

Triangulated Pigmentocracy

Colonial Dark-Tetrad Dynamics Behind Colorism, Ethnicization, and Diaspora Fragmentation

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Abstract

This article re-examines colorism, reframing it from a passive "cultural preference" to a measurable, intentional socio-clinical byproduct of colonial political engineering. The core hypothesis posits a strategy called **Colonial Triangulation**: an external power imposes a hierarchy and fosters internal competition for proximity to the imposed ideal, leading to a self-reproducing system termed **Triangulated Pigmentocracy**.

The work proposes a **Mechanistic Model** detailing the psychological factors driving this system: Narcissism (predicting status worship), Machiavellianism (predicting administrative sorting), Psychopathy (predicting neglect), and Sadism (predicting degradation). The primary contribution is a "clinically sharp conceptual framework" and a falsifiable research program anchored in African epistemic sovereignty, yielding testable predictions about discourse, markets (e.g., skin-lightening), and politics (e.g., identity wars). This shifts the focus to colorism as a structural political-economic tool sustaining colonial power.

Keywords:

Triangulated Pigmentocracy, Coloniality, Colorism, Dark Tetrad, Narcissism, Machiavellianism, Psychopathy, Sadism, African Epistemology, Ethnicization, Diaspora Fragmentation, Skin Lightening, Toxic Cosmetics, Minamata Convention, Governance Technology, Structural Adjustment, Decolonial Clinical Practice.

1. Introduction

I start from three working definitions.

Definition 1: Colorism.

I use *colorism* to mean: the systematic valuation of human worth, trust, beauty, competence, and marriageability by gradations of skin tone and phenotype *within* a population already racialized by an external power. Racism targets a “race” category from outside. Colorism polices degrees inside the category once it has been constructed. It is a sorting mechanism within the colonially-invented group.

Definition 2: Pigmentocracy.

A *pigmentocracy* is a stratification regime in which pigment and phenotype become durable predictors of life chances. It is not simply interpersonal prejudice. It is an allocation logic that migrates into schools, churches, hiring, media, police practice, and intimate life, until shade and phenotype quietly predict exposure to poverty, violence, and institutional trust.

Definition 3: Colonial triangulation.

Triangulation is a known manipulation pattern: one authority manufactures rivalry between two parties by controlling recognition, access, and information. Here I speak of *colonial triangulation*: an occupying or dominant system (state, church, corporation, development agency) installs an external ideal

- “whiteness,”
- “civilization,”
- “modernity,” or
- “respectability”

then distributes conditional rewards according to perceived proximity to that ideal, while assigning blame and stigma to those coded as furthest from it. The

population is pushed into lateral conflict around proximity, while vertical extraction remains almost untouched.

This is not a moral slogan; it is a mechanism.

Most existing writing on colorism focuses on *internalization*: people have “internalized” the colonizer’s gaze. That is correct but incomplete. Internalization is a psychological endpoint; it does not describe the machine that creates it, updates it generation after generation, profits from it, and weaponizes it during crises. I argue that the machine is best modeled as a *psycho-institutional regime*: stable incentives plus stable selection of personality profiles at the top of the apparatus.

1.1 Why the Dark Tetrad belongs in the model

The colonial project cannot be explained by “ignorance” or “historical context.” It requires at least four capacities:

1. The capacity to strip others of full human status.
2. The capacity to deceive strategically over long time horizons.
3. The appetite for domination and admiration.
4. The tolerance, and sometimes enjoyment, of cruelty.

These map closely onto the *Dark Tetrad* family of traits, treated here as behavioral strategies, not insults: narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and sadism. Personality research already documents that these traits cluster and are associated with exploitative behavior, strategic manipulation, and callousness toward harm.

I do not claim that “colonizers were all psychopaths.” I claim something structurally simpler: institutions that reward domination, impunity, and deceit will preferentially promote individuals whose traits match those rewards. Over time, the system acquires a Dark-Tetrad-compatible culture, regardless of individual variation.

1.2 Epistemological stance

My stance is explicit: African societies are under no obligation to interpret their own injury through Western innocence narratives. The archives of the perpetrator are usable, but they must be read as self-interested outputs. The fact that European missionary, administrative, and commercial sources still reveal the logic of hierarchy *despite* their self-protection is not an argument for their neutrality; it is evidence of the system’s confidence and of its blind spots.

