

The chromatic norm image: skin color as mathematically significant somatic trait

Abstract

In consideration of race and other somatic traits Hoetink coined the terms “somatic norm image.” As per somatic norm image the dominant race and its associated features are the standard ideal. Notwithstanding difficulty, the racial classification of human populations is ascertained by the assessment of somatic attributes: primarily skin color. In a Hispanic context, dark-skinned, non-Caucasian people have been no less susceptible to the idealization of light skin than light-skinned Caucasians. More germane to the dynamics of human social interaction and its corresponding behavior is the heretofore non-existing reference to the chromatic norm image defined by skin color. The prevailing challenge for the academy is then to construct a mechanism to process the dynamics of a new era.

Keywords: somatic, chromatic, skin color, race, image

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Introduction

African-Americans who visit Brazil are left confused and unprepared for their encounters with people pertaining to issues of race. Initially they are welcomed by Brazilians and frequently asked by locals to join them for conversation and other social interactions. Brazil is location of the largest African descended Hispanic population in the Western hemisphere at 65,000,000 persons.¹ On one occasion during his visit an African-American Journalist for the Washington Post was engaged by a Brazilian woman of African descent who invited him to join her and her friends for conversation. At some point, the issue of race was introduced into the discussion. The Brazilian contingent wanted to know what life was like in the U.S. whereupon the African-American journalist responded by offering to share with them what it was like to be “Black” in America. The previously civil exchange at that moment began to deteriorate. The disdain on part of the Brazilian conversant(s) had become dramatically apparent when the African-American queried to his Brazilian audience what it was like to be “Black” in Brazil. Ostensibly, the African descended Brazilians could not convey to the African-American journalist what it was like to be “Black” in Brazil because as they contended they were not “Black” and did not know any “Blacks” personally. Shocked and dismayed the journalist informed his Brazilian counterparts that they were indeed “Black” like him and that they should be proud and accept the fact. Upon hearing this, the group immediately dispersed ending the previously amicable conversation abruptly.²

Unbeknownst to the African-American journalist was that to be a member of the “Black” race in Brazil was an insult because it did not conform to the “White” race ideal.³ As a variable, race is a nominal somatic trait subject to interpretation and thus of less mathematical significance. Therefore, race has less potential for rigor on behalf of those who seek to conduct scientific investigations. Subsequently, African descended Hispanics may be “Black” race in the U.S. and an “other” race in Brazil. Similar nominal somatic traits are contained in what Hoetink identifies as the somatic norm image.⁴

In consideration of race and other somatic traits, Harry Hoetink coined the terms “somatic norm image.”⁵ Accordingly, to Hoetink the somatic norm image is reference to a description of “the complex of physical (somatic) characteristics which are accepted by a group as its ideal.” This considers the belief that each group regards itself as aesthetically superior to all others.⁶ However; Hoetink did not

specify the significance of any one physiological, somatic trait many of which are less mathematically significant than other traits. Said less significance is both confusing and incomplete as pertains to Hispanic quality of life.⁷ In designating race category as the standard somatic trait amounted to little more than race as a proxy designation for skin color. Consequently, skin color is the more mathematically significant somatic trait by measure of melanin content for scientists who require rigor. Therefore, despite minimal reference in public discourse skin color is and has been the somatic master status.⁸ Extended from Hoetink’s somatic norm image is the heretofore subjugated, but no less socially critical implications of dark skin. The objective of this paper is to educate and introduce the chromatic norm image by challenging critics in their acceptance of the somatic norm image as an explanation of the preferred somatic ideals. Critics and the society must begin to acknowledge skin color for its mathematical significance as pertains to quality of life as per

