

SKIN BLEACHING IN JAMAICA: A COLONIAL LEGACY

A Dissertation

by

PETRA ALAINE ROBINSON

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2011

Major Subject: Educational Human Resource Development

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ABSTRACT

Skin Bleaching in Jamaica: A Colonial Legacy.

(May 2011)

Petra Alaine Robinson, B.S., Nova Southeastern University;

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Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Mary V. Alfred

Light skin color sits within a space of privilege. While this has global significance and relevance, it is particularly true in Jamaica, a former British colony. The majority of the population is of African descent, yet there is an elevation of Eurocentric values and a denigration of Afrocentric values in many facets of life, specifically in the promotion of light skin as an indicator of beauty and social status. The purpose of this study was to examine the psychological and socio-cultural factors that influence the practice of skin bleaching in the postcolonial society of Jamaica. Additionally, the study outlined the nation's efforts to combat the skin-bleaching phenomenon.

The naturalistic paradigm of inquiry was used to frame the study and to collect and analyze data. The sample consisted of fifteen participants—twelve participants (six males and six females) with a history of skin bleaching; a retailer of skin lightening products; a local dermatologist who has written and published in local newspapers on the practice; and a representative from the Ministry of Health who was integrally involved in

the national educational efforts to ban the practice. Data came from three sources: in-depth interviews with respondents; observation of participant's skin-bleaching practices; and a review of local cultural artifacts from popular culture and the media. Data from the audio recorded and transcribed interviews were analyzed using a thematic analysis.

Some of the findings reveal that there are multiple and inconsistent definitions of bleaching; skin bleaching enjoys mixed reviews—much attributed to economic and social class distinctions; *bleachers* demonstrate and boast of their expertise in managing the bleaching process suggesting, that because of this expertise, they are immune to any negative side-effects of the practice; the bleaching practice was found to be intermittent, time consuming and laborious, costly and addictive; there are several motivations for the skin-bleaching practice, and these are primarily connected to issues of fashion, beauty, popularity, self-image and acceptability; there is a certain level of defiance towards the government's efforts to ban bleaching yet an expressed sense of responsibility among *bleachers*.

The overall findings show that there is a bias in Jamaica for light skin over dark skin and these values are taught in non-formal and informal ways from very early in life. The practice of skin bleaching is of social and public health concern, and this study has implications for national policy, practice and theory.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is for my son, Zachary, the one who teaches me to be brave. I also dedicate it to the memory of the funniest person I ever knew, John Hugh Horace Harrison.

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I am honored and pleased to thank those who made the preparation and completion of this dissertation possible. I have accomplished this great feat, but I did not do it alone. I have benefited greatly from the generosity and invaluable support of several people. Without this support, I could not have succeeded.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
ABSTRACT		iii
DEDICATION		v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS		vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS		ix
LIST OF FIGURES.....		xiv
LIST OF TABLES		xv
CHAPTER		
I	INTRODUCTION.....	1
	Background of the Problem.....	5
	Race and Racism	6
	Skin Color and Stratification.....	8
	Slavery and Colonialism	10
	Perceptions of Skin Color	12
	Culture and Media.....	15
	Statement of the Problem	17
	Purpose of the Study	19
	Conceptual Framework	20
	Postcolonialism	20
	Social Cognitive Theory.....	21
	Research Questions	22
	Significance of the Study	23
	Operational Definition of Terms	24
	Delimitations of the Study.....	26
	Limitations of the Study.....	26
	Summary and Organization of the Report.....	27
II	LITERATURE REVIEW.....	29
	Significance of Skin Color	29
	History of Jamaica.....	31

CHAPTER	Page
Skin Color in Jamaica	33
Imperialist and Colonialist Legacies	34
Sports.....	34
Religion	38
Music.....	45
Education.....	50
Social Life and Culture	54
Language	55
The Eurocentric and Afrocentric Battle: Light versus Dark Skin	59
Global Perceptions of Fair/Light Skin	60
Positive Characteristics of Light Skin.....	62
Economics of Light Skin.....	62
Class and Social Distinctions	63
Marital Choices	66
Beauty and Social Capital	67
Skin Bleaching	69
Skin Bleaching in Jamaica	71
Access to Skin Lightening Products.....	73
Medical Complications of Skin Bleaching.....	75
Summary	78
 III	
METHODOLOGY	79
Research Design and Methodological Approach	79
Site Selection.....	82
Sample Selection	83
Data Collection.....	86
Data Analysis and Management.....	89
Stage One - Transcribing.....	90
Stage Two - Profiling	91
Stage Three – Coding and Categorizing	91
Practical Example.....	92
Analysis of Cultural Artifacts	93
Quality Control or Trustworthiness of the Data.....	94
Triangulation	94
Member Checking.....	95
Researcher’s Role.....	95
Summary	98
 IV	
FINDINGS	99
Participant Profiles	100

CHAPTER	Page
Banks	102
Brown Man.....	103
Fabulous	105
Fifty	106
Kay.....	108
Keisha.....	109
Lisa.....	111
Mikey Spent Shell	112
Rice Bag	114
Sharon.....	115
Shem.....	117
Stacy	119
Presentation of Findings.....	120
Multiple and Inconsistent Definitions of Bleaching	121
Perceptions of the Bleaching Practice.....	121
Intended Results.....	124
Rationalizing Toning vs. Bleaching.....	126
Inconsistencies with Definitions	131
Summary	132
Mixed Reviews of Bleaching	133
Societal Perceptions of the Skin-Bleaching Practice	134
Nicknames Based on Rituals.....	136
Nicknames Based on Appearance	137
Gendered Societal Perceptions of the Skin-Bleaching Practice...	141
Subjective Perceptions of Skin Color.....	146
Summary	149
Expertise in Managing the Bleaching Process	149
The Incidence of Bleaching in Jamaica.....	149
Expertise in Mixing.....	151
Rubbing Rituals	154
Summary	159
The Nature of the Bleaching Practice	160
Intermittent	160
Time Consuming and Laborious	161
A Costly Endeavor	163
An Addictive Habit	165
Summary	167
The Motivation for the Bleaching Practice	167
Retailer's Perspectives	168

CHAPTER	Page
Bleachers' Perspectives.....	171
Toners' Perspectives	174
Dermatologist's Perspectives	177
Ministry of Health Official's Perspectives.....	178
Summary	181
The Government's Efforts to Ban Bleaching.....	182
Reactions to the Government's Efforts: Defiance	187
Reactions to Government's Efforts: Sense of Responsibility	189
Summary	192
Cultural Artifacts.....	194
Songs	194
Signage & Party Flyers	198
Summary	204
 V	
SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS.....	205
Overview of the Study.....	205
Discussion of the Findings	206
Addressing the Research Questions	212
Question One.....	213
Question Two	214
Question Three	216
Question Four	217
Question Five	219
Implications and Recommendations	220
Implications for Policy.....	221
Implications for Practice	222
Implications for Theory.....	227
Recommendations for Future Research	228
Concluding Thoughts	230
 REFERENCES.....	231
 APPENDIX A	258
 APPENDIX B	262
 APPENDIX C	269
 APPENDIX D	272
 APPENDIX E.....	276

	Page
APPENDIX F	279
APPENDIX G	282
APPENDIX H	284
APPENDIX I.....	286
VITA	302

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 4.1 Public Signage: Pretty Girls Only.....	199
Figure 4.2 Party Flyer: Bikini Fetish: Beauty on the Beach	200
Figure 4.3 Party Flyer: Naked.....	201
Figure 4.4 Party Flyer: Exclusive Celebrity Playground	202
Figure 4.5 Party Flyer: Rock Star Mentality.....	203
Figure 5.1 Health Literacy Model.....	224

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 4.1 Demographic Profile of Participants	101
Table 4.2 Toners' Self-Report on Products Used and Skin Tone	129
Table 4.3 Bleachers' Self-Report on Products Used and Skin Tone.....	130
Table 4.4 Subjective Perceptions of Skin Color	148

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE NEGRO'S COMPLAINT

FORC'D from home and all its pleasures
Afric's coast I left forlorn;
To increase a stranger's treasures
O'er the raging billows borne.
Men from England bought and sold me,
Paid my price in paltry gold;
But, though slave they have enrolled me,
Minds are never to be sold.

Still in thought as free as ever,
What are England's rights, I ask,
Me from my delights to sever,
Me to torture, me to task?
Fleecy locks and black complexion
Cannot forfeit nature's claim;
Skins may differ, but affection
Dwells in white and black the same.

William Cowper, 1872

The purpose of this study was to examine the psychological and socio-cultural factors that influence the practice of skin bleaching in the postcolonial society of Jamaica. Additionally, the study outlined the nation's efforts to combat the skin-bleaching phenomenon. The Jamaican society provided the context of the study in which the legacies of colonialism are still quite apparent.

This dissertation follows the style of *Adult Education Quarterly*.

Colonialism and slavery taught racial oppression, skin color stratification, and colorism in very distinct and effective ways. Today, skin color stratification continues to exist on a global scale, and skin tone specifically persists as a defining characteristic with significant impact on one's positionality, and even on an African American's life chances (Herring, 2002; Hunter, 1998; Telles & Murguia, 1990). Colorism, which describes the problem of discrimination because of skin color among people from the same race, is pervasive and disturbing. In highlighting the global importance of the issue among communities of color, Hunter (2002) described it as a major sociological issue for African American and Mexican American communities. Skin color and stratification based on complexion are important issues for all people of color.

In defining colorism, Hunter (2002) explained that it is a privileging process; also known as skin color stratification, the concept is described as a mechanism in which light-skinned people of color find favor over dark-skinned people. This privilege extends to areas such as income, education and housing. Further, Hunter (2005) explained that light-skinned Mexican Americans and light-skinned African Americans are more educated and reside in more integrated neighborhoods. The preferential treatment afforded to members of the colored community with lighter skin color/complexions relates to the popular ideal or concept of beauty revered in today's society and extends even through to courtship and marriage (Hunter, 2002; 2004).

Within the Black community, skin tone is important in defining beauty (Hunter, 2002; Wolf, 1991); lighter-colored skin has been and is still typically seen as more beautiful than darker-colored skin. Robinson and Ward (1995) reported that for African

American women and girls, fair skin is an asset. Hunter (2005) pointed out that, having light skin means having a kind of social capital or beauty. This beauty then can be used to access other kinds of capital such as economic or educational capital. The value of this beauty (capital) has caused the practice of skin lightening to become increasingly popular as a means of improving beauty and, thus, increasing one's opportunities for success.

Skin lightening typically occurs through a skin-bleaching regimen. This is not a new practice for people of color all over the world. Hoetink (1971) noted that in Santo Domingo, as early as the sixteenth century, Indian women used painful processes to bleach their skins, trying to become more attractive to colonizers. In Suriname too, for example, indigenous women were bleaching their skin in order to be considered more attractive to White male colonizers (Menke, 2002). Additionally, Pitche, Kombate and Tchangai-Walla (2005) highlighted that females in the Black population have been using cosmetic skin-bleaching products as a social practice for about 30 years. The use of these chemicals on the skin has proven harmful and has led to disfigurement and even death (Miyajima de Souza, 2008). Despite the potential harm, the bleaching syndrome (Hall, 1995) continues to gain support through influences from popular media and localized culture.

In an attempt to curtail this dangerous practice, different countries have responded in various ways to the phenomenon. However, there are several challenges associated with restricting the practice. Glenn (2009) attributed the recently increased use of skin-lighteners to the expansive network of multinational corporations that have

creative and intricate ways of skillfully influencing market needs. Globalization and capitalism facilitate an easy flow of products across international boundaries which make skin-bleaching products more easily accessible.

One such country faced with the predicament of skin bleaching among its citizens is Jamaica, a former British colony and small island nation that gained independence in 1962. In 1999, the Ministry of Health (MOH), the regulatory agency responsible for health in the nation, started highlighting the problems related to the widespread practice of skin bleaching. In July of that year, in an attempt to deal with the strain on the health system, the MOH convened a press conference with representatives from the Jamaica Bureau of Standards, the Association of Aestheticians, the Association of Dermatologists, the Community Mental Health Department and Customs (High Price, 1999) to address the skin-bleaching issue.

According to the Ministry of Health, the aim of the press conference was to launch their initiative which was specifically designed to eradicate topical corticosteroids (man-made powerful drugs) from the market and to prevent them from being used to lighten the skin (High Price, 1999). The MOH appealed to the island's citizens to cease the misuse of these drugs due to the dangerous risks associated with the practice of skin bleaching without the guidance of a medical practitioner. Dr. Clive Anderson, a dermatologist on the island, in discussing the increasing problem, reported to journalists at the press briefing explaining that while empirical data was not available, he was certain that thousands of people were bleaching their skin, offering that up to 10 to 15 percent of dermatology patients were bleaching (High Price, 1999). In response to

the problems related to the skin-bleaching crisis, the Ministry of Health launched an educational campaign called *Don't Kill the Skin* in February 2007.

The objectives of the five-month interdisciplinary operation was to use various media as part of an adult education effort to inform the public of the dangers related to bleaching and to confiscate the illegal bleaching products being sold as cosmetics. Despite these efforts and the negative effects associated with skin bleaching, the practice remains a critical problem for the island nation. In January 2007, the MOH and The Jamaica Library Service hosted a panel discussion entitled *Bleachers Beware!* This was an attempt to instigate an educational series to examine skin bleaching and the negative problems associated with the practice (Robinson, 2007). The rise in the number of cases of bleaching and the phenomenon itself continues to receive attention from local media in the island with each piece reiterating the message voiced by the Ministry of Health, particularly through various adult education efforts.

Despite the government's efforts to address the problem, the practice continues. In order to develop a keen understanding of the skin-bleaching problem in Jamaica, it is important to understand how race, skin color, slavery, colonialism, media and popular culture influence the socialization and ideology of the Caribbean people.

Background of the Problem

Media influences, historical legacies and other reasons are posited as possible reasons for the skin-bleaching phenomenon. Regardless of the motive behind an individual's desire to bleach, it is clear that it is a complex phenomenon. Understanding the trend is important as is understanding the social and economic stratum created and

assigned because of skin color discrimination. In trying to comprehend the genuine reasons that influence skin bleaching, it is important to consider the historical and social context of the individuals who seek to and engage in the practice.

Collectively examining the constructs of race and racism, skin color, skin color stratification, slavery and colonialism, media and popular culture as they relate to the history of the Caribbean, presents a portrait of the philosophical orientation and socialization of the British colonies. They provide the backdrop to the context of Caribbean culture and life today.

Race and Racism

A socially constructed theory of race purports that the idea of race is socially and historically created and is not based on scientific proof. It is grounded in the premise that there is a natural superiority for some groups based on external physical characteristics (Williams, Lavizzo-Mourey, & Warren, 1994). The privileging of one group over the other, based on race is the foundation of racism. Racism is a complex social problem and as Feagin (1999) pointed out, many social analysts have defined it using many different terms, each with its own value or merit. He noted:

Racial inequality refers to imbalances in such resources as income or housing access... *racial oppression* describes the imposition of discriminatory burdens on a subordinate racial group by the dominant group and the term *White supremacy* emphasizes an ideology of White superiority and reflects the creation of 'White' and 'Black' identities. (p. 79)

Feagin (1999) referred to these practices as *systemic White racism*, which he described as a "system of racist domination and oppression and its consequent racial inequality that has been created, maintained, and legitimized by those who subscribe to the White

supremacy ideology (p. 79). Further, Heery and Noon (2001) defined racism in the Dictionary of Human Resource Management as,

The ideology and practice of discriminating against someone on the basis of their race or their ethnic group. The term basically categorizes people according to physical attributes and ascribing negative characteristics to some categories. In addition, it refers to the phenomenon emerging out of white imperialism and is characterized by the ideology of white supremacy. (p. 294)

Discrimination, domination, social exclusion, and preferential treatment, as a result of racism, cuts deep into the psyche (Pine & Hilliard III, 1990) of any minority group. It creates boundaries and hegemonic systems designed to categorize and belittle minority races. Within the context of racism where one race is held as being superior to another, it creates structures that delineate groups according to race, evidenced by personal characteristics or traits (Giroux, 1997). LaViest (1994) explains that while race is a concept which lacks conceptual clarity, racism, according to Wellman (1993), is a defense of racial privilege. In particular, reference to racism against Blacks, Banks and Grambs (1972) defined racism to include any action which refuses Black people positive identity factors. Identity in itself relates to self- image in which race and skin color play a significant role.

Indeed, the popular and more prevalent context for the discourse on racism within the Black community is the Eurocentric versus Afrocentric model in which the term Eurocentric refers to the White tradition with European history and Afrocentric, the Black tradition with African history. Within the ex-colonies of the Caribbean and Jamaica, in particular, there is significant favor of the Eurocentric ideal. Nettleford (2003) emphasized that in the Jamaican culture, things European are placed in a place of

eminence and anything that is native to Jamaica or African is placed in a lesser place. This bias extends throughout all aspects of life and culture within the ex-colonies, specifically in relation to skin color and self-image.

In highlighting the importance of skin color on self-image in relation to the Eurocentric versus Afrocentric traditions, Hall (2005) remarked on the role of skin color and self-image explaining that, all over the world, skin color is a part of self image and in the United States, this image is representative of Europe and European ideals. This is also the case in the Caribbean. Skin color has always been an important determinant of class (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998), status and beauty in the Caribbean.

Skin Color and Stratification

In the Caribbean, race is not the primary indicator of social status, nor has it been the primary source of advantage after colonialism. Rather, social class has been a main source of privilege. Skin color stratification in relation to skin tone has historically had a significant correlation to social class. Henriques (1949) noted that as early as 1949 skin color was identified and documented as the determinant of class in Jamaica. In discussing colonialism and the importance of skin color as a determinant of social class, Sherlock and Bennett (1998) commented that the foundation of colonial law was White superiority and civilization of Black inferior savages. Complexion was a symbol of position within society and skin color could be seen as a marker of social class and condition, where slave labor was designated to blackness and the darker shade of color moving downwards to squalor.

The idealization of the European image was legitimized as early as 1814 when Oliver Goldsmith explained that being White was natural and that any variation from this was a sign of corruption and that the European figure and color were the standards to which everyone should be compared (as cited in Jordan, 1968). Essentially, the standard for beauty and all things honorable relates specifically to Whiteness and everything else to Blackness.

Without denigrating the importance of the universal debate on racism, there is a need for closer attention to the problem of discrimination related to skin color stratification and colorism within all communities of color. Hall (2005) explained the centrality of skin color in the context of African Americans' lives and indicated that skin color establishes their condition and goes further than the consequence of race. Colorism is important and pervasive enough that it deserves greater attention and scrutiny along with the consideration given to racism.

According to Freeman, Ross, Armor, and Pettigrew (1966), "color-sensitive" Negroes in the United States often repeat the adage "If you're white, you're right; if you're brown, stick around; if you're black, step back!"(p. 365). The idea of describing a population of Negroes as color sensitive, as well as the expression quoted, echoes some measure of the complexity and challenges faced by non-White people. The adage articulates long-standing perceptions about the distinct stratification associated with skin color in the United States as well as in the Caribbean.

Additionally, although these problems of intra-racial hierarchy are not recent, throughout academia there is inadequate consideration to the matter. The significance of

this concept is one which Hunter (1998) described as not having been conceived of theoretically. The implications of the skin color stratification predicament are historical in nature although ubiquitous in the world today. Examining the societies of former colonies in the Anglophone Caribbean highlights much evidence of skin-color's importance and symbolism. It also reveals the proliferation of stratification because of skin color and perpetuates ideology and practice that date back to slavery and colonialism.

Slavery and Colonialism

Slavery and colonialism promoted the ideas of White superiority and Black inferiority (racism) through much of the Western world, including the colonized countries of the Caribbean. Williams, Lavizzo-Mourey, and Warren (1994) posited that race and racist ideology grew out of slavery and imperial colonialism. The authors described how these oppressive conditions promoted colorism and how the idea of racial distinction and superiority was used to justify the exploitation of the colonized. Skin color provided the ammunition for the weaponry of racism and color stratification in the colonized nations.

Herring, Keith, and Horton (2004) presented the idea that when it comes to skin color stratification during slavery, colonizers instituted a social system by systematically dispensing workload according to color. Those for outside labor were dark-skinned and those who were light-skinned assumed jobs inside the plantation masters' homes. A social order among slaves evolved and the house slaves were believed to have experienced favorable treatment (although they suffered nonetheless) over the field

slaves. This social order served to create division and animosity among the slaves, much of which was based on skin complexion.

Additionally, Graham (1999) commented that the caste system that the masters implemented was not random and that it fueled the belief that one group was superior because they had lighter skin tones, essentially creating a wider rift between both groups. Resentment and social distinction between these groups increased as slave masters engaged in forced sexual relations with female house slaves.

As the offspring of White masters and Black mothers, the children became slaves of even lighter complexion. These mulattoes and other lighter-skinned slaves expanded the distance between themselves and the darker colored field slaves. Frazier (1957) noted the way in which the lighter-skinned Blacks became aware of their privilege over darker-skinned Blacks. Today, the issue of skin complexion furthers the distance or stratification throughout the Caribbean and society as a whole.

With the privilege, elitism, and beauty ideal assigned to those with lighter skin or to those more closely mimicking the appearance of the European masters, the desire for lighter skin was and continues to be widespread. Russell, Wilson, and Hall (1993) described the desire as being nearly universal, emphasizing the pervasiveness of prejudice against dark skin in many areas of the world including Central and South America, Asia and Africa. Other researchers have shown that skin color also affects perceptions in India, Israel, Korea, Japan, the West Indies, and Britain (Franklin, 1968; Hall, 1992; van den Berghe & Frost, 1986; Wade, 1996).

Continued emphasis on the supremacy of colonial ideals reinforces the socialization practices that sustain colorism throughout the island nation of Jamaica and the rest of the world. Hall (2003) posited that slaves were programmed into thinking that they were worthless and to hate themselves because of the superiority of European values over African ones. Additionally, these harmful lessons are so engrained that they are internalized by the descendants of these slaves. In the case of Jamaica, the battle wages on between both the Afrocentric and the Eurocentric cultures even after almost 50 years of independence from Britain and over 170 years since the abolition of slavery in 1838.

Perceptions of Skin Color

Inasmuch as people are classified based on the degrees of pigmentation in their skin, so are certain stereotypes and social stigma attached according to skin color. For hundreds of years, blackness was associated with things unnatural and with extreme ugliness. Jordan (1968) described the initial English confrontation with Africans and stated, “White and black connoted purity and filthiness, virginity and sin, virtue and baseness, beauty and ugliness, beneficence and evil, God and the devil” (p. 7). Additionally, Hunter (2007) explained that the bedrock of colorism is predicated on White supremacy in all aspects of life to include aesthetics and ideology and Black inferiority representing the opposite of civility and beauty. These oppositional associations conjure up very vivid images of good versus bad and continue on even today. Being White continues to signify wealth; being brown initiates perceptions of

privilege while being Black, initiates the opposite perception—one of poverty and negativity.

In a recent study investigating the connotations of English color terms, Allan (2008), hypothesized:

Among Anglos, white is associated with purity and light, freedom from malignity or evil intent and this with the beneficent, the innocent, the harmless. This is strongly motivated by its contrast with black... Thus to be white was a compliment and the attribution of darker hues was dysphemistic (p. 636).

The level to which a Black person experiences negative stereotypes according to these connotations is often attributable to their shade of complexion or skin tone.

Further, these negative connotations may lead to feelings of inferiority and internalized self-deprecation. The literature on mental illness among Negroes, according to Gergen (1967) records many instances of recurring dreams with the desire to be White. He explained that these mentally ill Black patients were consumed with the idea that their skins were merely dirty or painted, but that they were in face White. This issue traces back to early twentieth century when Lind (1914) explained that some mentally ill Black patients hated themselves and chose to believe that their skins only became dark because of foods they have eaten. Although this argument is dated and controversial (Baldwin, 1979), there have consistently been a myriad of theories positing some kind of Black self-hatred (Davis & Dollard, 1940; Banks & Grambs, 1972; & Fanon, 1967) or self-sabotage (McWhorter, 2000).

Hall (1995) recently describes this feeling towards dark skin color as disdain suggesting that African Americans build up disdain because it is a pervasively powerful cultural value. Essentially, the dominant culture dictates the beauty ideal (Whiteness)

and members of the colored community are striving to distance themselves from the ugliness of Blackness and integrate themselves into what is perceived as beauty. Moreover, Hunter (2005) reminds us that in the United States and other places worldwide, beauty is defined in terms of Whiteness. Skin lightening therefore becomes an obvious tool in the quest for this beauty and assimilation into the mainstream.

W.E.B. Dubois, a Black sociologist, offered an idea in 1903 called “double consciousness” in which he suggested African Americans battle with attempting to endure or to assimilate in two distinct worlds; one world is White, the other is Black. This assimilation influences Blacks to ingest the negative connotations and stereotypes against their race, mostly because they have in the past been powerless otherwise (Hall, 1995). While this may seem historical, there are instances of cultural domination where Blacks continue to remain powerless. Certain structures exist in today’s societies that promote cultural domination on a wide scale. Similar to the case of double consciousness in the United States, in Jamaican society, it presents itself as a clash between the Eurocentric (White colonialist and imperialist) principles and Afrocentric (Black) ideals. With an overwhelming bias towards White or European culture, Paul (2009) explained:

The bleaching or whitening of official Jamaican culture away from its African origins persists today and manifests itself in all sorts of ways from actual skin bleaching to the seamless assimilation of colonial norms, values and practices on the part of the middle and upper classes. (p. 96)

This bias towards the Eurocentric ideal is present and promoted throughout the society in various ways to include avenues such as popular media and culture.

