



(Image 1)

To Colour in the Lines:

Insight into the phenomenon of consumption and exploitation of skin lightening products

Kwasi Ritchie-Roux

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DECLARATION ON ETHICAL CONDUCT IN RESEARCH

I have read and understand the requirements laid out in the ethical clearance form as well as the Code of Ethics as extracted from The IIE Research Policy (IIE007) and commit to observe and uphold the principles of this Code in all aspects of the research work carried out in association with The IIE.

I confirm that all the information I have provided to enable The IIE to make a decision about my research is honest, complete and accurate and that I have not withheld any information that may adversely influence the decision.

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to seek out the phenomenon and exploitation of the practice of skin lightening in Cape Town, South Africa. Skin lightening is a practice that involves a topical cream that essentially bleaches ones' skin and changes the natural state of it.

Research was conducted at both the University of Cape Town and Vega Cape Town. Research was conducted in an ethical manner as all participants in both, surveys and interviews, took part willingly and information was not tainted or manipulated by the researcher.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to study

It is well known that the skin is the largest organ of one's body (WebMD Boots, 2017). Its function is to protect one's organs from outside threats (WebMD Boots, 2017). Skin serves as both a physical and a symbolic representation of an individual. It is on one hand an organ, a physical protective sheath, a part of one's body; and on the other hand, it is a powerful symbolic representation of one's identity. Thus, skin cannot only be seen within the constraints of the biological; skin also forms a large function in racial politics and identity formation. It is therefore imperative that the phenomenon of skin lightening, or bleaching products, form part of contemporary discourse. This essay will consider how symbolic constructs of 'whiteness' aids in forming identities of 'self' and 'other', and their relationships with class, gender and race within sociocultural contexts. Moreover, the aim of this essay is to analyse how companies, namely L'Oréal and Unilever, exploit the intersection of racial power dynamics and beauty standards to sell their product.

This research will predominantly take place in South Africa, with questionnaires being conducted at both the University of Cape Town (UCT) and Vega Brand School (Vega), on women and men between the ages of 18-30. Additionally, both ethnographic research and case studies on skin lightening products will contribute to this paper as both South Africa and India are classified as third world countries. From the findings of the research this study will attempt to analyse common trends pertaining to beauty, giving one insight into the minds of the individuals who use skin lightening products.

1.2. Research problem

"Triangulation involves using multiple data sources in an investigation to produce understanding." (Qualres.org, 2017). This paper will use triangulation to investigate both, qualitatively and quantitatively, the influences that drive consumers of skin lightening products. This will increase the validity of this paper as a variety of research methods will aid insight into the phenomenon of skin lightening and its consumption thereof.

1.3 Relevance of the study

This study forms a necessary dialogue between racial politics, skin manipulation and ultimately, the exploitative nature of brands like L'Oreal and Unilever. Moreover, this is an incredibly relevant study within the context of South Africa where there continues to be severe racial inequality. It is important for South Africans to understand terminology such as 'white privilege', 'colourism' and 'whiteness' along with other vocabulary in the category of racial politics. Furthermore, the current political climate in South Africa has increased racial division and often white South Africans are eager to accuse people of colour that live in South Africa of being racist. In this study, The researcher highlights terms such as 'racism' in order for the reader to gain more insight into why skin products are a growing industry despite well-known harmful side effects.

1.4. Research Questions:

- 1 Do you know about the practice of skin lightening?
- 2 Do you use skin lightening products? If yes, why?
- 3 Do you know of any companies that make and sell skin lightening products?
- 4 Would you use skin lightening products? why/why not?
- 5 Why do you think people buy skin lightening products?
- 6 Do you know of any people who use skin lightening products? If so, how many?
- 7 Do you see many adverts pertaining to skin lightening products? if so, what platform is used the most?
- 8 What are your views on skin lightening products?
- 9 Knowing that skin lightening products are bad for users, what would drive you to purchase a product that is harmful?

- 10 What is your perception of beautiful skin?
- 11 Do you think racism contributes to the consumption and production of skin lightening products? How?
- 12 Do you think skin lightening is popular in Cape Town? Why/ why not?
- 13 Do you think the practice of skin lightening is good or bad? Explain

1.5 Research objectives

The objectives of this paper are to grasp a better understanding of how and why, social, political and economic institutions perpetuate the idea of lighter skin being more desirable. Additionally, an investigation into the values that L'Oréal and Unilever promote will aid insight into the way in which these brands advertise and to whom their target market is. Furthermore, the investigation will seek to find out if these brands are in alignment with their core values.

