BOARD**
Full Board Review
IRB# 03010
Status
APPROVED

Dear Ms. Natividad:

Your application to use human subjects, titled, "Effects of TV and Women's Magazine Advertisements of Skin-Whiteness on Philippine Female Audiences" has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Your informed consent document is attached. This consent document has been stamped and signed by the IRB chairperson. All subsequent copies used must be this officially approved version. A change in your informed consent requires resubmission of your protocol as amended.

You are required to notify the IRB if any substantive changes are made in your research prospectus/protocol, if any unanticipated adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research, and when your project has ended. If your project lasts longer than one year, you (the investigator/researcher) are required to notify the IRB by email or correspondence of *Notice of Project Ending* or *Request for Continuation* at the end of each year. Failure to notify the IRB of the above may result in disciplinary action. You are required to keep copies of the informed consent forms and data for at least three years.

If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, IRB Secretary. Mr. Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 880-5027, by fax at (909) 880-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application identification number (above) in all correspondence.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Joseph Lovett, Chair
Institutional Review Board

JL/mg

cc: Prof. Robin Larsen, Department of Communication Studies

The California State University
Bakersfield • Channel Islands • Chico • Dominguez Hills • Fresno • Fullerton • Hayward • Humboldt • Long Beach • Los Angeles • Maritime Academy
Monterey Bay • Northridge • Pomona • Sacramento • San Bernardino • San Diego • San Francisco • San Jose • San Luis Obispo • San Marcos • Sonoma • Stanislaus

13. Informed Consent

This research study aims to examine the impact of Philippine television and women's magazine advertisements of whitening cosmetics on Filipino women's perception of themselves and their cultural identity. I, Beverly R. Natividad, a graduate student of Communication Studies, under the supervision of Dr. Robin Larsen professor of Mass Communication, will conduct this research study.

The study, which had been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of California State University San Bernardino, involves a focus group interview for which you are asked to participate. The interview session will last for approximately two hours and thirty minutes. During the session, you are asked to respond to all the researcher's questions as much as possible, to express agreement and disagreement with the researcher's and co-participants' opinions, to provide relevant information, and to maintain decorum by refraining from yelling, cursing, and doing unrelated focus group interview activities. With the participants' permission, the group discussions will be audiotape recorded.

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and can be withdrawn without explanation at any time. Your identity and personal information will be kept confidential. As compensation for your participation, you will be paid P100 for your time and P100 for you transportation expenses. You will also be provided with refreshments.

You are free to express your thoughts on any issues and concerns that will arise from the group discussion. Arguments might arise and cause emotional and psychological discomfort to you. In this case, care will be taken to ensure that

participants treat each other with respect. The use of profanity and derogatory remarks will not be tolerated.

Please be assured that your responses during the group discussion will be kept confidential. In case you have questions about your rights as a participant in this focus group interview, please contact my thesis adviser, Dr. Robin Larsen. If you are interested in obtaining a copy of the results of this study, please send me a letter of request through email or airmail. You will be provided with our contact information.

Your participation in the focus group interview is greatly appreciated. I expect that this study will provide you the opportunity to reflect on social and cultural issues affecting you and other women in a traditionally non-white society. I also expect that this study will contribute to consciousness-raising and understanding among white and non-white societies on the effects of privileging certain members of individual societies and the global society based on skin color.

BEVERLY R. NATIVIDAD

Date

I, _____, _____ years of age,
acknowledge that I have been informed of, and understand, the nature and purpose of this study, and that I freely consent to participate in the focus group interview.

Participant's signature

Date

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD COMMITTEE
APPROVED 09/26/03 VOID AFTER 09/26/04
IRB# 03010 CHAIR Joseph Lavett g llc

10

**SAMPLE PHOTOGRAPH/VIDEO/AUDIO USE
INFORMED CONSENT FORM
FOR NON-MEDICAL HUMAN SUBJECTS**

As part of this research project, we will be making a photograph/videotape/audiotape recording of you during your participation in the experiment. Please indicate what uses of this photograph/videotape/audiotape you are willing to consent to by initialing below. You are free to initial any number of spaces from zero to all of the spaces, and your response will in no way affect your credit for participating. We will only use the photograph/videotape/audiotape in ways that you agree to. In any use of this photograph/videotape/audiotape, your name would *not* be identified. If you do not initial any of the spaces below, the photograph/videotape/audiotape will be destroyed.

Please indicate the type of informed consent

Photograph Videotape Audiotape

(AS APPLICABLE)

- The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be studied by the research team for use in the research project.

Please initial: _____

- The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be shown/played to subjects in other experiments.

Please initial: _____

- The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be used for scientific publications.

Please initial: _____

- The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be shown/played at meetings of scientists.

Please initial: _____

- The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be shown/played in classrooms to students.

Please initial: _____

- The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be shown/played in public presentations to nonscientific groups.

Please initial: _____

- The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be used on television and radio.

Please initial: _____

I have read the above description and give my consent for the use of the photograph/videotape/audiotape as indicated above.

The extra copy of this consent form is for your records.

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD COMMITTEE

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

APPROVED 6/12/13 VOID AFTER 6/12/13
IRB# C-3610 CHAIR *Jorge A. Rivera*

October 13, 2003

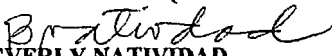
Dear Ma'am/Sir:

Greetings! I am conducting a research on the effects of skin-whitening product advertisements on Filipino women. My research involves administering a screening survey of Filipino women who use whitening cosmetics and skin care products. The survey will be used as a basis for selecting participants to a focus group interview, which will be conducted on Saturday, the 18th of October.

In this regard, I would like to ask permission to administer the screening survey in your store. I assure you that I will not distract your customer from buying products in your store. Before I approach the customer, I will wait until she is done looking at or buying a skin-whitening product. If possible, I would like to get your approval on this day. I only have until tomorrow to administer this survey.


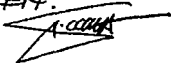
I hope for your consideration and cooperation. Should you approve my request, your name and the name of your company will be mentioned in the acknowledgment page of my masters' thesis. If you have any questions, please contact my thesis adviser, Dr. Robin Larsen, via her email add rlars@pe.net or the Secretary for the Institute of Review Board, Mr. Michael Gillespie, via his email add mgillesp@csusb.edu.

Respectfully yours,


BEVERLY NATIVIDAD
Graduate Student
Department of Communication Studies
California State University
San Bernardino, California

Approved by:

D P M I
APPROVED BY: _____
**STORE MANAGER/
AUTHORIZED COMPANY REPRESENTATIVE**


10.16.03
→ OCT. 16, 2003 ONLY
* UNTIL 1:00 PM ONLY, @ ENTRANCE GOING
TO DEPARTMENT STORE.
FOR STRICT COMPLIANCE OF TIME GIVEN!


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