Culture and Media

Popular culture and the media strongly influence and disseminate messages of cultural domination which often requires a high degree of cultural and media literacy to detect and resist. Culture provides the context for socialization and interaction. As an influential agent of socialization, (Brown & Gary, 1991) the media employs various mechanisms to influence identity as it shapes the development of a nation and its people. Culture and identity are intricate and complex concepts which, according to Alfred (2001), are “elusive phenomena that are socially and contextually constructed” (p. 111). It is evident that the construction to which Alfred refers is specific to the context of a particular nation, people or individual.

Essentially, a nation’s history, political climate, resources, location, and other innumerable variables influence its culture. In the case of Caribbean islands, which were all at one time European colonies, while generally small, and sometimes quite close to each other, there are often vast cultural differences amongst them. For example, in the case of Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, two islands in the Caribbean, while they share a legacy of Columbus, slavery, and Spanish then British colonization, they are both culturally different from each other. There are significant differences in ethnic makeup of both countries; Afro-Jamaicans constitute the overwhelming majority of the population in Jamaica (90%) while in Trinidad and Tobago there is a significant Black population (40%) as well as large East Indian population (40.3%). The rest of the population is mixed (18%), White (0.6%) and Chinese and Other (1.2%) (Encyclopedia of Nations, 2010a; 2010b). Variables such as their locations, natural resources, economic

and political legacies would influence and cause significantly different cultural identities, norms and mores. Cultural traditions and expressions are unique, fluid, influential and generational.

Culture is comprised of various components, including sub-cultures. Within Jamaica, there are pockets of various cultures and sub-cultures. The culture of the inhabitants, to include popular culture is an important element to consider in the context of the history of a people. Additionally, culture does not occur in isolation, and, as such, its promotion through the media is relevant and important.

Popular media is influential and pervasive; media proves effective in disseminating both implicit and explicit messages related to skin color. There are often messages that are critical of skin color bias as well as messages that condone and support this bias. These messages exist in film, music, print, entertainment, television and other genres of media. The media does not exist in isolation; it is based on the context of life of a people and nation. The way in which the media is shaped and takes form as an agent of socialization depends on other socialization factors.

Interestingly, these culturally important and influential socialization messages are generational and are present in various environments including homes, educational institutions, houses of parliament or governance, and churches. These messages frame personal belief systems and shape the personal identities of a nation and its people. The media simply reproduces and distributes many of the messages and it gives voice to the direction of the culture by highlighting new trends and desires of a people. Indeed, the trend of skin bleaching is increasing and awareness of this trend is also increasing

because of the media. The internet and globalization help the media spread messages rapidly across traditional borders such as geographical and socio-economic borders. Some of these messages are negative and promote certain unbalanced ideals, including racism and colorism.

The media is constantly invading our psyche with idealized messages promoting these power structures. It plays a large role in our perceptions about different racial and ethnic groups. As far back as the slavery era, many images related to African Americans were false and offensive. In the media, Black women are invariably likened to a White model of beauty and the media perpetuates this impractical definition and standard (Harrison, Reynolds-Dobbs, & Thomas, 2008). Given, the media symbolizes the ideal notions of beauty particularly through advertising (Baumann, 2008) and tends to be instructive and persuasive.

Statement of the Problem

It is a particularly prudent time to examine the problem of skin bleaching because there is extensive growth in the availability and use of skin lightening products worldwide (Glenn, 2008). Skin bleaching removes the melanin from skin to erase or bleach out the pigmentation. It is dangerous and harmful to the skin and to one's overall health (Mahe, Ly & Peret, 2005; Faye, Keita, Diakite, Konare & Ndiaye, 2005). Bleaching agents present great risk to the user, and as is the case in Jamaica, they are often homemade concoctions or chemicals used without a prescription or dermatologist's care or guidance.

In the Caribbean island of Jamaica, there is a select group of Afro-Jamaican individuals engaging in the dangerous practice of skin bleaching. The problem is compounded by the fact that there are no available statistics on the practice. The challenge to securing statistical data is that the practice is done in secret and unless the bleachers are facing negative side effects that warrant medical attention, the incidents are not documented.

There are many reasons posited for skin bleaching. There is evidence in the literature that suggests individuals with lighter skin tones receive preferential treatment in areas of economics, education, housing, and health (Herring, 2002; Hunter, 1998; 2005 & Telles & Murguia, 1990) even extending to courtship and marriage (Hunter 2002; 2004). Research also suggests that social status is greater for Black women with lighter complexions (Hughes & Hertel, 1990; Keith & Herring, 1991; Hunter, 1998; Maddox & Gray, 2002 & Hunter, 2005). Bearing this in mind, the desire to attain light skin becomes profound. Society promotes light skin tone as fair and beautiful. Beauty acts as a form of social capital (Hunter, 2002), and increases access and opportunities for women in today's world. Bleaching therefore, to attain this light skin tone becomes an appealing option.

Culture and popular media make constant references to the ideal model of beauty, that is, the Eurocentric model with long straight blond hair, narrow noses, thin lips, slender bodies and flawless skin with a light complexion (Bond & Cash, 1992; Jones, 2004; Lindberg-Seyersted, 1992; Okazawa-Rey, Robinson & Ward, 1987; Nichter & Nichter, 1991; Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999). The media's

messages often promote colorism and skin bleaching by devaluing dark skin tones, rendering them less attractive, making it painful for Black women who cannot attain this ideal (Collins, 1991; hooks, 1992). As a counter, the governing body responsible for health in Jamaica, the Ministry of Health, launched multiple educational efforts through the media to curtail the dangerous practice. The government's concern with the increased number of damaged skin cases influenced the launch of a major educational campaign in 2007 called *Don't Kill the Skin* (Brown-Glaude, 2007). As part of this campaign, there was a concerted effort to educate the public of the dangers of bleaching and to encourage bleachers to cease and desist.

Despite the government's educational efforts and the banning of these chemical bleaching agents in the marketplace, some Jamaican men, women, and children continue to show disregard for personal health and continue to bleach their skin. Dermatologist N. Persadsingh reported seeing up to three patients per day for problems associated with bleaching (personal communication, May 24, 2010). As a result, examining the experiences of individuals who are actively engaging in the practice of bleaching their skin is relevant, timely and instructive.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the psychological and socio-cultural factors that influence the practice of skin bleaching in the postcolonial society of Jamaica. Additionally, the study outlined the nation's efforts to combat the skin-bleaching phenomenon.

Conceptual Framework

The frameworks guiding this research are postcolonialism and social cognitive theory. These bodies of literature offer the system of concepts, assumptions and theories that inform the research (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Using these lenses we can understand the ideology, motivation, and practice of skin bleaching in Jamaica from the perspectives of those engaged in the process.

Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism offers a literary critique of the many consequences of colonialism, particularly those affecting the cultures and life of ex-colonies (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2004). Loomba (1998) suggests thinking of postcolonialism as protest to colonialism and which by extension, relate to imperialism and Western cultural domination. Using this lens, the skin-bleaching phenomenon was examined considering the context of Jamaica as a former European colony. Essentially, in conducting this research, the various influences of colonialism that have persisted throughout the nation's culture and their role in influencing the decision to bleach one's skin were considered to be of particular relevance and importance.

The term postcolonialism has faced much attack in research and has been criticized as a catchall term (Jacoby, 1995) meaning many different things to many different people (McGillis & Khorana, 1997). This is compounded by the problem that postcolonial literature has been notoriously difficult to read (Loomba, 1998). For purposes of this study, postcolonialism is used as a means of critique (Tikly, 1999). As the conceptual framework for this study, postcolonialism provides an understanding of

how culture, as influenced and created by colonialism and postcolonialism, influences the participant's decision to bleach their skins. Postcolonialism provides the necessary critique of the oppressive practices related to the consequences of colonialism. These practices were examined specifically related to aspects of culture such as sports, religion, music, education, social life, language, and other cultural practices. Postcolonialism as a framework is relevant as it also supports a purposeful and descriptive analysis of cultural values and practices that may influence the practice of skin bleaching.

Social Cognitive Theory

With a history of behaviorist and cognitivist points of reference, social cognitive theory as conceived by social psychologist, Albert Bandura, is particularly relevant to this study. Bandura (1986) explained how the social component of the theory recognizes the social origins of how individuals think, as well as behave. The theory situates psychosocial functioning in terms of triadic reciprocal causation. This means, according to Bandura (1986) an individual's thought and action are influenced, in a complex way, by that person's environment. Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, (2007) encourage using this theory because of its application in adult education contexts mostly because it considers the learner's environment. The authors suggest a learner's action is a result of interaction with the environment and much of an individual's behavior is learned through observation and interaction with the social environment. In the case of this study, the learners refer to the bleachers and how they learn to engage and participate in the bleaching practice.

This interactive model provides a framework through which the study sought to examine the motivations of the participants within the social environment of their lives and to examine how they arrive at the decision to bleach their skin. It takes into consideration the skin-bleaching phenomenon as learned behavior, (often through observation) influenced by the social context. Social cognitive theory suggests that people behave a certain way based on the interaction with their social environment and based on their social roles and status (Bandura, 2004). The study was interested in the interaction of the social setting, participants and the intersection of their learning how and why to bleach, and in particular as it relates to the issue of skin color as a physical characteristic and the skin-bleaching behaviors.

Research Questions

The following five research questions guided this study:

1. How does a history of slavery and colonialism influence members of a postcolonial society to engage in the practice of skin bleaching?
2. How does early learning and socialization within a postcolonial society contribute to the decision to practice skin bleaching?
3. What are the benefits—perceived and realized of skin bleaching?
4. What is the role of popular culture and media in the skin-bleaching phenomenon?
5. What strategies have the Ministry of Health employed to combat the health problem of skin bleaching?

Significance of the Study

The study is significant in various ways and the following section describes the rationale for the study accordingly.

Despite the magnitude of the global problem of skin bleaching, it has not received much attention in the social science literature. Much of the current literature on skin lightening deals with the health complications from using the products. This study highlights the pervasiveness of the social phenomena and provides empirical data to build literature on the problem of skin bleaching. Although this study examined the Jamaican experience, issues related to skin bleaching are pertinent to other people of color all over the world. Additionally, this study stimulates further research by generating questions for further exploration.

Studying the skin-bleaching phenomenon provides a window of opportunity for understanding the motivations behind the pervasive problem. It allows for hearing the voices of *bleachers* and to glean insight into the phenomenon. Adult educators will be better equipped to design, develop and implement educational activities to address the unique needs of the skin bleachers. By learning more about the skin bleachers and their multiple realities, adult education practitioners will be able to systematically incorporate health literacy concepts and adult education learning activities to address the skin-bleaching phenomenon. The need for this research is particularly great as multiple national-level initiatives to address the problem have been met with less than favorable results.

This study is significant as it relates to the matter of health literacy. As is the case in Jamaica, the skin-bleaching problem poses serious concern to health officials. The high number of cases and the resultant burdening of the health system concern the government on two levels. There is social concern for the major health problems (skin cancer among others) affecting the population of skin-bleachers as well as a fiscal concern related to the problem of skin bleaching. This study provides data which can be useful because of the implications for governing policy related to the problem.

By exploring the psychology behind the practice of skin bleaching and examining the role of popular culture and the media in the phenomenon, health and other government officials may negotiate their role in handling this dangerous trend. This study supplies alternative approaches in dealing with the problems of skin-bleaching phenomenon in relation to governmental policy, in terms of its design, administration and execution. It also may prove instructive in handling other issues of social concern.

Operational Definition of Terms

The operational terms presented here are for the purpose of this study:

Acculturation: “Acculturation is the process of adopting the cultural traits or social patterns of a group other than one’s own” (Banks & Grambs, 1972, p. 162).

Assimilation: “The degree to which an individual takes on the behaviors and language habits and practices the basic rules and norms of the host culture while relinquishing ties in the native culture” (Neuliep, 2009, p. 401).

Brown: “White (-skinned), or Jamaica White. Formerly used to refer to skin color of “mulatto or coloured person, “between Black and White’, also widely used as a synonym for ‘White’, esp by rural people (Patrick, 1995, p. 237).

Browning: A descriptive and complimentary colloquial term attached to people in Jamaica (predominantly women) with light skin tone.

Bleaching: Also known as skin whitening, skin lightening, and skin bleaching. This is the use of chemical agents, (cosmetic methods) to lighten the melanin (pigment) in the skin

Colorism: “Colorism is a systematic preference for lightness that stems from the larger and more potent system of racism” (Hunter, 2005, p. 89).

Cultural Literacy: “An understanding of the power of cultural practices to influence the health status of individuals as well as how they define a healthy lifestyle” (Zarcadoolas, Pleasant & Greer, 2006, p. 64).

Hyper Pigmentation: This is the deposition of the pigment melanin in the skin following injury to the skin. (Persadsingh, 1998, p. 61)

Postcolonialism: “Post-colonialism (or often postcolonialism) deals with the effects of colonization on cultures and societies” (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2004, p. 186).

Racism: Racism refers to the “the ideology and practice of discriminating against someone on the basis of their race or their ethnic group” (Heery & Noon, 2001, p. 294).

Toning: This term is used in Jamaica to describe the process of lightening the skin. It is a popular and less taboo term than skin bleaching.

Delimitations of the Study

This research study does not seek to provide an exhaustive exploration and examination of skin bleaching as a phenomenon in Jamaica. The results of the study are limited to data gathered from one area of the country. Furthermore, given the boundaries of the study, it does not seek to generalize its results to any population, nor that of the location where the practice is researched. However, using postcolonialism and social cognitive theory as bodies of literature to guide the study, it sought to uncover the meaning in the participants' lives when they engage in the practice and contextualize those meanings within the history and culture of Jamaican society.

Limitations of the Study

Based on the characteristics of the methodology which set the parameters for this qualitative study, the task and responsibility of data analysis is very inductive, and researcher-based. Overall, data analysis and presentation of the findings are an important and often overwhelming process. The main limitation of the study is the challenging nature of translating the local language as well as elements of the culture. This is particularly important in this study as I sought to accurately represent the participants based on their individual contexts and national culture and language to provide readers unfamiliar with Jamaican culture a true picture of the participant's expressions. Spradley (1980) alluded to the challenge this way:

A translation discovers the meaning in one culture and communicates them in such a way that people with another cultural tradition can understand them . . . the translator has a dual task. For one, you must make sense of the cultural patterns you observe, decoding the messages in cultural behavior, artifacts, and knowledge. Your second task is to communicate the cultural meanings you have

discovered to readers who are unfamiliar with that culture or culture scene (p. 161)

This places a huge responsibility on the researcher to capture the essence of the participant's responses, given the context, and to accurately represent them.

Although the interviews were conducted in English, that is, questions were posed primarily in Standard English, participant responses are predominantly recorded in Jamaican patois. The translation from patois to Standard English may be complicated in the sense of communicating the true sentiment embodied in the local vernacular. Given the focus on meaning making, this semantic equivalence may serve as a limitation due to the potential that the meanings participants assign to particular issues may get lost in the translation.

Summary and Organization of the Report

This introductory chapter presented the background for the study that examined the psychological and socio-cultural factors that influence the practice of skin bleaching in a post colonial society. The study also outlined Jamaica's national efforts to combat the skin-bleaching phenomenon. In Chapter I, I presented the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, and significance of the study.

In Chapter II, relevant scholarship that informs the study is reviewed. This included issues related to the significance of skin color, the history of Jamaica, skin color in Jamaica, imperialist and colonialist influences on Jamaica, Afrocentric and Eurocentric values and skin bleaching. The last part of this chapter focuses on skin bleaching in Jamaica; it examines issues related to access of skin-bleaching products and

the medical complications of skin bleaching. It concludes with a summary of the national efforts to combat the skin-bleaching problem. Chapter III describes the methodological perspectives and procedures. It also describes the techniques employed in analysis of the data (interviews and cultural artifacts).

Chapter IV presents a profile of the participants who were interviewed for their intimate knowledge and practice of skin bleaching. It provides information related to their personal and demographic backgrounds. The chapter also presents the findings from the study. The findings are organized by themes which emerged from the data. Six major themes emerged from the study: (a) multiple and inconsistent definitions of bleaching, (b) mixed reviews of bleaching in Jamaica, (c) expertise in managing the bleaching process, (d) the nature of the bleaching, (e) the motivation for the bleaching practice, and (f) the government's efforts to ban bleaching.

Chapter V presents a summary of the findings followed by a section which addresses the findings in relation to the five major research questions. This section is followed by a discussion of the study's implications for policy, current practice and theory. A summary concludes the chapter which includes recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to examine the psychological and socio-cultural factors that influence the practice of skin bleaching in the postcolonial society of Jamaica. Additionally, the study outlined the nation's efforts to combat the skin-bleaching phenomenon.

Chapter II is organized as follows: first, literature related to colorism and skin color and their significance are presented. Second, a brief history of Jamaica is presented along with a discussion of the impact and remaining influences of colonialism on Jamaica's culture. Third, literature related to the skin-bleaching phenomenon globally, and specifically in Jamaica, is presented along with a summary of the nation's efforts to combat the problem.

Significance of Skin Color

Until the philosophy which holds one race superior and another inferior is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned:
That until there are no longer first-class and second-class citizens of any nation;
That until the color of a man's skin is of no more significance than the color of his eyes;
That until the basic human rights are equally guaranteed to all without regard to race;
That until that day, the dream of lasting peace and world citizenship and the rule of international morality will remain but a fleeting illusion, to be pursued but never attained. . . . Until that day, the African continent will not know peace. We Africans will fight, if necessary and we know that we shall win, as we are confident in the victory of good over evil.

Haile Selassie I, Emperor of Ethiopia
Speech before the United Nations General Assembly
in New York, USA, 1963

In an address to the United Nations General Assembly, Selassie passionately addressed the issue of racial discrimination. Although this address was made almost 50 years ago, it still rings true for the African continent as well as people of the African Diaspora throughout the world today. Interestingly, Selassie focused on the discrimination between races. Historically, given the context of his speech, the superiority and dominance of the White race over the Black race was the central theme. Much of what we tend to think of today, as far as discrimination is concerned, is the issue of prejudice between Black and White people. Hall (2003) concurred, drawing attention to the idea that the philosophy behind discrimination in the Western world is founded on and focuses on the Black/White dichotomy. It is important to add the issue of skin color in the dialogue related to discrimination based on skin color.

While Selassie alluded to the significance of a man's skin color, in society today, discrimination based on skin color, even within the same race, is pronounced and prevalent. In addition, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous *I Have a Dream* speech spoke to the significance of skin color. He stated, "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character" (King, 1963, para. 14). Again, the Black/White racial tensions and discrimination is assumed to be the meaning behind the statement. However, given the context of this research which examines the practice of skin whitening, his message is still relevant to us today.

Intra-racial color discrimination, colorism, is an age-old and pervasive problem all over the world. Colorism, according to Blair, Judd, Sadler and Jenkins (2002) is the

result of evaluation, and more specifically, a positive evaluation that favors light skin over dark skin. Colorism is a persistent factor in the Caribbean and on the island of Jamaica with roots dating back to slavery and colonialism. Colorism and the issues of post colonialism are inextricably linked. Historically, colorism and skin color stratification, particularly among Jamaicans, was, and continues to be an important element of the racial and social structure in the island.

History of Jamaica

Jamaica is a small island located in the Caribbean Sea, south of Cuba and West of Haiti. It is the largest English-speaking, and the third largest nation in the Caribbean with an estimated population of 2.7 million people (Statistical Institute of Jamaica, 2010). Afro-Jamaicans constitute the overwhelming majority of the population. In fact, about 97% of the population is of partial or total African descent and other ethnic groups include East Indians (1.3%), Chinese (0.2%), Europeans (0.2%), and Other (0.6%) (Encyclopedia of the Nations, 2010b). Initially inhabited by the Carib and Arawak Indians, Jamaica was first colonized by the Spanish in 1492 followed by Oliver Cromwell who led the British takeover in 1655. Jamaica's geographic location and tropical climate was ideal for the slave trade.

Slaves came to Jamaica primarily from West Africa in the seventeenth century from many different tribal and national groups. According to Curtin (1955), the slaves who arrived on Jamaica's shores were diverse and included the Kramanti or Coromantyn, the Ashanti-Fanti of the Gold Coast, the Ibo of the Niger Delta, the Mandingo, the Pawpaws and a few Congo and Angolans from the south of the Bight of

Benin. The author explained that this diversity was significant in the creation of what he termed the Afro-Jamaican culture. In *Two Jamaicas*, Curtin revealed the legal and social strata of the society; He explained that there were three legal castes inclusive of free Whites, colored people with limited privileges, and Negro slaves. This separation and stratification of Blacks helped to shape today's color-conscious Jamaican society.

When the British captured Jamaica in 1655, the country's focus, managed through the British Empire, was primarily the sugar industry. Williams (1970) described the growth of the sugar industry and indicated that by 1672 sugar dominated the island, evidenced by over seventy sugar factories, greatly affecting the racial makeup of the population. With a steady increase in the slave population to meet the demands of sugar production, the ratio of slaves to Whites was one to three in 1658, and nearly six to one in 1698. Jamaica grew in importance to Britain and was the most important colony in the British Empire in the eighteenth century primarily because of slavery and the sugar industry. Notwithstanding, there were several slave rebellions and uprisings that proved costly for the British.

The British Empire ended the slave trade in 1808; after many years of turmoil, terror and domination, slavery in Jamaican was abolished in 1834. However, slavery proved to be very influential on the population. It molded life and framed the way in which the Black population survived in Jamaica and in all the other British territories. According to Rogozinski (2000), the African slave trade controlled and influenced all facets of life in the Caribbean islands. This control was extended through the creation and operation of sugar plantations; it molded social and familial relations while it

manipulated the islands' legal and political systems. The result of slavery's abolition was the formalization of the existing class organization or stratification according to skin color. At one end of the spectrum were the remaining White planters, at the other, Black slaves and in the middle, the children of female slaves and White masters (Manley, 1982). Of great relevance to the class structure was the issue of skin color.

Skin Color in Jamaica

Despite slavery's abolition and the island's later independence from Britain, there were, and continue to be internal struggles related to skin color and class among the population. Notable attempts in Jamaica's history to minimize the negative associations with black skin, especially darker-colored black skin, were made by Marcus Garvey and in the United States by W.E.B. DuBois (Anderson & Cromwell, 1977). However, these were unsuccessful efforts and social and racial distinctions continue to persist long after slavery, with the defining characteristic being skin color.

Further internal stratification within the three main (White, Mixed and Black) socio-racial groups in Jamaica, is often based on wealth, education and culture (Moore & Johnson, 2004). Although the majority of the population is of African descent, the Jamaican economy continues to experience control by the minority White, Jewish, Arab, Chinese, and East Indian population (Charles, 2003). In fact, decolonizing the nation did not remove the European ideals, power, and influences from the country.

In 1962, the nation gained independence from Britain, but the influences of the British monarchy are still quite evident today within the country's political, social and educational systems. With vestiges of colonial life lingering in the country, it is

important and necessary to reflect on how British colonialism framed the nation's history and how it continues to show itself as an agent of socialization in modern culture and society. Even after emancipation and through to independence, the colonists thought that it was important to help to 'refine' the nation. According to Tortello (2005), this was the reason museums and British sports such as cricket and soccer were introduced to Jamaica.

Imperialist and Colonialist Legacies

In the following section, I present literature related to imperialist and colonialist influences on Jamaican culture. The review consists of a look at these influences on sports, religion, music, education, social life and culture and language.

Sports

Sport is a social phenomenon and a component of a nation's culture. In order to explore its emergence and development in a nation, it is important to consider the conditions in the society or the context in which they occurred that may have influenced its development. Malec (1995) argued for the importance of studying sport in different cultures and suggested that sport reflected the history and culture of a nation. Further, the author put forward that studying sport could teach something about human society. Sport is an integral part of Jamaican life and culture. Cummings (1995) also recognized the importance of sport as part of a nation's identity and culture as well as its dependent relationship on a society's social structure.

Examining the role of cricket in the historic and cultural sense as it relates to Jamaica and the rest of the Anglophone Caribbean is relevant to this study as it

symbolically illustrates the way colonialism influenced the culture of a region through sports. Cricket is a dominant sport in the Anglophone Caribbean (Cummings, 1995); it is quintessentially a British game introduced in its territories in the Caribbean by British military officers (Yelvington, 1995). Slaves were restricted from participating in the game in its early introduction; they were only allowed to prepare pitches, bowl and retrieve balls during practice. Yelvington (1995) explained, “The power of colonial representation was inscribed on the colonized’s body: Blacks were regarded as machines in the cane fields and no less so as providers of batting practice for White batsmen/colonizers” (p. 17). Even after slavery, and during the subsequent transitional period immediately following but before independence (apprenticeship), Blacks were at a disadvantage; they did not possess the resources and access to participate in organized cricket. Cricket epitomized a vehicle through which colonial culture was disseminated. Through cricket, “the values, norms and prejudices of the colonial ruling class (Victorian Style) were symbolized” (Cummings, 1995, p. 86). For the wealthy colonial administrators and education authorities, cricket was essential for the “cultural reproduction system” (Cummings, 1995, p. 89) and an effective way to transmit appropriate and civilized behavior messages to the wider populace.

As cricket’s popularity grew, it was played at elite elementary schools which resulted in the formation of elite clubs. According to Cummings (1995) “Clubs were formed based on Old Boys’ Associations, race, religion, class, location, or a number of permutations of these factors” (p. 91). Organized cricket throughout the Caribbean in these elite social clubs was reserved for lighter skinned Blacks from established families.

This was particularly the case because, as Yelvington (1995) highlighted “In a colonial society which placed a philistine value on ‘Whiteness’ and what was defined as ‘European’ culture, most Blacks did not have the ‘symbolic capital,’ or economic capital for that matter, deemed necessary for entry” (p. 18). Cricket’s presence and acceptance in the West Indies was principally important for the British. It was and still is today, a cultural legacy, remnants of colonialism and imperialism in the Caribbean.