African oral histories, spiritual frameworks, and community memory are not “secondary” data. They are primary epistemic instruments. Here I give them priority as interpretive guides and treat Western documentation as corroborative or confessional.

1.3 Central claim

My central claim is straightforward:

Colorism is not a cultural side effect. It is a governance technology that sustains extraction across branding shifts.

When overt racial conquest becomes too expensive diplomatically, the regime does not dissolve. It re-skins. It maintains the ranking but pushes enforcement inward. The colonized population becomes the

policeman of the hierarchy, because the ladder is now woven through family affection, sexuality, employment, religious belonging, and respectability.

I call this configuration a *triangulated pigmentocracy*:

- *Triangulated* because control passes through an external reference point that is not neutral.
- *Pigmentocracy* because pigment and phenotype become signals for trust, capacity, and proximity to power.

1.4 Scope

This article is a conceptual review and programmatic paper, not a completed empirical survey. I do three things:

1. I propose a coding framework and research design that other teams can execute and audit.
2. I map Dark-Tetrad strategies onto observable colonial and postcolonial practices around color, phenotype, and intra-group conflict.
3. I derive concrete predictions and practical implications: how to measure the system and how to begin dismantling it.

The tone is clinical for a reason. Systems that deform minds, bodies, and futures at population scale should not be wrapped in euphemistic language.

2. Methodology: From Narrative to Mechanism

This section defines how colorism, triangulation, and Dark-Tetrad dynamics can

be studied in a way that is transparent, falsifiable, and accessible to non-specialists.

2.1 Units of analysis

I distinguish four evidence streams, each with its own distortions:

1. **Discourse corpus (D).**
Administrative texts, missionary reports, colonial policy statements, school manuals, church sermons, major newspapers, influential NGO reports, and postcolonial elite commentary.
2. **Market-body corpus (M).**
Cosmetics advertising, brand campaigns, product composition and toxicology reports, health advisories, trade and customs data, and regulatory texts concerning cosmetics and chemicals.
3. **Behavioral-attitude corpus (B).**
Surveys, interviews, and ethnographies describing mate choice, workplace bias, school discipline, jokes, and status language around skin tone, hair, facial features.
4. **Conflict-identity corpus (C).**
Political speeches, “tribalism” rhetoric, electoral campaigns, diaspora debates, social-media wars, and scapegoating scripts where phenotype or ethnicity is invoked.

Each stream captures a different aspect of the same regime.

- D shows how institutions *justify* the hierarchy.
- M shows how the hierarchy becomes *profitable and toxic*.
- B shows how communities *internalize and enforce* the hierarchy.

- C shows how elites *redirect anger laterally* when vertical power is threatened.

2.2 Variables

We code three outcome variables and four mechanism variables.

2.2.1 Outcome variables

Y1 – Colorist sorting intensity (0–3)

- 0 – Negligible: phenotype occasionally mentioned, no consistent ranking.
- 1 – Present: recurring language of “clearer,” “finer,” “better features,” but not tied to institutions.
- 2 – Institutional: phenotype linked to employment, schooling, policing, media casting, or religious leadership.
- 3 – Institutional + violent/medicalized: phenotype associated with police brutality rates, medical neglect, or high prevalence of harmful aesthetic interventions (e.g. toxic skin-lightening, abusive hair practices).

Y2 – Triangulation visibility (0–3)

- 0 – No clear third-party reference.
- 1 – Implicit external ideal (“modern,” “European,” “Arab,” “Indian”...) without explicit naming.
- 2 – Explicit appeal to external ideal as arbiter of value (“civilized,” “comme en Europe,” “international standard”).
- 3 – External power actively positioned as judge, funder, or savior who “confirms” internal rankings.

Y3 – Harm index (0–3)

- 0 – Symbolic discomfort only.
- 1 – Psychosocial injury (self-hatred, humiliation, social anxiety).
- 2 – Economic harm (employment, income, housing, schooling).

3 – Bodily harm (chemical exposure, violence, self-harm, obstetric neglect).

For Y3 we deliberately include the *chemical channel*: the use of mercury-containing skin-lightening products and other harmful agents documented as a public health concern. The WHO and UNEP have both described mercury as a chemical of major concern and have highlighted its use in skin-lightening creams, leading to regulation under the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

2.2.2 Mechanism variables: Dark-Tetrad codes (0–2 each)

We do not diagnose individuals. We code the dominant *strategy* visible in texts and practices.

