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Internalizing Oppression to the Level of Possibilities

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Bridging Epidermalization of Black Inferiority and the Racial Epidermal Schema: Internalizing Oppression to the Level of Possibilities

Seunghyun Song

Abstract

In this article, we will engage with Frantz Fanon's two prominent theses of *Black Skin, White Masks*, the epidermalization of inferiority (internalization process of colonial oppression) and racial epidermal schema (bodily embodiment of racial oppression), in order to refine our understanding of race beyond its traditional concepts. We will focus on how race pertains to racialization, which functions through internalization of racial oppression. On this basis, we will investigate how racial oppression influences colonized subjects' possibility of existence, and how the case of French colonialism could help us to unpack current complex issues of black racism.

Keywords

colonialization, black racism, inferiority, oppression

The nominalist notion of race, which explains it as physical dispositions that are hereditarily passed on from one generation to the next, has long lost its scientific validity thanks to critical theory and race studies. Yet race still persists as a category of our perception, as a social currency that divides society into two groups: "us" and "them". In this article, we will engage with Frantz Fanon's two prominent theses of *Black Skin, White Masks* (henceforth, *BSWM*), the epidermalization of inferiority (internalization process of colonial oppression) and racial epidermal schema (bodily embodiment of racial oppression), in order to refine our understanding of race beyond its traditional concepts. We will focus on how race pertains to racialization, which functions through internalization of racial

oppression. On this basis, we will investigate how racial oppression influences colonized subjects' possibility of existence.

As *BSWM* is a multifaceted piece that criticizes colonialism from multiple perspectives, we will focus on Fanon's phenomenological perspective that grounds the racial epidermal schema, which relates to the epidermalization of inferiority. Our purpose is to relate being in a racially oppressive environment to concrete consequences of being part of a racial minority. By doing so, this article will investigate how identity-based oppression restricts individuals to the extent that their capacity to imagine their identities becomes fixated on an unreachable ideal, i.e. the white, hegemonic masculine subject. We will explore racial oppression through Fanon's thesis on colonial racism, and how it could help us to unpack current complex issues of black racism.

Throughout *BSWM*, Fanon criticizes colonialization through concrete cases such as sexuality, language, and psychosis. He also translates numerous experiences of colonial racism through the phenomenologies of Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty to explain how colonial racism affects racial minorities. Fanon, who himself was a black man situated in the colonial culture, argues that experiences of racism overshadow his individual subjectivity with "legends, stories, history, and above all *historicity*" of colonialism, which forces him to undergo racialization, thus developing a racial epidermal schema (Fanon, 1986, p. 84, author's emphasis). At the most fundamental level, his corporeal schema racializes into a racial epidermal schema, which—as we will see—is equivalent to being pushed into the position of inferiority. By explaining this process of becoming inferior as the consequence of racial oppression, Fanon notes how black individuals internalize racism and develop different styles of embodiment in comparison to white individuals.

Fanon's phenomenological descriptions can be found in *BSWM*'s fifth chapter, "The Fact of Blackness", an unfortunate translation of the lived experiences of being black. The chapter engages with many instances of racism against people of colour in the colonial period. For instance, racial slurs of "Dirty Nigger!" are hurled at black individuals on the streets, through which Fanon confronts the "white" gaze, in other words, the gaze embedded in the colonial culture that regards black people negatively. This gaze influences Fanon to the extent that his bodily existence is restricted. The "white" gaze transforms Fanon's bodily existence: his body, formerly carefree in his race, transforms into a "Negro's" body through racialization. When a white child cries out "Mama, see the Negro! I'm frightened!" after setting eyes on Fanon, Fanon comes to embody the different meanings that his race carries in France in comparison to Martinique. While both places are subsumed in colonial culture, the metropolis is dominated by the white norm, propagated by the white majority. In France, Fanon confronts racial meanings that place him in an inferior status *in relation to* white people, altering Fanon's basic modes of existence at the most fundamental level.

The effect of the white gaze, simply put, reduces black individuals' subjectivity to racist representations of colonial ideology. We will investigate what it means

to be reduced in subjectivity by focusing on how a black individual dons herself a white mask in spite of her black skin.

