The Anglo-Indians: Aspirations for Whiteness and the Dilemma of Identity

Sheila Pais James

Department of Sociology

Abstract

The Anglo-Indian, as a distinct ethnic identity, was the product of the racialised social hierarchies of British India. Set off from the Indian majority by their claims to British heritage, they were, because of their mixed ancestry, never accorded full status as British. At the end of British rule, their anomalous status was confirmed in certain protections, including employment quotas, enshrined in the Indian constitution. Despite this, the Anglo-Indian community in India declined in the decades after Independence as many chose to leave. Climate, proximity, and its British roots meant that Australia was considered a desirable destination by many. In particular, this paper focuses on the relevance of the study of whiteness in relation to the study of the Anglo-Indians as an ethnic and racial minority. It traces the aspirations for whiteness among these diasporic people in their quest for identity. It explores the dimensions in the constructions of identity and the possibility of identity dilemmas among the Anglo-Indians as transcolonial migrants in a multicultural Australian society.

Introduction

Since the early days of colonial rule, it was difficult for the Anglo-Indians to answer with certainty the question: ‘Who am I?’ Set off from the Indian majority by their claims to British heritage, they were, because of their mixed ancestry, never accorded full status as British. At the end of British rule, their anomalous status was confirmed in certain protections, including employment quotas, enshrined in the Indian constitution. Despite this, the Anglo-Indian community in India declined in the decades after Independence as many chose to leave. Climate, proximity, and its British roots meant that many considered Australia a desirable destination.

The focus of this paper is on the relevance of the study of whiteness in relation to identity among the Anglo-Indians. It traces aspirations for whiteness among these diasporic people in their quest for identity and how they identify themselves with their ‘Anglo’ or ‘Indian’ heritage. This is a crucial question for the Anglo-Indians, many of whom migrated to Australia during the White Australia policy, but also in the context of Australia’s contemporary Multicultural policy. As Anglo-Indians range from fair to dark in complexion (Gilbert, 1996), this paper explores the possibility of an identity dilemma related to skin colour among the Anglo-Indian community in Australia.

This paper also explores the concept of ‘England as the mother country’ and whether it is ‘home’ for the Anglo-Indians in Australia. It draws attention to the dimensions in the constructions of identity and the possibility of identity dilemmas among the Anglo-Indians as transcolonial migrants in multicultural Australian society. Do they experience dilemmas of identity in their quest for identity in Australia and, in particular, the Australian monocultural power structure (Jamrozik, Boland & Urquhart, 1995) embedded in British or Anglo-Celtic traditions? The identity constructing process is made difficult by the different senses of what it means to be an Anglo-Indian engendered by more than fifty years of dislocation and dispersion. Even as transnationals, Anglo-Indians, they have to identify with their ‘Anglo’ heritage (Blunt, 2000), resulting in possible identity dilemmas within multicultural Australia.
Emergence of the Anglo-Indian Community

In his article on *The Shattering of Cultural Identity among the Anglo-Indians in Rural India*, Professor R Wright points out that:

> The sub-continent of India is a most noteworthy example of multi-culturalism, a blending of heterogeneous groupings that over its history has been witness to a variety of colonial dominations and subsequently a variety of cultural modifications of what might be considered traditional or indigenous. Along with numerous near-cultural invasions (e.g., Indo-Aryan) the Portuguese, Dutch, French, and British were the dominant European powers that colonized India and subsequently had dynamic influence on the history of India. Many forms of Indian art, language, religion and literature eventually blended these diverse cultures and became one of the most heterogeneous entities in the world (Wright, 1997, online).