- **N – Narcissistic status capture.**
0 = absent; 1 = occasional glorification of colonizer norm; 2 = systematic framing of colonizer phenotype/culture as the ideal model of humanity, and obsessive craving for proximity to that ideal.
- **M – Machiavellian architecture.**
0 = absent; 1 = ad-hoc manipulation; 2 = deliberate segmentation tactics embedded in institutions: classification systems, indirect rule, racial/ethnic codification in ID documents, linguistically coded job ladders, media stereotypes, and selective access to education and funding.
- **P – Psychopathic governance.**
0 = present concern for welfare; 1 = occasional callousness; 2 = consistent pattern of disposability, where certain phenotypes/regions are treated as expendable: slow violence, neglect, brutal policing, structural hunger.
- **S – Sadistic enforcement.**
0 = no humiliation; 1 = sporadic ridiculing of features or accents; 2 = normalized degradation: public mockery of dark skin, hair policing, scarification of dignity in schools, churches, police stations, online spaces.

Each document or case is scored on these seven variables (Y1–Y3, N, M, P, S) on explicit criteria contained in a codebook.

2.3 Logic of validation

To avoid interpretative drift, I propose four safeguards:

1. **Convergence test.**
A pattern is considered robust if it appears in at least two independent streams (e.g. D + M, or D + B). For instance, idealization of light skin in school books plus high market share of lightening products with known toxic ingredients indicates deep internalization.
2. **Asymmetry test.**
If colorist hierarchy stays stable while the actors change (different governments, brands, church leaders), the signal is structural rather than personal. The regime persists through turnover.
3. **Profit linkage.**
We only speak of a *regime* when there is clear extractive benefit: cheaper labor from stigmatized groups, political control through “tribal” tension, sustained markets for products that monetize insecurity.
4. **Re-skinning test.**
We examine whether the *justification language* shifts (from “civilizing mission” to

“development,” from “inferior races” to “backward cultures”) while the pigmentocratic outcomes remain unchanged. A stable outcome with moving rhetoric is a signature of adaptive domination.

2.4 The health-toxicology channel

Why insist on the chemical side? Because it is harder to gaslight than feelings.

Mercury is widely recognized as a global pollutant and neurotoxicant. Under Annex A of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, parties agreed to phase out mercury-added cosmetics, including certain skin-lightening products, above 1 mg/kg. WHO and UNEP have produced technical briefs linking skin-lightening creams to mercury exposure with renal and neurological effects.

This matters conceptually. When a prestige regime pushes targeted populations to spread neurotoxic and nephrotoxic chemicals on their skin for years, we are no longer discussing “aesthetic preferences.” We are describing a pipeline from ideology to chronic poisoning. That is clinical evidence of the value system.

2.5 Falsifiable predictions

The proposed framework generates clear hypotheses:

- **P1 – Discourse shift prediction.**
In colonial and early postcolonial texts, as overt racial conquest becomes embarrassing, references to “race” will decline while language of “respectability,” “modernity,” and “civilization” tied to phenotype increases. Y1 and N should rise while explicit racial terminology falls.

- **P2 – Institutional sorting prediction.**

In employment, schooling, and marriage markets, lighter phenotypes will be overrepresented in positions of authority, front-office roles, and “respectable” unions, even when explicit racist language has been outlawed. This should appear as Y2 = 2–3 with high N and M.

- **P3 – Toxic coupling prediction.**

In countries with histories of intense colonial racialization and weak regulatory enforcement, the prevalence of mercury-containing or otherwise harmful skin-lightening products will be higher, with disproportionate use by women of stigmatized groups. Y3 should reach 3 with high N and M.

- **P4 – Conflict displacement prediction.**

During economic or political crises linked to extraction (mining, structural adjustment, land grabs), official and media narratives will pivot toward “tribalism,” “community dysfunction,” or “youth delinquency,” not toward the architecture of extraction. Coded discourses of phenotype and ethnicity will be mobilized to explain instability. C will show high Y2 with elevated M and S.

A research team can pre-register these hypotheses, code a modest but representative corpus, and publish all data and disagreements. At that point, denials become empirically testable.

3. Literature Review

I do not attempt an exhaustive review; I select strands that clarify mechanisms.

3.1 Coloniality and classification

Work on colonial administrative practices has documented how European powers systematically classified populations into “tribes,” “races,” “castes,” and “customary” units, often freezing fluid identities into hard bureaucratic categories. These classifications were tied to labor regimes, land rights, and taxation. Although the focus is often ethnic or religious labels, the same logic extends to phenotype: skin tone, hair texture, facial features, and accent become rough proxies for “trustworthiness” and “modernity.”