Epidermalization of Inferiority

Fanon's epidermalization of inferiority explains colonialization through the perspective of internalization. Fanon notes how black individuals *become* inferior in concrete cases of everyday living, where black individuals simultaneously suffer from racial hierarchy, while perpetuating it by internalizing the idea of black inferiority. When confronted with racial prejudices, black individuals act in certain ways that render them inferior. In this essay, inferiority denotes relativization, rather than lesser human capacity such as rationale or intellect. In other words, epidermalization of inferiority refers to the process in which people of colour relativize themselves to the white norm.

Fanon handles numerous concrete examples of epidermalization of inferiority, the most pertinent being the case of sexuality. Fanon's acerbic criticism of Mayotte Capécia's *Je suis Martiniquaise* demonstrates Fanon's thesis of epidermalization of inferiority, as well as his perspective on decolonization. Fanon views Mayotte's desire of whiteness as a product of colonial self-misrecognition. Throughout the book, Mayotte reacts to the feeling of insignificance that people of colour face in colonial cultures. She finds her black body as concealing her "white potentials", accentuating the split between how she feels (white) and how she looks (black). This split culminates into her pursuit of a white partner, from whom she seeks confirmation of her "whiteness" and her belongingness to the white world. Her constant "preoccupation with attracting the attention of the white man ... being powerful like the white man ... to seek admittance to the white sanctuary" demonstrates the dependency of the white approval which she embraces in her attempt of self-transcendence (Fanon, 1986, p. 36). Fanon criticizes this dependency as an active embodiment of black inferiority, where black individuals affirm the colonial values by placing themselves in the position of relativity. The structure of dual narcissism that founds the white-black hierarchy in the colonial culture—"the white man is sealed in his whiteness [and] the black man in his blackness" (Fanon, 1986, p. 3)—is fundamentally based on black individuals' embrace of white authority. In their narcissistic pursuit towards self-approval, they place the white individuals in the position of authority, from whom they seek validation. Mayotte's candid desire for a white partner affirms and perpetuates the status of black inferiority by placing herself under the authority of white approval. Paradoxically, Mayotte's self-righteous vindication of her white potentials becomes proof of her status of inferiority, due to the dependency on the white approval.

When Fanon criticizes Mayotte's book and its success as "a sermon in praise of corruption", he points out that such embrace of colonial desires inexorably accepts the hegemony of colonial ideology, rather than striving towards decoloni-

zation (Fanon, 1986, p. 29). Embracing the white values, as Mayotte did, renders black individuals inferior. Moreover, it enforces their position as emulative beings condemned to fail in their aspirations to be white. Mayotte, being black, can never change her race and become white. In the colonial culture, black individuals' acts of self-transcendence are recognized as triumphs of the French colonial project. Even though Mayotte's desire of whiteness is based on her pursuit towards self-validation, her aspirations to be white will never elevate her into higher racial, social, or economic positionality but merely perpetuate her inferiority by conferring authoritative superiority on the ideal of whiteness. Mayotte's desire of whiteness evidences the righteousness of the colonizer's cultural imposition that led black "savages" to a (better) modern civilization. The dominance of ideology debilitates creative ways in which black individuals pursue and affirm their self-worth. In such a milieu, Fanon finds Mayotte's unadulterated expressions of desire acts of corruption that neglect the necessity of decolonization.

A feminist perspective immediately reveals how Fanon, regardless of his intention, dismisses the possibility of a female thinking body in his criticism of Mayotte's work. Fanon's interpretation of Mayotte omits to mention how women of colour experience oppression as intersections of misogyny and racism, which produce fundamentally different forms of self-realization and decolonization. For instance, Fanon does not account for the fact that Mayotte's narration critically engages with the status quo, supported by her self-analysis of desire. It does not occur to Fanon that Mayotte could be motivated to analyse colonial desire. Although she remains silent on the precise means of decolonization, Mayotte provides a critical description of women's situation in the colonial period. For Fanon, however, Mayotte is driven by "a motivation whose elements are difficult to detect" (1986, p. 29). This is indeed a symbolic matricide, a dismissal of Mayotte's status as a female thinker, as pointed out by bell hooks' rejoinder to *BSWM* and *The Wretched of the Earth* (hooks, 1990). Despite the fact that Fanon's later works (e.g. *A Dying Colonialism* and *Toward the African Revolution*) offer more pro-feminist accounts of women's liberation and the activities of feminine bodies, *BSWM* demonstrates why Fanon has an ambivalent relation to feminism and gender theory. However, Fanon's critique on Mayotte still leaves open the question as to how the system of oppression can be overthrown. Fanon argues that if black individuals are treated as inferiors, then the dominance of colonial ideology should be opposed without further propagation of the status quo. For Fanon, only revolution will secure the creative ways in which black individuals self-validate and become truly competent.