2.LITERATURE REVIEW

Kahn (1996) describes how skin bleaching has become a phenomenon throughout the world. Kahn (1996) conducted an interview with two women, Zeli and Nozakhe, both from Cape Town townships. Kahn found that Zeli wanted lighter skin because she felt her dark skin limited her job opportunities whereas Nozakhe claimed that her dark skin lead to her boyfriend cheating on her with a lighter skin woman (Khan, 1996: 37). Furthermore, Khan (1996) goes on to describe the implications of using skin-lightening products that contain the harmful agent called Hydroquinone. Ochrnosis is a side effect that occurs when using skin- lighteners and causes connective tissue in skin and cartilage to be permanently damaged (Kahn, 1996: 37).

Kahn (1996) simultaneously found in her study that a natural skin lightener called Umemezi was used amongst the Nguni people. Umemezi is made from plants and water until a thick paste has formed. Umemezi is not only used for skin lightening but also acts as a sunscreen and can be used to treat pimples (Kahn, 1996:38). Additionally, Kahn (1996: 39) discovered that 71.8 % of Umemezi users in Cape Town in 1995 used the paste for skin lightening purposes, as lighter skin is perceived as beautiful amongst the users. Education, income and geographic areas were found to play a vital role in determining Umemezi use. Furthermore, Kahn (1996: 38) found that users of Umemezi were adding dangerous substances such as Jik and baking soda to speed up the lightening process. Kahn (1996) also found that environmental implications were rising due to the plant used in Umemezi not being indigenous. However, the deeply rooted ideals of the apartheid system are to blame for the desire to be lighter and dates back to times of slavery. It was thought that labourers were darker as they worked in the sun all day therefore, the fairer one was, the higher up in society one was Kahn (1996:39). By concentrating on education and promoting self worth Kahn (1996:39) explains that the use of skin lightening products would decrease.

Similarly, Verma (2010) agrees with Kahn (1996) saying that, "Fairness is an issue that has cultural, sociological and anthropological roots." (2010: 464). In India, skin lightening is fundamentally based on the idea that light skin promotes marriage and prestige (2010: 464). Verma (2010:465) goes onto to discuss that marriage is so important to the extent that adverts are placed in the newspaper that entail the word 'fair' in the hopes of reaching a suitor. Additionally, Verma (2010) noted that skin

lightening is a phenomenon in villages, similarly to South Africa, which one could say correlates to the idea of education being a key factor in the usage of skin lightening (Kahn, 1996).

Furthermore Verma (2010:466) notes that Western ideals of beauty and portrayals of beauty in magazines also play a large role in skin lightening as most advertisements display white skin at the epicenter of beauty. Beauty is defined as, “the quality or aggregate of qualities in a person or thing that gives pleasure to the senses or pleasurably exalts the mind or spirit” (Merriam-webster.com, 2017). This means that beauty is a construct of personal traits that is deemed desirable to others. Moreover Verma (2010: 466) found that, “The dermatology market is worth 1642 crore rupees (\$410 million) and the fairness-directed skin lightening cosmetic market (also known as “fast moving consumer goods”) in India is 1000 crores (\$250 million).” Additionally, Verma notes that 30 % of people in India live below the poverty line with only 5% receiving health insurance therefore any dermatological skin condition must be paid for independently, which makes awareness on skin related issues dismally low compared to western countries.

Additionally, Blay (2011: 6), a key theorist in skin politics, defines global White supremacy “...as an historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations, and peoples classified as ‘non-White’ by continents, nations, and peoples who, by virtue of their white (light) skin pigmentation and/or ancestral origin from Europe, classify themselves as ‘White’”. Blay (2011) believes that the phenomenon of skin bleaching has been a repercussion of colonialism and white supremacy. Furthermore, Blay (2011) discusses how white supremacy defends a system of wealth, power and privilege that ultimately benefits ‘white’ people. Similarly, to Verma (2010) and Kahn (1996), Blay (2011:7) notes that skin lightening allows a person of colour to “...gain access to the privilege that has historically been afforded to lighter skin as an approximation of Whiteness...”.

Furthermore Blay (2011) discusses the impact of religion, specifically Christianity, that positions purity as being white and evil being black. With religion being the an immense influence of daily life and indoctrination of European nationalism and capitalism, self worth in people of colour was depleted. Additionally, Blay (2011:13) discusses ‘commodity racism’ where “...through commodities, namely soap, Europeans positioned and furthermore advertised whiteness as the color of

civilization.” Blay (2011) states people of colour were seen as ‘savages’ that needed rescuing from Europeans and thus soap would make one ‘clean (white)’ and remove odor. This was seen as “civilizing natives” (Blay, 2011: 17).