Indirect rule in British Africa and similar systems elsewhere show a pattern: external powers select intermediaries, often from groups socially constructed as “closer” to the colonizer in phenotype or culture, then rule through them while claiming to respect “local custom.” The pigmentocratic ladder is therefore not separate from administrative design; it is quietly embedded in it.

3.2 Psychological injury and mimicry

Decolonial clinical thinkers have described how colonized subjects are forced to see themselves through an external gaze that negates their humanity. The subject oscillates between rage and mimicry: anger at the humiliations inflicted, and a painful desire to approximate the standards of the humiliator to gain safety or recognition.

Colorism is a direct expression of this oscillation. Skin tone and phenotype become the surface on which the colonized psyche negotiates with danger: “If I or my children can look more like the safe

category, perhaps we will be spared.” What begins as survival strategy aestheticizes itself into “taste.” The original violence becomes invisible in the language of beauty.

3.3 Dark-Tetrad research and exploitation

Personality psychology has identified a small set of traits that systematically correlate with manipulative and exploitative behaviors: narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and, in the extended model, everyday sadism. The *Dark Triad* and Dark-Tetrad literature shows that these traits predict willingness to deceive, to instrumentalize others, and to ignore or enjoy suffering.

For my purposes, the key point is methodological. Dark-Tetrad research gives us a vocabulary to describe *strategies* rather than to moralize. When we see consistent patterns of deception, segmentation, and cruelty in institutions, we can say: this structure is Dark-Tetrad-compatible. That does not turn history into psychiatry; it turns vague notions of “evil” into operational behavior clusters.

3.4 Colorism as global structure

Sociological work on colorism has documented its global reach: from Latin America to the Caribbean, from North Africa to South Asia, from the US to the Pacific. In each context, lighter skin tends to be associated with higher income, better education, and more media representation. Scholarly reviews have described “yearning for lightness” as a transnational phenomenon linked to colonial histories and contemporary media.

These studies, however, frequently treat colorism primarily as an inequality pattern

or as identity injury. Fewer works explicitly connect colorism to planned imperial governance strategies, or to contemporary debt, security, and development regimes. That is the gap I aim to narrow.

3.5 Skin-lightening and health

Medical and environmental research has repeatedly flagged the health consequences of skin-lightening practices. Mercury, hydroquinone, and potent corticosteroids have been found in skin-lightening creams in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and diaspora markets. Prolonged use produces dermatological problems and systemic toxicity, including renal and neurological damage.

The Minamata Convention on Mercury, a global treaty, explicitly lists mercury-added skin-lightening products in Annex A among items to be phased out, recognizing both their role in mercury pollution and their health impacts. WHO designates mercury as one of the chemicals of major public health concern and has highlighted consumer products, including cosmetics, as significant exposure routes in some populations.

These findings demonstrate that pigmentocracy does not remain at the level of representation. It enters tissue, blood, and organs. The ideology leaves measurable traces in kidneys and neurons.

4. Expected Results: The Pattern the Model Predicts

Because this article is a conceptual review, this section describes the *pattern* that a properly executed study should find, and

that existing scattered evidence already suggests.

4.1 The ladder of triangulated pigmentocracy

Across archives, markets, and testimonies, the same four-step ladder appears:

1. **External ideal installation.**
An external phenotype/culture is framed as the reference for “civilization,” “progress,” and “beauty.” This may be explicitly racial (white, Arab, Indian) or wrapped in “modernity” language.
2. **Recognition rationing.**
Jobs, education, visas, marriage prospects, and religious prestige are bounded by proximity to that ideal. Those closer to it are celebrated, promoted, or forgiven more easily; those further are policed and punished.
3. **Lateral policing and moralization.**
The population is trained to see internal gradient policing as “our culture,” “standards,” or “taste.” Parents, pastors, teachers, and influencers become unpaid border guards for the hierarchy.
4. **Vertical extraction continuity.**
While internal conflicts intensify, the flow of resources, labor, and decision-making power remains vertical: up and out. Whether under colonial rule, structural adjustment, or “security partnerships,” the same corridors of extraction remain.

Colorism, then, is not a separate phenomenon that “Africans do to Africans.” It is the intimate-life interface of this ladder.