What Fanon shows through his thesis of epidermalization of inferiority in the case of sexuality is the relevance of contextual analysis, especially when it comes to societal oppression. He shows how colonialism restricts black individuals' possibilities of existence. Now, we will see that his thesis of epidermalization of inferiority parallels his notion of racial epidermal schema, as both describe the colonial restrictions of black individuals' possibilities. More precisely, both hinder the black individual's projection of possibilities for the future. Epidermalization hinders the

intelligibility of black bodies, while the racial epidermal schema hinders the body's development. Experiences of racism repeatedly compel black individuals to internalize the burden of being black; they are reduced to facile and homogeneous representations of the black "race" and allocated a social position as inferiors who evoke hatred and fear (Lennon, 2015, p. 130). By linking the racial epidermal schema with the epidermalization of inferiority, we reduce the problem of racism to the body as the locus of our being-in-the-world.

The Lived Experience of Being Black: The Structures of the Perceptual Field

The thrust of Fanon's critique of colonialism is a discomforting aspect of race: as much as other objects of perception, race is perceived with qualities that connote particular significances in social and individual registers. In a racist milieu, these qualities are decisively negative. In the same way as we perceive a contorted mouth and knitted eyebrows as a facial expression of anger, we also perceive dark skin tones as uneducated, lower class, or prone to criminality. The difference between perceiving facial expressions and race is that perception of the latter is neither as pragmatic nor benign as the former. We perceive dark faces with qualities that often restrict, if not stigmatize, people of colour.

In phenomenological terms, we perceive on the basis of schemas and images that structure and organize our perceptual field. When we see a person of colour, we perceive him or her through perceptual schemas that tacitly provide us with norms. These norms inform us on how bodies of different races should inhabit space and how we should perceive their bodily existences. In the colonial period, the perceptual field was loaded with colonial ideologies that restricted people of colour. Now, we will take a look at each structure that defines racial qualities in our perceptual field.

Corporeal Schema

In his treatment of the corporeal schema, Fanon reveals his embrace of phenomenological tradition. Fanon defends the division between reflexive and pre-reflexive consciousness on the basis of which the self arises. Moreover, he presents the relation between the body and the world in a way that is similar to Merleau-Ponty's treatment of the body:

In the white world the man of color encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema. [...] I know that if I want to smoke, I shall have to reach out my right arm and take the pack of cigarettes lying at the other end of the table. [...] all these movements are made not out of habit but

out of implicit knowledge. A slow composition of my *self* as a body in the middle of a spatial and temporal world—which seems to be schema. It does not impose itself on me; it is, rather, a definitive structuring of the self and of the world—definitive because it creates a real dialectic between my body and the world (Fanon, 1986, p. 83, author's italics).

The bodily schema is treated as the ground where consciousness' temporal and spatial compositions take place. In the time that consciousness unites lived experiences of the just-past with projections of the future, the self arises on the basis of retentions and protentions of time consciousness, which synthesize—or, as Fanon terms, compose—different adumbrations of consciousnesses into a unified perception and a self. Here, Fanon embraces fundamental structures of phenomenology: consciousness is consciousness *of* a transcendental object, while every consciousness *of* something has “implicit knowledge” of self-awareness by being conscious *of* consciousness. It is through reflection that consciousness forms the egological structure: pre-reflexive, spontaneous consciousness transforms through reflection where different consciousnesses are synthesized into an egological unity with a past, present, and future continuum of the self. What is important is that the self is the basis through which we perceive the world with coherence, where one finds one's array of possibilities.