Wright emphasises that wherever there was colonialism the domination of the military, administrative organization, technical assistance and industrial base was usually achieved and perpetuated by males of the dominating nation. He adds that:

> A natural consequence was that these males sometimes married local women and formed a family but more often had numerous sexual liaisons without the formality of marriage. In either instance, numerous populations of mixed children emerged. A number of social responses could be anticipated, ranging from acceptance to ostracism. In India a more rigid caste system prevented the child from easily entering back into the local population. Except during the reign of the Portuguese the child was seldom embraced with enthusiasm by the father’s community. Thus, the mixed populations of India tended over time to form together and develop a unique collectivity, becoming known as the Anglo-Indian Community of India (Wright, 1997, online).

In his acclaimed book on the Anglo-Indians, Varma writes that they were “The legacy of Europeans’ commercial and political enterprise in India, resulting in the inevitable co-mingling, many a time illegitimate, between European men and Indian women” (Varma, 1979, 1).

The Anglo-Indian was thus the product of the confident European expansion of the 16th century. After 1911, the term Anglo-Indian was, “Taken to signify persons who were of European descent in the male line but of mixed European and Indian blood” (Anthony, 1969, 3).

In the years of British colonial expansion, intermarriage between the British and the native females was encouraged, but soon after British power was established in India, this policy was reversed: it was feared that a mixed community might threaten the British rule. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the Anglo-Indians were discharged from all ranks of the army and they were barred from the Company’s civil, military or marine services. The restrictions imposed closed a large area of employment for them and they saw these actions as discriminatory because previously they were treated as British and they felt themselves to be British both by culture and inclination. Now they were no longer with the ruling elite. According to Gaikwad, these measures reduced the Anglo-Indians to political impotence and social degradation. (Gaikwad in Younger, 1984)

It was within this milieu that Anglo-Indian families had to survive, but even this set-up was continuously changing. From the 1920s and the decades after India’s Independence (1947) began communalism, Anglo-Indian unwillingness to accept inferior jobs, poor educational qualifications of Anglo-Indians and Anglo-Indian resistance to learning an Indian language and occupational specialization. All these factors contributed to a chronic
unemployment situation within the community (Schermerhorn, 1973; Cottrell, 1979; Younger, 1984).

According to Varma (1979), one of the most complex and critical problems in human history has been the problem of minority. Varma strongly claims that most of the problems of the Anglo-Indians were the product of the colonial British Raj whose leaders served the interests of their own class. He concludes that:

Thus, Anglo-Indians, disowned by the English and alienated from the Indians, drifted for centuries with no moorings, in the vain hope of reaching the English shores. Thrown repeatedly back to the midstream, they reached home (England) badly shattered, but fortunately with enough life to survive and recuperate (Varma, 1979, 4).

Hence, according to Varma, the Anglo-Indians were victims of dilemma and indiscretion throughout their existence.

Aspirations for Whiteness

Avtar Brah in her acclaimed book *Cartographies of Diaspora* (1996) writes about her experiences as a migrant. This paper acknowledges her experiences and her following statement:

I know now and knew then that ‘looks’ mattered a great deal within the colonial regimes of power...because discourses about the body were crucial to the constitution of racism. (Brah, 1996, 3).

The discourse on whiteness as a theoretical notion that attempts to uncover the authority of the invisible is very promising. Studying whiteness delves into the silence or invisibility (Frankenberg, 1993; Dyer, 1997) about whiteness which lets everyone continue to harbour prejudices and misconceptions. This silence, when penetrated, opens channels for the understanding of identity dilemmas among the Anglo-Indians and the identity choices they make vis-à-vis the skin colour of others in similar situations.

By the 19th century, the British separated themselves from the coloured people but accepted fairer (and often wealthier) people of dual heritage as ‘Anglo-Indian’. Darker (and usually poorer) people were given the name ‘Eurasian’. Anglo-Indians were of British descent and British subjects; some even claimed to be British to escape prejudice. The British did not however accept such identification. They did not see Anglo-Indians as kinsmen, socially viewing them as ‘half-caste’ members who were morally and intellectually inferior to the sons and daughters of Britain (Varma 1979). The Anglo-Indians tried to counter this by trying to be more like the British. Their campaign to be called ‘Anglo-Indians’ was aimed at establishing a closer link with the British Raj (rule) in contrast to the general term ‘Eurasian’ (Bose, 1979).