Nevertheless, Glenn (2008) discusses the marketing and consumption of commodities such as soaps and skin lighteners that dates back to slavery. Lighter individuals were to work inside the homes of slave owners whereas the darker individuals were to work outside. Glenn (2008) agrees with Kahn (1996) in that amongst people of colour there was a hierarchy that separated lighter people of colour from darker people of colour. Additionally, companies realized that they could sell products to match a person of colours insecurities. In 1903 Crane and Company realised an advertisement in the African Colored Magazine that stated, “...use of the company's "wonderful Face Bleach" would result in a "peach-like complexion" and "turn the skin of a black or brown person five or six shades lighter and of a mulatto person perfectly white.” (Glenn, 2008: 287). Moreover, the manufacturers of skin lighteners were white. This means that the manufacturers who are educated business men, believe that white skin is purer. Similarly, Glenn (2008: 289) notes that India and Indian diaspora suffer from colonial intervention, which much like Africa, skewed perception of darker skin therefore leading to extreme consumption of skin lighteners. Glenn (2008: 289) found that “...India and Indian diasporic communities around the world constitute the largest market for skin lightener...” In 1970, the mass media started to influence India as much of what was reflected through advertisements and campaigns displayed a light or ‘fair’ individual.

Additionally, Glenn (2008: 296) focuses on “...giant multi nationals, which are fueling the desire for light skin through their advertisement and marketing strategies.” Driving these campaigns are the consumers who desire to have lighter skin in the hopes of gaining acceptance and normally takes place in countries where western capitalism and culture are more prominent.” Glenn (2008: 296) notes that the “...French-based L'Oreal, with 15.8 billion in sales in 2006, is the largest cosmetics company in the world...” and second to that is “...Unilever, a diversified Anglo Dutch company with an annual turnover of more than 40 billion and net profits of 5 billion in 2006...” In 1970 Unilever patented ‘Fair & lovely’ and in 1978 it had spread across India. ‘Fair & Lovely’ has become the largest selling skin lightener in India. In an advertisement by ‘Fair & Lovely’ it states “...with regular daily use, you will be able to unveil your natural radiant fairness in just 6 weeks!” Glenn (2008: 297) notes, “As with other successful brands, Fair & Lovely has periodically added new lines to appeal to

special markets.” Essentially brands have created a different method of communication with people of colour.

Furthermore, “Unilever is known for promoting its brands by being active and visible in the locales where they are marketed” (Glenn, 2008: 297) and contestants are told to be as beautiful as they can be. Glenn (2008: 297) found that this meant being of lighter skin. Unilever promotes both Ponds and Fair & Lovely in print and television ads that are ‘tailored to local cultures’ for example in an advertisement shown in India a father grieves over the fact that he does not have a son and claims that his daughter is too dark to make money or get married. Once she uses Fair & Lovely she is supposedly able to get a job as an airhostess. This means that only once she used a skin lightener only then did she obtain acceptance. This type of advertising places dark skin as being evil, depressing and unequipped compared to lighter skin, which is made to seem angelic. Lastly Glenn states that -“In short, dark skin becomes a burden and handicap that can be overcome only by using the product being advertised.”(Glenn, 2008: 298).

According to Saylor.org(2017), there are 6 criteria that a consumer considers before purchasing a product- 1) realizing they need or want something, 2) searching for information about the product, 3) evaluating different products, 4) choosing a product and purchasing it, 5) using and evaluating the product after use and 6) disposing of the product. This means that the consumer follows a cognitive process from the beginning of purchasing a product to the final stages of using a product. Furthermore, consumer’s social situation, time situation, their reason for purchasing the product and their mood has an impact on purchasing the product. With regards to skin lightening products, consumers purchase these products with the intent on altering their outer appearance. The motives behind the purchasing of these products are heavily engrained in the psyche of the consumers, that black is bad and white is good. Companies use both shock and subliminal advertising to attract their target market. Consumer attitudes are the ‘mental positions’ of the individual; this means that the consumer purchases a product because of the way it will make them feel. With regards to skin lightening products, the aftermath of colonialism and racial injustice to people of colour has been the driving factor for the purchasing of these products (Saylor.org, 2017).

More so Pierre (2012) accounts for her time spent in Ghana. Her ethnographic research found that skin lightening in Ghana is just as much of a phenomenon as in

India. In an interview with a woman named Emma, Pierre (2012) discovered that skin-lightening products were perceived to make one both desirable and accepted. Hydroquinone is an active ingredient that is responsible for lightening one's skin. This harmful substance can be replaced by mercury yet many skin lighteners contain 2% of Hydroquinone. Hydroquinone works by inhibiting or destroying the skin's natural melanin production and removes the top layer of one's skin. The result is a lighter complexion. Mercury-based chemicals work the same way. Pierre (2012) also notes that skin lightening can take place in various forms, from soaps to pills. Interviewing Emma, Pierre (2012) found that she even combined different skin lotions to get the desired effect. Skin bleaching is expensive and as a result many individuals often resort to inexpensive ways to bleach their skin. Amongst the items they use are kitchen bleach and soaps to concoct skin lighteners.

