

KENNETH J. GERGEN

The Significance of Skin Color in Human Relations

ONE OF the most compelling features of Japanese Haiku poetry is its capacity to provide in a few brief lines an image of almost universal proportions. In the lines

Now my loneliness
After the fireworks
Look, a falling star

the reader finds himself in a moment of interrupted solitude and, at the same time, perceives that the contrast between excitement and isolation is common to all men. What would his reaction be, however, if the poet had added color to certain words of the poem? Would the thoughts and feelings about the experience or the broader implications of the poem be any different if the words *loneliness*, *fireworks*, or *star* appeared in pink as opposed to deep blue? A number of recent experiments have shown that the coloration of words has a powerful impact on one's feelings about and interpretation of poetry.¹ Light shades produce different reactions than dark shades, and blues elicit different associations than reds, although the words and form of the poem remain unchanged.

If colors have such a substantial impact when associated with the written word, is it not also possible that the pigmentation of skin may affect a person's feelings about other people and his interpretation of their actions? In particular, is it possible that color differences may play a divisive role in social relationships? The question is an intriguing one inasmuch as the major work on race prejudice and social conflict has used color simply as a way of designating the battle lines.² Much less attention has been paid to the possibility that color may be partially responsible for the battle itself.

The Significance of Skin Color in Human Relations

Color and Social Separation

There are numerous physical dimensions, such as height and weight, along which people within any society vary. For the most part, such dimensions may be characterized in two ways: First, they lend themselves to making fine distinctions, and second, the distribution of people along each dimension is roughly normal. For example, a person's height and weight are subject to very precise specification, and for varying purposes people may be sensitized to slight differences in musculature, manifestations of aging, or girth size. At the same time, for each of these dimensions there is a single norm within a society, and fewer and fewer cases exist as one moves away from this norm. While there are the very tall and the very short, the majority of the population falls within the mid-range. Likewise, populations are not often composed solely of the lean or the heavy.

In the case of skin color, neither of these population characteristics generally holds true. Although fine gradations in skin pigmentation can be made, social traditions normally disregard them. People are classified as white, black, yellow, and so on. To be sure, the classification of "high yellow" or "mulatto" is sometimes used, but at least for members of white society those who fall into such categories could just as well be jet black.³ The reason for these rather indiscriminate categories may be traced, in part, to the distribution of skin characteristics within a society. Unlike the physical dimensions discussed above, skin color is not normally distributed within most contemporary societies. Rather, the distribution tends to be multi-modal, with the result that several different sub-groupings are commonly recognized. Thus, the common perceptual tendency is to treat as equivalent all those who fall within a given sub-distribution; the person's major problem is in deciding into which of the available sub-groupings a person is to be placed.

In an extensive series of investigations, Charles Osgood and his associates have found that the categories used to classify objects or people take on certain connotative meanings.⁴ The primary connotation is evaluative in nature; any category or its exemplars will elicit feelings that may be placed somewhere along a "good-bad" or "pleasant-unpleasant" dimension. The latter two dimensions of connotative meaning are "potency" and "activity." In effect, the person will subjectively estimate the power or strength of various objects and identify them as to their degree of passivity. In-

vestigations in this area have found these same meaning-dimensions to exist in many diverse cultures and to pertain regardless of the particular object being classified.

Inasmuch as one major way of classifying people reflects the various pigmentation groupings, the major question emerges as to whether there may be compelling reasons for negative evaluations to become associated with members of groups other than one's own. Given no other information about persons whose skin differs from one's own, are there psychological processes that tend to cause one to evaluate such persons in a less than favorable way? Evidence from a number of domains suggests an affirmative answer to this question.

From a historical viewpoint, Sigmund Freud played perhaps the first significant role in thinking about this question.⁵ On the basis of extensive case studies, Freud theorized that the overriding pleasure instinct first becomes gratified within one's own body. In the life of the infant, libidinal energy becomes attached to the person himself prior to its finding suitable fulfillment in the external world. This narcissistic inclination was felt to be a universal condition, and generic to the individual's later choice of love objects. The adult person would be attracted to those people who most resembled some aspect of his own being.