Under these circumstances, it was not easy for Anglo-Indians to develop a clear conception of their own identity. Europeans tended to think of them as Indians with some European blood; Indians thought of them as Europeans with some Indian blood. On both the cultural and social level they were alien to many other Indians, though kin to them on the biological level. Many of the prejudices of the British were adopted by the Anglo-Indians towards the Indian people of dark complexion, thus creating rejection of the Anglo-Indians both by the British and other Indian communities. The prejudices against them, real or imagined, or the prejudices that they themselves had against other Indians were an obstacle to both group and individual identity (Gist, 1972, Gist and Wright, 1973).
When the British left India, the leaders of the Anglo-Indian community, like Frank Anthony, president of the (Delhi-based) All-India Anglo-Indian Association in the post-World War II period, looked for opportunities to resolve this conflict of identity. Anthony (1969) called upon his community to be Indians by nationality and Anglo-Indians by community. However, many Anglo-Indians were unable to resolve these issues of identity, and as Anthony titled his book *Britain’s Betrayal in India*, they felt insecure and opted to leave India. For those Anglo-Indians who stayed behind, the Constitution of India provided more security than they dreamt of. The official definition of the term ‘Anglo-Indian’ accepted by the Government of India in the new Constitution of Independent India is:

An Anglo-Indian means a person whose father or any of whose other male progenitors in the male line is or was of European descent but who is domiciled within the territory of India and is or was born within such territory of parents habitually resident therein and not established there for temporary purposes only… (The Constitution of India, paragraph 366).

The significance of India’s Independence and the hand-over of political power in 1947 had its impact on Anglo-Indian identity. It was after the departure of the British from Indian soil, that the Anglo-Indians were left without the protective umbrella of the British *Raj* (rule) and involved critical choice making for this community. They experienced the insecurity of a minority group, and thousands of Anglo-Indians left India and migrated to countries like England, Canada, New Zealand and Australia.

The fact that Anglo-Indians were Indian nationals by birth but culturally-oriented to Britain often made their status confusing to themselves and to others. Gist and Wright (1973) write about an Anglo-Indian school principal in Calcutta who related the dilemma of her own identity as her heart being in England but her responsibilities in India and after India’s Independence she migrated to Great Britain.

Thus, India’s Independence had diverse effects on the Anglo-Indian community. In this regard, Bose (1979) writes that some of the Anglo-Indians who stayed in India integrated well into the upper class Indian Hindu society. This phenomenon was summarized in Lewin’s (2003) writings as the concept of ‘passing’ which was a covert way of assimilation. On the other hand, there were many poorer Anglo-Indians who were left with their memories of past glories and a fondly created illusion of England as their ‘home’ (Bose, 1979).

According to Wright:

During the time of the British rule in India many Anglo-Indians looked toward England as ‘home’, although many of them had never been there. Just as expatriated British citizens continued to look toward England as their native land so did the Anglo-Indians in their emulation of everything that was European. Even today one will often hear some older Anglo-Indians make reference to ‘home’ when talking about England, but more and more they have been forced to dispense with that construction of national identity and turn toward India (Wright, 1997, online).

Brah’s (1996) comments on the concept of ‘home’ that she discusses in relation to migrants in general that cling onto the memories of the life they were accustomed to and bring these memories into their life in their country of migration. Brah explains this sense of ‘home’ that the Anglo-Indians had for England in the context of migrant communities. England, however, was not any of these things to the Anglo-Indians— their everyday was India! Their ‘home’ was spatially distant, and England was imagined as being their ‘home’ in that sense while their
friends, and ‘significant others’ were situated in a geographical space that was not ‘England’ but ‘Anglo-India’.