James (1983), in his book, *Beyond a Boundary*, provided a substantial and convincing argument for the importance of cricket in ex-colonies in assuring that they were prepared for self-rule in the first half of the twentieth century. Interestingly, what occurred on the cricket scene was indicative of what was occurring within the social demographic of the island. James (1983) explained that the first-class cricket clubs corresponded to the social echelons in society, with each having clearly defined boundaries. As a cricketer with an excellent record in all aspects of the game, he discussed the process of making the decision as to which first-class cricket club he should join. Regarding the decision, which on the surface would seem to be a simple one, he indicated that it caused him to be faced with a “social and moral crisis which had a profound effect” (p. 49) on the rest of his life. Membership to the most prestigious of cricket clubs in the 1920’s was the prerogative of the white and wealthy; a few mulattoes were allowed, primarily those from well-established families. James (1983) wrote:

The Negroid population of the West Indies is composed of a large percentage of actually black people and about fifteen or twenty percent of people who are varying combination of white and black. From the days of slavery these have always claimed superiority to the ordinary black, and a substantial majority of them still do so (though resenting as bitterly as the black assumptions of white superiority). With emancipation in 1834, the Blacks themselves established a

middle class. But between the brown skin middle class and the black, there is a continual rivalry, distrust and ill feeling, which, skillfully played upon by the European peoples, poisons the life of the community. Where so many crosses and colors meet and mingle the shades are naturally difficult to determine and the resulting confusion is immense. There are the nearly white hanging on tooth and nail to the fringes of white society and these, as is easy to understand, hate contact with the darker skin far more than some of the broader minded Whites. Then there are the browns, intermediates, who cannot by any stretch of the imagination pass as white, but who will not go one inch towards mixing with people darker than themselves. (p. 51)

James presented an overview of the stratification which existed throughout the West Indies since the days of slavery as it related to skin color and social class. Further, the author vividly illustrated the persistence of discrimination between members of the same (Black) race as evidenced in everyday life and perpetuated even in the game of cricket.

On the other hand, cricket, (also known as the gentleman's game), is also conceived as a modern-day oppositional force against the British rule and dominance. As a form of resistance to colonialism, cricket—with its roots in a colonial past, cricket takes on a representative burden with underlying as well as obvious patterns of cultural and national emancipation (Yelvington, 1995). According to Malec (1995), cricket became accepted as a way of “establishing a positive self-image, and, in part, they (West Indians) came to excel at it because it provided one of the few means available to them to defeat their masters. What Malec (1995) and Yelvington (1995) might be saying is that, as Blacks in the West Indies compete against the English in the sport, it provides them with an opportunity to challenge and possibly overpower their former colonial masters.

Cricket, after almost two centuries of play in the West Indies, is argued to be a powerful representation of colonial legacy in the region (St. Pierre, 1995). Even after

the colonial period, imperialist views remained pervasive. The attitude that cricket and other colonial institutions would refine the savages of the ex-colonies permeated throughout all aspects of social, political, and religious life in the Caribbean.

Religion

In accordance with the idea of refining savages and preparing the island for civilization and self-rule, missionaries began arriving in Jamaica. Indeed, the history of religion in the Caribbean is shaped by the colonial experience and it continues to serve as an influential factor in the religious and social life of West Indian nations. Understanding a people and their culture requires insight into their religion. The predominant religion in the Caribbean and particularly in Jamaica is Christianity.

Christianity came to the Caribbean through colonialism, and as far as church history goes in Jamaica, the Spaniards first brought the faith of late medieval Christendom in the early 1500's. The Spanish felt it was their responsibility to teach their slaves the Catholic faith. So much so that it was an integral part of the Spanish Slave Code (Morrish, 1982). The first Roman Catholic Church in Jamaica was started in 1509 and completed in 1526; however, when the Spanish lost the island to the British in 1655, the Church of England essentially dominated the religious scene (Dayfoot, 2001; Morrish, 1982).

With the dominant Protestant force, the Church of England or the Anglican Church became the Established Church up until 1870. The Protestants prohibited the Roman Catholics from freely practicing their religion in Jamaica until 1792 (Jamaica Information Service, 2007). Unlike the Spaniards who felt responsible for sharing

Catholicism with the natives, the English maintained intentional exclusion of the Caribbean slaves from the Christian community, despite slave laws which required planters to convert the slaves to Christianity (Charles, 2009; Morrish, 1982). Despite instructions from the Sovereignty to Christianize the natives, the “planter’s church” was averse to including slaves in their worship.

In the effort to Christianize the colonies, and with the coming of the eighteenth-century evangelical movement, religious missionaries began arriving in Jamaica. Among the first missionaries were the Moravians from Saxony (and later also from England), who came to Jamaica and started work in 1754 at the invitation of two wealthy English plantation owners (Jamaica Information Service, 2007). The Moravians were followed by English Methodists, English Baptists and African American free slaves (Dayfoot, 2001; Sherlock & Bennett, 1998). In order to continue the Christianization of the locals, one of the two bishops appointed for the Church of England in the West Indies settled in Jamaica. Their role, according to Dayfoot (2001) was to encourage conversion to Christianity and to educate slaves using the church as the main approach of socialization. Colonialist messages were disseminated through the colonial church. Religion was an avenue through which the colonizers could subdue and assimilate slaves.

The colonial church opposed the African religions as being the work of the devil. It dictated that the slaves renounce African religious practices and instead worship a White Christian God (Charles, 2009). Obeah was one such form of religious expression that the slaves brought from the continent of Africa. Moore and Johnson (2004) described Obeah as a set of complex beliefs that “included ideas about the power of the

ancestors, spirits, benevolence and malevolence, and the possibility of explaining and controlling life's circumstances" (p. 15). The colonists feared Obeah and viewed it as means of reprisal and Obeah was subsequently outlawed in most British colonies early in the eighteenth century.

Obeah, viewed by the planters as esoteric in nature, was considered dangerous as it posed a hazard for the maintenance of the peace on the plantations and other colonial structures (Fernandez Olmos & Paravisini-Gebert, 2003). Fear of Obeah was one reason the colonial church engaged in trying to Christianize slaves, and banning Obeah was a major thrust in the "civilizing" of Jamaicans. Many laws were passed in response to Obeah's practice on the island; as early as 1760, the Jamaican "Act to Remedy the Evils Arising from Irregular Assemblies of Slaves" considered Obeah a crime (Paton, 2009) and Section 3 of the Obeah Act of 1898 states:

Every person practicing obeah shall be liable to imprisonment, with or without hard labor for a period not to exceed twelve months, and in addition thereto, or in lieu thereof, to whipping: provided always, that such whipping shall be carried out subject to the provisions of the Flogging Regulations Act (Ministry of Justice, 2006).

Obeah suffers from a negative reputation and remains illegal in Jamaica even today. Paton (2009) argued that the laws from colonial times and even today have been particularly harmful and unfair to Obeah. Further, the author posits that perceptions of Obeah have never been positive and that it has always been difficult for Obeah to be granted the same status to ever be considered a valid religion. Indeed, Obeah has been perceived as primitive, hostile and in many cases, (particularly in Trinidad and Tobago, British Guiana, Barbados and Jamaica) as a kind of fraud and superstition (Paton, 2009).

Interestingly, Moorish pointed out that although illegal in Jamaica, Obeah is still practiced all throughout society. As a result of the vastly negative perception, and its illegal nature, there is great reluctance of Obeah practitioners to admit their practice in the contemporary Caribbean today.

Historically and even in contemporary Jamaica, the dominant religion is Christianity, even though there is also the presence of Muslims, Jews, and Hindus as well as a small representation of Ananda Marga and Baha'i (Mordecai & Mordecai, 2001). Jamaica is in fact home to one of the earliest Jewish synagogues in the New World, which was built in 1676 (Mordecai & Mordecai, 2001). There are many Christian churches of varying denominations in Jamaica; as a result, there is a popular theory that suggests Jamaica holds the dubious record of having the most churches per capita mile.

In describing the history and culture of Jamaica, Sherlock and Bennett (1998) stated that religion is central to Jamaica's national life. Chevannes (1998) described the religious landscape of the nation, categorized the multiplicity of Christian denominations into three groups: those of European origin (Baptist, Anglican—also known as the Church of England, Roman Catholic, Moravian and Methodist), those of North American origin (formed in the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as the Pentecostal, Adventist and Church of God), these make up the fastest growing denominations and those of Jamaican or African-derived origin. The third category as Mordecai and Mordecai (2001), explained is an ill-defined group. Within

this group lies a range of varying faiths to include Kumina, African Christian Revival to include the home grown faith Rastafarianism.

In considering the influence of colonialism on religion in Jamaica, it is important to consider the way in which various churches are perceived. The rise of Black religions, particularly after emancipation in 1838 offered significant resistance to colonialist churches. In an attempt to suppress African based belief systems such as Kumina, there was a great resurgence, albeit in a different form (Sunshine, 1985). By using the colonialist church as a disguise to perform their own acts of worship, the colonized people of Jamaica interpreted Christianity in their own ways, melding it with their African tradition, making it their own. Austin-Broos (1997) confirmed this explaining how Jamaicans tailored Christianity and defined it in their own way to suit their own reality. Although Afro-Caribbean churches have secured a firm place in Jamaican religious life, much of the population, particularly members of higher social class have favored traditional churches.

Religious prejudice was widespread during the years of colonization, but, the hegemonic display of favor for the European based or traditional churches in Jamaica is still observed on the contemporary religious scene on the island. Mordecai and Mordecai (2001) elaborated, “historically, a higher status has been accorded to European and North American denominations, than home-grown faiths; therefore religion as in other facets of life, many Jamaicans have reported themselves as one thing while being in fact another” (p. 40). What Mordecai is possibly saying is that traditional and more Eurocentric religions are more highly regarded than local or Afrocentric religions and

that people are more likely to claim affiliation with a Eurocentric religion than an Afro-Caribbean religion and that many Jamaicans while in fact members of home-grown religions, will publicly deny their membership. Additionally, Charles (2009) elaborated on Jamaica's struggle with religion and its relationship with Britain-based values suggesting that although Jamaica has received national independence from Britain, it still struggles with spiritual independence. Much of the perceptions related to home-grown faiths, such as Obeah as well as other "traditional" denominations have evolved from a persistent form of colonialist thought and policy. Paton (2009) summed it up this way:

Because the stigmatized status of Obeah was produced to symbolize African culture, African-ness, and ultimately blackness, it has helped to perpetuate the persistent race, class, and cultural hierarchies that continue to play a significant role in Caribbean dynamics of power and control, despite the emergence of powerful black leaders in... the period since independence. (p. 16)

Although dominant colonialist influences are apparent in the everyday religious scene, anti-colonial thought in form of religious expression and cultural values is a reality in Jamaica, being most apparent in the form of Rastafarianism (Rasta).

Indeed, the Rastafarian Movement whose foundations seem to coincide with the beginnings of Marcus Garvey's Back to Africa movement of the early 1930's was and remains today an obvious display of anti-colonialist expression (Morrish, 1982).

Edmonds (1998) emphasized:

Any interpretation of the significance of Rastafari must begin with the understanding that it is a conscious attempt by the African soul to free itself from the alienating fetters of colonialism and its contemporary legacies. To accomplish this freedom, Rastas have unleashed an ideological assault on the culture and institutions that have dominated the African diaspora since the seventeenth century. (p. 23)

Although based on religious concepts with an emphasis on cultural and spiritual connections to Africa, the purposes of the movement are mainly political (Nettleford, 2003; Morrish, 1982). The history of the Rastafarian movement in Jamaica was riddled with challenge from the wider Jamaican population and the government. They often found themselves at odds with the authorities and the public who referred to them as Black Heart men. The term Black Heart is a name based on a very serious fable which refers to a scary stranger who, if he were to find you on a lonely road, would take your heart out.

Ostracized by society, the ascribed reputation to Rastas stirred fear in the hearts of children, who were constantly warned to avoid them. One of the most infamous incidents related to the segregation of Rastafarians was the Coral Gardens Massacre of 1963. So loathed and feared were they that then Prime Minister and later National Hero of Jamaica Alexander Bustamante, in response to the murder of two police officers, allegedly at the hands of Rastas, issued an edict to the security forces to bring in Rastas dead or alive. The result was an attack by the police and Jamaica Defense Force in which a Rasta commune was attacked, dismantled and several members killed. In other parts of the island, large numbers of Rastas were caught, beaten, and their locks shorn (Mack, 1999; Barrett, 1997). This attack was sacrilegious in the sense that one of the tenets of the faith is that Rastas do not cut their hair. Although not universal among, or exclusive to Rastafarians, the belief is supported by the Nazirite vow Numbers 6:5 (King James Version).

The main goal of Rasta or the Rastafarian movement is to Chant down Babylon. Babylon in this instance refers to an ideological resistance to structures which relate to Western domination in areas of politics, economics and culture. Although the Rastafarian movement is a cultural movement, Rastas consider themselves members of a valid religious group. According to Morrish (1982) two of their objectives in the 1960's were:

To promote educational progress of the African continent, its languages, culture and history [and] to recognize the hurt suffered by the Continent of Africa through colonialism and to devote time and energy towards the development of Africa by all possible contributions. (p. 79)

While embracing their historical, social and economic realities, Rastas or Rastafarians defy traditional ways of being and knowing (Murrell, 1998). The movement is popular, and so are the stereotypes with which it is associated, many of which are negative. Often the group is seen as unkempt, criminal, drug-seeking, and brutal. These stereotypes color the mainstream perception of the movement. Kinder stereotypes associate the marginalized movement with Reggae music.

Music

Music is a central part of Jamaica's and, indeed, the Caribbean region's history and identity. While individual islands in the Caribbean have rightful claim to particular kinds of musical expression and style, music is an important component of the entire region's culture and historical context. Giovanetti (2005) concurred highlighting the importance and centrality of music and dance to Afro-Jamaicans since slavery. Additionally, music was used as a way to escape from their grueling lives on sugar plantations. Music played a very important role in the lives of slaves and through the

years, musical expression has continued to be significant in the lives and culture of the Caribbean people.

In analyzing the role of music in the history of the Caribbean and in Caribbean culture, it is important to situate it within the context of the times. Reggae music in Jamaica, since its inception, maintained a direct relationship with the island's social and cultural history. Giovannetti (2005) discussed Reggae's relationship with the context of the times, analyzing the music from a dual perspective. On one hand, reggae gives a historical account of the 1960s and 1970s (when it was emerging as an authentic art form) on the other hand, acts as an opposition to the history and context of Jamaican life. Reggae in its counter to history therefore, creates a space for Jamaicans to define their own reality averse to slavery and colonialism and the other social ills stemming from them (Giovannetti, 2005). Reggae was—and still is a medium for the diffusion of various ideologies, such as that of Rastafarians. It provides an avenue for artists to provide social commentary given the context of history and everyday life. It remains a popular and influential vehicle for communication and observations of daily life.

In recent times, Reggae music highlights and discusses issues related to relationships and other light-hearted subjects; however, it continues to reflect the challenges of the times by offering social and political criticism. Murrell highlighted that Rastafarians have cleverly used Reggae music with songs such as *Reggae Ambassador*, to challenge the colonialist mentality. Murrell (1998) described Rasta's use of Reggae to:

beat down Babylon's racism, cultural prejudice, and economic disenfranchisement through political dissonance and cultural resistance; developing a psychology of Blackness and somebodiness; exorcising the demons of racism, rejecting bigotry, classism and stereotypical ways of being and

knowing that are partially encoded in Jamaican folklore; attacking social problems with the creation of a 'big, big music,' an art that is irresistible and coded with situation-changing messages. (p. 10)

The song suggests that the group plays Reggae music to *Chant down Babylon* (Third World, 1993, track 11). The Rastafarians have a firm belief that the degradation of being African continues and is explicit in many avenues of Jamaican life, especially on the educational scene. It is easy to understand why the Rastafarians have such a disparaging attitude towards the formal education system in Jamaica. Rastas despise White culture; they consider it Babylon—an avaricious and impure set of structures imposing its beliefs as superior on the Black race. Much of the critique to the systematic colonial structures is offered through music.

Reggae also highlights popular cultural values, fads, and social practices. It offers critique as well as support for social practices and societal values such as brown skin and skin bleaching. In one particularly popular song *Love mi Browning* (1992), famed artist, Mark Myrie, better known as Buju Banton, proclaimed his love for light-skinned women (brownings). The popularity of this song and the message conveyed how much value is attributed to women with light complexions. With much public outcry over the colonialist mindset promoted in the song, Buju, in response released another song *Love Black Woman*, promoting his love for dark-skinned women. It is evident that there is favoritism for lighter skinned females over dark skinned ones and this colorism problem in Jamaica is persistent and revealed in common daily life.

Another popular song that provided commentary on the issue of light skin color is *Dem ah Bleach* (1992) by Nardo Ranks. Ranks' single about the bleaching fad was

very popular in Jamaica and received much airplay. Throughout his song, he encourages women not to bleach their skin. He emphasizes that women are bleaching their skins to look like or in effect to become a browning. A browning or person with light skin tone was, as earlier discussed, promoted two years earlier in Buju Banton's *Love mi Browning* song. Ranks' (1992) *Dem ah Bleach* articulates and emphasizes the overwhelming need that girls have to get brown- skin so they are using chemicals to bleach - their skins. He reiterates that it is not a disgrace to have black skin and that he honors women who do not bleach their skin in order to get the color of the browning.

While there have been other popular songs condemning the skin-bleaching practice, in late 2009, a new and upcoming Reggae artist, known as Lisa Hype released a single *Proud a Mi Bleaching* in which she declared she was not ashamed of bleaching her skin. The song has been a hit, particularly among other women who engage in the practice of bleaching their skin (Brooks, 2009). Aware of criticism against the bleaching practice, she uses the song to declare that she is beautiful and that she remains proud of her bleaching. She sings about various chemicals used in the process, about the different combinations for achieving beauty successfully. She considers herself a "bleaching pro" who knows "all the tricks in the street." She provides instructions on what products to buy to ensure that in two weeks you are "brown and white." Hype also attributes someone finding "Mr. Right" because she is bleaching her skin with the cream called "Fair and White."

In an interview with the *Jamaica Star*, one of the island's tabloids, Hype spoke to the popularity of skin bleaching and indicated that it was a sign that you were taking care

of yourself. Another female artist, a Rastafarian, Queen Ifrica (2007) recorded *Mi Nah Rub* to indicate her opposition to the bleaching practice. She highlighted that despite the popular trend, she refused to bleach her skin, as it was a sign of insecurity with being a dark skinned Black. This view is contrary to Lisa Hype's view who insists that bleaching makes her beautiful.

After some criticism to her *Proud ah mi Bleaching* song, Hype recorded *Mi Bleaching Fit Me*. In this song, she declares that bleaching fits her (suits her well) and she responds to the feedback that bleaching may cause skin cancer. She retorts that smoking also causes cancer and because she is rich, she can bleach if she wants. She asks to be left alone and justifies that her bleaching makes her beautiful. She posits that it "goes well with her hair" because she does not have "mop head." She volunteers to help others to bleach because they look like "cookie monster." She forcibly states that because she supports bleaching, she is considered a "hothead," but that she is not to be blamed because she is not the reason some women suffer from "blackhead." She emphasizes that she is certain her bleaching makes her beautiful and that she wants to be left alone. She states that those who do not like her bleaching should "drop down and dead," and that she should be able to bleach her skin if she wants to as it makes her happy.

Songs such as these expose the preference for light skin over dark skin in the island. They demonstrate the social stratification and passion that surrounds the issue among the population and how popular culture and the media in particular promote the current values of a society. A major value within society is that of education.

Interestingly, music has been also used as an avenue to offer critique of Jamaica's education system which was established from a British pattern.

Education

The colonists held mercantile attitudes in relation to their colonies and post colonies as their main interests in these countries were economic exploitation, not economic or social development. In the case of Jamaica, this affected the economic, political and social systems and structures, including education, above all the formal education system. Commenting on his reflection on education in Jamaica after independence, former Prime Minister, Michael Manley (1974) explained that Jamaica, like other countries, has been tardy in identifying the needs of the population and as such hold on to educational systems which are no longer relevant or useful. Essentially, like other postcolonial countries or countries with a history of slavery, the domination of the superior ideas is pervasive and evident, and nations are often unaware of the continued dominance. With that, as Manley highlighted, Jamaica maintained an English education system that did not fulfill the unique needs of the Caribbean people.

Life in Jamaica has been largely influenced by colonialism and its persistence even after independence from Britain. This has framed the culture, context, organization, and scope of the education system. Essentially, Jamaica's education system was designed on the British education system, and throughout the years has continued to model this system with not enough attention on educational reform or liberation from colonial world views.

European colonialism left the Caribbean scarred in all areas of life, including education. Colonialism created an education system that resulted in conditions that encouraged the replication and support of elitist values among the wider Black population. The colonial powers exercised significant control over education and in turn, control over thinking, values and culture. Campbell (2006) suggested that colonialism and, specifically colonial education, has had devastating effects on the colonized. The author advanced that it has served effectively to teach the colonized that they are in essence culturally worthless. The schooling system was designed to instill principles appropriate for loyal subjects and buttress ideas of black inferiority (Moore & Johnson, 2004).

The Rastafarian movement has remained vocal about Blacks remaining in mental slavery and they offer significant critique to religious and educational institutions in Jamaica. Bob Marley, one of the most famous Jamaican Rastafarian Reggae artists, in his song *Babylon System*, likened the Babylon, Eurocentric and colonialist, system—to include education and religion, to that of a vampire. In his song, Marley cries out for an insurrection as he encourages people to rebel because the system is a leech on the survival of the Black people and Black culture. In his message to the oppressed, he confronts the system which has offered lies and misinformation to the marginalized. Marley bemoans the fact that the efforts, resources, and energies of the Black Jamaicans continue to be usurped by the “system.” He makes specific reference to the building of both church and university as means of deception and demands that the system “tell the children the truth” (Marley, 1979, track 4). Marley’s critique of the Eurocentric religion

and education systems was directed at the idea that education and Christianity were the means by which colonists (through missionaries) were making Jamaica less barbaric and more Victorian. Indeed, he saw the education and Christianization of the people as a mere smokescreen or disguise which was designed to perpetuate the imbalance of power in the society.

In Bob Marley's *Redemption Song*, he describes the horrors of the slave trade to include the kidnapping and sale of Black Africans. He discusses the divine protection that enabled their survival and thriving, despite the oppression they have faced. In light of the oppression, he highlights that while the owners of the Babylon system still have the social power, he emphasizes that there is an internal power within Africans. He encourages them to "Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery; none but ourselves can free our minds" (Marley, 1980, track 11). With that, Marley quotes a 1937 speech from Marcus Garvey and calls on the indomitable human spirit suggesting that within the mental game, a perverted faith and education system encourages the continuation of their captivity. Garvey's speech, given in Canada in 1937, stated, "We are going to emancipate ourselves from mental slavery because whilst others might free the body, none but ourselves can free the mind" (as cited in Grant, 2008, p. 443).

Edmonds (1998) described the Rastafarians critique of the religious and education systems and put forward that Rastafarianism is in battle against a Eurocentric way of life which conditions Blacks into degrading African and elevating European. As the colonists and missionaries worked towards schooling, Christianizing, and civilizing the natives, they learned loyalty to the British way of life, to the king, and to the empire

in general (Moore & Johnson, 2004). The value of a British system of education remains high in Jamaica today. This closely revered value is significant because, hiding under the umbrella of education and improvement for the colonized, are the unchallenged and unconscious notions that suggest superiority of the British education system.

In effect, many Jamaicans, through a colonialist system of education viewed themselves or other Jamaicans with a European lens. The result, a uniquely Caribbean or Jamaican education system would be considered inferior and interestingly, a truly homegrown system of education that values indigenous knowledge still does not exist in the former colonies. For many years, Jamaica and other Caribbean nations relied heavily on a British curriculum and examination system. The region, under colonial influence, elevated the British education system and curriculum. Even though Jamaican students experienced disadvantages because of the foreign and unfamiliar points of reference in the British based curriculum, it was preserved because it was deemed superior to any regional or local curricula. The elevation of British curriculum was important as it was intended to groom children into loyal, civic-minded citizens. The perception that local or regional curriculum would be inferior to any British curriculum—regardless of being foreign, made it difficult for a regional examination body to be established.

The current regional examinations council, the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) which entered into an agreement with the governments of 15 Caribbean countries in 1972 (10 years after Jamaica gained independence from Britain) had roots in the colonial era (Bray, 1998). The main initial purpose of the regional examination council, despite its colonial history, was to substitute the ordinary level (O'level) examinations

offered by UK examining boards (Bailey, 1990). The council offered its first examination in 1979 and although the CXC currently offers various examinations and certification at the secondary and post-secondary levels, (CXC, 2010) European based examinations, based on European curricula, still exist in Jamaica and the Caribbean and remain popular.

Social Life and Culture

Exploring cultural identity in the context of social life is important as it acts as the bedrock of a nation's people. The cultural identity is formed by the social structures and social life of the nation. This interdependence is significant in seeking to understand the culture of a people. The culture of the Jamaican people is a result of the influences of many traditions and of particular relevance in this context are the European influences that still today influence everyday life in a predominantly Black nation. The British's main goal in slavery was the destruction of African connections and culture in which families were separated and religious practices were forbidden and punishable (Manley, 1991). The result of this concerted effort was a people with little history and culture outside that which was inscribed upon them.