While many are unsympathetic to Freud's particular statement of the case, contemporary work in the field of social learning tends to bear Freud out in certain respects. It has been shown that a person will seek out and associate with persons who provide gratification or reinforcement. If the initial source of gratification is not available, the person will base his choice of an alternative on the extent to which the potential alternate resembles the initial source. If, for example, a youth has been raised in such a way that he is extremely dependent on his mother for food, affection, or other forms of gratification, he might be expected to choose a wife who resembles his mother in some gross respects. From this point of view, one may generalize to say that self-love will eventuate in love for others who resemble self. In addition, to the extent that the person's major gratifications have been received within a social group delineated by a particular skin color, his future choice of friends, colleagues, or compatriots may be expected to fall within the same category.⁶ His evaluation of persons outside the category will be much less positive. Such work suggests that the roots of ethnocentrism may be exceedingly deep.

The Significance of Skin Color in Human Relations

Research on perception leads to similar conclusions. Perceptual tendencies to group objects in the physical world according to their geographical proximity and similarity have long been noted. More recently, Fritz Heider has developed a number of postulates connecting these perceptual tendencies to people's feelings toward one another.⁷ He has theorized that people will feel more comfortable if similarity is accompanied by mutuality in feeling. People who perceive themselves to be similar to each other tend to feel the same about each other. Inasmuch as positive feelings are less burdensome to most people than negative ones, similarity is said to breed mutual attraction. We can all perhaps attest to the inclination to feel friendly toward "one of our kind."

Support for Heider's notions rests, however, not only on common observation, but on a voluminous set of research findings.⁸ In study after study, it has been shown that people who are similar to each other—be it in terms of attitudes, interests, values, personality, or social characteristics—feel more positively toward each other than those who are dissimilar. While there may be alternative ways of explaining such findings, the implications of this line of investigation seem quite clear for the present purposes. Attraction may be a normal outgrowth within groups that resemble each other in physical characteristics such as skin color. The color line may mark the termination of such tendencies. If persons within a particular color grouping perceive that members of another group tend to be cohesive or internally unified, they may also feel potentially threatened. In this case, the stage is set for the outgrowth of active hostility.

In connection with the similarity-attraction hypothesis, it is also interesting to note the reactions to persons differing in skin color of various explorers or adventurers whose previous experiences with such differences had been limited.⁹ In describing his travels with Magellan, Francisco Pigafetta likens the "black people" of Brazil to "enemies of Hell."¹⁰ William Lithgow, the Scottish adventurer, wrote after his voyage to Africa in 1615 that nature "had set a fairer stamp on my face than theirs, which oft I wished (because of the menacing reactions of the natives) had been as blacke as their ugliness."¹¹ In 1910, the colonialist Putnam Weale was even moved to write, "the black man is something apart—something untouchable."¹²

A third way in which skin color differences may engender alienation is related to Gordon Allport's supposition that visible dif-

ferences imply underlying differences.¹³ A major share of the socialization process is involved with teaching the child a category system that will enable him to behave differentially toward various objects or events in his environment. He may be taught that certain objects are edible, and that those objects which do not visibly fall into this class are non-edible. Learning an extensive and particular category system may indeed be considered a stamp of membership within a given society. The vast majority of these learning experiences, and thus one's category system, are based, however, on visible differences existing in the environment. When the individual is later exposed to visible differences among people, he would tend to infer that different reactions are necessitated. Skin-color differences do not appear to be immune from this tendency. Indeed, the apparent ease with which people stereotype those of other races seems to lend considerable support to the thesis. Discussion cannot, however, be concluded here. To assume that those who are not visibly similar are basically different is not to assume that they are bad.