1. Pseudo-science and the somatic norm image of race.
2. The idealization of light skin
3. The chromatic norm image.

Pseudo-science and the somatic norm image of race

As per somatic norm image the dominant race and its associated features are the standard ideal. The somatic norm image of race is in fact a pseudoscience commonly referred to as eugenics.⁹ Accordingly, eugenics is the select processing of desired human characteristics for purposes of improving future generations of mankind. This falsely suggests that race is more potent than skin color. Originally, the term eugenics was applied in 1883 by a British scientist and explorer named Francis Galton. Galton was a surrogate of Charles Darwin who devised the notions of “natural selection” and “survival of the fittest.” Eventually after applying Darwinism to lower animals eugenicists extended the concept to include humanity in an effort to sustain the more “suitable” races for betterment of the species as a whole. References to the underlying agenda were prohibited in polite scientific and public discourse. Despite the fact as a product of eugenics, social Darwinism applied to humanity was eventually constructed in the latter 19th century as racial justification for “natural selection” and “survival of the fittest”.¹⁰ In the aftermath social Darwinism failed to be accepted as a legitimate science in the 1930s and 1940s having been associated with Hitler’s Nazi regime of WWII.¹¹ However, some

semblances of race eugenics have prevailed well into the 19th century and beyond.¹²

In an effort to challenge the pseudoscience of eugenics Stephen Jay Gould¹³ in 1981 authored the infamous *The Mismeasure of Man*. Considering the traditions of legitimate science Gould's work was motivated by a pre-existing objective to reveal the agenda of eugenicists who were dedicated to eugenics as justification for Hispanic quality of life. In analyzing eugenicist Morton's work in measuring human skulls Gould re-measured said skulls finding bias in Morton's conclusions. As per Gould, Morton's results were biased relative to his sample selection. The skulls of females selected were more often smaller than the skulls of males selected. Gould found that Morton had increased the number of female skulls for the inferior "Black" sample. For the superior "White" sample most of the skulls selected were from larger males. For other "race" populations such as Native-American, Morton selected skulls from the smaller Incas rather than from the larger skulls of the Iroquois' tribe. After rigorous investigation, Gould concluded that the average measure of the "Black" male skull sample was in fact significantly larger in size than that of the average "White" male. Ultimately, Gould concluded via rigorous scientific investigation that evidence supporting the association of intelligence with brain size is non-existent. Dramatically Gould's investigation was an illustration of eugenics as pseudoscience whereby scientific conclusions are fashioned relative to the construction of the question, the tenor of the sample, the analytical processing of the investigation and the ultimate conclusions drawn. The end-result is the manufacture of "truth" sustained by the prestige of legitimate science.¹¹ It is by such means that racial classification of human populations has reaped universal acceptance well into the new millennium despite the limited mathematical significance of somatic category.

Notwithstanding difficulty, race conclusions about human populations is accessed by the measure of somatic attributes: primarily skin color. This effort requires the assumed validity of race to accommodate racial outcomes. Conversely the human population subjected to conquests of one so-called race by another, invasions of one so-called race by another, migrations from one location to another, and various experiences with deportations, humanity is not homogeneous pure but heterogeneous impure.¹⁴ However, due to various somatic manifestations such as melanin content in skin, skin color, hair texture, head shape, body stature, and nose shape, traditional scientists absent scientific rigor have historically agreed that there exists three relatively distinct race categories.¹⁵ They consist of Caucasoids, Mongoloids, and Negroids.¹⁶

The Caucasoid race is located in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and North India. In stature, they are medium to tall and have long to broad head shapes. Their skin color ranges from a pale reddish white to olive brown but most importantly compared to Negroids they are light-skinned. Caucasoid hair texture ranges from light blond to dark brown but most importantly it ranges from straight to wavy compared to the Negroid kinky texture. In eye color Caucasoids range from light blue to dark brown complimented by a nose shape that has a high bridge. Ultimately, Caucasoids are a contrast to Negroids where some are Hispanic and whose natural eye color is dark and nose shape flat. Their skin is light, compared to the Negroid dark.¹⁷

Closer to Caucasian is the so-called Mongoloid race not irrelevant to Hispanics. Mongoloids include populations in East Asia, South America and Native-Americans. Their skin color is described as saffron to yellow or reddish brown. Compared to Caucasoids,