Similar to Glenn (2008), Pierre (2012) found that despite awareness on the harm that skin lighteners can cause, countries lose battles to the informal market of skin bleaching products but more so significantly to "manufactures and multinational pharmaceuticals and cosmetic companies whose marketing strategies tap into local and transnational ideologies of race, difference and aesthetics." (Pierre, 2012: 109). Pierre (2012) also noted that it was easy to identify "skin bleachers" as companies normally advise their consumers to cover themselves while in the sun. This is similar to what Verma (2010) discovered in India. Furthermore, Pierre (2012) found that prostitutes were amongst users of skin lighteners because they said it made them more desirable to their clients. When asked, Emma said that her husband doesn't enjoy it when she uses too much skin lightener but just a bit. The reason for this is that Pierre (2012) thinks that it is rather to obtain proximity to whiteness rather than be white, which is what Blay (2008) agrees with. Skin can be seen as a brand in that skin-lightening products help an individual manipulate their bodies to represent their ideal 'identity' or ideal personal brand (the same way we put tattoos or piercings on our body etc).

2.1 Discussion of the literature

The literature above is imperative to the study as it aids the researcher to back the study with evidence-based cases. This said, there has been no studies done on the consumption of skin lightening in Cape Town. The literature above will aid the researcher in finding the link between culture and the phenomenon of using skin-

lightening products. Furthermore, the literature describes the links the use of skin lightening products to colonialism which will be at the epicenter of this study.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Paradigm

This research paper will be using a triangulation, epistemological approach, of both qualitative and quantitative research to conduct my research project. This method will aid the way in which my research project is illustrated. By grouping information into categories and coding, the information will be useless for gaining insight from interviews with participants. This will help to gain a better perspective of common trends. I shall also use quantitative methods to show facts and figures that will back my findings. Interviews will take place in South Africa, Cape Town on women between the ages of 18-40. The research paper can therefore illustrate information on skin lightening from different age groups, which increases validity and widens the range of information. The reason for this age group is because it is relevant due the historical timeline these individuals would've lived in in South Africa.

Furthermore, this paper will discuss skin lightening in both positive and anit-positivist stance. This means that my research paper will attempt to demonstrate knowledge from and objective angle and subjective.

3.2 Research Design

The study will follow a triangulation approach. The method of triangulation includes both qualitative and quantitative research. Qualitative research will help the study gain insight into the phenomenon of skin lightening through comprehensive surveys that will allow the research to be valid through contemporary discourse pertaining to skin lightening as a practice. Quantitative research will allow this study to display facts and statistics. Once surveys have been distributed to 40 random individuals between the ages of 18-40, coding will be used to condense the information to generate similar attitudes of the individuals.

Individuals randomly selected and willing to partake in the study will have a 20-minute time constraint to answer the four questions provided. The surveys will be handed out to the individuals at the same time on the same day. This will allow the study to generate statistics that are accurate and viable.

Therefore, the study will combine both an interpretivist and positivist approach. Additionally, no research, pertaining to the consumption of skin-lightening, has been

done in Cape Town. Inductive research refers to studying patterns and trends from observational point of view whereas deductive research is involved with looking at theory first and then observing participants (Socialresearchmethods.net, 2017)

. This study will use both approaches.

The researcher can therefore make attempt to conclusions or genralisations based on the combination of statistics formed through data gathered from the surveys answered. This will increase validity as statistics would have been comprised of both qualitative and quantitative research.

3.3 Population

3.3.1 Unit of analysis

The object or individual is referred to as the unit of analysis (reference)

The unit of analysis in this research paper is the customer who purchases skin lightening products from either L'Oreal or Unilever.

3.3.2 Target and Accessible population

The target population of the study is all the customers who purchase skin-lightening products in South Africa. The accessible population are customers of both genders between the ages of 18-40 who purchase skin-lightening products in Cape Town, South Africa.

3.3.3 Population Parameters:

The population parameters for this study are limited to the University of Cape Town and Vega Branding School.

3.4 Sampling

3.4.1 Non-probability Sampling

Non-probability sampling is a method used when all individuals in a society aren't given an equal chance to take part in the study. This sampling method will be used as the researcher does not have access to the entire population.

3.4.2 Sampling method

The study will make use of convenience sampling as this method will allow the researcher to access all elements needed to compile data.

3.4.3 Sample size

The sample size will be 40 participants selected randomly from UCT and Vega Brand School in Cape Town, South Africa. It is estimated that 55 717 680 (Countrymeters.info, 2017) people live in South Africa, with 3,736,000 residing in Cape Town (Worldpopulationreview.com, 2017). According to an online study, 35% of South Africans use skin bleaching products (AFRIZAP WORLD, 2017). It is therefore plausible for the researcher to identify that, 19 501 188, use skin bleaching products in South Africa.