To understand the development of alienation in this case, one must appreciate what it is for the individual to encounter another who, on the face of it, appears to be "different." Such situations are almost universally threatening. The other appears strange, alien, and unknown. He suggests to the individual that the relevance of his long-standing styles of relating to others is in severe question; his security in knowing how to act adaptively is shaken. The same reaction often accompanies one's encounter with the mentally ill. As soon as another is categorized or identified as mentally ill, one can no longer assume that one's structured ways of behaving are functional. The common reaction to the unknown, the unpredictable, or the strange is aversion. This reaction has recently been dramatically underscored by a plethora of social psychological studies that have demonstrated the aversive nature of inconsistency.¹⁴ In one investigation, by altering the predictability of a person's behavior, it was found that people became more friendly when the other was predictable, but hostile when they were unable to comprehend his actions.¹⁵ In essence, when skin color differences imply behavioral patterns different from one's own, antipathy may result.

One major way of offsetting the tendency to reject those whose skin differs from one's own would be to generate factual evidence of similarity over and above pigmentation differences. If persons

The Significance of Skin Color in Human Relations

were aware that pigmentation was all that differentiated them from other racial groups, the climate for generating positive relations would be vastly improved. Once the wheels of psychological process are set in motion, the outcome may, however, serve only to sustain the basic tendencies. Avoidance of or aversion to those who appear different tends to create social segmentation. Persons may choose their friends, associates, marriage partners, and places of residence on the basis of perceived similarity. Once such segmentation occurs, not only within-group similarity but also dissimilarity across groups may increase at a rapid rate. Mores, customs, habits, traditions, and languages develop within cultural groupings. These indigenous patterns only serve to accentuate what may have been at the outset minimal differences among groupings.¹⁶ One might conclude that at least within any single culture the continued enforcement of an *apartheid* system over time tends only to reinforce itself. Minimal differences among persons spiral with segmentation.

While some of the processes described above may decrease affiliation across color lines, they do not all actively promote hostility. Moreover, there are other differentiating features within society that do not appear to engender prejudicial feelings. Although sex differences,¹⁷ certain religious vestments, and uniforms may serve a differentiating function, hostility is not a normal component of one's reaction to those who are dissimilar to oneself in these respects. One might also ask why certain racial groups seem to suffer more from such tendencies than others. The moderately rapid assimilation of the Chinese into Western culture can, for example, be contrasted with the arduous path faced by Negroes. Each of these issues leads headlong into the problem of color semantics.

Color Symbolism

Colors, like words or gestures, have substantial currency in the semantic domain. While words are most often used denotatively (for example, to refer to specific objects or events in the real world), color is more often used to communicate on a connotative level. Colors lend themselves to this type of communication because they lack concreteness. Color, like dimensions of shape and size, is perceived as a characteristic of an object, rather than as the object itself. Thus, while seldom denoting objective content, colors

have the capacity to elicit directly certain types of feelings or emotions. Artists have long used this assumption to advantage. Within recent times interior designers, advertisers, architects, human engineers, and fashion designers have systematically begun to investigate the impact of color in communication.

How do colors come to have this semantic value, and what feelings do various colors communicate?¹⁸ Some have argued that the connotative meanings of various colors are related to innate physiological structure. For example, certain colors stimulate a greater number of receptor cells in the retina of the eye and, thus, in the central nervous system; these same colors absorb less heat and may, therefore, be cooler to the touch. While this notion may account for certain reactions to color brightness and saturation, it does not account for the many differences produced by the all-important dimension of hue. Nor does this theory explain the range of different emotions that may be elicited by the same color over time. A more reasonable explanation may be derived from principles of associative learning.

Within this latter framework certain environmental events are observed to possess the inherent capacity to produce various emotions. A full stomach may provide the newborn child with a pleasurable sensation, while a loud and unexpected noise may produce fear. Various aspects of the environment to which the initial response has been neutral may come to be associated with these more basic forms of arousal. If a mother's caress has been associated with physical satisfaction, her presence on subsequent occasions may be sufficient to elicit some form of pleasure. While colors may initially be effectively neutral for the developing child, they are constant aspects of his environment. If a given color is usually present when the child is frightened or sad, through processes of associative learning such a color may come to elicit such feelings at later points in time. These associations may develop prior to linguistic abilities; unless extinguished, they may continue through the individual's life.