Along with skin color, culture became a new standard for maintaining class divisions. This culture related to the elevation of Eurocentric values and the degradation or separation from Afrocentric practices and ideals. Moore and Johnson (2004) in describing and distinguishing between appropriate and undesirable culture stated:

Culture, however, meant British-derived cultural attributes, and those who came closest to emulating them were accorded the highest social status. Culture, therefore, supplemented race and colour in determining one's social position by the late nineteenth century, and a premium was placed on the acquisition of the

‘appropriate’ cultural characteristics: speech (The queen’s/king’s English:, not Jamaican creole); Western marriage and the nuclear family; British customs and ideas, values and morals, sports and entertainments, arts and music, furnishings, societies and associations and so forth. (p.12)

The promotion of the value of this ‘desirable’ culture is finely intertwined in all aspects of social life on the island and many lessons related to this appropriate culture are taught early in life.

As early as elementary school—called primary school on the island—children are indoctrinated, even in childish ring games, that brown skin (light skin) is attractive. In the Jamaican ring game, *Brown girl in the ring*, girls of brown (light) skin tone are invited to take turns skipping around the ring to show their motions. Interestingly, the game is innocently played and there is no critique of the promotion of brown skin as opposed to dark skin. There is a certain degree of ignorance or acceptance of the superiority of light skin, which remains a significant marker of beauty and status on the island. Social life and cultural practices and beliefs support the notion that light skin is more beautiful and a better indicator of social status than dark skin, because of its link to class and privilege.

Language

Another status symbol relates to the ability to speak proper English or the Queen’s English. Speaking “proper” English has become a marker of status and also of education level. The language of the colonizer is important in the context of the colonized country, and English Language in India for example, according to Kempf (1998), was an important colonial tool. In Jamaica, patois, or Jamaican Creole, being an African influenced language is thought of as broken English. It is not traditionally

celebrated and honored as indigenous knowledge; instead, it is the language Jamaicans are taught to consider as “broken or bad English” and not to practice or speak, but instead to speak properly. In fact, Mordecai and Mordecai (2001) explained, that one of the tragedies of colonization is the long-lasting negative attitude Jamaicans have for their indigenous language. Although attitudes to Jamaican Creole have improved, with much credit to linguists and activists such as the Honorable Dr. Louise Bennett-Coverley, affectionately called Miss Lou, there are still many negative perceptions related to speaking patois. The debate continues regarding the status that patois is to be afforded in Jamaica—unofficial and informal. There are proponents who suggest it is to be declared a language and be upgraded from the popular opinion of being a mere dialect; this is in attempt to recognize patois as the legitimate expression of the culture and people.

The author, poet, and playwright, Miss Lou, despite being shunned by traditional literary groups, worked diligently throughout her career to improve the perception of the Jamaican language. Miss Lou’s work with Afro-Jamaican culture goes back to the 1930s, but during the '40s and '50s became extremely popular (Campbell, 2009). Through her poems in Jamaican patois, Miss Lou offered critique to established regimes including colonialism. Through her use of common language in her work, she enhanced the view of patois throughout the nation.

In her poem *Colonization in Reverse*, Miss Lou makes fun of the way in which many Jamaicans were migrating to England in the 1960’s for better lives. In patois she stated, “Dem a pour out a Jamaica/ Everybody future plan/ Is to get a big-time job/ An settle in de mother lan” (Bennett, 1966). A standard translation says “They are pouring

out of Jamaica/Everyone's future plan/Is to get a big-time job/And settle in the mother land." Interestingly, Miss Lou referred to the new Mother Land—England, not Jamaica nor Africa with a sense of cynicism. Despite her sarcasm related to the migration, she playfully revels in the idea that the British may not be able to tolerate the “reverse colonization.” She offers the idea that the British may see Jamaicans as threatening their livelihood when she said, “Oonoo see how life is funny, Oonoo see de tunabout?/ Jamaica live fe box bread Out a English people mout” (Bennett, 1966). Roughly translated this means, “Do you see how funny life is? Can you see how things have turned around (changed)? Jamaicans have lived to see the day when they may actually be in a position to take bread (food/way of earning a living) from the English. In this sense, she marvels at the possible shift of power where Jamaicans actually are competing against, and in some instances, earning more than the British.

Much of Miss Lou's work was dedicated to the nation's cultural identity and occurred at a time when it was not popular to celebrate the African heritage. In a letter to the Editor of *The Gleaner*, Samuels (2006) wrote of the impact of her work. He wrote,

Her pioneering efforts for us to love our African-influenced native tongue, was not an exercise in linguistics per se. It was an effort to confront the status quo and to say in a loud voice that we have a proud heritage that predates slavery. It was no easy road for Miss Lou. She had to work against those who wished to forget our heritage ... They described our natural hair as being 'bad' and when we spoke our dialect we were talking 'bad'. To summarize it all, they taught us that any part of our African heritage, which survived the horrors of slavery, should be scorned.... She fought with her wit and her belief in self. She spoke on behalf of and in the language of the downtrodden. (para. 6)

In celebrating and promoting the Jamaican indigenous language, Miss Lou wrote the poem *Bans a Killin* (1944) in which she makes her case for the Jamaican dialect against

the proverbial English man who is on a mission to kill the Jamaican language. She wittingly emphasizes that the killing of the language is in essence the killing of indigenous culture.

She emphatically criticizes the notion that the Jamaican language is inferior to what is considered proper English, especially since she professed the English language was derived from a compendium of other dialects. Miss Lou skillfully uses her knowledge of English language and literature to humorously suggest that many well acclaimed English works by people such as Chaucer, Burns, Lady Gizelle and even Shakespeare could not stand up to the same scrutiny. She highlights that the highly revered English was once a patois, as is the Jamaican language.

Patois, the unwritten vernacular has caught the attention of many linguists who recognize that a word study of the language exposes how it reflects and characterizes daily Jamaican life in all its social and cultural contexts (Patrick, 1995). Today, despite many plays, songs, and poems performed in the natural language, there is still a challenge to accept and appreciate the language, or even acknowledge it as a language.

Undoubtedly, there is a slow increase of acceptance of patois in mass media (Patrick, 1995) but it is important to remember that Jamaica's relationship to its language is entrenched in its history. Words used in patois often are riddled with a kaleidoscope of influences and traditions from Africa and Europe forming a uniquely Jamaican way of communication. In other words, there is rich cultural meaning in many words and these meanings reflect the values of the society. Patrick (1995) provides a glossary of certain Jamaican words, influenced by the nation's historical context, which

emphasize the country's cultural framework. In considering the word bright, for example, the meaning extends from traditional references to light, to include being “bold, forward, impudent or facetious,” as well as “light colored (esp. for skin)” (Patrick, 1995, p. 236). The latter meaning shows that Jamaicans indeed possess a preference for light skin. The word brown is attributed to “White (skinned) or Jamaica White, but also is used as a synonym for White.

A very popular term in Jamaican parlance is the term “browning” which usually represents someone with light skin tone who is considered attractive—because of the skin tone, especially in the case of females. The use of these words shows the continued partiality towards light skin over dark skin and other influences of colonialism in the culture. These influences are obvious not only in the language, but also in the cultural customs of the Jamaican people.

This persistent tension shows that there is an ongoing conflict between the values placed on the Eurocentric and Afrocentric cultures on the island.

The Eurocentric and Afrocentric Battle: Light versus Dark Skin

In this section of the review, I present evidence from the literature of the persistent tension and ongoing conflict between the values placed on the Eurocentric culture and its superiority over the Afrocentric culture on the island. Details of the global perceptions of fair/light skin follow, along with issues of the positive characteristics, economics, class and status distinctions, and marital choices as they relate to skin color are presented. The concept of skin color as an indicator of beauty and social capital is also discussed.

One potent and toxic lesson taught by slavery and colonialism was a social discrimination between darker members of the same race. The battle wages on between both the Afrocentric and the Eurocentric cultures in Jamaica and within this struggle, people of color, particularly with darker skin complexions, are victims of a set of structures within society that support and enable colorism. Hall (2008), in underscoring the severity of the situation, submitted, “The most potent problem for people of color in the post-colonization era has perpetuated a status hierarchy that is based on their ability to idealize light skin” (p. 238). Further, he commented on how skin color is incessantly linked to power in terms of economics and politics, especially in former colonies. Light skin, also called fair skin, enjoys a positive image and perception all over the world.

Global Perceptions of Fair/Light Skin

In Japan, there is an old proverb that says “white skin makes up for seven defects” (Wagatsuma, 1967, p. 407). The proverb, in highlighting the importance and the value placed on White skin, shows that White skin is so attractive and powerful that it causes one to overlook the absence of other attractive physical characteristics. Similarly, in China, the idiom says “one white covers up three uglinesses” (Bray, 2002, p. 1). The word fair and beauty are synonymous in India (Franklin, 1968; Hall, 1995). Indeed, in Asia white skin is a key desire for women and it has been the case even before colonialism and for a long time, Asian countries have idealized white skin as an essential requirement for personal beauty (Li, Min, Belk, Kimura, & Bahl, 2008).

In a study analyzing print advertisements for skin whitening and lightening products in India, Hong Kong, Japan and Korea, Li, Min, Belk Kimura and Bahl (2008)

found: (a) white skin serves as cultural capital in Asian society, (b) white skin is always associated with naturalness, and (c) whitening skin has empowering and disempowering functions for women. There is great desire for white/fair skin and this is not limited to Asian countries. Along with Asian print media, in the United States media, models predominantly have light skin tones with Eurocentric features (Keenan, 1996; Leslie, 1995) and this is even the case in Black magazines such as *Ebony* and *Essence* (Frisby, 2006).

This concept of light-skinned superiority was and continues to be a persistent global challenge on all continents. Another conspicuous example of the inequality is among people in the United States Congress of African American heritage. Most representatives until the 1960's were light-skinned (Lake, 2003). In an article titled *The Skin Color Paradox*, Hochschild and Weaver (2007) stated:

Dark-skinned Blacks in the United States have lower socio-economic status, more punitive relationships with the criminal justice system, diminished prestige, and less likelihood of holding elective office compared with their lighter counterparts. . . .(And) skin color is associated with individuals' preferences as well as their outcomes. With some exceptions, most Americans prefer lighter to darker skin aesthetically, normatively and culturally. (pp. 643-644)

The authors further posit that complexion plays an important role in how voters evaluate political candidates and who wins elections. In essence, light skin is an important indicator of beauty and positive perceptions in many non-White cultures. The issue is particularly challenging for Blacks. People with light skin, even within the Black race have enjoyed certain benefits in their communities (Russell, Wilson & Hall, 1993). Essentially, the research shows that there are several positive characteristics attributable to light skin as opposed to dark skin within communities of color.

Positive Characteristics of Light Skin

Literature dealing with the issue of skin color in the Black community has explored the notion that both Blacks and Whites prefer lighter skin over dark primarily because it signifies positive characteristics not limited to constructs of beauty. The research literature points to light skin tone as a predictor of higher intelligence, with greater years of schooling and educational attainment (Russell, Wilson & Hall, 1993), higher likelihood of occupational success with higher prestige occupations and earnings both on a personal level as well as family income more than darker-skinned Blacks, even while controlling for family background and family socio-economic status (Edwards, 1973; Hughes & Hertel, 1990; Keith & Herring 1991; Hill 2000). The research also points to higher levels of self worth, attractiveness, self-control, satisfaction and quality of life for lighter skinned Blacks (Bond & Cash, 1992; Cash & Duncan, 1984; Neal & Wilson, 1989).

Along with physical characteristics, perceptions in the media are more favorable for people with light skin. In fact, Ducille (1996) and Neal and Wilson (1989) posit African Americans with darker skins fall victim to negative stereotypes in the media more than African Americans with light skin. Skin color preference is persistent throughout the media and economic structure of society.

Economics of Light Skin

Researchers highlight prejudices against darker skinned persons and the relationship between skin tone and socioeconomic status in the United States as well as Brazil (Hunter, 2005; Sherriff 2001; Telles 2004). In a research study by Ransford

(1970), 312 Black males were interviewed shortly after the Watts riot in 1965 to determine if dark skinned Blacks find themselves in lower socioeconomic positions because of greater levels of discrimination or because they do not try as hard. The study found that color structures opportunity and that light skin acts as a source of privilege and, in effect, darker skinned Blacks face greater economic disadvantage and perceptions than lighter skinned Blacks.

Further evidence of economic disadvantage and discrimination is provided by Johnson, Bienenstock and Stoloff (1995) who conducted a similar study of Black males (both light and dark skinned) in Los Angeles from the same neighborhoods. The results showed that along with being Black and having dark skin, one's chances of being employed was reduced by 52 percent, after controlling for characteristics such as age, education, and criminal record. Hunter (2008) reiterated that while Blacks, overall, are disadvantaged, the disadvantages of having dark skin still prevail over the disadvantages faced by Blacks with light skin in the labor market and educational institutions, thereby, creating economic and class disadvantages.

Class and Social Distinctions

While skin color stratification among Blacks originates in slavery, the superiority of lighter skin color is still prevalent, and it plays a role in class distinctions (Jones, 2000; Kerr, 2005; Neal & Wilson, 1989). In a study of 250 urban Black families, using charts of skin tones, wives were interviewed and their skin color (as well as their husbands') judged accordingly. They were interviewed twice over a ten month period and their skin color was measured at the second interview to indicate reliability of

measurement. The study sought to provide an “analysis of the association between skin color and structural and sociopsychological measures among middle-income, residentially stable, urban Negro families.” (Freeman, Amor, Ross & Pettigrew, 1966, p. 366) The results showed that there is a substantial relationship between skin color and social status and, in some sense, creates margins of social class in families, particularly in families of color.

This issue of skin color and its relationship to social class is not new; according to Jones (2000), in the United States after slavery, the light-skinned Blacks (Mulattoes) created exclusive social clubs, different churches, schools and communities in order to separate themselves from the darker skinned Blacks. Admission into these institutions, such as schools and social clubs, fraternities and sororities was dependent on the lightness of the skin color.

One such exclusive organization that admitted men only with light skin and economic success was the Brown Fellowship Society. It was initiated in 1790 at the suggestion of a European American preacher in an Episcopal church and the purpose was charity and benevolence. Interestingly, much of the assistance was for its own members and their families (Lake, 2003). The Blue Vein Society was another exclusive organization that was organized in Tennessee in 1889. To qualify for admittance was dependent on whether one’s skin color was “light enough for the veins in their wrist to be visible. The social club provided access to holiday resorts such as the Highland Beach located on Chesapeake Bay (Russell, Wilson & Hall, 1993; James, 2003) and other privileges to light skinned individuals. There were other social organizations that

limited membership to light-skinned Blacks or wealthy brown skinned Blacks such as the Kingdom, the 400, the Lotus Club of Washington DC, the Manasseh Society in the Midwest and the Douglass Literary Society in Columbus, Ohio (Lake, 2003).

Various methods to exclude darker skinned Blacks from these social groups were used (Hall, 1995; Kerr, 2005) but the criteria were primarily based on physical features to include hair texture and skin color. Hall (1992) argued that these elitist social groups were created in an attempt by Blacks to assimilate into the dominant culture that downgrades darker skin. The Paper Bag Principle or the paper bag test was a popular method used to determine admissibility into these organizations (Jones, 2000,). In the paper bag test, applicants would place their arm inside an ordinary brown paper bag. If the skin tone was darker than the bag, entry to the organization was denied (Hall, 1992).

Educational institutions were not exempt from this stratification as there was discrimination based on skin color in terms of admittance and curricula. There was a focus on a liberal arts education for the light-skinned students and vocational training for the dark skinned students to continue directing darker skinned Blacks into manual or menial jobs that paid less (Jones, 2000, p. 1516). Several studies examine the relationship between skin color and education showing that higher education levels correlate with lighter skin tone (Hughes & Hertel, 1990; Hunter, 2002; Keith & Herring, 1991).

The historical and cultural information on the origin, prevalence, and persistence of racial stratification in the United States and Jamaica is relevant to this study. It confirms the significance of the stratification and it confirms the continued prejudices

and preferences for lighter skin tones over dark ones. This may be seen as one possibility why people would choose to bleach their skin.

Most research focused on issues relating to skin color have shown that a preference for lighter skin still exists among both Blacks and Whites (Atkinson, Brown, Parham, Matthews, Landrum-Brown & Kim, 1996; Bond & Cash, 1992; Cunningham, Roberts, Barbee, Druen, & Wu, 1995; Porter, 1991). Skin color preference is significant in that early assumptions and impressions about character have also been shown to be based partially on facial features, including skin color (Dasgupta, Mahzarin & Abelson, 1999; Sporer, 2001).

Marital Choices

Based on the research on skin color, and in particular as it relates to the matter of courtship and marriage, there is some evidence of skin color preferences and gender. This is relevant and important because it was believed that marrying someone with lighter complexion was equivalent to increasing social status (Hall, 1995; Hunter, 2002; 2004). From a study using data from the 1980 National Survey of Black Americans (NSBA) and the 1979 National Chicano survey to assess the effects of skin color on the income choices of African American and Mexican American women, Hunter (2002) submitted that having lighter skin was more pertinent to women than to men. In general, while colorism affects both men and women, it affects attitudes relating to self-esteem greater on women than men and self efficacy for Black men and not women (Thompson & Keith, 2001). Further, Hunter (2002) espoused that this was because of the American model or American perception of beauty, which is Eurocentric in nature has greater

effect on women than men. In addition, Hunter (2002) asserted that women with lighter skin tones had higher self-esteem. Incidentally, Hill (2002a) conducted a study using National Survey of Black Americans (NSBA) data collected between 1979 and 1980 to assess whether skin color played a role in the attractiveness of Blacks from the perspective of the interviewer. The results of that study indicated that Black women with lighter skin were rated as significantly more attractive than women with darker skin.

Beauty and Social Capital

Cunningham et al (1995) also conducted a study dealing with the perceptions of beauty related to skin color. The study examined the consistency of ratings in physical attractiveness ratings across cultural groups—Asians, Hispanics, White and Black students in three studies. The students were asked to rate the attractiveness of Asian, Hispanic, Black, and White women who had been photographed. The results showed that Black and White males shared similar views of beauty and attractiveness in facial features when presented with a photograph of a Black female. Both Blacks and Whites in the study showed preference for long hair, lighter skin and other Eurocentric characteristics. These preferences related to skin color and beauty have also been found in studies related to Black female children (Porter, 1991) and Black female adults also have reported their ideal skin color to be lighter than their own (Bond & Cash, 1992). These women also testify that they thought Black males prefer women with lighter skin tones (Bond & Cash, 1992). This poses a challenge for females in particular because self-esteem is often predicated upon skin color for Black women, but not for Black men (Thompson & Keith, 2001).

The preference for light skin and advantages afforded based on skin color suggests that conforming to a status quo or white beauty standard would lead to a more rewarding life (Bond & Cash, 1992; Gatewood, 1988). What makes this more complicated is that issues related to skin color and beauty or physical attractiveness are closely connected, and beauty demands are greater for women across all cultures. It becomes more heavily weighted as an issue particularly for Black women as stereotypes of what is considered attractive are more profound for them (Warner, Junker & Adams, 1941).

The hierarchies of skin color leading to white or light-skin privilege for women has received less attention than light skin privilege in general (Hunter, 2002). This is the basis for which Hunter calls light skin a kind of social capital for women in which she theorizes that beauty is a form of social capital for women of color. Hunter used the data from the 1980 National Survey of Black Americans and the 1980 National Chicano Survey to confirm the hypothesis that darker skinned women are less privileged than lighter skinned women.

Beauty, then, for many is Eurocentric and while tempting, it is not as simple to analyze the issue as a Black vs. White issue as in the anti-racist scholarship. It is critical to analyze it related to the issue of skin color and not merely as a Black race versus White race issue. In Jamaica and other West Indian islands, while racism is important, the issue of skin color is more poignant as the majority of the population is of African descent. With this ideal of light skin color being considered the hallmark of beauty, it is

especially important to examine the issue of skin bleaching as a means of attaining this beauty.

Skin Bleaching

In this section, I present literature on the issue of skin bleaching. It is divided into four main sections. The first discusses skin bleaching as a global phenomenon while the second presents details on the bleaching practice in Jamaica. The third section discusses issues related to access while the fourth concludes the chapter with a discussion of dermatology as it relates to skin bleaching.

Inescapably linked with the problem of colorism or discrimination in relation to color is skin bleaching. Having established light colored skin as the ideal model of beauty, some people of darker skin tones are engaging in the process of skin bleaching, in an attempt to attain lighter skin tones. Essentially, there is preference among Blacks for more stereotypical European standards of beauty and attractiveness thus perpetuating the skin-bleaching practice.

In a quantitative study using a sample of African-American college freshmen, Hall (2006) formulated hypotheses to assess the extent of the way in which light skin has evolved as ideal, and by inference, the Bleaching Syndrome. The study included 200 African American full-time freshmen at a historically Black college in the United States and the hypotheses were formulated with the purpose of providing an objective standard for investigating the issue of light skin among Black people and it being indicative of the Bleaching Syndrome. The findings revealed that there is a statistically significant relationship between self-identified skin color correlated with light skin. This, according

to Hall suggests an indication of the pervasive discriminatory feelings towards people of color. The findings also suggest that this is particularly true for people with dark skin. Based on the results of the study, Hall (2006) suggests that the value of light skin and its association with social worth could be attributed to the perpetuation of the Bleaching Syndrome.

Skin bleaching is a dangerous phenomenon occurring all over the world (Jones, 2004); Glenn (2008) in testifying to the dominance and significance of colorism, highlighted the extensive growth of the use of skin-lightening products globally. The practice of skin bleaching is not new; however, the desire and fervency is disturbing. Tied to the problem of skin color discrimination, the problem of skin bleaching does not lie far from slavery and its legacy. Its prevalence indicates that it is not a distant or historic problem. In other words, the existence of skin bleaching as a global phenomenon, suggests that there are issues of skin color discrimination, which may date back to slavery and colonization, but are still current and troubling.

In effect, the creation of a social stratification or skin color hierarchy remains a constant and viable force of discrimination against people with darker skin tones. This is a problem worldwide, but Hunter (1998) in commenting on its prevalence in the United States, mentioned that in order to understand race and racialization in the US, it is important to understand skin color stratification among African Americans. Further, she described the color stratification as a skin color selection system. This system favors and values lightness over darkness across and within racial categories. Greater benefits are

received by people who appear closer to being White. This is an ever-present reality for people of color that remains deep in the psyche of many within the Black community.

Hall (2003) posited that the strata or caste system of skin color impinges every element of life for members of the Black community. Further, he emphasized that since this is not a new phenomenon, and that it has been so deeply entrenched in society, people of color have no alternative, but to face the challenges of colorism which includes internal strife for them. This internal strife results in unhappiness with darker skin and a fueled desire for lighter skin and thus bleaching.

Skin Bleaching in Jamaica

Bleaching in Jamaica, an island with a rich colonial heritage is increasing in popularity and acceptance amongst the population. With this dangerous trend, the authorities in Jamaica's health sector, the Ministry of Health (MOH) began to take notice and action. The Ministry of Health (MOH) the pre-eminent Government organization mandated to care for the nation's health. The bleaching practice receives significant attention across many facets of the island

Charles (2003) concurred, commenting on the widespread media coverage and also suggesting that the the views of columnists and letter writers to the newspapers are instructive. The MOH continued its efforts against the bleaching phenomenon, and in February 2007, initiated a five-month island-wide campaign called *Don't Kill the Skin*. The government health officials went on the offensive, and sought to continue the attack against the practice by using various media to communicate the message to the public. In fact, Brown-Glaude (2007) indicated that the "goal was to reduce the practice of skin

bleaching by confiscating illegal products from streets and hosting a series of lectures to educate the public of the dangers of this practice” (p. 34). She examines the *Don't Kill the Skin Campaign*, organized by the Ministry of Health, under the context of the bleaching phenomenon as a social problem.

Throughout the research literature, several reasons are put forward for the bleaching phenomenon that Hall (1995) refers to as the bleaching syndrome. He suggested that much of the bleaching syndrome is the desire to assimilate wherein some people of color are disposed to accepting the devaluing of dark skin, enabling the bleaching syndrome. Additionally, research shows that people's judgment about others is influenced by skin tone and that darker-skinned individuals are seen as less intelligent, trustworthy, and attractive than lighter-skinned individuals (Herring, Keith & Horton 2004; Hunter, 2005; Maddox 2004). Bleaching then, to achieve the idealized lighter skin tone may be an option for many.

In the January 22, 2007 editorial of Jamaica's oldest daily newspaper, *The Daily Gleaner*, the editor presents an opinion on the reasons for the bleaching crisis by stating,

The reasons for the use of these products by Jamaican women of African descent are deep and complex, having to do with the sociology of slavery, the continuing relationship between race and power, and notions of beauty. The assumptions are that beauty is not obviously black; although, in the context of Jamaica, and perhaps the rest of the English-speaking Caribbean, it is not overtly Caucasian and aquiline. Something in between translates in Jamaican parlance to 'browning', the mixed-raced person legitimized by beauty contests and endorsed in popular culture. (Jamaica Gleaner, 2007)

This message presents similar arguments related to the hegemonic and discriminatory practices related to skin color. It, however, introduces the role of the media and popular

culture in perpetuating the idealization of light skin and its superiority over dark skin tone. This is significant because colorism can influence life chances and perceived self-worth and attractiveness (Fears, 1998), thereby having a direct relationship with the skin-bleaching practice.