3.5 Data Collection method

The collection of data will take place on both campuses of UCT and Vega Branding School. Questionnaires will be used and compiled of 4 questions. By using 4 questions per questionnaire the participants can answer the questions comprehensively as the questions compiled are open ended with one question pertaining to the number of users the participant knows that use skin lightening products. This question will enable the researcher to gain better insight into the use of skin bleaching products. Additionally, twelve questions were compiled by the researcher which will be divided into four questions per participant in which the questions will be distributed to 40 random participants.

Participants are instructed about how to answer the questionnaires. The questionnaire is short yet should be answered comprehensively. The participants are also guaranteed that the data collected will be confidential and participants who decide to void their participation half way through will be able to with no questions asked. This ethically secures the relationship between the researcher, the participants and the study. The limitations of questionnaires are that questions may be answered in a dishonest manner and follow up questions aren't possible.

The questionnaires will be handed out by the researcher on both campuses throughout the day and will be constrained to a time of 20 minutes to complete the questionnaires. The method of manually distributing the questionnaires allows the participants to choose accordingly and makes the process interaction orientated which can help relax the participants to gain the most effective and honest responses. This said, the time limit may distort the participant's responses.

The researcher will make sure that questions are not confusing, open ended and short. The method of distributing the amount of questions per participant will ensure that the participant does not lose interest half way through the questionnaire.

3.6 Data analysis method

This study follows a mixed method approach of both quantitative and qualitative. It is expected that the questionnaires will be answered by participants as comprehensively as possible to gain accurate insight to the perceptions of the participants.

Once all questionnaires are gathered and completed by the participants, the researcher will analyse the questionnaires through grouping similar themes and deducting similar patterns and thought processes of the participants. Coding is a tool used by the researcher to classify information from the questionnaires (Dictionary.com, 2017). Additionally, once the information has been coded and classified into general themes, the researcher will then illustrate data collected and represent the data quantitatively through bar graphs and line graphs. For example, the amount of people that the participants know of that use skin lightening products will allow the study to show the number of individuals that use skin lightening products, statistically. This will visually illustrate the trends that participants communicated and the data that the researcher interpreted. Thus, generalisations for the study will be made about the population that purchases and uses skin lightening products.

4. RESEARCH CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Validity, reliability and trustworthiness

The study follows a triangulation method of both quantitative and qualitative data. Due to the questionnaire being fundamentally made up of comprehensive and open ended questions, the issue at hand is not of validity and reliability but more of trustworthiness. The researcher must therefore be aware of the chances that the participants may answer the relevant questions inaccurately or may lie. The researcher will therefore make use of a larger population of participants which will be attainable on both campuses of UCT and Vega Brand School.

Validity refers to the legal soundness of an argument (Dictionary.com, 2017). Validity is measured through the researcher acting diligently and comprehensively when the data is constructed and interpreted. Quantitative research will provide the statistics and 'legal soundness' in the form of data in statistics and figures. The figures will provide a valid stance on the study as facts will be illustrated using bar graphs, pie charts and line graphs. Furthermore, the researcher has made the questionnaires in such a manner that the participant is not overwhelmed- therefore answers should be more accurate as participants won't get bored and answer inaccurately. Internal validity research method is answering the research question whereas external validity refers to the researcher being able to generalize findings to a larger population (Webstat.une.edu.au, 2017). The researcher has used an interval of 95% with a margin of 5% of error to enable findings and research to be interpreted and generalized.

Reliability cannot be measured accurately- therefore it is imperative for the researcher to make use of Inter-rater observation. Inter-rater reliability test refers to the researcher splitting the questionnaires in half and seeing the common trends and patterns to transcribe it into data that is reliable. It leads to consistent estimates of the same phenomenon (Socialresearchmethods.net, 2017).

Furthermore, Trustworthiness is divided into credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. If the sample feels that the researcher has accurately interpreted data then the study is thought to be trustworthy.

4.2 Ethical Considerations

The term ethical refers to “pertaining to or dealing with morals or the principles of morality; pertaining to right and wrong in conduct.” (Dictionary.com, 2017). This study will conduct research in an ethical manner. All data and comprehensive information received from participants are used for the sole purpose of the study and the participants have the right to remain anonymous and to not partake in the study. Each participant will be assured that if they want to remain anonymous that the researcher has the obligation to adhere to the participant.

Furthermore, the researcher must not distort or misuse any data or results. Given that the study is qualitative, the researcher must remain unbiased as bias output can be a result of fundamentally qualitative research. The researcher will interpret both qualitative and quantitative data in a manner that is trustworthy, unbiased and honest.

4.3 Limit of the study

Although this study was carefully prepared, the researcher is still aware of its limitations and shortcomings. Firstly, this study is aware that skin lightening is extremely popular in India, but as the researcher only has access to a certain demographic within Cape Town, South Africa, where it is not as popular. With skin Lightening not being so popular the sample size chosen in Cape Town will limit the outcome of the study, however the chosen population is what the researcher can afford to make use of. The population chosen is small, only forty students, and might not accurately represent the hegemonic views.