While the learning hypothesis may largely account for the emotional or connotative significance of various colors, the question of "what" colors communicate remains at bay. This issue also presents an intriguing enigma. Not only do differing colors register differentially on a symbolic level, but the emotional significance of certain colors may be common both within and even across cultural boundaries. If, indeed, primary reactions to colors are learned, it is

The Significance of Skin Color in Human Relations

a matter of some amazement that peoples with highly dissimilar cultural backgrounds should react similarly to a given color.

After careful study of color symbolism in the Western tradition, Matthew Luckiesh lists the following as most commonly associated with black: woe, gloom, darkness, dread, death, terror, horror, wickedness, curse, mourning, and mortification.¹⁹ Walter Sargent adds to this list the attributes of defilement, error, annihilation, strength, and deep quiet.²⁰ From his studies, Faber Birren concludes that "despair" is the major association elicited by black.²¹ Such attributes stand in marked contrast to those associated with white: triumph, light, innocence, joy, divine power, purity, regeneration, happiness, gaiety, peace, chastity, truth, modesty, femininity, and delicacy.²² Studies of color symbolism in the Bible, the works of Chaucer, Milton, Shakespeare, Hawthorne, Poe, and Melville also reveal a major tendency to use white in expressing forms of goodness, and black in connoting evil.²³

In terms of the above discussion of connotative meaning, it might be said that white tends to elicit a positive evaluative reaction and black a negative one. Several direct and well-controlled tests of this relationship have been made within Western culture. All convincingly demonstrate the differential evaluative reaction to black versus white. One of the more outstanding of these studies demonstrated not only that white is rated more positively than black, but that both Negroes as well as whites feel similarly in this regard (though whites are more extreme in their differential evaluation of the colors). Furthermore, black is rated by both racial groups as more potent but less active than white.²⁴ These latter findings are particularly intriguing inasmuch as they coincide with the popular Western stereotype that Negroes are "strong" but "lazy."

While the homogeneity of meaning within the Caucasian-dominated culture of the West is impressive, the possibility that color symbolism may be common across cultural boundaries is even more challenging. The evidence in this case is, of course, much more sparse, and one must be tentative. A systematic examination of a randomly selected group of cultures does reveal, however, many interesting observations: For the Chiang, a Sino-Tibetan border people, a sacred white stone is a leading feature of worship. The anthropologist studying this culture notes the people's basic tendency to equate white with goodness, and blackness with evil.²⁵ Among the Mongour, descendants of the Mongols, black is the

color of mourning, and white betokens good fortune. The Chuckchees of Siberia utilize black to symbolize the *Kelets*, or evil spirits. Germaine Dieterlen has observed that for the Bambara, a West African Negro tribe, white is used to symbolize wisdom and purity of the spirit.²⁶ A piece of white cloth is sometimes hung over the door of a home where the inhabitants have just made a sacrifice; white is also the regal color. The dark tones of indigo, on the other hand, connote obscenity, impurity, and sadness. Black is also identified with the North and the rainy season. Similarly, Negroes of Northern Rhodesia are observed to associate good luck with cleanliness and whiteness. A hunter smears a white substance on his forehead to invoke the powers of fortune; a person who has met with disaster is said to be "black on the forehead." In Nigeria, the Nupe tribe represents bleak or frightening prospects, sorcery, or evil by black, while white implies luck and good prospects. The Yorubas, also in Nigeria, wear white when worshipping, as they believe the deities prefer white. Among the Creek Indians of North America, white betokens virtue and age, and black implies death. Although the present examination did reveal irregularities, these were extremely few and limited largely to instances in which white was associated with funeral rites. In short, the major volume of the evidence suggests widespread communality in feelings about black and white.

Before the significance of these findings for human relationships can be examined, the apparent existence of communality must be reconciled with the theory of color learning developed above. If the connotative meanings of colors are primarily learned, why is there not dramatic variability in the emotional impact of various colors from one cultural context to another? One clear reason for uniformity in association obviously derives from cultural diffusion. Meanings common within a culture may be passed on to others as a simple result of cross-cultural interaction. Such an explanation would not, however, account for the germination of such associations or for their common existence in somewhat isolated areas of the world.