Mongoloids are dark-skinned and compared to Negroids they are relatively light-skinned. They are medium in stature having a broad head shape. In hair texture, Mongoloids range from straight to course that is always dark and sparsely covering the body. Their eye color is usually dark where some are characterized by a distinct eye-fold with a nose shape that has a low to medium bridge. Most importantly, Mongoloids compared to Caucasoids may accrue a range of skin colors from light to dark but as non-Caucasoids are accorded status as dark-skinned.¹⁸

The last of the three eugenics so-called race categories is the Negroid. Negroids include Hispanics and are the darkest-skinned racial category, having a long head shape. In stature, they vary characterized by thick lips and dark usually kinky hair texture. The eye color of Negroids is dark and they have a nose shape with a low bridge and wide nostrils. Negroids prevail in Africa, in the Pygmies of Indonesia, as well as New Guinea and Melanesia.¹¹ More importantly they are the most visible and dark-skinned in contrast to light-skinned Caucasians. While dark skin does not universally denote Negroid ancestry, it consistently implies inferiority. Conversely, light skin is universally defined as the somatic ideal by Caucasoids, Mongoloids and Negroids alike. A descriptive investigation of light skin as somatic ideal provides an objective revelation of the chromatic norm image.

The idealization of light skin

In a Hispanic context, dark-skinned, non-Caucasian people have been no less susceptible to the idealization of light skin than light-skinned Caucasians. To investigate the circumstances a Cutaneo Chroma Correlate questionnaire was administered to a sample of Hispanic (Mongoloid) college students.¹⁹ A null hypothesis was formulated to provide a context for investigating the problem ("There is no relationship between skin color and selected values for skin color ideals"). The selected sample consisted of 256 student participants conducted during the traditional school year. Participants had a reported mean age of 18.5 years. In differentiating responses, a designation of lightest was noted as 5, light as 4, medium as 3, dark as 2, and darkest as 1. The maximum skin color measure being 5, very light, light, medium, dark and very dark was collapsed into light and dark categories. A score of 2.50 was calculated as the cut-off between dark and light skin color categories. The CCC was available in English for measuring participant's skin color. Results are reported in Table 1.

By explanation of results, dark skin was preferred as per item 3 and 5 at a mean of 2.44 and 2.19 respectively. All other item means exceeded a 2.50 mean calculated as light skin. The highest mean was calculated for item 12. A mean of 3.08 was calculated for item 13 and 3.05 for item 6. For items 5 (1.25) and 13 (1.31) the calculated SD indicating the extent of deviation for the group as a whole was largest. Referring to the aforementioned descriptive data it would appear with some reservation that light skin is ideally valued among Hispanic "race" and/or non-Caucasian respondents as pertains to chromatic norm image.

The chromatic norm image

Holistically traits contained in the somatic norm image are multifaceted and complex including sex, male, female, and skin color, etc.... With the exception of skin color, the preceding somatic traits have the potential to compromise scientific rigor where each variable like the previously mentioned race variable may be subject to less mathematical significance. Many traits such as sex are discrete and limited to binary categories where idealization cannot be rigorously

investigated. Unlike binary somatic traits, skin color can be processed per mathematical significance being less amenable to subjective interpretation.²⁰ It is a mathematically more significant somatic trait considering the continuous measure of melanin content.

Table 1 The idealization of light skin

Item	N	MN	SD
1	252	2.57	0.61
2	254	2.9	0.63
3	254	2.44	0.59
4	245	2.91	0.52
5	244	2.19	1.25
6	247	3.05	0.5
7	255	2.86	0.64
8	253	2.57	0.54
9	250	2.76	0.59
10	252	2.76	0.48
11	250	2.92	0.4
12	244	3.47	0.77
13	233	3.08	1.31
14	249	2.68	0.52
15	253	2.85	0.46

In most of the world as in Brazil and the majority of Latin America ideal skin color as per the somatic norm image is extremely potent in its quality of life consequences.²¹ Idealized light skin is complicated by an assortment of skin hues, skin tones and skin shades. Some in Latin America erroneously contend that skin color is little more than a reference to appearance subjugated by a more potent reference to race category. While Hispanics in Latin America profess having no such racial problems as existent in the U.S. numerous terminology for race category challenges the fact as contained in Table 2.