Access to Skin Lightening Products

Another contributing factor to the bleaching phenomenon is the easy access to skin lighteners. As Hunter (2008) pointed out, the creams used in the skin-bleaching practice have many different names such as skin lighteners, skin whiteners, skin-toning creams, skin evening creams, and skin fading creams. Within this globalized society, the production, marketing and distribution of these skin lighteners form part of what Glenn (2008) terms a multi-billion-dollar global industry. This large industry, she suggests, is a dynamic network of both formal and informal elements on a transnational scene, made up of various types of corporations. The skin lightening industry serves various markets and its providers include large multinational corporations, small entrepreneurs, petty traders and even illegal smugglers. Procuring skin lighteners today is a relatively easy task, particularly with the advent and use of the internet.

Hunter (2008) comments on the concept of “exporting the color complex,” in which she stated:

Globalization, multinational media conglomerates, and the new restructured world economy all work together to export U.S. cultural products and cultural imperialism. Part of this structure of domination is the exportation of cultural images, including images of race. The United States exports images of the good life of White beauty, White affluence, White heroes, and brown and Black entertainers and criminals. As many people in other countries yearn for the “good life” offered in the United States, they also yearn for the aesthetics of the United States: light skin, blonde hair and Anglo facial features. (p. 73)

Jamaica, with its close proximity to the United States and easy access to mass media from the United States, is not exempt from this importation. Indeed, bleaching is thriving worldwide and is popular in the Third World, post-colonial countries. According to Hunter (2008) chemical bleaching is trendy in countries such as Mexico, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Jamaica, Philippines, Japan, India, Tanzania, Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya, Ghana, and less so but also in the United States. According to Jones (2004) the products used in skin-lightening are also popular in Hong Kong, and Malaysia. These products are everywhere and easy to get.

Despite banning certain skin lighteners in Jamaica, including Neprosone Gel, Hyrogel, Dermo Gel Plus and Movate along with hefty fines for illegal sale of banned skin lighteners, products are reportedly still available. As part of the government's *Don't Kill the Skin* campaign, Charles (2009) indicated, that the police made attempts to confiscate illegal bleaching products that were being marketed in very inconspicuous places such as restaurants. The confiscated bleaching products included creams, Topsone Gels, Lemonvate, Omic, Movate, Top Extra Gel, Prosone and Reggae Lemon.

Additionally, Ritch (1999), a columnist for *The Daily Gleaner*, explained that homemade skin lightening products are popular and easily made. In fact mixing peroxide, baking soda or toothpaste, with lemon, Dermaclear, Nadinola and Topiclear, and curry powder, is thought to make the skin color of the face even more attractive. Hunter (2008) commented on many old wives' tales with recipes for skin bleaching, and emphasized that after the Civil Rights Movements and cultural pride movements of the 1960's and 1970's, bleaching became less acceptable. Further, however, the author

explained, that skin bleaching is becoming increasingly popular in many former colonies. The ease with which these products may be acquired presents many challenges for authorities who seek to control or curtail the practice of bleaching. It presents major concerns for the health practitioners who come in contact with bleachers and are charged with treating the skin diseases associated with the use of these bleaching creams and homemade concoctions.

Medical Complications of Skin Bleaching

Mahe, Ly, Aymard and Dangou (2003) commented that the cosmetic use of bleaching products has a major impact on current dermatological practice. Skin bleaching is not an isolated case, and the complications related to the use of skin-bleaching products are worldwide. In sub-Saharan Africa, both men and women are engaging in the practice and problems related to the practice are increasing (Mahe, Ly, & Perret, 2005). The practice carries serious risks and some reported complications such as those related to certain chemicals in the bleaching products include renal complications, lesions, neurological complications. Others complications include irritability, insomnia and memory loss, necrotizing cellulitis, iatrogenic Cushing's syndrome and other complications which have even proven fatal (Mahe, Ly, & Peret, 2005).

Faye, Keita, Diakite, Konare and Ndiaye (2005) conducted a study in a hospital in Mali, aimed at quantifying the risk of cutaneous complications connected with the use of cosmetic skin-bleaching products. From their cross sectional study, the results indicated that the products most frequently used contained hydroquinone,

corticosteroids, mercuric compounds, among others. Hydroquinone (HQ) is popular on the bleaching market, because of its effectiveness as a skin-lightening agent and its accessibility (Tse, 2010). HQ has been sold in skin-whitening products for almost half a century and estimates suggest that approximately 10-15 million tubes of products comprised of HQ are sold each year (Burke & Maibach, 1997). The chemicals in the skin-lightening products are toxic and dangerous to not only the skin, but other organs and functions.

Ajose (2005) conducted a similar study in a skin clinic in Nigeria where in a survey, 92% of female patients and 5% of male patients over 16, who used the clinic between February and October 2004, reported using skin-bleaching creams.

The results of Ajose's (2005) study found that the side-effects extended beyond being dermatological. The dermatology related consequences included:

- (a) Disease modification, for example, atypical scabies, overwhelming mycoses and disseminated warts, (b) dyschromias, for example ochronosis and confetti hypomelanosis, (c) sun damage, including elastosis and sunburn, (d) skin infections, for example pyoderma, erysipelas and dermatophytoses, (e) fragile skin, for example extensive striae and telagiectasia, (f) acne, for example acneform eruptions and rosacea, (g) hypertichosis, and (h) body odor. (p. 41)

There was also significant evidence of serious medical and surgical consequences revealed in the study.

Medical consequences were: (a) induced Cushing's syndrome, (b) renal impairment leading to dialysis in two cases, and (c) immunosuppression: five long-term uses had tuberculosis and three had widespread vulval warts. Surgical consequences were fragile skin, poor wound healing, bad scarring and the need for corrective dermabrasion. (p. 41)

The dangers associated with the practice have surfaced in Jamaica as well and doctors are working with the Ministry of Health in Jamaica to curtail the practice. Other side effects of bleaching creams include skin cancer, thinning of the skin, irreversible stretch marks, easy bruising and tearing of the skin, rashes, enlarged blood vessels, susceptibility to infection, delayed wound healing, hyper pigmentation, acne and hormonal disturbances. Andrew (2002) provided commentary on the skin-bleaching practice in Jamaica and reported that the author of *Acne in Black Women*, Dr. Neil Perdasingh, a leading dermatologist in Jamaica added:

Some of these creams work by killing the melanin, the substance that lends skin pigmentation and protects the skin from the cancer-causing ultraviolet rays of the sun. All people have melanin in their skin; the more melanin present, the darker the skin. In addition, he says, the preparations contain large amounts of hydroquinone- a white crystalline de-pigmenting agent that is fatal in large concentrations. Victims suffer from nausea, shortness of breath, convulsions and delirium. Damage to the skin- wrinkles, severe acne marks- may be irreversible after prolonged use. ...When we are faced with this type of damage, there is nothing that we can do except to advise the patient to live with their condition. The prolonged and continued use of these creams will lead to a face looking like a grater. (para. 6)

Despite the efforts of medical practitioners and the Ministry of Health, there is disregard for the dangers related to skin bleaching. With this in mind, it suggests that there is a need to address the root cause of the problem and not merely the symptoms. This underscores the importance and value of this study.

Given the influence of colonialism on the nation and the significance of skin color, it is important to examine the skin-bleaching practice in Jamaica. It is important to study the issue because of the health issues related to the practice as well as for

understanding the motivations—sociocultural and psychological that influence individuals to bleach their skin.

Summary

This chapter has presented an in-depth review of the literature relevant to the issue of skin bleaching in postcolonial Jamaica. It examined issues related to skin color's significance on a global scale as well as in Jamaica, the Imperialist and Colonialist influences on Jamaica in areas of culture including sports, religion, music, education, social life, and language. The review covered aspects of the tension between Eurocentric and Afrocentric values and how they influence economics, class and social distinctions, marital choices, beauty and social capital. It also showed how a preference for Eurocentric values, i.e. light skin, may have an influential role in the skin-bleaching phenomenon. The chapter also provided a review of the skin-bleaching practice, both globally and in Jamaica and it cited specific studies which provided details of the many consequences of the practice. It also emphasized the misuse of the topical steroids in the bleaching process. Interestingly, the research suggests that these consequences have far-reaching implications in the areas of health, finance, psychology and culture.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine the psychological and socio-cultural factors that influence the practice of skin bleaching in the postcolonial society of Jamaica. Additionally, the study outlined the nation's efforts to combat the skin-bleaching phenomenon.

This chapter outlines the methodology for the study. It describes the theoretical assumptions or paradigms that guided the collection and analysis of the data and provides a description of the research design by detailing the specific methods used in the data collection and analysis. The chapter first presents the research design and methodological rationale followed by a discussion of data collection, management and data analysis.

Research Design and Methodological Approach

According to Morgan (2007), paradigms are a set of “beliefs and practices that influence how researchers select both the questions they study and methods they use to study” (p. 49). Indeed, the paradigm selected informs the specific techniques and procedures of the research design. Of principal concern in this study are the psychological and socio-cultural factors that influence the practice of skin-bleaching. It refers to how the life experiences of the individual skin *bleachers* influence their decision to bleach their skin.

The nature of the research problem determines the methodology or methodological approach. Schwandt, 2007 defines methodology as:

A theory of how inquiry should proceed. It improves analysis of the assumptions, principles, and procedures in a particular approach to inquiry (that, in turn, governs the use of particular methods). . . . Methods and methodology display a synergistic relationship: A particular method (or set of methods) is employed (and given meaning within) a methodology that defines the object of the study and determines what comprises an adequate reconstruction of that object. (p. 193)

Since the study sought to explore the phenomenon of skin bleaching, among those who engage in the practice, it called for a naturalistic (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) approach. The methodology utilized in this research study was qualitative. Qualitatively designed studies are naturalistic because the research occurs in real world settings with interviews made up of open-ended questions in locations that are comfortable and familiar to the participants (Patton, 2002).

Creswell (2007) suggested specific circumstances when qualitative research may be appropriate. He posited this approach is appropriate when:

There is a need to study a group or population, identify variables that can then be measured, or hear silenced voices. . . . When we want to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants in a study [and]. . . . When we want to understand the context or settings in which participants in a study address a problem or issue. (p. 40)

The qualitative approach was ideal for this study as it allowed the *bleachers'* voices to be clearly presented within the context of their history, culture and socialization. Participants were encouraged to share their individual experiences and stories related to their decision to bleach their skin and their reflections of the phenomenon.

Merriam and Associates (2002), documented eight approaches to conducting qualitative research; these are basic interpretive, phenomenology, grounded theory, case

study, ethnography, narrative analysis, critical, and postmodern-post structural. With its interpretive, descriptive, and exploratory nature, a basic interpretive inquiry is most useful for the purposes of this research study. Merriam (2009) emphasized that the basic qualitative study is useful in research keenly interested in “(1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences (p. 23). Consequently, this approach is essential to capturing interpretations and meanings individuals attribute to experiences that influence their decision to bleach their skin.

In order to develop a complex and detailed understanding of the skin-bleaching phenomenon, as experienced by each individual participant, the broader context of their lives—to include early learning, socialization, and media influences--provided the context for data collection and analysis. In other words, there was deliberate attention paid to the culture and history of the participants to gain insight into their experiences, particularly because individuals relate experiences through lenses colored by cultural and historically-derived personal constructs. Early learning and socialization, as well as the media, were important elements for exploration in this study because of the possible influences they each have on the participants’ decision to bleach their skin. These constructs provide instructive messages that guide meaning making, behavior, and decision-making.

Within a basic interpretive and descriptive qualitative study, “the researcher is interested in understanding how participants make meaning of a situation or phenomenon, this meaning is mediated through the researcher as an instrument, the

strategy is inductive, and the outcome is descriptive” (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 6). In other words, the study offers richness and an in-depth understanding of the individual skin *bleachers*’ experiences that influence their decision to bleach as interpreted by the researcher. As Merriam (2002) explains:

There are multiple constructions and interpretations of reality that are in flux and that change over time. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding what those interpretations are at a particular point in time and in a particular context. Learning how individuals experience and interact with their social world, the meaning it has for them, is considered an interpretive qualitative approach. (pp. 3-4)

With this in mind, the research explored the ways in which the participants view their life and realities. The research sought to be inductive in its efforts to learn about the individuals’ experiences and how these influenced the decision to participate in the skin-bleaching phenomenon. It follows then that I used the details from the participants’ stories to develop a deep understanding of how their experiences influence their decision-making process related to skin bleaching.

The study sought to outline Jamaica’s educational efforts to address the skin-bleaching phenomenon and in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the educational efforts targeted at the population of *bleachers*, and the wider Jamaican society, I interviewed a Ministry of Health official who was intimately involved with the educational campaigns.

Site Selection

Site selection in naturalistic research is important and central to a study’s viability (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993). It is important because the physical environment or setting needs to be comfortable and familiar for the participants

(Patton, 2002). Marshall and Rossman (1989) provided specific principles for selecting a site, notably:

(a) entry is possible; (b) there is a high probability that a rich mix of many of the processes, people, programs, interactions, or structures that may be a part of the research question will be present; (c) the researcher can devise an appropriate role to maintain continuity of presence for as long as necessary; and (d) data quality and credibility of the study are reasonably assured by avoiding poor sampling decisions (p. 55).

This research study was conducted on the island nation of Jamaica in its capital city, Kingston. The site was selected primarily as it was the site of the government's major anti-bleaching campaign in 2007 called *Don't Kill the Skin*. This initiative was the government's formal attempt, recognizing the magnitude of the problem, to intervene and educate the populace about the dangers related to skin bleaching.

Jamaica is administratively divided into fourteen parishes and the research site was in the capital city, in the parish of Kingston. Kingston, the most densely populated parish (667,778 people), accounting for almost 25% of the country's population of 2,698,810 people (Statistical Institute of Jamaica, 2010) and is one of three major cities in the country and is a bustling metropolis. The site is associated with the hub for urban trends style; it also provided the opportunity to gain multiple perspectives on the practice of skin bleaching.

Sample Selection

Unlike quantitative inquiry and analysis, qualitative inquiry does not seek "objectivity" but "values the subjectivity of the participants and sees their unique characteristics not as 'error' to be removed or minimized but to be valued aspects of the research situation" (Rudestam & Newton 2007, p. 37). In this study, the individual

perspectives and stories of each participant was highly regarded for its distinctiveness and subjectivity. Therefore, sampling techniques were equally important for purposes of credibility, richness, and data quality. From the population of *bleachers* in the city of Kingston, six men and six women over the age of 18 engaging in the practice of skin bleaching participated in the study. They were selected through a process of snowball sampling (Patton, 2002) as well as criterion-based sampling (Creswell, 1998).

Snowball sampling involves identifying ideal participants by asking knowledgeable people (skin *bleachers*, dermatologists, retailers of bleaching products) for referrals (Merriam, 1998, 2009; Patton, 2002). Criterion-based sampling involves selecting participants who meet a predetermined set of criteria of relevance and importance and it is effective when each participant has experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). Merriam (1998) also emphasized the usefulness of a criterion based selection method to enhance discovery, understanding and gaining more insight on issues critical in a study. For the purposes of this study, participants were required to meet the following criteria: (a) over the age of 18 – age of universal adult suffrage in Jamaica, (b) engaged in the practice of skin bleaching, (c) born and raised in Jamaica, and (d) willing to engage in the interview process and be audio recorded.

These criteria were to allow for the selection of participants who could provide rich, in-depth, relevant and meaningful information about the phenomenon within the Jamaican context. Considering the taboo nature of the skin-bleaching phenomenon, inducements were necessary to ensure adequate participants were recruited for the study. This was important in order to fulfill the goal of understanding the skin-bleaching

phenomenon in Jamaica. The bleaching participants were each given a pre-paid telephone calling card valued at \$1000 Jamaican (approximately \$11.00 US).

Another participant in the study was a local dermatologist who has written and published articles on the phenomenon in the country's oldest newspaper—*The Daily Gleaner*. Noting his writings, I emailed him to ask if he would be willing to participate in the study and he agreed. The dermatologist provided valuable insights and information related to the prevalence of the practice, the products used in the process, as well as a synopsis of the health risks and treatments associated with the practice. The information from the medical practitioner is useful in understanding the phenomenon from the medical perspective.

In order to develop an even broader understanding of the phenomenon as a national issue, a senior official from the Ministry of Health who was actively involved in the efforts to address the problem was also interviewed. I noted her name and title in many of the reports in the local newspaper and emailed her asking if she would be willing to participate in the study; she agreed. It was important to gain the perspective from the government representative in order to understand the government's position on skin bleaching as well as to gain information on the national efforts implemented or designed to educate the public. The research questions were designed to cover issues related to the incidence, legal ramifications of sale and use of the bleaching products, and the educational campaigns designed to address the skin-bleaching problem.

Additionally, a retailer of bleaching products from the local community was interviewed to gain insights into the economics related to the phenomenon and to gain

information on the way in which her customers gain access to the products used in the skin-bleaching process. This was particularly important and relevant because of the illegal nature of the products. The retailer was also provided with the inducement of the pre-paid calling card valued with the same monetary value as the card provided to the other participants. She was recommended by one of the other participants who admitted to being her customer for several years.

Data Collection

Interviews are important in data collection in qualitative research; Merriam (2009) explained, that interviewing is widely used for data collection in all kinds of qualitative research. The primary source of data collection was through audio recorded open-ended interviews (Patton, 2002), conducted in a face-to-face format at the participant's site of preference in the Kingston Metropolitan Area. Patton (2002) lists three approaches to collecting qualitative data through open-ended interviews: (a) informal conversational interview, (b) general interview guide approach and, (c) standardized open-ended interview.

Interviews for this study were conducted with 15 participants—a local dermatologist, a representative from the Ministry of Health (MOH), a retailer of bleaching products, as well as six female and six male Jamaicans who were or are currently engaged in the skin-bleaching practice. All interviews were conducted one-on-one using open ended questions. Although I used an interview guide (See Appendices A-D), the questions were not all asked in the same way nor were they asked in the same order. I also sought to have an interactive dialogue with each interviewee.

The general interview guide approach was used where the interview guide was developed and acted as a checklist to ensure relevant topics were covered. The interview questions were informed by the overall research questions (Briggs, 1986). In other words, the interview guide was designed to address the overarching research questions, the purpose of the study, and was informed by the conceptual framework and other concepts from the literature.

The focus of the interviews was to determine how having a history of slavery and colonialism influence members of a postcolonial society to engage in the practice of skin bleaching. They sought to determine how early learning and socialization within a postcolonial society contributes to the decision to practice skin bleaching. Interviews also sought to address the question of the benefits—perceived and realized of skin bleaching and to determine what the role of culture, particularly popular culture and media has in the skin-bleaching phenomenon.

The interview with the dermatologist was conducted in the office of his private dermatology practice in the Cross Roads area, a predominantly commercial neighborhood in Kingston. The interview with the representative from the Ministry of Health occurred at her office in Downtown, Kingston. Downtown is located near the Kingston Harbor which is Jamaica's largest port. The downtown area of Kingston is a bustling metropolis and is the home of many government and private industries and businesses. The interview locations were private, the participants were comfortable, and the overall environment was conducive for engaging in dialogue.

The interviews with the other 13 participants (*bleachers* and retailer) were also carried out in Kingston but in public locations (e.g. park grounds, fast food restaurants, shopping malls, community center) all over the city according to their individual preferences. The interviews were with persons who admitted either currently or in the past to using bleaching chemicals in an effort to lighten their skin. All interviews were done in a friendly, yet professional atmosphere and the participants were engaging and forthcoming. The locations allowed for discretion and confidentiality ensuring that the participants were relaxed and comfortable in these non-threatening spaces.

My goal in conducting each interview in a private, comfortable environment and in a collegial style (Bergen, 1993) was important because of the nature of the questions. Indeed, the nature of the conversations, and the issue of skin bleaching in particular, is a very personal one, and demanded a high level of trust and rapport. This collegial style of interviewing was effective in developing rapport and getting answers to these kinds of personal and sensitive topics (Bergen, 1993). To create an amiable atmosphere, I introduced myself to each participant and explained the purpose of the study, always pausing and inviting questions from them. Before starting the recordings, we engaged in polite, yet personal conversation to develop rapport and trust with each other. Overall, data from all the interviews appeared to be rich in participants' insights and perceptions. Much of the data from the interviews are in patois, Jamaica's indigenous language, and where possible, English translations immediately follow (in italics) individual quotes in the presentation of the findings.

While interviews addressed issues of participant demographics (age, gender, ethnicity) and background (educational, marital, socio-economic and employment status), they also afforded participants the opportunity to express themselves on other matters related to the questions and subject as they deemed fit. Interviews were tape recorded, transcribed, and coded for emergent and recurring themes.

In addition to conducting interviews, cultural artifacts were collected and analyzed throughout the research process. These included photographs of public signage and transcribed songs from popular media. These artifacts are data sources from which cultural mores and meanings were observed. For example, in analyzing songs from popular culture about the bleaching phenomenon, specific messages about color and color stratification were coded.

All data sets (interviews, and various cultural artifacts) were triangulated, critically assessed for alignments, corroborations, as well as contradictions throughout the data.

Data Analysis and Management

Data analysis in a qualitative research study is not linear in that data analysis does not asynchronously occur after data collection (Merriam, 2009). Indeed, the collection, analysis and report writing are interrelated and are to be done concurrently (Merriam, 1998; Creswell, 2007). For the interview data, a thematic analysis was useful to analyze the way in which the participants make meaning of the bleaching phenomenon through their stories. Analyzing the narratives from the interviews showed how they (participants) structure their descriptions to make sense of their stories

(Riessman, 1993). During the interviewing process, a crude analysis began where I took notes to document my first impressions, tentative themes, as well as items to follow up on from the first interview and the process continued to the second and subsequent interviews (Merriam, 1998). Each interview was audio recorded. While data analysis was done during the interviewing process, it was formally done in three main stages.

Stage One - Transcribing

The first step after interviewing was to transcribe interviews. Transcription is a very important part of the data analysis, particularly for accuracy but also because the transcription process is interpretive (Riessman, 2008). Transcripts themselves have implications for the analysis and interpretation of the research data. All transcripts were, as best as possible, transcribed verbatim and include the spoken dialect of the participants (Jamaican patois) and a translation (where possible) into English. Jamaican patois is a non-standard language and there is no official way of writing it. Bearing this in mind, it was important to consider this “natural language” along with the local culture as critical as it was expected to “impinge upon the data, shaping them” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 333). For all intents and purposes, the natural language and culture may have hidden meanings which may affect the data. In an effort to obtain a deep understanding of the bleaching phenomenon, the narratives obtained from the interviews received specific focus by means of a thematic analysis on “what is said, rather than how, to whom, or for what purposes” (Riessman, 2008). After confirming that the transcription data from each interview were accurate, a profile of each participant was then created.

Stage Two- Profiling

This profile or case story of each participant presents a short narrative of the participant's history and experience with the practice. It also presents information related to who they are, their educational background, marital status, and other relevant personal information and importantly, details on how long each person has been engaged in skin bleaching. The profile also makes note of my personal observations related to their skin tones, their overall physical feature as well as provide my overall impressions of the participants. The purpose of the case story is to provide an introduction to the individual participants making it easier to relate to the whole person when analyzing interview data.

Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to guarantee confidentiality. Interestingly, the participants all self-selected their pseudonyms. Where applicable, explanations for the choice of pseudonyms are included.

Stage Three- Coding and Categorizing

After the case stories were prepared for each participant, the data from the transcribed interviews were carefully reviewed. A master copy was printed and filed. Each interview transcript was read several times for meaning and sagacity. In order to start the unitizing process, I used the information from the interview notes as the starting point for assigning tentative themes. As I read each interview transcript, using my earlier crude analysis as a guide, I started to divide the text into meaning units. The unitized chunks of data were color coded with highlighters, each according to the tentative themes identified in the interviewing process.

Based on the identified themes, I assigned each theme a representative color, and reviewed each transcript to ensure all matching meaning units were assigned the corresponding color of the appropriate theme. I made notes through the process to use as a data management guide by listing which themes were found through specific interviews. This process of organizing the data helped facilitate data management particularly for the next step of categorizing.

As the data were being reviewed and manipulated, I underlined key words, concepts and descriptions. From these, other themes and patterns of ideas, concepts, behaviors, interactions, and or language emerged and were noted (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Sections of seemingly unrelated text from each transcript were placed in a miscellaneous category for later review. The process of sorting and categorizing was repeated, allowing room for subcategories or amendments to the initial organization and for new themes to be assigned. The process was repeated to make sure all the data were accounted for and classified appropriately. In order to illustrate a clear example of the coding and categorizing process, the steps in assigning the theme rationalizing toning vs. bleaching are described next.

Practical Example

During the interviewing process, I took notes and found that all the participants made the distinction between the concept of *bleaching* and *toning*. As the interviews progressed, I realized that it was important to the participants that I understand the differences between the two concepts. After transcribing the interviews and reading through each several times, I assigned the tentative theme *toning*, not *bleaching*. With

that, I began going through the transcripts searching for related ideas and concepts which I highlighted in green. By the end of the review, other patterns and themes emerged which were noted separately. Afterward, the units related to the theme *toning* and *not bleaching*, were reviewed and categorized for writing the report. Using the notes from the interviews and the other patterns and concepts which emerged from the initial transcript reviews, I repeated the process using other colored highlighters to assign other themes. This was done several times leaving units of text that seemed to fit into a miscellaneous category. This miscellaneous category was then reviewed and some data were reclassified.

Analysis of Cultural Artifacts

A thematic analysis was done to the cultural artifacts relevant to the study. Cultural artifacts were included in the study to provide a more holistic view of the Jamaican culture and how the participants interact within the culture, based on these artifacts. The process was similar to that of the interview data analysis; themes from the songs' transcripts were highlighted to show any relevance to the research questions or themes identified from the interview data. The transcripts were reviewed and key concepts, words and descriptors were highlighted. Categories were also created and as the themes were identified (explicit or implicit), they were compared to the emergent themes from the interview data to see how they related to each other.