4.2 Mapping Dark-Tetrad strategies onto observable outputs

Under this model:

- **Narcissism** → **prestige mimicry.**
Collectives with power require continuous admiration and distinction. They promote the idea that their phenotype and culture are superior. Colonized elites are encouraged to prove their worth by aligning with that ideal. Within the population, the “closest” to the ideal are recruited as junior partners and often become the harshest enforcers.
- **Machiavellianism** → **architecture of division.**
Administrative borders, ethnic classifications, language hierarchies, school curricula, church structures, and media formats are designed to fragment. “Tribal” boundaries, color-coded urban geographies, and classed schooling create many small ladders instead of one horizontal community. This is visible in colonial ethnic codification and continues in contemporary policy that treats “community rivalry” as the cause of conflict, hiding the initial engineering.
- **Psychopathy** → **disposability and slow violence.**
Certain zones and bodies become acceptable collateral. Darker neighborhoods are more exposed to environmental toxins, policing, poor infrastructure, and medical neglect. When scandals erupt, compensation is rare and impunity frequent. A quiet conclusion is taught: “some bodies matter less.”
- **Sadism** → **humiliation rituals.**
Jokes, memes, school punishments, church sermons, and “disciplinary” violence repeatedly target the same features: hair texture, lips, nose,

skin, mother tongue. The system extracts not only labor and resources but also the pleasure of degradation. The person most damaged by the pigmentocracy is made to laugh at his or her own stigmatized features.

The four elements are mutually reinforcing. Narcissistic self-glorification sets the target, Machiavellian tactics build the maze, psychopathy accepts casualties, and sadism makes the maze entertaining.

4.3 The toxic channel as confirmation

In contexts where colorism is strong, we find high consumption of skin-lightening products and hair-straightening chemicals, often poorly regulated. Studies across several African and Asian countries have found mercury levels in some creams far above recommended thresholds, leading to renal and neurological issues.

From the model’s perspective, this is not an anomaly but a confirmation:

- The prestige regime creates demand for “lightness.”
- The global chemical regime supplies cheap, potent compounds into poorly protected markets.
- Regulatory regimes, often under-funded or captured, fail to protect.
- The body of the stigmatized person becomes the site where global capital, colonial aesthetic hierarchy, and weak sovereignty meet.

If a full study finds no association between strong colorist discourses and toxic product markets, the model would require revision. If, as preliminary evidence indicates, the

association is strong, the model gains empirical weight.

5. Discussion

The model of triangulated pigmentocracy clarifies several recurrent confusions.

5.1 “It’s just preference” is analytically empty

A “preference” is not a primary variable; it is an outcome. Human preferences form under pressure: who is rewarded, who is punished, who is visible, who is mocked, who is allowed to migrate or survive. When a preference systematically reproduces a historically imposed hierarchy of human worth, the burden of proof is not on those who see the pattern. It is on those claiming neutrality.

If the descendants of populations explicitly told for centuries that dark skin is inferior, savage, or ugly now show a statistically strong preference for lighter skin in dating, hiring, and media consumption, that is not “evidence of their internal dysfunction.” It is evidence that the original conditioning has not been dismantled.

5.2 “Africans do it to themselves” is the triangulation script at work

One of the most efficient features of triangulation is that, after a few generations, the victims can be presented as the primary agents of their own degradation. Elders scold youth, parents scold children, ethnic groups accuse one another. The external architect withdraws into the role of “observer,” “partner,” or “mediator.”

The pigmentocracy reinforces this: when darker children are insulted by lighter relatives, when one ethnic group is portrayed as naturally more “advanced” or “governable” than another, the system appears endogenous. This is the final stage of gaslighting: to reclassify engineered self-destruction as “culture.”

My position is the opposite. Internal conflicts matter and have their own dynamics, but they operate *within* a larger architecture. To treat colorism or “tribalism” as purely internal is methodologically equivalent to studying cancer cells and ignoring the laboratory that created the radiation.

5.3 Why colorism, “tribalism,” and diaspora wars are siblings

Colorism, ethnicization, and diaspora factional wars are not separate pathologies. They are three expressions of the same triangulated regime on different scales:

- In the family and intimate sphere: *colorism* chooses who is loved, protected, invested in, or concealed.
- In the regional and national sphere: “*tribalism*” names the hardened identity lines drawn or intensified under colonial and postcolonial governance to manage labor, land, and votes.
- In the global sphere: *diaspora wars* reproduce similar patterns as communities compete for proximity to Western validation, blaming one another for systemic conditions.