More compelling is the possibility that the emotional response to at least the experience of black and white is established at a very early age, and as a result of almost universal experiences. Two such experiences seem especially germane: the meaning of night versus day for the child, and the training he receives in cleanliness. Night is often a period in which the child is in isolation,

The Significance of Skin Color in Human Relations

without comfort or bodily gratification. Moreover, night is a perfect screen on which he can project his worst fears. Any phantom, no matter how formidable, can exist within the amorphous cover of blackness. In Wallace Stephen's poem "Domination of Black," one finds the following reaction to chaos and disorder:

I saw the night come,
Come striding like the color of the heavy hemlocks.
I felt afraid.

With the coming of daylight, family and environment are again visibly present, and sustenance and touch available. It is also much more difficult to project one's fears onto the compelling properties of visually apparent objects. John Dollard and Neal Miller have perhaps best outlined the profound significance of cleanliness training in the life of the child.²⁷ It is unnecessary to review the details of their arguments to appreciate that for most children immersion in dirt or other dark substances is ultimately reprehensible, and unsoiled skin rewarded.²⁸

Are the basic emotional reactions triggered by various colors generalized to the domain of social interaction? Will, for example, the person whose emotional reaction to black is negative also feel antipathy for people whose skins are dark? In theory, such a possibility is highly plausible, and research has shown that emotions generated by color can be generalized to objects continuously paired with color.²⁹ But when one turns to the factual domain, the evidence is far from conclusive. The existence of anti-Negro sentiments among whites is subject to a host of explanations that do not involve color experience. More compelling, and yet unsettling, are incidents in which Negroes themselves seem negatively predisposed toward those among them with dark skin. Some of the most dramatic cases of this kind are found in the literature on mental illness among Negroes. Investigators have noted the great frequency with which the desire to be white recurs in dreams and delusional states of hospitalized Negroes. Such patients believe that they are really white, but that their skin is dirty, dyed, or painted. Some even think that they have eaten foods that have caused their skin to darken.³⁰ Other investigators have found that Negroes' self-esteem may be greatly impaired as a result of such feelings, and that accompanying self-hatred may be generalized to hatred for the entire Negro race.³¹ Such feelings do not seem to be limited to psychotic patients. Among normal groups, one study has

shown that three out of five Negroes feel that black is the worst color to be.³² Among Negro college students, light-skinned Negroes are considered more attractive.³³ On the broad social level, Negroes with lighter skin have more education and hold jobs with higher status.³⁴

In studies of adults it is, of course, difficult to rule out the impact that the attitudes and treatment received from whites have had on Negro feelings toward self. It would also be a mistake to attribute all these various findings to simple assimilation of white attitudes. Somewhat more convincing with regard to our initial supposition are studies of elementary and preschool children. Even in the second grade, Negro children will prefer white children as friends.³⁵ The Clarks have found that three-year-old Negro children will notably prefer a white doll to a brown one, feeling the white doll is nicer, looks better, and has a better color. Further studies show that preschool nursery children will fail to identify themselves as Negro and will prefer to see themselves as white.³⁶

The supposition that attitudes toward color generalize to attitudes toward people, and in this case working toward the detriment of the Negro, gains further credence when one peruses various accounts of experiences in non-Western cultures. The classic case is the capitulation of the Aztec civilization to Cortez and his small band of soldiers, an event some have thought to be the result of the Aztec association of whiteness with divinity. There are also the accounts of Captain James Cook's explorations in New Zealand, where he found that the more prestigious natives of the tribes were of a whiter cast.³⁷ Melville's description of the Marquesan islanders is also *à propos*. Upon the arrival of the first white woman to the island, the islanders . . . gazed in mute admiration at so unusual a prodigy, and seemed inclined to regard [her] as some new divinity." The Marquesan women were also known to take great pains to whiten their skin in order to appear more beautiful. In India, *varna*, the word for caste, originally meant "color." While the color of the highest caste, the Brahmins, is white, the color associated with the Sudras, the lowest caste, is black.