It must also be considered that the research is Caucasian. This could limit the study by acting as a misrepresentation of the population of consumers that use skin lightening products. This said, the use of insightful literature and studies should be adequate to aid the researcher in displaying the findings objectively.

4.4 Anticipated contribution of the study

It is imperative that the phenomenon of skin lightening, or bleaching products, form part of contemporary discourse. If the proposed research is successful, there will be

three main contributions. The findings of this study will contribute to the benefit of society, considering the three main contributions. First, the study will allow for public discussion around the politics of skin bleaching and colourism. Secondly, the study will contribute to existing knowledge regarding skin lightening in a post-apartheid South African context. Third, the study will help uncover critical areas in the post-apartheid discussion on colourism in which many researchers have not explored.

5. FINDINGS

BASED ON APPENDIX A

It is undisputed that 'Western' ideologies have seeped into a spectrum of cultures across the world, causing its victims to adapt to the superior version of a societal norm. In this research project, I shall look at how the phenomenon, of skin bleaching, infiltrated the idea of identity and ethnicity. Furthermore, I shall discuss the influence that media has in forming perceptions of one's skin colour. The data that ethnography draws on was obtained through interviews at UCT. Five participants namely Nico (Black), Zanele (Black), Emma (White), Gugu (Black) and Pavithra (Indian) were interviewed for the purpose of this study. I will draw upon research done by Charles, Steyn et al., Pierre, Lewis et al., Brodtkin and Blay to elaborate my findings.

As a white woman, I am hesitant to discuss or analyse such a topic with deeply rooted agendas. Despite this, given that I am interested in racial politics, with an eager mind to understand more on this topic, and that anthropology is making the 'familiar strange and the strange familiar'. I am ready to immerse myself into this topic, knowingly, that I will never be able to empathise on the topic of how skin bleaching affects my research participants but I can sympathise and understand the deeply embedded issues that surround skin bleaching.

Skin Bleaching:

For several years certain laboratories have been trying to produce a serum for 'denegrification'; with all the earnestness in the world, laboratories have sterilized their test tubes, checked their scales, and embarked on researches that might make it possible for the miserable Negro to whiten himself and thus to throw off the burden of that corporeal malediction.

Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967)

Skin bleaching is essentially a method that makes one's skin appear lighter. One can consume various skin bleaching products in the form of soaps, pills, creams and lotions (Pierre, 15: 2008). These products contain two harmful ingredients:

hydroquinone and mercury (Pierre, 15: 2008). Hydroquinone is an agent used to develop photos and used in the manufacturing of rubber and hair dyes (Pierre, 15: 2008) and the latter is used as an ointment to treat skin disorders (Pierre, 15: 2008). In order for the skin to lighten, the product must be used consistently over a period of time, which costs not only one's health, but also their income (Pierre, 15: 2008). During my ethnographic research conducted at UCT in South Africa, I found that two of my participants took part in Skin bleaching. Nico, a young man with a light dark complexion was, in fact, unaware that he was participating in skin bleaching. Purchased and passed on by his mother, Nico thought that this cream was for pimples. As he entered university a friend recognised the product and queried him about why he was using Gentle Magic, a skin-lightening product. Nico immediately stopped using it and acknowledged that this product had no effect on his health. He did not want to partake in skin bleaching due to his knowledge of the health side effects and his appreciation for his darker skin.

In contrast to Nico, Pavithra uses a skin-lightening product daily. She notes that in Indian culture it is desirable to be lighter and thus she takes part in the ritual of skin lightening. She notes that through lightening her skin, she became more desirable to Indian men. The product she uses is 'Fair and Lovely', she further comments that, 'Even that name alone, hey!', shows the absurdity of the product from its name alone. Interestingly Pierre (14:2008) also highlights the names of these products saying that she, "...was particularly struck by how ironically straightforward the names of these products were in their marketing of cosmetic and, indeed corrective, whiteness." In the above case with Nico's product, 'Gentle Magic', which implies some sort of 'magic' happens when using such a cream, and Pavithra's cream of choice 'Fair and Lovely', play a large role in shaping the ideology of light skin as being 'magical' and 'lovely'.

Whiteness and Social Media:

"White always contains a positive spin in explicit or implicit contrast to a negative one attached to a non-white."

(Brodin, 147)

When deconstructing whiteness and what it is to be white and have white privilege, it becomes clear why women of colour take part in skin bleaching. Blay(8: 2011) discusses how it became visible that darker skin women do not want to be white but

rather, "... gain access to the privilege that has historically been afforded to lighter skin as an approximation of whiteness...". This means that it is essentially the proximity to whiteness that is a fundamental goal to achieve. One must, therefore, look at how this idea has been so deeply rooted and engrained into the minds of darker skinned people, specifically women.