Table 2 Racial combination³⁷

Classification	Composition
Albarazado	Cambujo and Mulato
Albino	Spanish and Morisco
Allíte estás	Chamizo and Mestizo
Barcino	Albarazado and Mulato
Barnocino	Albarazado and Mestizo
Calpamulato	Zambaigo and Lobo
Cambujo	Indian (3/4) and Negro (1/4)
Cambur	Negro (1/2), Spanish (1/4), and Indian (1/4)
Castizo	PR: Mestizo & Spanish Guatemala Spanish & Indian (1/128)
Chamizo	Coyote and Indian
Chino	In Peru: Mulato and Indian
Cholo	In Peru: Mestizo and Indian

Table Continued

Classification	Composition
Cimarrón	Mexico & Guatemala: Negro (1/2), Spanish (1/4) & Indian (1/4)
Coyote	Spanish (1/2), Indian (3/8), and Negro (1/8)
Cuarateado	Spanish (1/2), Indian (1/4), and Negro (1/4)
Cuarterón	Spanish (3/4) and Negro (1/4)
Cuarterón de Chino	In Peru: Spanish and Chino
Cuarterón de Mestize	In Peru: Spanish and Mestizo
Cuarterón de Mulato	In Peru: Spanish and Mulato
Cuatrero	Indian (3/4) and Spanish (1/4)
Español	Spanish
Español Criollo	Colonial-born Spaniard
Indio	Indian
Jibaro	Lobo and Indian
Ladino	Spanish (3/4) and Indian (1/4)
Lobo	Indian (3/4) and Negro (1/4)
Mestizo	Spanish (1/2) and Indian (1/2)
Moreno	Spanish (1/2), Indian (1/4), and Negro (1/4)
Morisco	Spanish and Mulato. In Spain: a baptized Moor
Mulato	Spanish (1/2) & Negro (1/2) Chile & Colombia: Indian & Negro
Negro	African Black
Negro fino	Negro (3/4) and Spanish (1/4)
No te entiende	Tente en el aire and Mulato
No me toques	Mixture of Spanish, Indian, and Negro
Ochavado	Spanish (7/8) and Negro (1/8)
Pardo	Indian (1/2), Spanish (1/4), and Negro (1/4)
Prieto	Negro (7/8) and Spanish (1/8)
Quartarón	See Cuarterón
Quinterón	In Peru: Spanish and Cuarterón
Requinterón	In Peru: Spanish and Quinterón
Salta atrás	Spanish and Albino
Tente en el aire	Calpamulato and Cambujo
Torna atrás	No te entiende and Indian
Tresalvo	Spanish (3/4) and Negro (1/4)
Zambaigo	Spanish and Chino
Zambo	Peru: Negro & Mulato. Venezuela: Indian (1/2) & Negro (1/2)
Zambo de Indio	In Peru: Negro (1/2) and Indian (1/2)

The display of Hispanic racial composition in Table 2: Racial Combination is dramatic. There currently exists no standard method

for assessing such composition but as a reference race is applied universally. Crossing cultures and disciplines may reveal unlimited racial differentiations which are mathematically less reliable and ultimately disserve scientific rigor. Thus in Brazil is belief in any number of distinct nominal somatic traits. The resulting racial diversity is rationalized as the foundation of racial tolerance, which accounts for the increased levels of interracial marriages acceptable in Brazil but less tolerated in the U.S. Despite the fact, bias in Brazil is no less evident than in the U.S.²² Its manifestations may ascribe to the dictates of a separate cultural nuance but the fact of its existence remains current. Racial bias, is thus sustained worldwide by the subtle but no less potent idealization of light skin and denigration of dark. Skin color as a somatic master status contained in the ideal somatic norm image implies inferior race category. The aftermath is a substantiation of the chromatic norm image in subjugation of Hoetinks²³ somatic norm image.