Similarly, as participants described the skin-bleaching process and offered responses in the interviews, I made notes of their skin color and compared it to how they described it. Participant observation in this case is important in understanding the

context of the phenomenon, which is necessary to a holistic perspective (Patton, 2002). These observations highlighted and presented my own personal impressions of each participant.

Quality Control or Trustworthiness of the Data

As the researcher and primary research instrument (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993), it was impossible to remain unbiased as I documented, handled, and analyzed the data. Indeed the foundation of qualitative research recognizes and appreciates the influence of the researcher on the participants and vice versa (Merriam & Associates, 2002). With this, and the subjective nature of qualitative research in mind, the trustworthiness of the data becomes even more important. Trustworthiness refers to the quality of the investigation that made the research findings significant. The trustworthiness or quality of this research was ensured through triangulation and member checks.

Triangulation

Using multiple data sources and multiple methods of analysis provides excellent opportunities for triangulation. Triangulation is a multi-method approach that strengthens a study (Patton, 2002) and leads to credibility by providing a more absolute account than using one method (Denzin, 1970; Maxwell, 2005). Further, it increases the chances of developing an understanding of the way in which participants experience the phenomenon and report on these experiences (Fontana & Frey, 2005). As themes and patterns emerged from either method of data collection, whether interviews or artifacts, they were compared among each other for corroboration. For example, themes from

interview data were compared with themes from the transcripts of songs to check for contradictions as well as similarities. Participant observation and notes from these observations also served as a valuable source of data in this study.

Member Checking

Member checks or respondent validation (Schwandt, 2007) is essential for credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and for internal validity (Merriam, 2009). In the process of member checking, the participants were asked to comment on my interpretation of the data to ensure accuracy of interpretation and trustworthiness of data. These checks were throughout the course of the study; as interviews were transcribed, I contacted six participants by telephone in an effort to communicate my understanding of what they said.

It was practical to conduct member checks by telephone as I was no longer in Jamaica and the transcripts were recorded in the unwritten language patois. Transcribing the interviews verbatim (in patois) was my attempt to capture the essence of and the passion within the participants' stories. By calling the participants and talking about what they said and my understanding of what was said, it was my intention to offer them an opportunity to verify as well as to add further commentary related to the phenomenon.

Researcher's Role

Illuminating my positionality and perspectives in this process, is critical for a variety of reasons. First, declaring my perspective is important because social imagination as described by C. Wright Mills (1959), "everything depends on the lenses

through which we view the world. By putting on new lenses, we can see things that would otherwise remain invisible" (as cited in Palmer, 2007, p. 27). More recently, Hall (2003) noted, "We all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific. What we say is always 'in context,' positioned" (p. 234). Essentially, my underlying assumptions, personal values and beliefs controlled the direction of the study; these beliefs (paradigms or lenses through which I view the world) influenced how I selected my research questions as well as my research methods (Morgan, 2007). They also offered rationalization for any affinity to relevant theories.

Second, the researcher is particularly important in qualitative research because "the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis" (Merriam, 1998, p. 7). It follows that it is impossible as the researcher and primary research instrument (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993), to remain unbiased throughout the research process.

Upon starting my doctoral program, I began to ponder many topics that I thought would be interesting to pursue for further study, especially for a dissertation study. The main criteria were that these topics would relate to issues affecting my home country directly, relate to the field of adult education, and be interesting enough to capture and hold my interest for an extended period. I was disappointed with many of my selections as I realized I did not have the required passion for studying them in a dissertation study. I was often frustrated in trying to choose a topic and often felt defeated and less than qualified to be pursuing a doctorate because I was having difficulty selecting a topic for study.

In December of 2008, on a trip home to Jamaica for the Christmas break, my family and I watched a feature on a weekly entertainment television program that highlighted the popular skin-bleaching trend in Jamaica. I was captivated. My family and I engaged in a rich discussion about the issue and I started tinkering with the idea of somehow incorporating the bleaching phenomenon in my dissertation. I was not particularly hopeful, as I could not yet visualize the link with the field of adult education. I dismissed the idea and restarted my search for the ideal topic.

After tinkering with many more topics, I found myself drawn to examining an issue I studied in one of my first classes in my very first semester. In fall 2007, I took a class called Special Issues in Adult Education: The Intersectionality of Race, Class, Gender, and Sexual Orientation in Adult Education. As an assignment, with a classmate, friend and later academic writing partner, we designed a classroom activity on multicultural issues. Using items from popular culture and media, the activity comprised the following objectives: (a) increasing awareness of pigmentocracy/colorism/shadism and its impact in society, (b) exploring how skin shade is perceived within the African-American community, and (c) helping participants develop an understanding of basic concepts related to shadism. This course and assignment propelled me to begin to think critically about issues of colorism in my own country.

I began to contemplate the role of the media and popular culture as vehicles for learning as they educate and sometimes misinform the general population in these social matters. These experiences motivated me to think seriously about this topic for the dissertation. This research seeks to examine the social phenomenon of skin bleaching in

Jamaica. As a female and middle-class Black Jamaican with a light-colored complexion, I engaged in an examination of the historical perspective of power, privilege, and oppression through slavery, colonialism and colorism in Jamaica. I also discuss the role of popular culture and media in the skin-bleaching phenomenon.

Summary

This was a qualitative research study that examined the psychological and socio-cultural factors that influence the practice of skin bleaching in a postcolonial society. Additionally, the study outlined national efforts to combat the skin-bleaching phenomenon. In order to understand the way the participants made meaning of their bleaching experiences, the primary source of data collection was through audio recorded open-ended interviews. Cultural artifacts were collected throughout the process and included newspaper articles, poetry, transcribed songs, games, photographs, and public signage.

In analyzing the interview data, I performed a thematic analysis where I reviewed the transcribed interviews and coded them according to patterns. I then identified all data related to the classified patterns. I combed the data and highlighted emergent themes. By piecing together the themes which emerged from the participant's stories, I was able to present a comprehensive picture of their collective experience. In reviewing and analyzing the cultural artifacts, I scoured the data for similar concepts and themes which emerged from the interview data. I looked for corroborations as well as contradictions and documented them accordingly in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine the psychological and socio-cultural factors that influence the practice of skin bleaching in the postcolonial society of Jamaica. Additionally, the study outlined the nation's efforts to combat the skin-bleaching phenomenon. The following research questions guided the study: (a) How does a history of slavery and colonialism influence members of a postcolonial society to engage in the practice of skin bleaching? (b) How does early learning and socialization within a postcolonial society contribute to the decision to practice skin bleaching? (c) what are the benefits—perceived and realized of skin bleaching? (d) What is the role of popular culture and media in the skin-bleaching phenomenon? and (e) What strategies have the Ministry of Health employed to combat the health problem of skin bleaching?

This presentation is divided into four main sections with each section culminating with a summary of that section. First, the chapter presents a profile of the participants who were interviewed for their personal insights into the bleaching practice. Second, the major themes identified from the interviews are highlighted. The six themes include: (a) multiple and inconsistent definitions of bleaching (b) mixed reviews of bleaching in Jamaica, (c) expertise in managing the bleaching process, (d) the nature of the bleaching practice, (e) the motivation for the bleaching practice, and (f) the government's efforts to ban bleaching. The third section presents an analysis of cultural artifacts related to the bleaching phenomenon. This includes photographs, dancehall

event flyers, and popular songs. The fourth and final section presents a summary of the study's overall findings as they relate to the study's major research questions.

Participant Profiles

This section presents an overall descriptive profile of the participants; its purpose to provide information on their backgrounds in order for the reader to get to know and understand the participants. These profiles were prepared for the participants who admitted to using (either currently or in the past) bleaching chemicals in an effort to lighten their skin. These profiles cover demographic information and offer a snapshot of their socio-cultural background. I discuss the participants' backgrounds as well as offer my perception of their disposition, physique and skin color. Of the twelve participants profiled in this section, there are six females and six males. Each person selected the pseudonym by which he/she is referred to in the profile. The females included: Sharon, Lisa, Stacy, Fabulous, Keisha and Kay. The males included: Brown Man, Shem, Fifty, Mikey Spent Shell, Banks and Rice Bag. Table 1 summarizes the demographics of the participants recorded in alphabetical order. Each profile is also presented in alphabetical order.

Table 4.1
Demographic Profile of Participants

Name (Pseudonym)	Gender	Occupation	Age Range	Education Background	Length of time Bleaching
Banks	Male	Student	18-25	Completed High School	7 years
Brown Man	Male	Student/Data Entry Clerk	18-25	Completed High School	3 years
Fabulous	Female	Cashier	18-25	Completed High School	11 years
Fifty	Male	Grocery Store Merchandiser	18-25	Completed High School	6 years
Kay	Female	Baker	30-35	Completed High School	10 years
Keisha	Female	Customer Service	30-35	Completed High School	9 years
Lisa	Female	Bar owner	35-40	Some High School	5 years
Mikey Spent Shell	Male	Entrepreneur	18-25	Completed High School	1 ½ years
Rice Bag	Male	Carpenter	18-25	Some High School	4 years
Sharon	Female	Waitress	35-40	Some High School	10 years
Shem	Male	Grocery Store Merchandiser	18-25	Completed High School	7 years
Stacy	Female	Student/Clerk	30-35	Enrolled in Practical Nursing Course	16 years

Banks

Banks is a young man who was born and raised in Kingston. He has always lived in Kingston and has no desire of living anywhere else. To Banks, Kingston is the center of all activities and he likes “to be where the action is.” He claims to be an outgoing individual although he seemed pensive throughout the interview. His persona was very serious and he was apprehensive to do the interview as he admitted to being skeptical about my motives for wanting to talk to him. He has a medium-brown skin tone and appeared to have a very muscular physique. Banks has been bleaching his skin for seven years. He said he knew that purchasing the bleaching creams were illegal and wondered if I was a policewoman doing an undercover sting operation.

After explaining that I was a student at a university in the United States, and was conducting the interview for my dissertation, he became more relaxed and forthcoming with his responses. Still, not an overly talkative individual, he was very receptive and willing to continue the interview. He was fascinated about school in the United States and admitted that he had dreams of visiting the US one day. Banks did not finish high school, but because of his aspirations to be a soldier in the Jamaica Defence Force (JDF), he is doing what he calls “extra lessons” in preparation for CXC examinations. The Jamaica Defence Force is the combined military forces for the island and although CXC passes are not necessary for becoming a soldier, Banks hopes of one day becoming an Officer in the army. To become an Officer he would need tertiary level (higher education) training. He hopes that by passing the CXC subjects now and gaining

experience as a soldier, one day he would be able to afford going back to college. He is interested in studying psychology.

Banks mentioned that education is very important to him and his future but admitted that while attending high school he was not very focused. He further commented that his girlfriend graduated high school and that it was important for him to be involved in a relationship with someone who had high regard for education. He grew up with his parents in a working class household, but claims not to know much about their backgrounds. He was unaware if either of his parents graduated or even attended high school, nor was he particularly convincing that he was interested in finding out. Conversations regarding his parents seemed distressing for Banks and he quickly shifted topics whenever the discussion focused on them.

Brown Man

Brown man is this participant's nickname. He has very light brown complexion and explained he got this nickname when he started bleaching. He has been bleaching his skin for three years. He sheepishly professed that he likes his nickname and that he is proud to be called Brown Man. He insisted I use this pseudonym in reporting the findings based on our interview. Being proud of his newly found light/brown complexion, he emphasized that his nickname is a symbol of his success at becoming light skinned. He feels like a better person because of his nick name; as he puts it, "I am new and improved." Although he was born in Kingston and grew up in the city, he once lived in a neighboring parish before moving back to Kingston. He emphasized that he loves the excitement and energy that goes with living in the city.

A soft-spoken and articulate man in his very early 20's, Brown Man is a recent high school graduate who pursued Advanced Level (A level) studies in 6th form (twelfth and thirteenth grade) which is usually reserved for students who perform well in their final high school examinations. Education is important to Brown Man and his family. He explained that even though he did well in high school, he was not successful in one of his lower level Mathematics exams and he made sure he sat the exam a second time. We joked about the mathematics exam which he professed was not difficult the second time around. It was important for him to be successful in passing his math exam as it would play an important role in determining his future prospects for getting a job.

Brown Man grew up with his mother and was proud that she also graduated high school, even though it was a rural school. He stressed that education was very important to him and to the rest of his family, especially because he felt that education would help him to get himself and his family out of poverty. He explained that he had to work very hard, unlike many of his classmates. During his time in high school Brown Man worked as a data entry clerk part time. He highlighted that though it was a good opportunity for him to work during school as it ensured that he could afford to complete his studies and graduate, it made studying and performing in school more challenging. Being able to work and to remain independent is very important to him; he bemoans the fact that he is currently unemployed. He hopes that he will be very successful in his examinations to qualify for a scholarship to attend college and if not, he is hopeful that he will do well enough to secure a well paying job.

Fabulous

Fabulous was born in Kingston and grew up in several communities throughout the city. A mother of a 6- year-old daughter, Fabulous currently lives with her daughter in a volatile part of the city. Despite this, Fabulous appears to be a carefree, jovial and outgoing person; it was her idea to be called Fabulous in the study. Her pseudonym, she said, described her perfectly. She boasted that she was indeed Fabulous. Her demeanor was very warm and she has an endearing personality. She was very friendly and talkative, described herself as fun-loving and good looking. It was obvious that Fabulous, despite admitting to being from a working class background, is a fashion enthusiast who takes great pride in her appearance. Having a dark brown skin tone and a slim-build, Fabulous wore clothes and accessories with prominent designer labels. She has been bleaching her skin for about eleven years.

As for her marital status, Fabulous said she was “single right now” and laughed, leaving me to think there was more to be discovered where that was concerned. She seemed to blush when the matter of her marital status was being addressed and jokingly avoided answering questions directly about her current relationship status. Later, she revealed that she was in a relationship but that it was on hiatus.

Although she is currently unemployed, she recalls with pride that she used to be a cashier at one of the universities in Kingston. She complained that she was achieving financial success until they closed the department in which she worked. She spoke of her job as a cashier as a fun and important job. She said she really misses the income from the job, but most of all she misses the daily interaction with the college students.

She particularly enjoyed being complimented on her good looks, especially because she makes an effort to “carry” herself well. In reflecting on her experiences as a cashier at the university, Fabulous made the point that she also enjoyed that she often learned a lot from the students and was proud to say that they learned a lot from her as well.

She acknowledges that she has a second career in the field of cosmetology. Despite not pursuing any studies after high school, she boasts about how good she is at cosmetology. She said she was a professional at “doing hair and stuff like that and mi love fix up and put on eye lash and thing.” She is considering pursuing a cosmetology certification program at HEART NTA when she starts working again and has an income that will allow her to afford the course. She insists that school is very important to her and her family. She was able to say that her mother attended high school but, because she does not know much about her father, she is unsure whether he attended school or not.

Fifty

Fifty is a tall, slim, young, energetic, and outgoing man in his early 20’s with a light brown skin tone. Fifty has been bleaching his skin for six years. He works as a merchandiser in Kingston at a large grocery store. He has worked in this job since he graduated high school about two years ago. Fifty describes his high school days as his “glory days” mainly because he was very popular and because he was a soccer star. He played soccer in a very competitive high school league where he competed with his team for the Manning Cup. Because of his soccer playing skills, and his good looks, he explained that he was very popular with the girls.

Although unmarried, Fifty declared that he has a serious girlfriend. When asked about his marital status, his response was “Duh! Of course I have a girlfriend!” He alluded to the idea that since he was not a homosexual, it would follow that he should have a girlfriend. He reminded me that he was quite the “ladies-man” during high school, but now that he is older and more mature, he is in a committed relationship. Fifty and his girlfriend attended the same high school and they have been in a relationship since that time. He noted that his girlfriend was also popular during high school, mostly because she is a pretty girl.

Fifty still enjoys playing soccer. He claims his newest obsession is music and he loves to party. Fifty believes that it is important to celebrate his youth and in order to do that, “one must work hard and play hard too.” He especially enjoys dancing and rapping. His favorite kinds of music are Reggae, Dancehall, Hip Hop, and Rap. He was tickled when he realized I did not know from which music mogul he got his nickname. He particularly likes the music and work of Curtis James Jackson III, an American rapper and actor whose stage name is 50 Cent, hence the name, “Fifty.”

In describing his passion for music, he confided that he was inspired by 50 Cent’s background because it was “hardcore” and that he too hopes to one day make a successful career of producing music. His enthusiasm for music was contagious and we spoke at length about his future plans in the music industry. He said he believes that if he is afforded the opportunity he “will take the world by storm” with his talents. He shared a song he wrote and told me that I should listen out for it on the radio one day soon.

Born and raised in Kingston, Fifty has never lived outside of the Kingston metropolitan area. He is very proud of being from Kingston. He insists that living in Kingston gives one more opportunities than living in the country. He grew up with his parents in a working class home, and while he insists they went to high school, he admitted to not knowing whether they actually completed high school or if they dropped out before completion.

Kay

Kay is a baker by profession; she has been baking professionally in the bakery section of a large grocery store in Kingston for just over five years. She thoroughly enjoys it and shared with me that her dream is to attend HEART NTA to further her studies in the field. At this time she finds it prohibitive, but proclaims that she will do the course in baking at HEART one day because it is the best in the country and she is looking forward to it. She mentioned that she grew up very poor, but has done very well for herself, and she attributes much of her success to the love she has for her job.

Kay spent a great deal of time talking about how much she enjoys baking and emphasized that she was very good at it. She pointed out that while she was happy to do workshops or short courses in culinary skills, baking, and pastry making in particular, is her favorite part of her work. Baking, she said, was probably to her what sports are to men. It is her passion and the shy 34 -year- old wishes that one day she may own her own bakery.

Born and raised in Kingston, Kay has dark brown complexion and has been bleaching her skin for about ten years. She lives with her common law husband, her 11-

year-old daughter and her 5-year-old son in Kingston. Both Kay and her spouse graduated from high school. Disappointed that has not been able to pursue further education, Kay wants to make sure her children attend and high school and go on to college if they so desire. She said that as a mother, it is important to work hard for your children so that they do not have to experience life in the same way you experienced it.

Kay grew up with her mother who also attended high school but she does not know if her father completed high school. In fact, because he died when she was only 2 years old, she does not know very much about him. Unwilling to leave me with an impression that his death made life hard for her, Kay spoke glowingly of her mother who she said played the role of mother and father for her very well. She is clearly very disheartened by the way some men abandon their families, and she stressed that while the father of her children has been present in their children's lives, she said she would do whatever it takes to keep her children happy, whether they had a father or not.

Keisha

Keisha is a 32 year old mother of an 8-year-old girl. She lives with her daughter and her common law spouse (her daughter's father) about ten miles east of Kingston. Although Keisha grew up in a neighboring parish, she was born in Kingston and works there. She has a medium-brown complexion and has been bleaching her skin for about nine years. She is tall and very slim; she is very proud of her slim figure and joked saying that is why she was chosen to work on the "front page." The term front page means being in a visible position working with customers and not at the back where she would remain hidden from the public.

Keisha works as a Customer Service Representative in a large grocery store. She sometimes works in the catering section of the grocery, an area she enjoys. She has worked in this grocery store since she graduated high school. For Keisha and her family, education is very important. She reported that she attended the same high school as her child's father, emphasizing that she would not be with a man unless he went to high school. In discussing the educational background of her family, Keisha took great effort to highlight that although she came from a poor background, many members of her family went to "good schools." She took great pains to list the high schools that various members of her family attended. In particular, she made the point that the schools her mother as well as a few of her uncles attended were all traditional high schools (not vocational or technical) and that they are prestigious schools in Kingston. She was very proud of her family's educational achievements.

For most of her life, Keisha lived with grandmother. Her father died when she was 11 years old and she did not know if he attended high school. She knows he sold leather sandals but knows very little about his educational background. Keisha spoke lovingly and longingly of her family. She divulged that her grandmother, who recently died, raised her because she was a "barrel baby" and her mother lived in the United States. The term "barrel baby" is a colloquial term given to children whose parents migrate to foreign countries to work, predominantly, USA, Canada and England and often support their families by shipping "barrels" of goods and supplies to them. These barrels would typically contain an array of household and personal items such as school supplies, clothing, canned goods and other food items. Keisha was quick and apparently

happy to report that her mother did not abandon her as she would go to visit her in the United States along with her grandmother on holidays.

Lisa

Lisa is a determined entrepreneur; she owns and operates a bar in a volatile area in Kingston. She explained that she has worked in bars all over Kingston since she was 19 years old but has owned her bar for almost six months. Lisa's life has not always been easy, and she is proud of having turned her challenges into opportunities. Owning a bar, according to Lisa, was a dream for her and she loves it, even if it is sometimes hard to manage. She spoke highly of her achievement and emphasized that she did it all on her own, despite many naysayers and hypocrites who speak slanderously of her. When prodded for details about some of her challenges, Lisa was not afraid to show her disdain for others who were seemingly "out to get her" while she was trying to make something of herself.

Her overall attitude was assertive and almost combative; she explained that she felt as if many people, particularly those in her community, were envious of her and of her ambition. She grew up and still resides in a poor community, and this she says has propelled her to work hard and to achieve the success she enjoys. She is annoyed by people who do not work hard or even seek out opportunities to fend for themselves. Today, she feels there are still many people trying to pull her down, but that she "nah watch no face." In other words, she refuses to pay any attention to anyone who is not supporting her, and she will not worry about what anyone else thinks as that is the only way she will be able to succeed.

Lisa is a forceful and gregarious woman in her 30's who was born in and has always lived in Kingston. She is tall, has a slim-build and has very light brown complexion with obvious damage to her face and arms from skin bleaching. Lisa has been bleaching her skin for about five years. She was trendily dressed and boasted that she was single. She joked about being single on more than one occasion during the interview, and when asked directly if she did not have a spouse/man asserted "di amount weh mi have caan count" (she has so many that the number could not be counted). When she was asked if she was serious about that, she said she did not really have only one man because that only hampered progress. She joked about needing to be smart and knowing when to call on one man for one thing and on another man for another thing. Much of this statement captures some of the essence of Lisa: strong-willed, resourceful and resolute.

A single mother of two children, ages 16 and 12, Lisa attended high school in Kingston but did not graduate. She attributes much of the difficulty she faced to the fact that she was not afforded the opportunity to complete high school. She also believes that her mother faced many challenges too since she also went to high school but did not complete her studies. As for her father, Lisa was not sure if he attended high school. She grew up with both her parents until she was about age 11 when her mother migrated to the United States and she was left to be raised by her father.

Mikey Spent Shell

Mikey Spent Shell is a Kingstonian his early 20's. He is a tall, jovial young man with a charming personality and dark brown skin. Mikey Spent Shell has been bleaching

his skin for a year and a half. He loves to play rugby and has an entrepreneurial spirit. Mikey Spent Shell is a determined and ambitious individual who professes to be a “hustler” who is always trying to improve his station in life. He explained that he has always been very enterprising and has always tried to work hard both academically and professionally. In high school, he was always looking for opportunities to earn money and to be successful.

He spoke with pride that he attended a prestigious all-boy high school in Kingston. He recently completed some continuing education courses to prepare him for Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) examinations. He recently took the exams with a hope of passing the subjects and improving his educational background. He admitted to passing examinations in 5 CXC subject areas before he graduated high school, but that he thought that was not enough for him to have a successful career.

For fun, Mikey plays sports. He enjoys coming up with new and innovative business ideas as he has an entrepreneurial spirit and intends to be a successful businessman later in his life. He concedes that it will take time for him to achieve the level of success that he wants, but that he is determined to work hard and to be successful. Although formally unemployed, Mikey points out that being unemployed gives him the opportunity to work for himself, where he is in full control. He has had some success with different ventures since high school.

In order to keep himself busy and out of trouble, Mikey admits to being a businessman; he has over the past couple of years sold various goods, and currently sells phone cards and ice cream on Sundays. To him, it is important to keep busy and to stay

focused on his dreams. It is important for him to reach his goals, in part to make his parents proud and also because he has a strong drive to be successful. He was proud of the fact that his parents both attended high school. While his mother was not financially able to take CXC examinations, his father passed 5 CXC subjects and went to college. He does not know if he completed his post-secondary education. Mikey's girlfriend is still in high school and he has dreams of them both attending college.

Rice Bag

Rice Bag is a young, slim and reserved Kingstonian man with light brown skin. He admitted that he got his nickname when some of his friends told him that his skin color was as light as the crocus bag in which bulk rice is sold. He admitted to secretly liking the nickname because of the association with light skin. Rice Bag has been bleaching his skin for four years. Rice Bag is currently unemployed and he did not finish high school. When asked about high school, he expressed disappointment that he was unable to complete his secondary education. He even stated that his last day of school was November 21, 2008. Because of his obvious disappointment and demeanor, I did not pursue the topic of his educational history much further. Initially, Rice Bag stated that he did not know if his parents attended high school, and later in the interview he recanted and said he was sure they attended, but that he was not sure if any of them actually graduated.

Since leaving high school, Rice Bag has worked intermittently as a carpenter. He does not particularly like carpentry, nor does he claim to be very good at it. However, he emphasized that it is an honest living and that it is something that he has learned from an

uncle. He grew up with his mother in Kingston in a working class household but does not know very much about his father. The last time he remembers seeing his father was some time in 2006.

Rice Bag currently lives with his girlfriend, of whom he is very proud. She is a high school graduate and she holds a job that he deems to be quite prestigious. She is currently working as a bank teller with a very large bank in the uptown area of Kingston, New Kingston. He boasts that she has been his girlfriend for several years and that he hopes to marry her. His marriage however, is dependent on when he gets a job. He admits that his ego will not allow him to marry her until he can support her financially. This is his responsibility as a man and he believes she would end the relationship if he could not support her financially during their marriage.