The corporeal schema structures and organizes these possibilities which arise in the body's relation to the world. The corporeal schema is the development of habitual comportments and motility, through which a body is a body fully at home, comfortably oriented towards the world in unified patterns of movement that are cultivated in relation to that world. It is on this basis that Fanon can spontaneously reach out for his cigarettes without having to assess every movement of his arm and torso. As corporeal schemas enable our spontaneous movements in pre-reflexive consciousness, disruption of the corporeal schema will hinder individuals' basic human possibilities. As demonstrated by the Schneider case in Merleau-Ponty, disruption of corporeal schema will hinder intelligible movements that the habitual body exhibits (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). It is crucial that the corporeal schema acts as a framework of daily, mundane bodily possibilities. Moreover, Fanon accentuates that the corporeal schema is created out of volition, a view also embraced by Merleau-Ponty. It relates to bodily possibilities that are not “imposed” on the body, but rather created through the reciprocal relation between the body and the world. We are free to activate our bodily possibilities that exceed the framework of our bodily schema, despite the habitual stylization that the schema provides. The body is not something that exists in the world, positioned amidst the world. Rather, the body *relates* to the world by navigating through the world in its interaction with structures of meaning, through which a new structure of coherence is *created*. It discovers the historical world by tuning itself to specific aspects of the world, to which we react with a certain amount of agency. We have the capacity to either affirm or interpret the historical world. When we encounter a situation that provides us with specific possibilities of “I can”, we are capable of abiding,

modifying, contesting, or creatively reproducing the discovered structures of meaning through our volitional yet reciprocal acts.

Racial Epidermal Schema

What Fanon adds to phenomenological tradition through his philosophy is to shed light on the disparity between the body and the world through the case of colonialism. Colonial racism disrupts the corporeal schema, which Fanon refers to as his initial mode of existence, when he confronts how others perceive his body as the “Negro’s”. His corporeal schema transforms into a racial epidermal schema. Through this racial epidermal schema, Fanon becomes confined to the mode of objecthood, where denigrating colonial racial meanings pervade the perceptual field:

I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors. I subjected myself to an objective examination, I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slaveships, and above all else, above all: “Sho’ good eatin” (Fanon, 1986, pp. 84-5).

To understand what the racial epidermal schema involves, we can refer to a lucid description of a black man’s bodily movements when in the presence of a white woman, provided by Cynthia R. Nielson:

The white man is free to adjust his bodily attunement in order to hear the white woman, whereas the black man is not. What should be an ordinary, noncognitive bodily adjustment becomes for the black man a movement that must be scrutinized from as many perspectives as possible, lest the “wrong” move cost him his life. Such an asymmetrical restriction of the black man’s freedom to make bodily adjustments of this sort prevents him from developing a personal “style” which would enable him to emerge and differentiate himself from the phenomenal field in which he finds himself (2013, p. 80).

For instance, we perceive a black man as a threatening “biological” body (which we will discuss further below), informed by racist historicity. This means that a black man, in return, will internalize such perceptions by steering clear of any “unacceptable” bodily movements. The awareness of negative racial perceptions will lead him to develop a specific style of movement: a black man will not approach or lean in, that is, physically approach a white woman to indicate that he could not hear her, while a white man would. The racial difference in bodily stylization attests to the influence of racial perceptions; how racial meanings become ingrained in

people of colour at the level of pre-reflexive consciousness to the extent that their spontaneous movements are self-audited to react to racial meanings.

The racist environment ultimately inhibits black individuals in their corporeality. This statement is the thrust of Fanon's racial epidermal schema, where racial meanings function in relation to specific social positionalities, that is, being black becomes indicative of one's inferior social, economic, political, and even geographical status. These "indications" restrict people of colour. Because black men are perceived to be prone to criminality, violence, and wrongdoing, they may exert their bodily existence in abidance to the racist norms. What is more is that the stylization of racialized bodies self-audit their bodily existences *in anticipation* of the punitive norms, so that the "white" standards become ingrained as a panoptic presence in the black individual's consciousness. This solidifies the power of racial oppression by means of internalization. In other words, the racial bodily schema as a product of racial oppression becomes internalized by black individuals through the very means of their embodiment.