Identity

One of the problems the Anglo-Indian community has always faced is the question of identity. It was difficult for them to answer with certainty the question: ‘Who am I?’ About the Indian society, it is necessary to recall the prevalence of the caste system operating within the Indian social structure and more specifically among the followers of the Hindu religion. It is important to draw attention to Srinivas’ s theory of Sanskritization in reference to the Indian caste system. This theory propagates the hypothesis that people at the lower ends of the caste hierarchy could attempt to move upwards, by adopting upper-caste norms, values and practices (Srinivas, 1969). The Anglo-Indians, whether they liked it or not, were residents of India. It is possible that through their aspirations to adopt upper British class practices in order to move upwards and to identify with their ‘Anglo’ heritage they would have a higher status than their Indian counterparts.

Charles Taylor (1994) in his influential essay, The Politics of Recognition emphasises the demand for recognition that is linked with identity in relation to a person’s understanding of who they are and what are their defining characteristics as human beings. Taylor writes that the effects of being given recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others can be detrimental to a person or group of people who suffer real damage. He points out that there is a close, dialectical relationship between a notion of ‘inwardly derived, personal, original identity’ and the ‘vital human need’ for the public recognition of that identity within a given society. According to Taylor, “Identity is who we are and where we’re coming from” (Taylor, 1994, 33).

In reference to Taylor’s essay, Appiah (1994) clarifies that the identities Taylor discusses are ‘collective social identities’, namely, the identification of people as members of a particular gender, race, ethnicity, religion or sexuality. Each person’s individual identity has two dimensions: the collective dimension (the intersection of collective identities) and the personal dimension (intelligence, charm, wit etc.), which is not the basis of collective identity (Appiah, 1994, 51). These collective dimensions provide scripts, that is, narratives of people’s life plans or life stories as with women, Catholics, Jews, blacks etc. These life scripts are often negative, and have obstacles to, rather than opportunities for, living a socially dignified life and being treated as equals by other members of their society e.g., the negative recognition of a black identity by ‘white society’ in the United States. The demand for political recognition is to construct positive life scripts in place of the negative ones. Specifically, it requires that one’s skin colour, one’s sexual body is politically acknowledged for collective identity (e.g. multicultural identity).

In the light of Taylor’s writings, we may ask whether the Anglo-Indians can possibly even desire to, retain their self-identity as Anglo-Indians? And how is their collective identity as the Anglo-India community affected? For Anglo-Indians who left India and settled abroad, the problem of identity again arises. How fully can they identify with their adopted country? How much of their Anglo-Indian self-image do they retain? In this regard, Wright notes that:

The Anglo-Indian community fought hard to define themselves in a very specific manner, tracing their heritage along the male side of the family. Once winning that right it became necessary to maintain clusters of the population large enough to continue that heritage. When the numbers dropped because of migration or self-definition, a point was reached where the social, cultural, and social - psychological identities could not be maintained. Internationally there is a
community that meets in various countries, celebrating the identity of being Anglo-Indian. In some countries, enclaves and formal as well as informal groupings have emerged to provide both a critical mass as well as a means for perpetuating identity (Wright, 1997, online).

White Identity & Race

Alistair Bonnett (2000) traces the relationship of white identities and modernity across the world - a global history of whiteness. Writing about the instabilities of racial whiteness Bonnett states that:

Modern European white identity is historically unique. People in other societies may be seen to value whiteness and to have employed the concept to define, at least in part, who and what they were. But they did not treat being white as a natural category nor did they invest so much of their sense of identity within it. Europeans racialised, which is to say naturalised, the concept of whiteness, and entrusted it with the essence of their community. Europeans turned whiteness into a fetish object, a talisman of the natural whose power enabled them to impose their will on the world. (Bonnett, 2000, 20-21)

According to Bonnett, non-European white identities, as in Chinese and Middle Eastern societies, though they still exist, were forced to disappear when there was the development of racial whiteness. Early European accounts of contact with non-European white people did not raise a concern to assert Europeans’ sole claim to whiteness. European marginalisation of other forms of whiteness came significantly later with the exclusionary and hegemonic European white identity. He stresses that, “White identity has been the reinvention of Europeans over the last 250 years; erasing the fact that white identities ever had a history outside Europe. Only within a longer and wider context can the process of whites becoming non-whites and Europeans becoming the only whites be brought to visibility.” (Bonnett, 2000, 26).