Although hardly conclusive, the above evidence suggests that whenever there are distinctively different color lines within a society, there will be a pronounced tendency toward strife between the light and the dark. Further, alterations in laws or social structure, loosening of economic biases, and reduction of prejudice within any period of time will not serve as a trans-historical pana-

The Significance of Skin Color in Human Relations

cea. Rather, each new generation may have to learn anew the irrational basis of their antipathy. While race prejudice may to some extent be learned, persons may also have to be taught *not* to be prejudiced. The often noted tendency for the dark-skinned to feel inferior may have an initial basis in color symbolism. Such feelings may serve to reinforce exploitation by the lighter skinned, and thus diminish further the self-esteem of the dark. Again, an extended process of relearning may be entailed.

Skin Color in the World of Everyday Relations

A person tends to categorize other people on the basis of overt physical differences and to invest these categories with certain connotative meanings. When such investments take place on a denotative level, they are often called stereotypes. The common tendencies to perceive Negroes as lazy, Jews as mercenary, and Japanese as shy have received keen attention inasmuch as they exemplify indiscriminate modes of thinking. There are also culturally shared stereotypes based on differences in clothing, club or group affiliations, and so on. People feel they know something about a person because he wears the uniform of a policeman or a soldier; the personalities of those affiliated with extreme-right versus left-wing political groups are commonly supposed to differ. Such stereotypes may have subtle but far-reaching influences on human relations. They tend to dull one's sensitivities to the truly individual qualities of the single other. Encountering another, people typically search for information that will allow them to act adaptively toward him. Once it has been found that the person can be stereotyped, the search for and sensitivity to more refined facts concerning the person may be sharply reduced. Thus, color-based categorization and resulting stereotyping can deter what may be termed "personalistic" encounters.³⁸ In addition to reducing sensitivity, categorization also promotes *object* relations as opposed to *person-centered* relations. Rather than being engaged as a unique individual, the person who is marked as an exemplar of a group becomes an object. He will be identified first of all as Chinese or Negro; the difficulties in breaking through such categorizations to engage the man are considerable. In Buber's terms, the person who is classified on the basis of skin color becomes an *It* rather than a *Thou*.³⁹

For the person who may potentially be discriminated against

because of his skin color, additional liabilities may accrue.⁴⁰ Being treated as a member of a category, rather than as an individual, one tends to behave in ways that are consistent with the assigned category. If the person feels that others expect him to act differently, for example, the path of least resistance is to act in the prescribed manner. In this sense, stereotyping may tend to reinforce itself. In addition, unlike a uniform or group affiliation, skin color cannot be donned or doffed as the situation may demand. The person is thus placed at an important disadvantage because he must always present to others information about his racial background. In essence, he is disadvantaged with regard to information control in the situation. Lest this be taken lightly, one might envision a typical member of white society living out his public life with the words "middle-class suburbanite," "less than a high-school education," or "I was 4-F" emblazoned on his forehead.

As a result of this uncontrolled presentation of information, the person is also forced to attend to its consequences. At the outset of relationships with persons of another racial grouping, he will be forced to seek cues as to the other's assessment of him. In essence, the internal logic might go, "He sees I am Negro"; then, "What does he think of Negroes?" Once the search for cues has commenced, he is forced into an almost schizoid position. He must discriminate between reactions to his skin color as opposed to those relevant to him as a person. He cannot be certain, in effect, whether a warm smile or a cold remark is a reaction to his racial category or to his more individual personage. Persons with wealth or power are faced with parallel problems. They cannot be certain whether their acceptance by another is personal or prompted by their position in life. Such persons are at an advantage, however, in that they often have greater control over the information available to others.