Body Images

In Fanon's description of colonial racism, we find that racial qualities are structured not only through schemas but also through images. While the perceptual field is informed by the schema, through which we holistically perceive coloured bodily existences, the perceptual field is anchored on racialized body images of people of colour. In his discussion of colonial psychosis, Fanon explains how being black is perceived as the symbol of the "biological". Black individuals are viewed as "biological", that is, closer to nature, savage-like, immoderate, and as having unexpressed desires equivalent to the drives of the Freudian life instinct. In other words, all the desires that should be repressed in accordance to (white) social standards are projected on black individuals, which shapes the perception of black individuals "as if the Negro really had them" (Fanon, 1986, p. 127).

In particular, black masculinity suffers from the qualities of exaggerated sexual potency, where black men are regarded as instinctual, dangerous, and violent. It is also this sexual exaggeration that cancels out black men's intellect: "An erection on Rodin's thinker is a shocking thought" (Fanon, 1986, p. 127). Subsequently, black masculinity is castrated: the virility and manhood of black men are tabooed by colonial norms. Put differently, black masculinity is contorted and oppressed, as it is unacceptable that the black male body signifies a phallus that exceeds that of a white man: "the Negro is castrated. The penis, the symbol of manhood, is annihilated, which is to say that it is denied . . . it is in his corporeality that the Negro is attacked. It is as an actual being that he is a threat . . . by the fear of the sexual potency of the Negro" (Fanon, 1986, pp. 125-6). In other words, we perceive black men as "biological", which in turn enforces the social taboo of their sexuality. It is also on this perceptual basis that an ideal of the black male slave is cultivated, e.g. as portrayed in the ex-

ample of “Y’a bon banania”, a racist image of a good-natured simpleton who smiles widely in naïve, innocuous servitude, even when tending to his Madame’s nylons.

This symbol is one of many schemas and images that constitute the racial qualities of our perceptual field. We perceive countless racial qualities, shaping our perception of people of colour. Racial qualities pervade our perception, bodily existence, and usage of language, which all structure the experience of being black. Entrenched in such structures of racial intelligibility, the child attests its immediacy by conveying intense reactions when seeing Fanon. As a naïve, unknowing child sees racial qualities and affirms them, so we are influenced by its immediacy as the racial qualities flood our perceptual fields spontaneously. Moreover, people of colour are influenced by these racial qualities: the ways in which they are perceived by the others shape their experiences of being black. In other words, the detrimental qualities that we see so spontaneously in our quotidian perception change the ways in which black individuals must live as the objects of perception.

The reductive function of racial qualities has a strong influence on black individuals in colonial milieus. These negative race perceptions turn people of colour into inferiors; a racial hierarchy of colonization is affirmed and perpetuated. White and black individuals form a racial power imbalance, attested by Fanon’s confrontation with the child’s frightened cry. Merely through the child’s gaze, Fanon is pushed into a state where he is rejected in the basic capacity of human consciousness to oscillate between two modes of being: being-for-itself and being-for-others. The confrontation with the “white” gaze, in other words, renders Fanon’s own body alien to himself, where he finds himself incapable of reapprehending, that is, reasserting his body and endorsing his being-for-itself that will replace the child’s gaze and its colonial objectification. In colonial culture, individuals’ bodily existences are perceived with specific intelligibility, which, in the case of black individuals, petrifies their bodies into the imageries of colonial historicity. This historicity comes with an insuperability, which immobilizes Fanon from reapprehending his own body in confrontation with the other’s gaze. Whereas white individuals enjoy the privilege of accessing their body through unmediated self-awareness, black bodies become mediated by the structures of racial meanings.

“I can” and “I can, insofar I am white”

The problem of colonial asymmetry—the disparity between one’s experiences and the other’s perceptions thereof, and the disparity among different races in stylizing their bodies—becomes clearer when we understand how such restrictions hinder an individual’s existence as a whole. In order to illustrate this, we can address Fanon’s treatment of racial meanings and their temporality. Racial meanings come with historicity. While not developed in detail, multiple examples in *BSWM* elucidate how racial meanings never arise in a vacuum. Racial meanings of the present continue those of the past and are projected onto the future. When we perceive

race on the basis of corporeal schema and body images, we take up its temporal dimension, where present meanings connect to the past's and the future's. Both racial epidermal schema and epidermalization of inferiority pinpoint the limited existence of black individuals, through which it is fruitful to note how oppression takes its toll in one's broader existence.