Bonnett further points out that the triumph of European whiteness is portrayed by its transformation as a norm for not just Europeans but for the whole of humanity.

With whiteness, the ability to identify and trace moments of intermixture or hybridity which opens up whiteness as a static and unchanging notion. The notion that whiteness as a dominant identity and hence, an invisible identity is found throughout ‘white studies’ literature. Also the groups that are victims of white racism (whiteness is a dominant identity) are the most likely to ‘see’ whiteness. (Bonnet, 2000, 137)

The Anglo-Indian, as a distinct ethnic identity, was the product of the racialised social hierarchies of British India. Varma points out that:

One of the important causes of the race consciousness is that ‘people identify’. ‘They look upon themselves as belonging to a certain group. All the achievements of the group as a whole can, thus, be looked upon, according to W.C. Boyd and I. Aismor, as the individual’s own accomplishment and ‘he can glory in them.’ There is no proof that a particular group can produce people of only great qualities or of only worthless aptitudes. People of different shades of worth and capacity, good and bad in various degrees are, produced by all races. This evident fact notwithstanding, fortunately, many people believe that there is something good about being pure and something bad about being hybrid (Varma, 1979, 2).

Varma writes that racial superiority has had many manifestations, as seen in the devised institutions like ‘gotra’ and ‘varna’ in Indian caste society. Moreover, he points out that:
The crux of the racial prejudice is ‘the urge to dominate’. The other side of the same coin is the apprehension to be dominated, outclassed or outnumbered. The same racial prejudice has in a way created the Anglo-Indian community and has ‘perpetuated’, as is admitted by L.M. Schiff, an English Christian missionary ‘a crime which can hardly be equalled elsewhere’. C.N. Weston’s assertion that the British were directly responsible for the emergence of this community can hardly be disputed. If human beings were treated as individuals and classes instead of fanatically categorising them in communities, there would be no victims of unfounded racialism, as Anglo-Indians were (Varma, 1979, 3).

Lewin (2003) points out that ethnocentric patterns prevailing in India maintained a specific boundary between the Indian and Anglo-Indian communities. Lewin’s study focuses on the identity of Anglo-Indian women in Western Australia. In her study, some participants were conscious of the racist attitudes toward the Indian ethnic communities in India that had been manifested in Anglo-Indian identity through ignorance of Indian culture, a disregard for the ethnic groups that surrounded them in India and a belittling of the Indian ancestry that was a part of the Anglo-Indian identity. While many of her interviewees worked against this notion, Lewin found that the problem was not totally overcome as evidently the preoccupation with skin colour led dark-skinned relatives to be identified more readily as Anglo-Indian than the fair-skinned ones.

According to Gilbert (1996), in colonial society it was the white-skinned Anglo-Indians who would have been capable of passing themselves off as British that had, or could expect, better job opportunities and class privileges. He writes that the issue of skin colour is of particular relevance to the Australian Anglo-Indians, who have varied skin colour, while they assimilate into Australian society. This paper acknowledges Gilbert’s contributions in his thesis about skin colour and points out the need to extend them further. Namely, to explore skin colour in relation to constructions of Anglo-Indian identity and identity dilemmas in Australia as these Anglo-Indians look for employment, and try to assimilate into Australian society and make Australia their ‘home’.

A recent study by Williams (2002) provides documented factors concerning inter-marriage, friends and self-identity in his survey of Anglo-Indians in 21st century India, North America and the UK. According to Williams, several sociological theses have been done about the Anglo-Indian community since 1947. He points out that, apart from Gilbert’s study (1996), little is known of the emigrant Anglo-Indians in Australia. Williams also states that he found no identifiable connection between colour and integration in his study. He then goes on to state, “As such, this factor was not considered to be of any significance and is therefore not discussed” (Williams, 2002, 7).