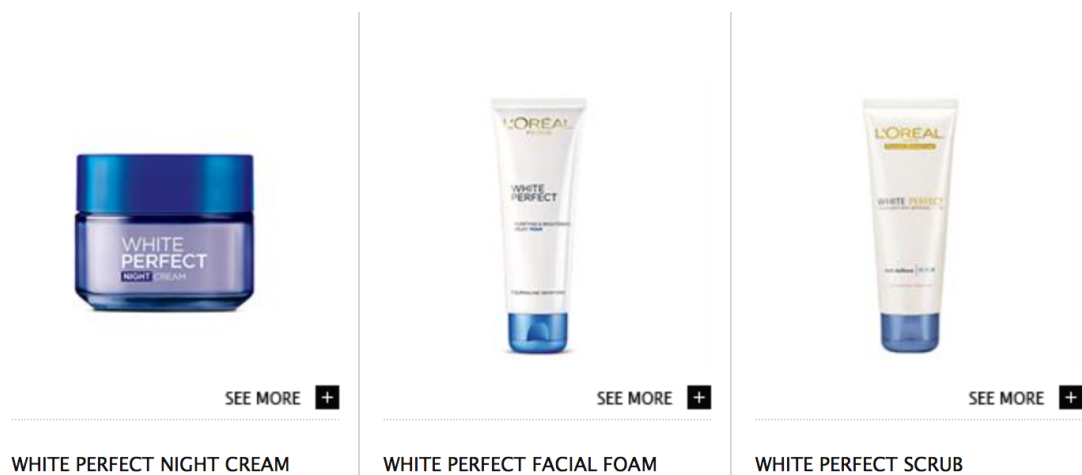
My interview with Zanele posed valuable points around the idea of beauty and success. Whilst discussing the role of social media in skin bleaching, I learnt that in fact, social media plays an immense role in what one perceives as beautiful and successful. With regards to Barbie, which was created as white, one is able to see that whiteness is socially embedded from a young age. It became evident that magazines throughout time have displayed a white woman at the epicenter of its perceptions on what is beautiful. Emma, a white student, also notes that her desire to be white stems from editorials that contain the white, youth and virginal woman. Zanele also gave rise to the importance of celebrities that endorse skin lightening as she says, "Even if you look at celebrities, Zendai, Beyonce and Nicky Minaj, all these African American artists are all light skinned, Rihanna as well. So, uhm, the lighter you are you're probably seen as beautiful and your chances of success are higher because you are closer to whiteness." Pierre(23: 2008) found the ideology, through her ethnographic research, that: "lighter skin Blacks complete more years of schooling, have more prestigious jobs, and earn more than dark skin Blacks". Similarly in an article by Brodtkin(149), found that, "Nerdiness among high school kids is discursively hyperwhite in middle-class was". More so in research done by Lewis et al. (798: 2012) it was found that influence came from "Two forms of electronic media" and "were specified by the participants: television and movie."

It is, therefore, applicable to see that in conjunction to Zanele describing affluence and successful which are visible in dark skin celebrities, that bleach their skin, the correlation between success and lighter skin is a driving factor of skin bleaching. Furthermore, in my interview with Gugu, who does not use skin bleaching products and emphasizes that it's 'Bullshit!', I was introduced to the idea that not only is this ideology harmful to ones body image but it has equal influence on ones fashion sense and identity. She says, "...when you're looking in a fashion magazine and that's where you get your fashion sense from and everyone you look at in the magazine does not look like you or is remotely the same colour as you, you start to think of your skin colour as inferior or that its not the standard of beauty." Zanele and Nico also discuss how although there are conscious movements such as 'Black Magic' and 'Black Out Day' they contest this by stating that although in recent times