For instance, by pointing out the "biological" image of black men's bodies, Fanon exposes the sedimentation of the colonial past that propagated this racial image. We may regard this as historicity of racial oppression, which is not so much a set of genealogical explanations of current racism as the structural synthesis of racial meanings. The present racial meanings arise from the lived past and are projected onto the future. Our perception is structured through sedimentation, which exceeds the scope of the here-and-now into the past and the future. In this sense, a lived experience of the just past can be used as an exemplar of the long past, affirming the significance of Fanon's phenomenological analysis of a lived experience as attesting to the broader history of colonial culture. Fanon intuits the dire consequences of a racist milieu, where oppression does not only refer to the present. Mundane, daily perceptions of race, as sedimentation and historicity of colonialism, have a temporal impact. Black individuals who confront colonial historicity recognize its insuperability by intuiting their inhibited potentialities as already *has been* and internalize and perpetuate the historicity as what *will be*. Then we understand that minorities never simply experience racial discrimination in an atemporal sense; being discriminated against is always a process in which one's future becomes inhibited by past "sedimented" experiences. As a result, we can anticipate the consequences of the racist perceptual field, that is, the functions of racial epidermal schema and colonial body images.

To understand an aspect of the racial epidermal schema and its consequences for racial minorities, we will specifically handle people of colour's projection of possibilities, which base itself on the present. In other words, we can complement the thrust of *BSWM* by investigating black individuals' intentionality of "I can" and how it would be hindered in a colonial context. Here, I embrace the thrust of feminist commentaries on gender embodiment, a pivotal figure being Iris Marion Young: oppression becomes internalized by minorities at the level of embodiment, through which their fundamental scope of being becomes restricted in comparison to their dominant counterparts (Young, 1980). Oppression does not only restrict on the basis of structural disadvantages or unequal opportunities, but also force the minorities to internalize the norm to their bodily existence. We can see that internalization of colonial black inferiority results in self-auditing consciousness. On this basis, we can argue that internalized oppression will format the projection of "I can" in an inhibited form. For instance, "I can" becomes influenced by racial schemas and images that contextualize the projection. That is, a woman of colour's projection of "I can" becomes contextualized into "I can, insofar as I am white". Or, faced with intersections of discrimination of gender and race, her projection of "I can" is followed by a clause of "I can, insofar as I am like the white man". In this case,

the possibility of “I can” is accompanied by “insofar as I can be like a white man” which posits a white, masculine ideal. This contextualization can be explained by a function of the imagination, where the projection of the “I” becomes uncanny due to the alien body-image that does not match that of the black person’s. In other words, imagination can function as one of the mechanisms that inhibit one’s projection of possibilities, by orchestrating a normative projection that is fundamentally alien to one’s own gendered and racialized body. This is paramount in Fanon’s work: black individuals’ imagination becomes colonized. The imagination adjusts itself to the paradigm of emulation. The ideal that is assumed is a white body’s that contrasts with the real body that projects.

We can refer to the imagining consciousness to explain how colonial white norms infiltrate the projections of people of colour. Imagination allows the pseudo-perception of the absent (Sartre, 2004): the imagining consciousness combines the perception of “I can” with the projection of “I can insofar as”. Imagination, in other words, fixates the black individual’s projections onto the white ideal, similar to Bonnie Mann’s analysis which reveals women’s imagination to be the realm of heteronormativity (2009). The ideal, in turn, is always embodied by a hegemonic white masculinity, which alienates black individuals from their own projections of possibilities. As imagination fixates upon the white ideal, black individuals realize and perpetuate the ideology of white humanity and black inferiority to the most intimate levels of existence. It is in the spontaneous projections of possibility that black individuals’ imagination comes into play, so that acts of transcendence become disrupted by colonial ideology. This is how black individuals sediment colonial ideology of black inferiority by embodying their corporeality in accordance with the interference of the colonial ideal. To return to the starting point that motivated Fanon to such reflections, daily experiences of racism function as unsettling reminders that one’s existence so far has been shaped by preceding sedimentation of racist values, and will be shaped by these values by projecting one’s possibilities on the very same basis. In other words, while the internalized norm is nothing more than an imaginary, it serves as a pressing conscience that defines the very mode of being of a racialized individual in a racist milieu.