While Williams found no connection between colour and integration in his study, this paper stresses that the factor of colour and embodiment is an important indicator of how the Anglo-Indians assimilated (‘fitted in’) into Australian society. The Anglo-Indians may be a relatively under-studied community, but to write-off colour as having no significance would render incomplete any study that explores constructions of identity, and dilemmas of identity, without considering the issue of whiteness and skin colour.

The Anglo-Indians have been studied in terms of race and concerns have been raised about whether it is a dying race or whether its survival is an ethnic myth (Mills, 1998, Williams, 2002). In Australia, there have been studies of how they have assimilated and gained economically (Colquhoun, 1997; Gilbert, 1996). However, while studying people of colour, and in this case the Anglo-Indians of varying skin colour, one should not only study the question of ethnicity and race. In addition, the key issue of whiteness as a significant cultural category and indicator of prevailing racisms of colour requires examination and interpretation.
More specifically, studying whiteness issues will contribute to literature on the Anglo-Indian community while challenging the very idea a ‘race’ study excluding whiteness issues.

The Dilemma of Identity

According to Wright:

Over time, Anglo-Indians settled into all parts of India, travelling far beyond the railroad setting and urban enclaves that we have come to associate with their heritage. It became very common to find Anglo-Indians in any part of India and indeed in any English-speaking community of the world. Canada, Nigeria, United States, Great Britain, and Australia have become new homelands over the fifty years since India became independent from England (Wright, 1997, online).

In this connection, this paper explores the concept of ‘England as the mother country’ and whether it is ‘home’ for the Anglo-Indians in Australia. Do they still consider England as ‘home’ or after migrating to Australia regard India, their country of birth as ‘home’? Furthermore, is there a possibility that Anglo-Indians see Australia as their home and do they have a sense of belonging in Australia? In that case, is this feeling of ‘home’ a result of their identification with Australia? Is this identification a continuation of aspirations for whiteness, in this case, Australian white identity?

The Anglo-Indians, although a numerically small component of Australia’s post-war migrant population, are sociologically unique and interesting because of their origins as an early transnational community (Caplan, 1998) formed across the boundaries of race, colonialism and globalisation. Caplan stresses that the process of moving across cultures or globalisation is not new and that the Anglo-Indians were one of the early results of the globalisation process. Hence, it is not only the withdrawal of Britain (returning ‘home’) that sparked their migration, but even before they migrated they lived in this liminal space. The Anglo-Indians are a particular kind of (trans) colonial subject wherever they were. They did not feel that they belonged in India and were a diasporic community. These concepts are linked with the Anglo-Indian community in this search for identity in Australia.

In their book *Social Change and Cultural Transformation in Australia*, Jamrozik, Boland and Urquhart (1995) writing about the Australian search for identity, note that from the start of the Australian immigration program in 1947, cultural transformation has been simultaneously occurring along with technological social change, especially in social change of the class structure. This cultural transformation has been multidimensional and more extensive where Australian-born people have had direct contact with immigrants in everyday life. As a result of the social change, the class structure and varied extent of cultural transformation in that structure, Australia has become a society of cultural diversity but directed by a monocultural structure of power which is deeply embedded in the British or Anglo-Celtic tradition. Jamrozik et al point out that the core institutions in Australia carry this monocultural inheritance as ‘colonial baggage’ or ‘colonial ballast’, which makes the Australian search for identity a laborious process (Jamrozik, et al, 1995, 207, 208).