Anthropologist Harry Hoetink constructed the notion of somatic norm image to further his research.⁴ Succinctly put Hoetink²³ somatic norm image refers to any number of somatic traits and the macro acceptance of light skin as the ideal. The associated somatic characteristics including hair texture, eye color etc. is accepted as the standard ideal by the community at-large. This includes dark-skinned populations where the ideal somatic traits may be alien as well as those where they are native.²⁴ These ideals factor into every quality of life measure such as mate selection, self-worth and attractiveness. The intensity of the ideal skin color somatic trait is such that it may be applied both inter-racially by Hispanics and “Blacks” and intra-racially by Hispanics and Blacks as suggested by the African-American journalist in Brazil and the aforementioned descriptive investigation. The somatic norm image is an antiquated 20th century social phenomenon not irrelevant to the standardization of race that is no longer-and perhaps never was-as relevant as it is assumed to be. The lionization of such a eugenic construct may in fact extend from Eurocentric hegemony.²⁵ More germane to the dynamics of human social interaction and its corresponding behavior is the heretofore non-existing reference to the chromatic norm image. The chromatic norm image replaces race with skin color exclusive of all other less potent somatic traits. In the age of globalization and increased variations in human skin color, the chromatic norm image is a more applicable fact of biological and social existence. Said variations in skin color are also a factor in the viability of Hispanic quality of life. Thus, in the aftermath of European colonization Hispanic sovereignties of diverse racial backgrounds are predisposed to Eurocentric light skin color as the somatic ideal.²⁶ Said ideal, via European colonization of Hispanics is the result of an association of light skin with power. Assuming power is germane to human coexistence, understanding the implications of skin color as pertains to chromatic norm image is then compulsory to the fair and equitable negotiation of global outcomes. Despite its relevance, the chromatic norm image was otherwise trivialized for its assumed insignificance. Succinctly defined, the term chroma refers to the hue and/or intensity of a particular color.²⁷ Folk references to skin color such as black, red, white, brown, and yellow are merely metaphors and hence in fact inaccurate as such colors do not occur in human skin. Their appearing to occur is a product of melanin content, which suggests the existence of such colors via amount of melanin contained at higher or lower levels. Therefore, the chromatic norm image is specific to skin color via melanin content which characterizes the subject as a light ideal or by dark skin as a stigma. All other somatic physical attributes as pertains to the ideal are in affect subjugated.

For the most part chromatic norm image as a theory pertains universally to all people, at all locations worldwide as opposed to reinforcing the limited race status quo. It illuminates the circumstances, which determine the cultural impact upon one's life, her or his perspective, values, and belief systems. Chromatic norm image focuses on how gender, race, class and other social categories relative to skin color influence people's quality of life, especially if they do not conform to the somatic ideal. The aftermath determines the quality of life social appointments they gain and the kinds of social experiences associated relative to those social appointments. According to Kitano²⁸ the chromatic norm image as theory seeks to address both acts of domination by dominant groups and acts of resistance by dominated groups on the basis of skin color. It attempts to describe their quality of life experiences and assess those experiences with the intention that their contributions will reveal otherwise taboo aspects of the social terrain. Chromatic norm image as a theory may then in fact introduce fractures into the academy in preparation to challenge tradition. However to validate chromatic norm image at the expense of somatic norm image is apropos in moving the academy forward by engaging in active dialogue.

Conclusion

The preceding investigation provides empirical evidence concerning the idealization of light skin. Hispanics similar to African, Asian and Native-Americans are a dominated population whose quality of life experience is correlated with their degree of assimilation.²⁹ To the extent Hispanics cannot conform naturally to idealized light skin they compensate in their behavior.³⁰