Conclusion

In this article, we discussed Fanon’s epidermalization of inferiority and the racial epidermal schema. We can thus anticipate the problem of these two products of colonialization by theorizing their influence on black individuals’ possibilities of existence, that is, the inhibition of their existence.

We can suggest a possible application of our discussion by way of conclusion. Our discussion of the effect of colonial oppression on people of colour can help us understand the issues of identity-based discrimination in contemporary society. More specifically, Fanon’s phenomenological description of colonial racism provides us with important insights that help us in further grasping the complex issues

of concrete racism that black individuals face in white-dominant cultures and environments. For instance, we can apply our understanding of colonial racial oppression to the contemporary racism that women of colour face in professional fields. Due to intersecting aspects of identity, women of colour will experience similar, yet fundamentally different oppressive schemas to men of colour, as proven by the thrust of intersectionality (e.g. Crenshaw, 1994). Women of colour are perceived with specific qualities of race and gender. On the basis of these qualities, their acts of self-transcendence will be perceived in ways that restrict their creative possibilities of existence. Moreover, since women of colour are perceived through different images, norms, and qualities of both gender and race, their development of bodily schemas will embody and internalize specific images that are different from those of black men during the colonial period in the 1940s when Fanon was experiencing racism. The specificity of women of colour's bodily schemas, which arises from the specificity of perceptive qualities that limit their intentions and capacities, will develop as they internalize discrimination in such a way that their possibilities of existence are limited by both racial and sexist oppressions.

For example, when women of colour enter an organizational culture in professional fields, they are usually required to act according to professional norms, which are defined through hegemonic white masculinity. Often these women adapt to these norms. However, they are still perceived as those who do not fit into the role of professionals, especially as professionals who rank high in the hierarchy. Even when women of colour act in ways demanded by the masculine work culture—aggressive, self-assertive, dominant, etc.—they are rejected on the basis of their “artificial” identity that betrays their gender and racial identity. The betrayal of femininity, or ethnicity, often leads to disproportionate criticisms; women of colour are often regarded as “too” aggressive, “too” dominant, or “too” reserved, thus, not satisfying the normative demands and expectations, but rather parading fake identities. These kinds of evaluations devalue their capacities or potentials as “good workers”, hence, marginalizing them from further achievements within professional settings. Glass ceilings and bamboo ceilings bar women of colour from belonging to the field, by treating their identity as a mismatch for the profession. In such cases, women of colour are perceived as having certain qualities that do not match with the ideal of the professional. Moreover, when women of colour join the job market, they internalize the perceived qualities by projecting self-audited possibilities of “I can ..., insofar as I act like a white male”. The result of internalization is detrimental: these projections only accentuate the fact that women of colour enact inauthenticity. This play of inauthenticity is strongly reminiscent of the logic of colonialism: by inducing the paradigm of emulation, a black individual was demanded to be white, only to be perceived as a black man who has donned himself a white mask. This inspiration to “become white” becomes proof of people of colour's position of relativity, which Fanon specifies as the position of inferiority.

We can surmise that women of colour's internalization of discrimination will function in a manner that is comparable to, yet also different from, that of men of

colour. Moreover, further research needs to be done on the complex negotiation between the resistance of the oppressed and the power of oppression. This article paid attention to the descriptive power that phenomenology can provide to reach deeper and more impactful understandings of oppressive processes and their consequences. We aimed to describe the gravity of racial and gender discrimination by providing a detailed analysis of how oppression functions at the level of bodily consciousness. This is not to downplay the agency that any oppressed individual may possess. Instead, we suggest that investigating Fanon's phenomenological descriptions of colonial racism can offer us insights into racial oppression; it can further advance our understandings of complex issues of black racism that hinder the possibilities of minorities in numerous domains of everyday living.

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