In each case, the structure is the same: an external arbiter defines value, rewards those who align, and blames those who resist. The population fights over crumbs of

recognition while the main flows of power and wealth move elsewhere.

5.4 Clinical consequences: from psyche to organ

The harms of triangulated pigmentocracy can be grouped in four clinical domains:

1. **Identity fragmentation.**
Children learn early that some features of themselves and their kin are despised. This produces shame, body dysmorphia, aggression toward siblings, and difficulty forming cohesive identities.
2. **Family pathology.**
Parents may invest more in lighter children, treat darker ones as burdens, or deny them protection in school or in public. Families replicate the colonizer's sorting table, with lifelong psychological scars.
3. **Risk behaviors and self-harm.**
Chronic use of lightening agents, aggressive hair practices, or surgery aimed at approximating the imposed ideal can be conceptualized as slow self-harm: the person damages their own organism to escape stigma.
4. **Political paralysis.**
When communities are consumed by lateral fighting over shade and subgroup, their capacity to organize against structural exploitation weakens. Leaders can weaponize pigment and ethnicity to deflect from corruption, extraction deals, or foreign military arrangements.

A decolonial clinical practice cannot ignore colorism and ethnicization as "social issues." They are etiological factors in depression, anxiety, substance use, and family violence.

5.5 Why African epistemology strengthens, not weakens, the analysis

An African epistemological stance does three things:

1. It centers lived experience and oral transmission as legitimate data, not as "anecdote." The grandmother who traces when bleaching became normalized in her neighborhood is a time-series in human form.
2. It refuses to treat Western discomfort as a stopping rule. If evidence points to a continuous architecture from conquest to present "partnerships," it is methodologically incoherent to censor that conclusion for diplomatic reasons.
3. It integrates spiritual and symbolic dimensions without sacrificing rigor. My concern is not to "psychologize" everything; it is to recognize that symbolic violence is often a precursor or accompaniment to material violence.

Western empirical sources are still useful: environmental treaties, toxicology studies, demographic surveys, and corporate reports are raw material. But they are read as documents produced by agents located inside the system. Their silences are data.

5.6 Toward a minimal but powerful empirical program

To transform this conceptual model into an "unignorable" evidence base without waiting for gigantic grants, a small, disciplined research program is enough:

- Select a *modest* corpus of high-impact texts for three periods

in one region (e.g. 1880–1930; 1950–1980; 1990–2020). Combine official policy, missionary/NGO material, school textbooks, and major newspapers.

- Assemble a *market-body* dataset: ingredient lists and lab tests of common skin-lightening and hair products; regulatory histories; hospital and clinic observations.
- Conduct *targeted qualitative interviews* with three groups: elderly community members, young adults who have used lightening products, and professionals (teachers, nurses, police) about their perceptions of shade and respectability.
- Pre-register hypotheses around Y1–Y3, N, M, P, S. Publish the codebook upfront. Invite skeptical co-coders, including those outside Africa, on the condition that they accept African epistemic leadership.
- Release data (anonymized) and analysis scripts. Let others re-analyze or challenge.

The point is not to build the perfect dataset but to break the illusion that colorism and “tribalism” are too diffuse to measure. They can be measured, and once measured, they must be politically addressed.

6. Conclusion and Next Steps

Triangulated pigmentocracy names a system in which an external ideal, supported by Dark-Tetrad-compatible strategies, is used to organize internal hierarchies of worth by phenotype and subgroup. Colorism, ethnicization, and diaspora fragmentation are not separate

pathologies. They are synchronized outputs of the same psycho-institutional engine.

The system survives because it adapts its rhetoric while preserving its structure. It moves:

- from “civilizing the savage” to “developing backward regions”;
- from “inferior races” to “vulnerable communities” and “fragile states”;
- from open bans on dark bodies to “neutral” policies that produce the same pigmentocratic outcomes in schools, offices, borders, and hospitals.

If we treat colorism as personal taste or “community dysfunction,” we are doing the system’s work for it. If we name it as a governance technology linked to extraction, military alignment, and chemical markets, we can begin to dismantle it with precision.

Practically, three lines of action emerge:

1. Institutional detox.

Audit media, curricula, hiring practices, and church leadership for pigmentocratic patterns. Where necessary, impose corrective quotas, iconography changes, and value statements that explicitly reject phenotype as a proxy for worth.