The aforementioned Brazilian anecdote illustrates the potency of race implied by skin color. In Brazil to be “Black” is to belong to a race defined as an urban, criminal underclass.³¹ To be “Black” is to be a product of colonization. However, the Brazilian denigration of “Black” is no less disparaging than what exists in the U.S. What's more, in Brazil race/color is earned, on the basis of cultural traditions. In the U.S. race is a matter of genetic heritage prescribed by the pseudoscientific methods.³² Therefore from a Brazilian perspective the aforementioned African-American journalist was ideal “White.” By virtue of an earned status as both professional and educated the dark-skinned African-American journalist escapes from the denigration of “Black.” Subsequently race as the most potent somatic norm in Brazil is less scientific. On the other hand race in the U.S. is permanent assumed as inherited at birth. Despite the fact in both national instances is denigration by skin color i.e.: dark. Being dark consistently represents inferior race category not only in Brazil, but the U.S. and elsewhere internationally.² Therefore where race is inconsistent necessitates the chromatic norm image.

Although his native origin extends from Holland, Hoetink remained for most of his career in the Hispanic Caribbean where he worked as a teacher and historian. This granted him the opportunity to live and settle amongst the dark-skinned peoples of the West Indian islands of British, French, Dutch, and Spanish occupations. It is here where he constructed the hypothesis of the somatic norm image. Based upon this hypothesis Hoetink concluded that there were eventually three socioeconomic classes formed on the island nations. Said classes were a consequence of the importation of African slave labor which became widespread when Native-American labor pools dwindled. The results introduced a three-tiered social structure. At its zenith was a small cadre of idealized European landowning planters who

dealt in agricultural products which required slave labor. At the very bottom was slaves themselves who were dark-skinned inferiors. The middle tier consisted of free non-Caucasian subsistence farmers given freedom in exchange for militia duty to prevent a slave insurrection. In skin color they were dark but light-skinned in status.³³

Hoetink observed that in each colony, skin color came to represent non-Caucasian distinction from the intermediate class and the slave class. Those who were the ideal light-skinned status were treated as “White”; those who were the despised dark-skinned were treated as “Black.” Therefore Hoetink was well aware of the significance of skin color but failed to acknowledge it among the various traits of the somatic norm image. This failure necessitated the more comprehensive chromatic norm image. Chromatic norm image coupled with scientific investigation is an extremely potent mechanism whereby Hispanic quality of life can be measured, assessed and otherwise illustrated. Chromatic norm image is an alternative paradigm that will enable social scientists to redefine and confront the marginalization of oppressed populations. In deed chromatic norm image will allow for a centering of human social transgressions which account for Hispanic quality of life differentiations. This is significant given that the overall experiences of humanity have more often been analyzed through the prism of a Eurocentric framework.³⁴ Therefore, chromatic norm image provides a more accurate account of social dynamics transnationally, transracially, transculturally as well as trans-ethnically. Given that most African descended Hispanics arrived in the Western hemisphere as slaves, the relative preponderance of dark skin versus light skin in individuals became the distinguishing master status somatic trait. While hair texture, eye color, body stature and other somatic traits are not irrelevant, it is skin color which ultimately dictates Hispanic quality of life. Skin color is commensurate with socioeconomic class throughout North and South American society that has influenced the world through internet, social media and other communication technology. Therefore when assessing the worth of others today few will deny skin color as a factor in determining whether they are the ideal “White” race or stigmatized dark-skinned non-“White” race.³⁵ The criteria may vary by culture to some extent as the African-American journalist visiting Brazil came to know but the relevancy is authentic and substantial.

The U.S. is not unique as pertains to the chromatic norm image. Modern transportation has brought diversity to many countries now populated by large non-Caucasian, Hispanic immigrant communities. Subsequently the ideals of such countries are influenced in some fashion by the many diverse non-White immigrant groups including Brazilians that have recently arrived who are in turn influenced by the dominant light skin ideal as well. This process is a systems theory feedback loop.³⁶ Thus the need for the chromatic norm image as a comprehensive theoretical explanation will remain steady as a manifestation of worldwide community growth. The prevailing challenge for the academy is to construct a mechanism to process the dynamics of a new era. Chromatic norm image at some point will then prevail as a critical and comprehensive social science necessity.³⁷

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Conflict of interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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