Sharon

Sharon is a mature woman, who when asked to describe herself, started by emphasizing the importance of her job in her life. She explained that she used to define herself as a mother, but now that her son is an adult, she is more focused on her career. Sharon works as a waitress at a prominent business hotel in the New Kingston Business District, an area of Kingston commonly referred to as “up-town”. She was not born in Kingston, but has lived there all her life. She emphasizes that she is not a “country girl” and boasts of being a “Kingstonian.” This is important in understanding the context of the Jamaican culture and environment because of the keen distinction between Kingston and the rest of the country. Kingston is the capital of Jamaica and is considered to be the most metropolitan area in the country, particularly by Kingstonians.

It is typical to meet individuals who claim to be from Kingston although they are from other parts of the country. Although there are three major cities in the island, some Kingstonians often do not ascribe city status to the other two cities, and still refer to them as “country.” Kingston, as the capital city has the reputation of being the most progressive in terms of business as well as social life. This is particularly true for fashion and other trends that become popular on the island, including the bleaching phenomenon. Sharon identifies herself as a Kingstonian as she declares she is more sophisticated and fashionable than anyone from the country (anywhere but Kingston). My interactions with Sharon suggest that status is very important to her; she made it clear that she wanted me to understand that she is a Kingstonian and that her focus is on her career which she emphasized is in an “uptown” hotel.

Sharon is an outgoing and audacious woman in her late 30’s. She is a single mother in a common-law relationship (not her child’s father) with a man whom she proudly declares is a teacher. Sharon, by my judgment appeared to have a dark skin tone although her face was significantly lighter in color when compared to her arms. Sharon has been bleaching her skin for about ten years. She wore her very neat uniform to the interview, and it was obvious she spent much time grooming her hair. A heavy set individual, Sharon is from a middle class family which did not have the means to provide her with as good an education as she would have preferred.

When discussing her educational background and those of her family members, Sharon appeared agitated and somewhat reticent. It appeared that this was a sore topic which made her uncomfortable and even abrasive. Overall, during my interactions with

her, Sharon was very agreeable, that is, pleasant, accommodating, and extroverted. She only became cautious and withdrawn when discussing education. On one hand, she appeared embarrassed for not completing high school; and on the other, she became overtly proud in discussing her more recent educational achievements.

For Sharon, successfully completing a nine-month course in catering at The Human Employment and Resource Training-National Training Agency (HEART/NTA) was a high point in her life. HEART, which was established in 1982, is the premier national body for workforce development in Jamaica. It provides technical, vocational and education training as well as certification for working age Jamaicans (ILO/Cinterfor, 2009). Only after emphasizing the value of that certificate to her, was Sharon comfortable enough to discuss her mother's educational experiences. She explained that her mother also went to high school, but that she was not fortunate enough to complete high school. When asked about her father and his educational background, she made it clear that she did not know anything about her father; in fact, she went on to say she did not have a father.

Shem

Shem was born and raised in Kingston. In fact, he has never lived outside of Kingston and has admitted that he has not spent much time outside of the Kingston area. He is a reserved and soft-spoken young man in his early 20's, is short and has a very dark skin tone. Shem has been bleaching his skin for seven years. Of all the participants, Shem appeared most nervous to be interviewed. He spoke very softly and early in the

conversation did not make much eye contact. He confesses to be very shy, but can be very open once he gets to know the people he meets.

As a child, Shem lived with both of his parents in a working class home and although he admits to growing up with both parents, he made it clear that it was his mother who raised him as his father was not around very much. He pointed out that it was not uncommon in Jamaica for children to be raised mostly by their mothers. He was quick to say that he appreciates the way his mother raised him and that he will be a better father to his child than his father was to him.

It was clearly very important for Shem to convince me that he had every good intention of being a good father. He was proud to report that he lives with his girlfriend and they were making the necessary arrangements to prepare for the birth of their baby. He was very excited to talk about the baby they were expecting before the end of the year. He is convinced (despite not having any proof) that they will have a son, although his girlfriend is praying for a daughter. He jokingly informed me that I could give him my recommendations for baby names, and to be clear, those names would need to be boy names!

Shem is currently employed as a merchandiser and he likes his job although he does not make a lot of money. He particularly enjoys travelling around to several grocery stores and making attractive displays and ensuring the goods are properly displayed throughout the stores. He graduated high school although he admits to not being very successful in his end of school final examinations. He reported that he only passed one subject. His girlfriend on the other hand, did not pass any subjects nor did

she graduate from high school. Similarly, neither of Shem's parents completed high school.

Stacy

Stacy was born and raised in Kingston. She lives in a small community in Kingston with her three daughters, ages 3, 9, 13, and her common-law spouse. Life is challenging for Stacy and her family. She complained bitterly about the way "times are hard" for her, and when prodded for details on these hard times, she asked me if I ever heard the saying about "making one step forward and then three steps backward." When I told her I had heard of the saying, she mentioned that this has been her story for a few years. Stacy admitted that she never imagined her life would have been this difficult. She grew up in a working class home, but believed she would have been better off financially since she attended high school and had a full time job.

Stacy has been bleaching for about sixteen years and now appears to have a medium-brown complexion. The greatest difficulty for Stacy, a petite, demure woman in her early 30's, is trying to support her family while attending school. She currently works a full-time job as a clerk six days per week while she attends school full-time in the evenings. She acknowledges that her weekdays are especially long and arduous as she has classes from 2:30pm to 9:00pm Monday through Friday. From her perspective, juggling the responsibilities of school, work, and her family would be tolerable if she were earning more money and if the cost of living were not so high. Admittedly, Stacy is working towards self-improvement, but for the mother of three, everything she does is for the betterment of her family, even if it is in the long run.

Enrolled in a collaborative Practical Nursing program, a joint program with a college in Canada and one in Jamaica, Stacy insists that the course is more challenging than she expected. She laughed about the need for the program to be difficult as it needs to filter out unprepared students. She emphasized that the program prepares you to care for people and with lives at stake, the program would not be a good one if it were too easy to complete. The challenge of the program acts as a motivator for her because ultimately she has hopes of migrating to Canada. For Stacy, successful completion in the program is mandatory as it will not only provide her with necessary skills for a career in the health services, but most importantly, it will make her eligible for a license to work in Canada. She professes that the hard work and sacrifice will be worth it in the long run because she is looking to see what opportunities she can get for her and her family in Canada.

Stacy's spouse completed high school as well and he later attended a trade school. Although Stacy does not know much about her father, she is confident that he went to trade school. While her mother did not go to high school, Stacy believes she got her drive, ambition and value for family from her mother.

Presentation of Findings

The following section presents the overall meanings associated with the interview data from the study's participants. Divided according to representative sections, or identified themes, each subsection includes a discussion of the theme and relevant segments of the interviews that are reflective of the identified themes. After each theme and sub-theme discussion, there is a summary which captures the essence of

each theme as presented by the data. As quotes are often presented in Jamaican parlance, italicized translations immediately follow as necessary. Where applicable, my own related observations associated with the themes and the overall interview experiences are also presented.

The first theme discussed is Multiple and Inconsistent Definitions of Bleaching. The supporting evidence for this theme is presented in several sub-themes: a) perceptions of the bleaching practice; b) intended results; c) rationalizing tanning vs. bleaching and d) inconsistencies with definitions.

Multiple and Inconsistent Definitions of Bleaching

Bleaching in Jamaica is not a new phenomenon. Some participants in the study revealed that they have been bleaching their skin for several years. In Stacy's case for example, she has been bleaching intermittently for at least sixteen years. The reputation that the practice now enjoys however is relatively new. Interestingly, defining bleaching in Jamaica is not as straightforward as one would expect. A review of the interview data indicates that bleaching is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon that is defined by two key elements: perceptions and intentions.

Perceptions of the Bleaching Practice

While the process of bleaching involves the application of chemical lighteners to the skin, the definition is not as concrete. Other names for the process include rub or rubbing, touch, or touching the cream. If someone is perceived to be using the products, or rubbing, in what is deemed a "responsible" manner, they are not viewed as bleaching their skin. In other words, the degree to which skin lighteners are used in terms of

consistency, quantity and variety, determines whether someone is actually bleaching or not. From the perspectives of most of the participants, if someone is using only one skin lightening cream, or a skin lightening soap, but no combination of creams, soaps, gels, or serums, then that person was not necessarily bleaching his/her skin. In explaining the difference between bleaching and toning based on the way in which the products are used, Keisha shared,

There is a whole lot of difference, whole lot! With the bleaching now, they mix up all stuffs. I tone. Cause deh so now I only use one stuff. Like body lotion I don't mix nothing else, that you call tone. With bleaching now, you mix up all kinds of stuff in the cream. That you call bleaching. Toning you use a light something and you don't mix anything with it.

There is a whole lot of difference between toning and bleaching, a whole lot! With the bleaching now, they mix up all kinds of stuff. I tone! I use only one stuff like a body lotion. I don't mix with anything else, that you call tone. With bleaching now, you mix up all kinds of stuff in the cream. That is what you call bleaching. Toning now you just use a light little thing and you don't mix anything with it.

Similarly, Fabulous noted,

You have the difference because bleaching is in-depth, to bleach you have to mix the serums that come with the product itself, so if you have the BioClaire lotion, you have the BioClaire serum that you mix with it, if you wish to mix the two of them together, and plus you have the gels that you can mix as well. These give you a faster action, like the Dermagel, the Neprosone Gel, the Omic Gel—they give you a faster action and they are very strong.

We glean from these quotes that the participants appear to define bleaching and toning based on product mixing and usage. Understanding perceptions of the skin-bleaching practice is important in carving out a definition of bleaching primarily because it is defined by the person using the product(s).

If someone perceives that an individual's skin color has changed significantly, (and the key is significantly) by the use of chemicals, then they would determine that individual is bleaching. This is contrary to the previous definition that suggests that if only one product is being used, that is not considered bleaching. The caveat here rests with the perception of the degree to which the skin color is changed, regardless of the kinds or quantities of products being used in the bleaching regimen. Fifty emphasized the distinction between bleaching and toning based on the extent of the change in skin color:

Alright, you see when yuh ah bleach, you directly you white (emphasis). Definitely white! You white! Right, yuh see when you ah tone now, a jus a normal level. Yuh nuh too black an yuh nuh too white. Yeah man, you deh pon a normal level. Normal, you balance.

Alright, you see when you are bleaching, you become white! Definitely white! You are white! Right, you see when you are toning, it is just on a normal level. You are not too black and you are not too white. Yeah man, you are on a normal level; normal, you are balanced!

Likewise, Rice Bag shared,

See, alright, see if you toning, yuh skin don't look as though you are bleaching—not as white. Yuh face might just cool, no bumps—cool. That's what it means.

See, if you are toning your skin, you do not look as if you are bleaching your skin—your skin is not as white. Your face may just seem cool, (flawless) no bumps, cool (flawless). That is what it means to be toning.

Additionally, Brown Man commented,

Maybe a slight difference but is the same process yuh go through. Same toning, same bleaching. Maybe there is a slight difference because toning nuh really mek yuh face white but bleaching really whiten yuh face.

There may be a slight difference, but you go through the same process. Same

process—toning is the same as bleaching. Maybe there is a slight difference because toning does not really make your face white, but bleaching really whitens your face.

Similarly, Shem emphasized the difference between bleaching and noted,

Alright, yuh see yuh toning now, toning is like you jus a light up your complexion, yuh nah bleach and overdo it. Yuh jus a tone up your complexion, that when yuh wash yuh face nuh, you black skin get a likkle bit brown, but then little bit brown, so him woulda normally do it pon him face, you know what I mean? That ah the tone one, but you see when dem a bleach, dem face white, white, white, white, and dem skin white, white, white, so that ah the difference between toning and bleaching.

Alright, you see toning now, toning is like you are just lightening up your complexion. You are not bleaching and overdoing it. You just toning up your complexion, so that when you wash your face your normally black skin gets a little bit brown and you would normally do it on your face. Know what I mean? That is toning, but you see when they are bleaching, their faces are white, white, white (repeated for emphasis), and their skin white, white, (repeated for emphasis) so that is the difference between toning and bleaching.

The comments shared above show that while the actual application process may be the same for both bleaching and toning, it is the degree of change in skin color that determines whether someone is practicing bleaching or toning. In Shem's definition, he makes specific reference to using the products only on the face if one is toning the skin. This highlights another nuance—the role of intent in the definitions of toning and bleaching and distinguishing them as two separate practices.

Intended Results

If the intention is to drastically change the color of the skin, for example, to significantly alter the complexion from very dark to very light, then this is considered bleaching. On the other hand, if the intent is to simply brighten up, remove blemishes, or to even out, or refine the skin tone, then this is not considered bleaching. Rubbing the

product only on your face, ears and neck area would suggest toning while rubbing all over the body would indicate intent to bleach. Interestingly, for some, although they are using the skin lightening creams and other chemical agents to lighten their skin, they do not consider themselves to be bleaching. In this regard, the term “toning” is applicable and is distinct from bleaching. This is a key concept in understanding the bleaching phenomenon in Jamaica and warrants mention.

Notably, of all 12 participants practicing skin lightening, eight made specific mention of the distinction between skin bleaching and skin toning. Of the group, only four acknowledged to be bleaching their skin, but only two admitted that there was no difference between toning and bleaching. For instance, Lisa who acknowledged that she is bleaching her skin, shared:

There is no such thing as toning! White people tone, we bleach, Black people bleach! Come on! Come on! People need to cut the crap! Black people can tone? Can Black people tone? You have to have a White person to tone. Yuh White, yuh need fi get a more like a lighter color caw yuh skin pale caw you too white. Why is that Black people keep on telling themselves say dem a tone? Tone (shout and emphasis)? Yuh a bleach man!

There is no such thing as toning! White people tone, we bleach, Black people bleach! Come on! Come on! People need to cut the crap! Black people can tone? Can black people tone? You have to be a white person to tone. If you are White and you need to get a lighter color because your skin is pale and you are too white, then you tone. Why is it that Black people keep on telling themselves that they are toning? Tone (shout and emphasis)? You are bleaching man!

Spent Shell offered an interesting perspective on why there is in fact no difference between bleaching and toning. He stated,

Alright, lemme tell you why toning is not different from bleaching. Toning is an excuse for bleaching because it basically means the same thing. When you toning, you are basically trying to lower your skin tone which is lightening your

skin which will make your skin get lighter. This is the same thing with bleaching. People just say it to make it sound like it is what they are actually doing.

Let me tell you why toning is not different from bleaching. Toning is an excuse for bleaching because it basically means the same thing. When you are toning, you are basically trying to lower your skin tone; you are lightening your skin, which will make your skin get lighter. It is the same thing with bleaching. People just say it to make it sound like it is what they are actually doing.

The four participants who indicated that they were toning and not bleaching, seemed to have a strong desire to communicate that message, and wanted it to be clearly understood that they were toning and not bleaching their skin. Remarkably, in describing the distinction between bleaching and toning, some “toners” were adamant in their critique and in some cases, even disdain for bleaching and made attempts, whether directly or indirectly, to justify or rationalize toning as opposed to bleaching.

Rationalizing Toning vs. Bleaching

Toning, from their perspective, is a better option than bleaching. The efforts to disguise their attempts to “bleach” their skin by calling the practice toning, was evidenced in the discussion with eight of the twelve participants. They offered justifications for toning by suggesting that it is a fashionable, safer and cheaper alternative that produces more attractive results. For instance, Stacy said,

Alright, yuh see wid me now, my toning is really fashion for me. It is a good style because when yuh see some people yuh nuh see how dem get so red. Underneath the eye, the skin you can see the veins. That is real extensive bleaching, yuh see toning now, yuh face jus look smooth, yuh nuh see no big blotch like extensive bleaching.

You see with me, my toning is really just fashionable for me. It is stylish because when you see some people who bleach their skin gets so red. I am toning and it works for me. Underneath the eye gets red, you can see the veins through the skin, that is real extensive bleaching, you see with toning now, your face just

looks smooth (flawless) and you won't see any big blotches like in extensive bleaching.

Banks also noted that toning was different and indeed better than bleaching and rationalized it this way:

The difference between toning is, toning and white out yuhself: when yuh a tone, yuh a tone fi look normal said way, like yuh jus a light up yuh skin, yuh jus lif up yuh skin a likkle bit, but when yuh bleach out, yuh bleach out yuh whole face an look white, yuh no normal, yuh over dweet. Dat mean say yuh ah go look white like di foreign people dem, so dem a go look.

The difference between toning and bleaching is like the difference between toning and whitening out yourself: when you tone, you still look normal, like you are just "lightening" up your skin, you just lift up your skin a little bit, but when you bleach out your whole face and look white, you are not normal. You over did it, that means you are going to look white like the foreign people (Caucasian).

Similar to the perception of change in skin color, when the intent is to make a significant change in skin color, the practice is defined as bleaching. The quotes above highlight the belief that bleaching is distinct from toning and definitions related to bleaching are varied and not concrete. They also show that *bleachers* justify the practice of bleaching by labeling it toning.

In seeking to further understand the intricacies of toning as a perceived distinct practice from bleaching, I asked the participants about the products they use or have once used in their toning or bleaching. I also asked them to report on their individual perceptions of their own skin tones in terms of their original complexions and their desired or actual complexions as a result of bleaching or toning. I asked them to check for consistency between their professed definitions and their actual practice.

Table 4.2 shows the self report of skin color classifications (original versus desired) and a list of products used by *toners*. Similarly, Table 4.3 shows the self report of skin color classifications (original versus desired) and a list of products used by *bleachers*. Information in both tables is recorded in alphabetical order.

By looking at this information graphically, one may immediately notice glaring inconsistencies with the participants' theoretical definitions of bleaching and toning in contrast to their actual practice.

Table 4.2*Toners' Self Report on Products Used and Skin Tone*

Name (Pseudonym)	Original Skin Color	Desired Skin Color	Self-Report Practice	Products Used
Banks	Dark Brown	Light Brown	Toning	Immediate Clear Omic Gel
Kay	Dark Brown	Light Brown	Toning	Apricot Scrub Carrot Cream
Keisha	Dark Brown	Light Brown	Toning	BioClaire Lotion
Mikey Spent Shell	Dark Brown	Light Brown	Toning	IKB Soap African Formula Cream BioClaire
Rice Bag	Dark Brown	Light Brown	Toning	Cake Soap Dr Clear Apricot Scrub Moisturizer
Sharon	Dark Brown	Very Light Brown	Toning	Skin Success Cream Palmer's Products Nadinola Lemon Gel
Shem	Dark Black, Black	Brown	Toning	Ultra Soap/Cream Neprosone Gel Lexus Cream
Stacy	Very Dark Brown	Light Brown	Toning	Fair & White African Soap Meta Salt Fashion Fair IKB

Table 4.3
Bleachers' Self Report on Products Used and Skin Tone

Name (Pseudonym)	Original Skin Color	Desired Skin Color	Self-Report Practice	Products Used
Brown Man	Very Dark Brown	Light Brown	Bleaching	Ultra Crusader Soap Ultra Cream Neprosone Gel
Fabulous	Medium	Very Light Brown	Bleaching	Natural concoctions such as Cornmeal & Aloe Vera(known as Single Bible) Maxi Light BioClaire Immediate Clear G&G Dynamclair Crusader Ultra Symba Body Clear (off market) Bulk Nadinola BioClaire Serum Omic Gel Derma Gel Neprosone Gel Volume 40 peroxide
Fifty	Dark Brown	Light Brown	Toning & Bleaching	Neprosone gel Omic gel IKB Immediate Clear Ultra Cream
Lisa	Black	Light Brown	Bleaching	G&G Dynamclair Neprosone Gel Volume 40 peroxide

Inconsistencies with Definitions

According to the participants' definition of toning as articulated above, the data shown in Table 4.2 indicates several serious inconsistencies between the definition of toning as defined by the participants and their actual practice. Sharon, for example self-reported that she was toning her skin and not bleaching. She explained how different toning was from the practice of bleaching. She stated,

Mi nah bleach, mi a tone. Toning is different. You don't overdo it like how other people overdo it.

I am not bleaching, I am toning. Toning is different. You do not overdo it (when you are toning) as others (who are bleaching) are overdoing it.

By definition, it would follow that she would be using a limited number of products and not be mixing many products together or that there would be no desire for a significant change in her skin tone. On the contrary, Sharon, as shown in Table 4.2, is currently using a combination of four products and has admitted to using a combination of at least six different products at some point. Incidentally, she also wants to change her skin tone from dark brown to very light brown, another issue of inconsistency with the definition of toning as opposed to bleaching.

Remarkably, among all the participants who claimed to be practicing toning and not bleaching, only one participant, Keisha, was actually using one product on her skin. Stacy, another self-reported toner and not bleacher, had at one point in time used a combination of up to five different products. All self-reported *toners*, including Keisha and Stacy have reported a desire to change their skin tones significantly, both from their

original dark brown skin tone to light brown. This suggests that the *bleachers* and *toners* hold loose definitions which are essentially self-determined.

Of the four participants in the study who admitted to be practicing bleaching as opposed to toning. Fifty, (as seen in Table 4.3) admitted to practicing both bleaching and toning. He explained that he more often than not, tones his skin, but will bleach his skin in anticipation for an upcoming special social event such as a dance. Dances and the overall dancehall culture in particular, occupy an important an important part of social life in Jamaica. Research suggests that dancehall culture provides a creative outlet for the poor to respond to issues of inequality that characterize life in the Jamaican urban experience (Bakare-Yusuf, 2006). For Fifty, dances provide an avenue for him to sport his new body.

Summary

There are multiple definitions of bleaching in Jamaica. The participants present their personal definitions of bleaching which highlight various inconsistencies. There was an attempt to distinguish between the concepts of toning as opposed to bleaching. The inconsistencies in the definition of toning and the actual practice show that it is not easy to distinguish between toning and bleaching and describe them as dissimilar practices. Indeed, the review of the participants' statements does not persuade me that there is a distinction between bleaching and toning. What becomes more apparent is that the definitions are not as concrete as one would expect and that there is an intangible element to the definition which only remains clear to the participants. Although it is important to concede that defining skin bleaching in Jamaica is not straightforward, it is

equally, if not more important, to allow participants the space to create their own definitions of the practice in order to understand their perspectives and the practice from their point of view. As such, the distinction between toning and bleaching will be discussed throughout the study as it is conceived by the participants, not based on my inability to identify or articulate the distinction.

In some way, it is understandably difficult for participants to accept that there is indeed no actual difference between toning and bleaching. It becomes conceivable to think that because of the taboo nature of the practice, claiming to be toning as opposed to be bleaching is more palatable. The need for contrasting the two concepts as different practices is comprehensible because of the stigma attached to the bleaching practice in the society at large.

Mixed Reviews of Bleaching

Under this theme, Mixed Reviews of Bleaching, I discuss the reputation of skin bleaching in Jamaica. Supporting evidence for this theme is discussed, categorized by the following sub-themes: societal perceptions of the skin-bleaching practice, nicknames based on rituals and appearance, gendered societal perceptions of the skin-bleaching practice and subjective perceptions of skin color. A summary of the findings under this theme and subthemes directly follow.

Societal Perceptions of the Skin-Bleaching Practice

There is stigma attached to the skin-bleaching phenomenon in Jamaica. The participants revealed that they thought the societal perceptions of bleaching were varied and often depended on the person's socio-economic status. Essentially, their responses indicated that they felt that the society was divided on the matter of skin bleaching. The general consensus among the participants was that while there were some people within the society who support the practice, there were others who were opposed to bleaching. Mikey Spent Shell put forward his views on how society perceives the practice and how some people negotiate around the stigma attached to the practice. He said,

Majority of the people in the country disagree with people trying to change their skin complexion to be lighter. Because then, that would basically say, or would be saying that they are ashamed of their skin color and want to change it, so they would want to say they are not bleaching, just toning

Lisa added that she saw where the society was divided when it came to bleaching. She commented,

Well it stick two-way: yuh have some people weh see who do it see it as a good thing and it mek dem look good; who nuh do it feel say a suppm weh no right an it nuh fit yuh so basically it have a switch it hava a switch you woulda say, 40, 60. 60 nuh like it and 40 nuh have no problem wid it.

Well, there are two ways of looking at it: there are some people who see others doing it and see it as a good thing and that it makes them look good; those who do not do it, feel that it is something that is not right and that it is not becoming of you, so basically you have it two ways, it goes about 40%- 60%. 60% do not like it and 40% have no problem with it.

Banks also offered his take on the percentages of people in Jamaica that are in support of bleaching and the overall perceptions of the practice. He offered,

Well, some say it bad; some like it! A fifty- fifty said way caw 50 % a dem ban it, 50% like it.

Well, some say it is a bad thing; some like it! 50% are against it and 50% like it.

In substantiating their views on how the practice is perceived in the country, some of the participants expressed sentiments suggesting that most of the bleaching in Jamaica was occurring downtown or in lower class communities and that people uptown, or those in higher economic and social classes, were against the practice. On the other hand, some participants expressed that while most of the bleaching was happening in lower class communities, they felt that the fashion of bleaching was admired and that it was spreading even to uptown communities. Fabulous gave her views,

Well, everybody have their own opinion, but mostly the bleacher dem deh downtown. Uptown, very rare you find dem bleaching. You have some uptown girls who bleach, who tone dem skin same way and I think it unique to them also. And when dem rub on dem foundation, it blend in wid dem skin. Dem do tone too you nuh? The richer set of people dem do wha downtown ghetto people dem do or dem waan inna di in ting; but yeah! Den the next set of people who say it is bad so dem just nuh do it. Dem jus nuh waan dem skin mash up—according to dem. Yeah! But bleaching a my ting!