2. Chemical protection.

Align national law with Minamata commitments, resource regulators to test products, and prosecute importers and distributors of known toxic lightening agents. Public health campaigns must frame skin lightening not as vanity but as a manipulated risk behavior.

3. Cognitive inoculation.

Teach the triangulation model in schools and community settings. When people understand that

pitting darker and lighter, or one group and another, is an old, profitable trick, the trick loses some force.

The next paper in this series will extend the same logic to *pawnship and debt*: from colonial pawnship and foreclosure of persons to contemporary sovereign debt conditionalities and foreclosure of policy space. The hypothesis is that we are dealing with one continuous extraction algorithm, dressed in different legal and moral clothing. The goal is not rhetorical outrage but a clinically precise diagnostic that makes hypocritical narratives harder to sustain.

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21. Additional regional ethnographies and archival studies on African colorism, to be detailed in the final version of the paper.

These two annexes resolve the potential subjectivity of "Sadism" and the gaps in archival data.

Annex A: The "S-Code" Protocol (Resolving the Sadism Metric)

Problem: "Sadism" is often viewed as a subjective emotional state, making it hard to code objectively in administrative or political texts.

Solution: We define Institutional Sadism strictly as "Surplus Degradation."

The Rule: A policy or practice codes as S=2 (High Sadism) if it inflicts humiliation that is unnecessary for the stated administrative goal.

- **Metric:** Does the procedure involve public exposure, mockery of physical features, or forced self-degradation?
- **Example:**
 - *Administrative Control (S=0):* Checking ID cards at a checkpoint.
 - *Sadistic Control (S=2):* Forcing men to strip naked in public to "search for weapons," or measuring noses/craniums in front of peers to assign "tribal" status (e.g., colonial Rwanda).

- **Coding Heuristic:** If the system extracts "duping delight" or public entertainment from the suffering of the subject (e.g., making people laugh at a darker-skinned candidate's accent), it is Sadism.

Annex B: The Shadow Archive Strategy (Resolving Data Gaps)

Problem: Colonial and corporate archives are often sanitized, destroyed, or restricted.

Solution: Use "Shadow Data": proxy indicators that the regime could not hide.

1. **The Price Index (Economic Proxy):** Track the relative price of skin-lightening soap vs. regular soap. If the poorest households spend a disproportionate percentage of income on "correction" products, the pressure is systemic (High Y1), regardless of what official documents say.
2. **The Proverbs & Lyrics Corpus (Oral Proxy):** Analyze popular songs and street proverbs from the target era. If slang terms for "ugly" become synonymous with "dark/indigenous" in street language, the Triangulation (Y2) is confirmed.
3. **The yearbook/Photo Test (Visual Proxy):** In the absence of hiring data, analyze school yearbooks or cabinet photos. If the gradient of skin tone lightens as the rank increases, the Pigmentocracy is empirically present.

Part 2: Model Simulation

I present five distinct events/contexts to test the **Triangulated Pigmentocracy**

mode, scored using the variables defined earlier:

- **Outcome: Y1** (Sorting), **Y2** (Triangulation), **Y3** (Harm/Violence)
- **Dark Tetrad: N** (Narcissism), **M** (Machiavellianism), **P** (Psychopathy), **S** (Sadism)

Case 1: The Belgian Classification of Hutu/Tutsi (Rwanda, 1930s)

Context: Belgian administrators formalized fluid social identities into rigid "racial" ID cards based on nose width, height, and cattle ownership, privileging the "Hamitic" (closer to white) ideal.

- **Y1 (Sorting): 3** (Total stratification of education/admin access).
- **Y2 (Triangulation): 3** (Explicit "Hamitic Hypothesis" claiming Tutsis were "Black Europeans").
- **N (Narcissism): 2** (The colonizer projects their own image onto the "superior" group).
- **M (Machiavellianism): 2** (Perfect architectural division to prevent unified resistance).
- **S (Sadism): 2** (Measuring skulls and noses in public; surplus degradation).

Clinical Note: This is the "Type Zero" example of Triangulated Pigmentocracy. The external power manufactured a race war by using phenotype as a proxy for "civilization." The 1994 genocide was the catastrophic release of this engineered tension.

Case 2: The "Paper Bag Test" in High Society (USA/Caribbean, 20th Century)

Context: Social clubs, sororities, and elite circles denied entry to anyone whose skin was darker than a brown paper bag.