In a society where race prejudice exists, the above problems are only exacerbated. In such cases the person carries with him a constant reminder of his limitations, disadvantages, and diminished opportunities. These constant reminders serve only to support the low-self-esteem syndrome referred to above. The description of some Negroes as being "color struck" may be quite apt. For the strong at heart, skin color may produce overcompensation. Feeling others' discrimination, the Negro may strive all the harder to achieve or gain power. But the seeking of power, whether economic or otherwise, on strictly retaliatory grounds may have un-

The Significance of Skin Color in Human Relations

fortunate consequences within a society. Moreover, skin color serves as an easy scapegoat for the person who tries and fails. Rather than asking rational questions calculated to overcome past errors, the person may simply blame his failure on his skin color and ask no further questions. In all too many cases, however, the person's skin color may simply inform him that trying itself is fruitless.

The hurdles of racial equality may be high ones, indeed, and great preparation may be needed for the jump. The most direct mode of offsetting many of these problems may reside in programs of learning. Increased knowledge concerning persons of other races should serve to ameliorate many of the above conditions. In particular, knowledge of basic similarities is at a premium. Such similarities are most likely to be manifested prior to intensive subgroup acculturation, and thus the period of childhood is most strongly implicated as a teaching context. Discrimination learning in the area of color symbolism may also play an important role. Both this type of training as well as training in breaking down stereotypes work against the inertia of imprecise thinking. The ultimate solution may reside in the domain of racial homogenization.

REFERENCES

1. Susan Hole and Kenneth Gergen, "Color and Communication: The Effects of the Hue and Saturation on Reactions to Poetry." Paper presented at the 1966 Meetings of the American Psychological Association.
2. While it must be recognized that within anthropological circles skin color alone is not considered a technically valid yardstick for assessing racial membership, the traditional social distinctions will be adhered to for the present purposes.
3. Some have also ventured that sensitivity to differences in skin shade is much greater within a color grouping than across it. Thus, for example, Negroes may be much more sensitive to lightness of skin among Negroes than are whites.
4. C. E. Osgood, G. H. Suci, and P. H. Tannenbaum, *The Measurement of Meaning* (Urbana, Ill., 1957).
5. Sigmund Freud, "On Narcissism: An Introduction (1914)," *Collected Papers*, Vol. 4 (New York, 1959).
6. John Dunne, whose critical comments have been exceedingly valuable during the preparation of this paper, has suggested in this regard that

attitudes of whites for whom a Negro domestic has served as a mother surrogate may be of special empirical interest.

7. Fritz Heider, *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations* (New York, 1958).
8. A summary of this literature may be found in Kenneth J. Gergen and David Marlow (eds.), *Personality and Social Behavior* (Reading, Mass., in press).
9. While of interest, these accounts are certainly not intended to be conclusive evidence of the processes at stake. Many alternative explanations can be made. Untangling the processes involved in historical accounts is an almost impossible task.
10. Francisco A. Pigafetta, *The First Voyage Round the World by Magellan*, ed. Lord Stanley of Alderly (London, 1874).
11. William Lithgow, *The Totall Discourse of the Rare Adventures and Painfull Peregrinations (of Long Nineteene Yeares Travayles from Scotland to the Most Famous Kingdomes in Europe, Asia, and Affrica)* (Glasgow, 1906; original, 1632).
12. Putnam B. L. Weale, *The Conflict of Colour* (New York, 1910).
13. Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Cambridge, Mass., 1954).
14. Cf. Jack W. Brehm and Arthur R. Cohen, *Explorations in Cognitive Dissonance* (New York, 1962), for a general discussion of inconsistency.
15. Kenneth J. Gergen and Edward E. Jones, "Mental Illness, Predictability, and Affective Consequences as Stimulus Factors in Person Perception," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, Vol. 67 (1963), pp. 95-104.
16. In cases where upward socioeconomic mobility is possible, one offsetting tendency is for the disadvantaged to imitate the customs, dress, and behavior of the advantaged. This tendency had been noted as early as 1903 in the writings of Gabriel Tarde, cf. (*The*) *Laws of Imitation*, trans. Elsie Parsons (New York, 1903).
17. Sex differences may be a debatable example in this instance. In terms of mobility and autonomy, females are in many respects more disadvantaged than members of racial minorities.
18. This discussion will treat "black" and "white" as colors, although arguments to the contrary could be made on technical grounds.
19. Matthew Luckiesh, *The Language of Color* (New York, 1918).
20. Walter Sargent, *The Enjoyment and Use of Color* (New York, 1923).
21. Faber Birren, *Color in Your World* (New York, 1962). While "strength" and "deep quiet" are exceptional within the group of associations to black, it is not clear that they fall along an evaluative dimension. More will be said below concerning the other connotative dimensions related to black.
22. Birren and others also equate white with death, but the referent here seems