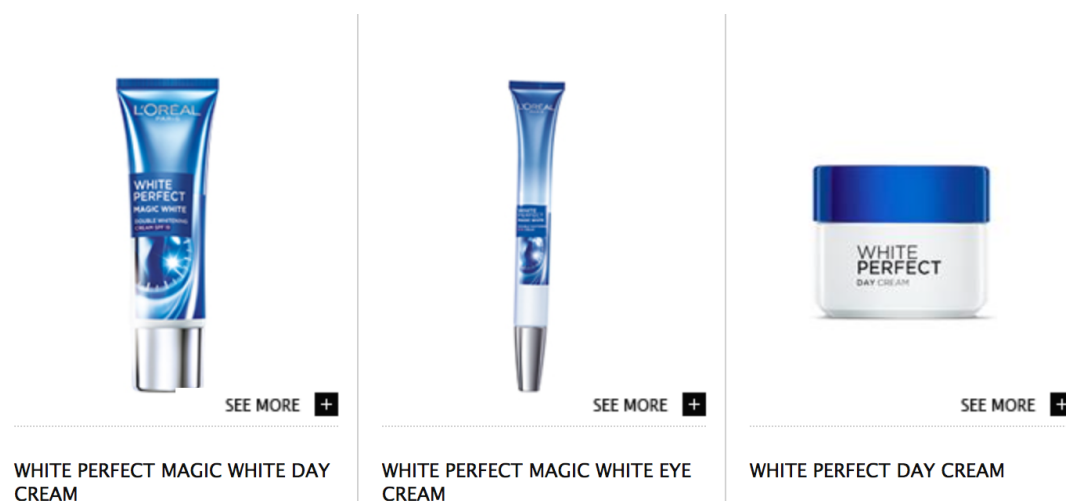
there has been an emphasis on black skin being beautiful, there is still this desire amongst black culture to achieve light skin as it is communicated within black culture that the darker you are, the less desirable you are. Zanele builds on the concept of slavery as a starting point for such deeply rooted western ideologies of dark skin being dirty and unequal.

FINDINGS BASED ON APPENDIX B

5.1 L'Oreal



(Image 2)



(Image 3)

L'Oreal can be said to be a trust worthy and household brand. L'Oreal's product list is abundant and varies from skin care to hair care. Their philosophies and corporate social responsibility is to make the world better place by contributing to positively to the planet (Lorealparis.co.in, 2017). This can be said to be an immense contradiction as the above images show that L'Oreal sells skin lightening products which are evidently seen as having a negative impact on society. Furthermore, L'Oreal is blatantly promoting and promising lighter complexion using its products, such as "white perfect", as seen above. The packaging of the product seems to give off an element in prestige as if what you are about to do it help your skin become royalty.

This furthermore adds to the data collected where participants suggested that, despite advertising being somewhat less in Cape Town, it is in fact the products that subliminally promote skin bleaching through packaging and emotive words that are used to describe the product such as 'white' or 'bright'. Participants stated that they saw advertising on media platforms such as Twitter and YouTube yet majority said that they have not encountered dense advertising on Skin lightening products.

Additionally, 29 out of the 30 participants said that they do not use skin lightening products with 1 participant saying that they are white and use it for blemishes. This is a positive outcome as it shows progression in the upcoming generations. Furthermore 23 participants did not know of any brands that sell skin lightening products, with only 5 participants naming larger household brands such as Garnier and Dove.

Nevertheless, when participants were asked if they thought that skin lightening was a system of racism 17 participants said it was as it was a form on promoting western ideals and western society. This coincides with the information and data gathered from the interviews conducted in Appenidx A.

5.2 Fair and Lovely:



(Image 4)

Furthermore, Fair and lovely is a brand that falls under the parent brand- Unilever. Unilever's company is based around the "... aim to make a positive impact in many ways: through our brands, our commercial operations and relationships, through voluntary contributions, and through the various other ways in which we engage with society" (Unilever South Africa, 2017). It is evident that Fair and Lovely therefore does not align with Unilever as a house of brands. Additionally 7 Participants out of 30 said that Skin lightening is prominent in Cape Town and while 14 participants said yes, with the remaining 9 participants undecided. This illustrates that there is not much conversation around the topic of skin lightening in Cape Town specifically. In one answer a participant thought it was due to the fact that Cape Town is a very socially aware pool of individuals.

Additionally when looking at the packaging of Fair and Lovely it is also evident that it depicts a darker woman standing behind a lighter version of herself. The packaging suggest that by using Fair and Lovely she will wash her darker complexion away,

This is evidently another method of subliminal messaging as the participant above mentioned that occurs in the packaging of these products.

6. CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, it is evident that skin-lightening products play a significant role in the market of beauty products, especially amongst lower-income populations. The products are marketed in a way that speak to the insecurities (as constructed by society) of the individual in order to make them believe that they can achieve what is perceived as the 'white' ideal through the use of these products. Skin lightening products carry many health-risks for the users but in addition, there are also negative emotional consequences that might affect the user of these products. These commodities are still being used to perpetuate the idea that 'white is right' and that success in life is correlated to a lighter physical appearance.

Furthermore, one can see that skin bleaching is harmful to not only one's health but to one's identity and self-image. Skin lightening is practiced across cultures and is performed to gain proximity to whiteness. Furthermore, skin lightening is influenced by what society and magazines shape as 'beautiful' and 'successful'. By gaining proximity to whiteness, women feel that privilege and beauty are attainable. Skin bleaching has been fueled by deeply rooted western ideologies and although in modern society there is a consciousness aimed at dark skin being beautiful, the issue of privilege that is acquired by whiteness is a driving factor in the choices that dark skin women take to participate in skin lightening.

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8. IMAGE REFERENCE LIST

Image 1

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Image 2 and 3

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Image 4

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Appendix B

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