Jamrozik et al (1995) point out that the dilemma that for the traditional Anglo-Australians experience is how to develop an Australian identity without weakening the Anglo-British inheritance and without contamination by non-English cultures. In contemporary Australian multicultural society there is more than one cultural inheritance; and hence the cultural inheritance of Australian society can no longer be described as solely British or Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Celtic. In reality, England is no longer the only ‘home’ because Australians now
have many ancestral homes and the society is much richer for it (Jamrozik, et al 1995, 215).

Jamrozik, et al conclude that if multiculturalism is to become a social reality in Australian society in all aspects of social, political and cultural life, then ethnic communities need to integrate their own cultural heritage with the Anglo-Celtic heritage. Reciprocally, the Anglo-Celtic inheritance will need to be ‘diluted’ with the inflow of the new cultures. In aiming to remove the division between the ‘Australians’ and ‘multiculturals’, they acknowledge Smolicz’s concept of an overarching umbrella of values drawn from the core values of various ethnic communities. And the search for a new identity, which would reflect the social reality of contemporary Australia, will need to focus on the essential necessity of transforming the core social institutions, which continue to present a monocultural image of society (Jamrozik, et al 1995, 224).

In a recent work, Colquhoun conducted a series of studies and focussed on the adaptation and well being of Anglo-Indians in Australia. Colquhoun’s findings suggest that, for the Anglo-Indians, adaptation to life in Australia overall had been achieved fairly easily. However, it is interesting that the Anglo-Indians saw themselves as different from other ethnic minorities in terms of being Western and having English as a first language. The participants also reported that life in Australia had been different to India. Unlike India, they felt Australia placed less emphasis on a person’s status, religion or social functions. It was again interesting, that they saw the differences between Australia and India as those same indicators, which defined them as a community. Without those indicators, it would be difficult to distinguish them from many Australians today. (Colquhoun, 1997, online)

Blunt’s work on Anglo-Indian communities in India, Britain and Australia explores the geographies of home and identity, and studies the politics of whiteness and the ambivalent place of Anglo-Indians in ‘White’ Australia. According to Blunt (2000), even as transnationals Anglo-Indians have to identify with their ‘Anglo’ heritage’ resulting in a possible identity dilemmas in multicultural Australia. This paper seeks to acknowledge the dilemmas (tensions according to Blunt (2000)) of these diasporic Anglo-Indians who identify as Anglo-Indians, as British, as Australians and as Indians keeping links with their country of birth, as seen in Lyons (1998).

Regarding the survival of this community, their assimilation into Australian society may result in the construction of new identities (Eade and Allen, 1999) along with identifying with the country of their birth. Thus, the aspirations for whiteness among these diasporic Anglo-Indians, may have resulted in the construction of a number of different ‘Anglo-Indias’ (Lyons, 1998) in Australia corresponding to the different experiences of Anglo-Indians in the places of their exile (migration). Is this reflective of the fact that some Anglo-Indians have made Australia their ‘home’ and feel they belong here in Anglo-Australian (white/multicultural) society?

Conclusion

In conclusion, the focus of this paper was on the relevance of the study of whiteness in relation to identity among the Anglo-Indians. It traced aspirations for whiteness among these diasporic people in their quest for identity and how they identify themselves with their ‘Anglo’ or ‘Indian’ heritage. It explored the relevance of the concept of ‘England as the mother country’ and whether it is ‘home’ for the Anglo-Indians in Australia.

In particular, this paper values the extent to which the concept of whiteness is useful in explaining the patterns of identity and identity dilemmas of Anglo-Indians portrayed in their
aspirations for white ‘Anglo’ identity, Indian identity and Australian identity or dilemmas in these choices.

Modestly, it is possible to explore responses to the question: ‘Who am I?’ among the Anglo-Indians in Australia. Do they desire to retain their identity as Anglo-Indians? Do they identify with their ‘Anglo’ heritage as against their ‘Indian’ heritage or vice-versa? In short, in the country they chose to migrate to, namely Australia do they have aspirations for British (white) identity or Anglo-Australian (white) identity? In other words, is there a dilemma of identity for the Anglo-Indians in Australia also?

References