The Significance of Skin Color in Human Relations

to be to the pallor sometimes accompanying death and to the spiritual domain related to the theme of the hereafter.

23. Cf. Harold R. Isaacs, *The New World of Negro Americans* (New York, 1963); Harry Levin, *The Power of Blackness* (New York, 1960).
24. Cf. J. J. Jenkins, W. A. Russell, and G. J. Suci, "An Atlas of Semantic Profiles for 360 Words," *American Journal of Psychology* (1958) for an overview of the subject. The experiment alluded to was conducted by John E. Williams, "Connotations of Color Names Among Negroes and Caucasians," *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, Vol. 18 (1964), pp. 121-31.
25. Thomas Torrance, "The Basic Spiritual Conceptions of the Religion of the Chiang," *Journal of the West China Border Research Society*, Vol. 6 (1933), pp. 31-48.
26. Germaine Dieterlen, *An Essay on the Religion of the Bambara*, trans. Katia Wolf (Paris, 1951), pp. 1-293.
27. John Dollard and Neal Miller, *Personality and Psychotherapy* (New York, 1950).
28. With the lack of viable evidence, it is difficult to know whether this argument would hold on a cross-cultural basis. In addition, for Negroes with very dark skin, dirt may often have the effect of lightening their skin.
29. S. P. Harbin and J. E. Williams, "Conditioning of Color Connotations," *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, Vol. 22 (1966), pp. 217-18.
30. John Lind, "The Color Complex in the Negro," *Psychoanalytic Review*, Vol. 1 (1914), pp. 404-14.
31. Henry Myers and Leon Yochelson, "Color Denial in the Negro," *Psychiatry*, Vol. 11 (1948), pp. 39-46. For further analysis of Negro self-hatred, see Thomas F. Pettigrew, *A Profile of the Negro American* (Princeton, 1964).
32. Charles H. Parrish, "Color Names and Color Notions," *Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 15 (1946), p. 13.
33. E. S. Marks, "Skin Color Judgments of Negro College Students," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, Vol. 38 (July, 1943), pp. 370-76. It will be interesting in this case, as well as the others, to assess the effects of the "black power" movement on Negro evaluation of skin shades. The present tendency could possibly reverse itself.
34. Howard E. Freeman, David Armor, J. Michael Ross, and Thomas Pettigrew, "Color Gradation and Attitudes Among Middle-Income Negroes," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 31 (1966), pp. 365-74; St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, Vol. 2 (New York, 1962), pp. 496-500.
35. Helen Koch, "The Social Distance Between Certain Racial, Nationality and Skin Pigmentation Groups in Selected Populations of American

- School Children," *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, Vol. 68 (1964), pp. 63-95.
36. Kenneth B. Clark and Mamie P. Clark, "Racial Identification and Preference in Negro Children," *Readings in Social Psychology*, eds. T. M. Newcomb and E. L. Hartley (New York, 1947), pp. 169-78. Also see Mary Ellen Goodman, "Evidence Concerning the Genesis of Interracial Attitudes," *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 48 (1946), pp. 624-30.
37. Captain James Cook, *The Voyages of Captain James Cook Round the World* (London, 1887).
38. Kenneth J. Gergen, "Interaction Goals and Personalistic Feedback as Factors Affecting the Presentation of Self," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 1 (1965), pp. 413-24.
39. Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Ronald G. Smith (New York, 1958).
40. For an additional treatment of these types of phenomena see Erving Goffman, *Stigma* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1963).