- **Y1 (Sorting): 2** (Institutional exclusion, though not always state-enforced).
- **Y2 (Triangulation): 2** (Implicit acceptance of whiteness as the aesthetic "gold standard").
- **N (Narcissism): 2** (Obsessive mimicry of the dominant caste's manners and aesthetics).
- **M (Machiavellianism): 1** (Internal gatekeeping, less state-directed).
- **P (Psychopathy): 1** (Neglect of the broader community; elitist insulation).

Clinical Note: This demonstrates **"Internalized Enforcement."** The colonizer doesn't need to be in the room; the "Brown Paper Bag" acts as the deputy. It effectively fractured the political solidarity of the Black community for decades.

Case 3: The Modern "Whitenicious" & Mercury Market (Lagos/Manila, Present Day)

Context: The explosion of unregulated, high-mercury cosmetic markets, often endorsed by celebrities.

- **Y1 (Sorting): 1** (Market-driven sorting; lighter skin = more Instagram engagement/sales).
- **Y2 (Triangulation): 1** (The "Global Filter" aesthetic as the new external ideal).
- **Y3 (Harm): 3** (High toxicity: kidney damage, fetal risks, thinned skin).
- **N (Narcissism): 2** (Pathological focus on the "perfect" self-image).

- **P (Psychopathy): 2** (Corporations selling known neurotoxins to vulnerable populations for profit).

Clinical Note: This is the **Chemical Phase** of the model. The ideology has become a commodity. The "Psychopathy" score is high because manufacturers often know the medical risks (Minamata banned substances) but exploit weak regulatory zones.

Case 4: The "Front Office" Bias in Post-Colonial Banking (Kenya/India, 1980s-90s)

Context: Unwritten rules where "customer-facing" roles went to lighter-skinned individuals, while darker individuals were kept in back-office or labor roles.

- **Y1 (Sorting): 2** (Economic sorting impacting career lifetime earnings).
- **Y2 (Triangulation): 1** (Implicit association of lightness with "professionalism" or "trust").
- **M (Machiavellianism): 2** (Subtle, deniable corporate stratification).
- **S (Sadism): 0** (Generally polite exclusion, not overt mockery).

Clinical Note: A "cleaner" version of the regime. It shows how pigmentocracy survives in the capitalist sector as "branding." It creates an economic incentive for families to "marry light" to secure their children's employment future.

Case 5: The "Yellow Bone" Discourse in South African Townships

Context: Street slang and social media debates valorizing "yellow bones" (light-skinned women) and mocking dark skin, leading to "taxi violence" or intimate partner violence dynamics.

- **Y1 (Sorting): 1** (Social/Romantic sorting).
- **Y3 (Harm): 2** (Psychosocial injury and association with gender-based violence).
- **S (Sadism): 2** (High levels of public mockery, meme-based degradation, and "roasting").
- **N (Narcissism): 1** (Status-seeking through partner phenotype).

Clinical Note: This captures the **Sadistic** tail of the model. The "humor" used to denigrate dark skin often masks deep community trauma. It is the mechanism of "Lateral Policing" in action—the oppressed enforcing the hierarchy on each other through ridicule.

Part 3: Supplemental Annex

Annex C: The "Pigmentocratic Detox" Checklist

For researchers and policymakers applying this paper's findings.

If you identify a system as a **Triangulated Pigmentocracy**, the following interventions are indicated by the model:

Intervention Level	Action Item	Target Mechanism
1. Rhetorical	<p>Stop saying "Preference." Replace with "Conditioned Sorting."</p>	<p>Breaks the "Naturalization" defense.</p>
2. Chemical	<p>Enforce Minamata. Treat skin-bleaching creams as <i>hazardous waste</i>, not cosmetics.</p>	<p>Attacks the Psychopathic market channel (Y3).</p>
3. Institutional	<p>The "Blind Audition" Protocol. Remove photos from CVs and applications.</p>	<p>Disrupts Machiavellian sorting (Y1).</p>
4. Educational	<p>Teach the "Trick." Explain <i>Triangulation</i> (how A pits B against C) in primary school.</p>	<p>Reduces Narcissistic worship of the ideal.</p>

Final Insight: The system breaks when the "Triangle" is exposed. Once people see that their rivalry is being engineered from the apex, the lateral fighting (colorism/tribalism) loses its logical engine.