

Departmental Research Seminar



Yearning to be Fair:
Skin Tone and the Pursuit of Status
By

Prof. Nancy Wong
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Date : 19 Mar 2019 (TUE)
Time : 10:30 am – 12:00 nn
Venue : M802

Abstract

Our societal obsession with fairness has assumed psychological, economic and political importance with the continued growth in the desire for skin lighteners transcending boundaries of country, race, culture, and socioeconomic status. Whereas tanned complexions are perceived as representing youth and beauty in the West; pale, white skin represents the ideals of glamorous Asian women and men. This deep-rooted ideal is what propels the burgeoning skin-whitening business in Asia and elsewhere in the world. To further understand this phenomenon, we begin by reviewing the historical, cultural, societal, and individual motivations for skin lightening. Next, we explore the pursuit of fairness through empirical evidence. Finally, we propose an emergent framework for skin lightening as a form of cultural agency. As such, we argue that both public and private representations of agency may be the key motivation for consumer change.

Prof. Nancy Wong holds the Kohl's Chair in Retail Innovations and she is Professor of Consumer Science at the School of Human Ecology, University of Wisconsin-Madison. She holds an affiliated appointment at the Marketing Department, School of Business. She received her Ph.D. in Business Administration and a M.A. in Social Psychology from the University of Michigan. Her research has focused on the influence of culture in consumption decisions, affective responses, and consumption values such as materialism. In addition to exploring methodological issues in cross-cultural research, she also conducts research on consumer decisions in healthcare, personal finance and sustainable consumption.

All interested are welcome.