Well, everyone has their own opinion, but bleachers are mostly found downtown. There are rarely any bleachers uptown. Although there are some girls uptown that are bleaching and I think it looks good on them as well and when they apply their make-up foundation, it compliments their skin. Did you know that they tone their skin too? The richer people want to do the same thing that the people downtown in the ghetto are doing—they want to be in fashion. Yeah! Then there is another group of people who say it is a bad thing so they just do not do it. According to them, they do not want to harm their skin. Yeah! But, bleaching is for me!

Overall, there is general consensus that bleaching is a contentious topic on the island and that it was more popular, if not more publicized in lower class communities. There are several nicknames for people who bleach their skin and these primarily negative monikers are evidence of the negative societal perceptions of the bleaching practice.

The nicknames associated with the bleaching tend to be based on rituals related to the physical practice as well as the negative side-effects of bleaching. In other words, some nicknames relate to the process and practices, while others are based on the appearance of the *bleachers*.

Nicknames Based on Rituals

“Pharmacy Rat” is one such nickname that refers directly to the practice and rituals related to skin bleaching. It speaks to the persistent and desperate way in which the *bleachers* try to maintain a constant supply of the products to support their bleaching habit. Kay emphasized the desperate nature of the pharmacy rat as she noted,

Pharmacy rat means is that as you get you pay you have to buy bleach. You can't be out of it none at all. So is like you live at the pharmacy. Every weekend as you get you pay, you have to buy the cream. It depends on how hard them money and how hard you rubbing. So if you want to keep up your color, you haffi live at the pharmacy every week; so that is why them call them pharmacy rat.

Pharmacy rat means as soon as you get your paycheck, you have to buy bleaching products. You cannot afford to run out of the products so it is as if you live at the pharmacy. Every weekend when you receive your pay, you have to buy the cream. It depends on how much money you are earning and how intense you are bleaching your skin (rubbing). So, if you want to maintain your (light) color, you have to live at the pharmacy each week. That is why they call them pharmacy rats.

Similar to the pharmacy rat nickname, two other popular nicknames are “chemist” and “druggist.” These names ridicule the *bleachers*' practice of mixing the chemicals, and depending on who explains the nicknames they may have a somewhat positive connotation. The idea is that a druggist or chemist is an expert at creating the combination of chemicals for the ideal bleaching potion; the term speaks directly to the way in which *bleachers* mix multiple creams, gels, serums and lotions to create the ideal

“mix” of products to bleach their skin. It underscores the pharmaceutical nature of the practice and on one hand lauds the bleacher for his/her expertise but, depending on the source, it also criticizes the amount of time, effort and money spent in making the “right mixture” for one’s individual skin tone.

Nicknames Based on Appearance

Nicknames that ridicule the *bleachers*’ appearance are more popularly used across the island. One such nickname, “batman,” ridicules the *bleachers* and the way they look because of their skin-bleaching practices. In particular, the term attacks the *bleachers* because of the dark blotches left around the eyes because of excessive use of the bleaching creams. This “batman” name pokes fun at the mask-like appearance, similar to the mask of the comic book superhero Batman, and it characterizes significant skin damage around the eyes.

Another popular nickname is “vampire.” The vampire nickname references the fact that the *bleachers* have done so much damage to their skin that they are not able to tolerate exposure to the sun. The folkloric creature, the vampire, is known to sleep in the daytime and prowl at night. A bleacher, who is thought of as a vampire, can only come out at night when the sun is down. This is primarily because of the significant damage to the skin caused by bleaching and sun exposure would only worsen the problem. *Bleachers* who are called vampires often cover their skin when outside and usually have very pale and thin skin with an alabaster or translucent appearance. The participants who criticized other *bleachers* and called them vampires were very animated and expressive in their descriptions. For instance, Kay described vampires and pharmacy rats this way,

So the vampire dem ah the one dem wha a rub on them cream and dem wear inna di brawling sun, because you know Jamaica is a very hot country and you have on sweater, and you have on socks, and you have on tall pants, you literally ah bleach yourself! Dem one deh ah the one dem call vampire. Because you hot! You understand? You hot! So the pharmacy rat dem ah the one dem wha no necessarily stay inside but dem nuh run out of the cream and vampire ah the one whey haffi stay in and keep demself away from the sun. The sun lessen the effect because the sun nuh gree wid di bleaching thing.

So the vampires are the bleachers who rub on the cream and they wear sweaters, socks, full-length pants in the very hot sun—as you know Jamaica is a very hot country. They are literally bleaching themselves. You are hot! So the pharmacy rats are the ones who do not necessarily stay indoors, but they do not run out of the cream (all bleaching agents) while the vampires have to stay indoors and keep themselves away from the sun. The sun lessens the effect because the sun is not helpful with bleaching.

Fascinatingly, as the participants described the nicknames given to *bleachers*, they were very critical of people who they thought abused the practice and seemed to offer a kind of self-righteous criticism of other *bleachers*. There seemed to be a sense of superiority shown in that they saw themselves as being better than those who did not bleach responsibly.

Similar to the vampire moniker, “day ghost” and “duppy” are two other popular nicknames used for *bleachers* who have made extreme changes to the complexion of their skin. Both names make a mockery of the *bleachers* based on their appearance. These nicknames are used to describe the *bleachers* who also have bleached their skin until it appears pale, unhealthy, translucent and thin. The names carry a negative connotation as they suggest that the *bleachers* appear ghoulish and scary. The term duppy is used in Jamaican parlance to mean ghost or spirit. It has West African origins

and refers to ghosts who come out predominantly at night to haunt or cause harm to individuals.

Another nickname for *bleachers* is monkey. The nickname monkey in the context of the society relates directly to someone who is ugly. Interestingly, the *bleachers* were not the only ones aware of the nicknames ascribed to them. Kayja, the retailer whom I interviewed, explained,

Some of dem monkey; ooh ooh ahh ahh, when yuh see dem. Anything weh ugly so. When you see dem , when dem nuh mek it. Caw some of dem ugly bad, mi nah go lie, some of dem ugly bad. Is not dat all of de *bleachers* ugly, but some of dem a monkey, dem ugly bad. Some of dem can't work wid.

Some of them are monkeys (monkey noises accompanied by imitations of monkey behavior) when you see them. Anything that ugly (is a monkey). When you see them, and they have not made it (not successful or attractive from bleaching). Because some of them are very ugly; I will not lie, some of them are very ugly. It is not that all the bleachers are ugly, but some of them are monkeys. They are very ugly. Some of them can't be worked with (have nothing to work with) and would be ugly regardless of bleaching.

In this case, Kayja makes specific reference to the *bleachers* she considers to be monkeys, as those whose appearance cannot be improved by bleaching as they are just simply ugly. On the other hand, although mentioned less frequently, there is also the perception that there are some *bleachers* who look good as a result of their bleaching.

If someone is actively bleaching and are perceived to be doing it very well, and it compliments their appearance, they are often called “bright a day.” The term “bright a day” is the only positive nickname I came across in all the interviews, including those with the dermatologist, retailer, and Ministry of Health Official. Bright a day simply means the person looks good both in the night time as well as in the day time. It suggests

that the bleacher has been very successful at their attempts to bleach their skin and that they look very good, or “bright.” Kayja highlighted,

Some a dem look nice; you have some people who bleach and it look good pan dem, you ah say, don’t stop bleach, continue bleach cause it fit some a dem. Dem look good, stay good and proper, but some of dem otherwise, when you look pan dem, you woulda say mmm mmm, that couldn’t be me! Dem mek dem face red and dem bleach till dem pink. Bright a day a some a dem dat a when it fit dem. Well, some a dem bleach till dem look good, you call dem bright a day.

Some of them (bleachers) look nice; you have some people who bleach their skin and it looks good on them. You would say to them “don’t stop bleaching; continue bleaching because it fits some people.” They look good, they look good and proper, but some of them otherwise, when you look at them you would say mmmm mmmm, that could not be me! They have made their face red and they have bleached their faces until they are pink. Some of the bleachers are bright a day when it (bleaching) suits them well. Well, some of them are bleaching until they look good, you call them bright a day.

The nickname bright a day is a positive nickname associated with *bleachers* and the vast majority of the nicknames are negative. These negative names and perceptions also influence people to claim to be toning and not bleaching.

To escape some of the ridicule and embarrassment faced by *bleachers*, many participants claim to be toning as a defense mechanism in order to avoid the prejudice or stigma attached to bleaching. Some even go as far as hiding the fact that they bleach.

Banks stated,

Some a wi dweet a hide eh nuh, yuh see mi? Mi nuh want nobody know say me a bleach. Differently still, mi nuh know, to how me do my thing, me nuh up front wid it like say yow, when me go a shop mi a bawl out , “sell me a bokkle ah bleach” Me wait so till all shop empty me go buy mi ting, and when me a use mi a use my own under psyches, so, dem only see mi face a get brown and a wonder, “a wah mek him a get so brown?” an ting, you see me? Till dem start find out say a rub me a rub, and it nuh too loud, and me nuh loud it up and mek everybody know say me a bleach and dem ting deh. Dat no call fa. Mi nah show off nutten.

Some of us are bleaching and hiding. Do you understand? I do not want anyone to know I am bleaching. On the other hand, I don't know, the way I do my thing, I am not very open with it. I don't go to the shop and shout "Yow! Sell me a bottle of bleach" I wait until the shop is empty to go and buy my things, and when I am rubbing, I am rubbing in secret (trickery), so people will only see my face getting brown and start to wonder "why is he getting so brown skinned? Until they start to find out that I am bleaching, but it is not too obvious and I don't publicize it to let everyone know that I am bleaching and so on. That is not called for. I am not showing off (boasting/publicizing) anything.

Along with fear of ridicule or harassment, men in particular, hide because of the stigma attached to men bleaching their skin.

Gendered Societal Perceptions of the Skin-Bleaching Practice

Another societal view of bleaching is that it is a female practice and men who bleach their skin are homosexual. Jamaica has a reputation of being a homophobic country. One of the slogans used in the government's educational campaigns was "Real Men Don't Bleach" and this emphasized the homophobic undertones pervasive in the Jamaican culture. Since the bleaching practice is viewed as being cosmetic in nature, and therefore, the prerogative of women, men who bleach are at risk of being labeled homosexual. On the other hand, while the practice was believed to be done predominantly by women, the participants, especially the women, highlighted how the number of men who are bleaching is increasing. They also commented that they would prefer that men not bleach because while it is suitable for women to bleach, it is not appropriate for a man to bleach his skin. All the female participants spoke with great alacrity against the men bleaching their skin. Kay commented,

The man dem tek it over from the woman dem, Mi nuh know what happen to dem. Ah man dem a bleach now! To me bleaching still, is not a right thing fi nobody, male or female still, but me see it fit the female because she must know what kind of attraction she seeking, but when the man dem start do it now, it

kinda mek me confuse because me nuh know a who him want fi look pon him. You see? Him look like him a seek attraction from both man and woman. Cause dem claim say dem want to be prettier. And me nuh believe man fi pretty. Him fi look good yeah, but him nuh haffi pretty. Cause my bredda who a bleach look good already, mi nuh know what him a try prove. You understand? But mi nuh like it when the man dem bleach. Definitely, mi nuh like it, dem mus mek the woman dem go on do her thing. But the man must just see certain things and allow it.

The men have taken it over from the women. I don't know what has happened to them. It's the men who are bleaching now! To me, bleaching is not right for anyone, male or female, but I think it suits the females because she should know what kind of attraction she is seeking. But, when the men start doing it, it confuses me because I don't know who he wants to admire him. Do you understand? It seems he is seeking attraction from both men and women, because he claims he wants to be prettier. I do not believe men are supposed to be pretty. He should look good yes, but he doesn't have to be pretty. Beacuase, my brother who is bleaching, he already looks good; I don't know what he is trying to prove. Do you understand? But, I do not like it when the men bleach. Definitely, I do not like it; they should let the women go on doing her thing. But the men should just see certain things and let them be.

Stacy spoke more critically of the men who are bleaching their skin. She emphasized the negative view she held of men who bleach their skin. She blatantly said,

A woman fi bleach, mi nuh think man fi bleach. When you walk wid a man weh bleach it look a way to me. It look like the man wukkless to me. Yeah him look like him nuh have no way a go, mi nuh like when men bleach cause a cosmetics and yuh nuh?

Only women should be bleaching! I don't think men are to bleach. When you are walking with (implies having a relationship—whether intimate or platonic) a man who is bleaching, it does not look good to me. It seems as if the man is worthless. Yeah, it seems as if he is not going anywhere (referring to personal ambition), I don't like when men bleach because it is cosmetic and so on.

Fabulous was very direct stating,

Well me think if a man bleach, him funny, some of dem.

Well, I think that if a man is bleaching his skin, he is gay—some of them are gay.

Keisha expressed somewhat similar sentiments and her focus was centered on whether she would date a man who is bleaching. She reported that she believes bleaching can make anyone who does it more attractive, but that she would not date a man who is bleaching his skin. She said,

Anybody that bleach look good, but I wouldn't go for a man that is bleaching. Wha man a bleach fah? Is woman stuff dat. Yeah! Is woman thing that! Wha man a bleach fah? Him a run competition wid woman dem. For a me fi look good.

Anybody who bleaches looks good but, I would not be attracted to a man that is bleaching. What is the reason for men to bleach? Bleaching is for women. Yeah! Bleaching is a woman thing! Why would a man bleach? He is competing against women, because I am supposed to be the one who looks good (as a woman).

Lisa said,

Man nuh fi bleach. Bleaching is a feminine thing yuh nuh. Me personally mi nuh like man feminine. To me bleaching a feminine thing and once me see a man bleach it jus a tell me say him feminine. Yeah man that is my opinion, mi nuh like see man bleach caah it a feminine something it's a female thing. Feminine thing!

Men should not bleach. Bleaching is a feminine thing. Personally, I do not like effeminate men. To me, bleaching is a feminine thing and if I see a man bleaching, it just tells me he is feminine. Yeah man, that is my opinion. I do not like to see men bleach because it is a feminine thing. It's a female thing. Feminine thing!

The comments from the female participants show a significant level of insistence that men should not bleach their skin. The reasons the women give typically center around the idea that bleaching is a feminine practice and men who bleach are homosexuals or have feminine tendencies. There is a sense that while bleaching is a practice in which both men and women are engaged, the females in the study emphasized that they did not approve of men bleaching their skin,

Interestingly, on the other side of the spectrum, the feedback from the males in the group was contrary to the opinions expressed by the females. For the most part, the men in the group mentioned the positive effect their bleaching or toning was having on their social life, particularly as it related to dating women. Some went as far to say that the reason for bleaching or toning was to get women. When Banks was asked specifically about the benefits he received from bleaching he said,

The girls love it man, see yuh face look brown out, and look good, ha! The girls dem like it man. Mi mother cuss mi everyday still say mi ah bleach out an look like woman, but the girls dem girls pray fi it man, nuff girls.

The girls love it man! See, your face looks brown and looks good. Ha! The girls like it. My mother curses me everyday saying I am bleaching and look like a woman, but the girls pray for it man (support and adore)! Lots of girls (like it)!

Banks' statements confirm that there are mixed views on the matter of men bleaching. He pointed out that his mother was not a fan of him bleaching as she thought it made him look like a woman. However, this is not a deterrent for Banks as his experience tells him that a lot of girls like it when he bleaches his skin and looks brown. He went on to comment on his cousin's experiences,

Well mi cousin say him bleach fi get the girls dem still caw, as mi say di girl dem say dem love di browning, di brown skin, di cool face and such an such, so yeah, him rub fi get the girl dem, and di girl dem do di same ting fi get the boy dem or dem dweet fi di hype.

Well, my cousin says he bleaches to get the girls because as I said before, the girls say they love the browning, the brown skin, the cool face (flawless), and so on. So, yeah, he rubs to get girls and the girls do the same thing to get the boys or they do it for the hype (fashion/style).

Bank's cousin's perspectives are similar to those of the other men in the study. He emphasizes that he bleaches in order to get women. Banks mentioned that the women are

doing bleaching to get men. In effect, the bleaching therefore becomes a means to an end, in that the way to achieve browning status, or brown, flawless (cool) skin, is to bleach which ultimately leads to getting more women, in the case of men, and getting more men, in the case of women. The term browning is a popular nickname for individuals who are considered light-skinned (especially women).

The end result of bleaching which is becoming brown or gaining browning status, acts as a motivator for the men in this study. Rice Bag explained the reason men bleach this way,

Like fi a man, is because den you can probably get more girl. So dem wi bleach fi see if dem can get more girl. Cause as me ah tell you when you do it, yuh face pretty pretty. Alright so you say, yuh brown now, yuh can get nuff girls.

For a man, he bleaches because then he can probably get more girls. So they will bleach to see if they can get more girls. Because, as I was telling you before, when you bleach, your face is pretty (repeated for emphasis). Alright so you say you are now brown (as a result of bleaching so you can get a lot of girls).

Brown Man added,

You get a lot of girls! And you get a lot... (smile); you get popular because people just start see you. Who neva usually see you start see you! Who neva talk to you, talk to you, who neva was your friend want to become your friend because dem see a lot of people around you.

You get a lot of girls! And you get a lot... (smile); you get popular because people just start taking notice of you. Those who did not notice you before, start to see you now. Those who did not talk to you, start talking to you now, and those who were not your friends, want to become your friends because you start to become popular.

From these responses, we glean that there are contradictions woven into the bleaching phenomenon in Jamaica. In reviewing the societal perspectives of the bleaching phenomenon in Jamaica, as presented by the participants, there are three key points to

note. The first is that they believe the society is divided on the issue and that there are some people who are in support of the practice and others who are opposed. In addition, the incidence of bleaching is more widespread in poor communities, and even though the practice is frowned upon, people in the higher strata are yearning to bleach as well in order to be part of the fashion. Second, the female participants stressed that they believe bleaching or toning is a feminine practice and males who bleach may be homosexuals or lack ambition. Third, there are contrary views related to males who bleach because while females insist that men should not bleach their skin, the males boast that they are considered more attractive because they bleach and ultimately get more girls.

As is evidenced from the findings, the perceptions of the skin-bleaching practice are very subjective. The issue of skin color determination is also subjective and vary based on the observer. There were notable differences in the perceptions of the participant's skin color and what I observed. The next section elaborates on these perceptive differences.

Subjective Perceptions of Skin Color

In this research study, there is interplay between the researcher and the participants; these relationships played an important role in the research. Along with the rich findings, I offer my perspectives throughout the data analysis. In this section, I present my perceptions of the participants (*bleachers* and *toners*) complexions. Further, I contrast them with the participants' self-reported perceptions. Table 4.4 shows a graphical comparison of the participant's self-report of their original skin color (before

bleaching/toning), their current description of their skin tone as compared to my perceptions of their skin color at the time of the interviews.

The participant's views of their complexions are predominantly in sharp contrast with my views of their complexion as the observer. Of the twelve participants, only one participant (Rice Bag) and I used a similar descriptor to describe his skin color. Seven of the group (Stacy, Keisha, Kay, Fabulous, Mikey Spent Shell, Shem and Banks) described their skin color as a lighter color than I viewed. For example, Stacy described herself as having a light brown complexion and I described her as having a dark brown complexion. The remaining four (Lisa, Sharon, Brown Man and Fifty) each used a darker color than I used to describe their complexions.

This is an important point to note as it highlights the subjectivity as it related to describing skin color. In other words, skin color is indeed, "in the eyes of the beholder." These discrepancies suggest that while the process is interpretative and subjective, most of the *bleachers* claim to be lighter in color than my assessment of their skin color.

Table 4.4
Subjective Perceptions of Skin Color

Name (Pseudonym)	Original Skin Color- Self Report	Current Skin Color	Researcher Perception of Skin Color
Banks	Dark Brown	Light Brown	Medium Brown
Brown Man	Very Dark Brown	Dark Brown	Very Light Brown
Fabulous	Medium	Light Brown	Dark Brown
Fifty	Dark Brown	Medium Brown	Light Brown
Kay	Dark Brown	Medium Brown	Dark Brown
Keisha	Dark Brown	Light Brown	Medium Brown
Lisa	Black	Light Brown	Very Light Brown
Mikey Spent Shell	Dark Brown	Light Brown	Dark Brown
Rice Bag	Dark Brown	Light Brown	Light Brown
Sharon	Dark Brown	Light Brown	Very Light Brown
Shem	Dark Black, Black	Brown	Very Dark Brown
Stacy	Dark Brown	Light Brown	Dark Brown

Summary

The table shows the participants' self-report of their original skin color, their report of their current skin color and by contrast, the report of the skin color as perceived by the researcher. This highlights the subjectivity of discerning skin color and how perceptions related to skin color differ among individuals and that it is a socially constructed concept.

Expertise in Managing the Bleaching Process

This section presents theme three, Expertise in Managing the Bleaching Process. It describes the management of the bleaching practice in Jamaica from the perspective of the participants, to include the views of the local dermatologist, Dr. Persadsingh, (name used with permission) who was interviewed for the study. Supporting data are categorized and presented under the subthemes the incidence of bleaching in Jamaica, expertise in mixing, and rubbing rituals. The section concludes with a summary of the findings reported under this theme and subthemes.

The Incidence of Bleaching in Jamaica

Rubbing or bleaching/toning is a relatively common practice. Dr Neil Persadsingh, a leading dermatologist on the island who has written and published several articles in the main newspaper related to the phenomenon, described skin bleaching in Jamaica this way:

Skin bleaching which is really the application of chemicals to get a clearer or fairer tone or lighter color. This was unknown in Jamaica when I graduated in 1970 (from medical school) and then about in 1990 we started seeing people with this problem until the present time. Nowadays it is fairly common.

When asked specifically about the incidence of bleaching in Jamaica, Persadsingh explained that he would not be able to provide statistics on the incidence, nor did he think anyone would be able to provide these numbers for a variety of reasons. He explained:

You have to realize a lot of people bleach, but they do it quietly—in silence, and as a secret and they are not going to tell you that they are bleaching. Unless they are having problems (as dermatologists) we will not see them so we won't know that they are bleaching.

While he reported that he currently sees about one patient per day who is suffering from side effects of bleaching, down from about three or four per day, he is not hopeful that the practice has significantly reduced.

Interestingly, while Dr. Persadsingh attributes the reduction in his patient load to the possible success of the educational campaigns that the government has initiated, he explained that the *bleachers* have become more sophisticated with the use of the chemicals and are becoming smarter with their applications. He reported that the *bleachers* have become more experienced and skilled in mixing the chemicals and their use of the bleaching products, extending the time before they begin to experience the negative side effects.

He advised,

And a lot of people bleach, they stop, they bleach again, they stop and they bleach again, right? They do it intermittently, and so you will never be able to assess the true incidence of bleaching in the society. What we can tell you is that we have not been seeing the amount of complications, that is the complications from bleaching as we saw before, but we still see about one patient per day.

Although the dermatologist acknowledged an increase in the skillfulness of the *bleachers*, he emphasized that there was no safe way to bleach the skin without the guidance of a medical practitioner.

Expertise in Mixing

The *bleachers* boasted about their expertise in mixing and applying the products. Constant reference was made to the necessity of being careful in the bleaching process, and they made attempts to convince me (and maybe themselves) that since they knew what they were doing, they would not encounter the negative side effects. The participants made it clear that in order to bleach effectively, it was important to know which products are suitable for your individual skin-type and how to mix and apply them in order to get the right effect in the fastest possible time.

Banks said of his process,

Me use di Immediate Clear mix up wid di Omic gel. Caw the Omic gel strong—if you use the raw gel it bun yuh. So mi mix it up now, two ah dem combine, it come faster. Yuh get di cream an di gel, yuh squeeze di gel inna did cream and mix it, mix it roun an put it inna di fridge. Caw when it inna di fridge it work faster.

I use the Immediate Clear (bleaching cream) mixed with Omic gel. Because the Omic gel is harsh, if you use it alone, it will burn your skin, so I mix them both and combined, they give you the desired effect faster. You get the cream and the gel and you squeeze the gel in the cream and mix it well then you put it in the refrigerator. Because, when it is in the refrigerator, it works faster.

Kayja, the retailer, spoke of her experience with selling the products. She explained that the way people used the products was based on their skin color and how much change they wanted to make to their complexion. She emphasized that choosing the products

was important and that it was based on their knowledge of their individual skin types.

She said,

The most popular ting is the Neprosone gel, the IKB, the lemon gel, G&G, Maxi Light. The Neprosone gel dem say mek yuh come faster. Well most of di people roun here, like when dem brown like me, dem, say dem nuh use it, dem nuh really go hard. Dem use like di Maxi Light, an dem put like a lemon gel inna it, so dem say dat a when dem brown, but when time dem black black black now dem mix up everything, dem mix up like of everything, Maxi Light an di D and G, when dem mix it wid di lemon gel, dem say dem come faster. But most people nuh like when mi mix it, dem mix it demself. Yeah, caw dem wah know what an what in dere an everybody nuh want, everything in dere, dem want put wah dem feel cause a nuh everybody it work wid. Some people it bump up dem skin,

The most popular things are the Neprosone gel, the IKBm the Lemon gel, G&G, and Maxi Light. The Neprosone gel (they say) will give you the desired effect faster. Well, most of the people around, who are brown (like me), they say they do not use it; they do not use it as much. They use the Maxi Light and they put like lemon gel in it, so they say (when they are brown). But when they are black (repeat black for emphasis), they mix everything. They mix everything, Maxi Light and the G&G and when they mix those with the lemon gel, they say they (come faster) achieve the desired look faster. But, most people do not like it when I mix it; they want to mix it themselves. Yes, because they want to know what is in the mixture and not everyone wants everything in it. They want to put in what they feel because, not all the products agree with everyone's skin type; it gives some people bumps on their skin.

Rice Bag, so named because of his light skin color, said to match that of the crocus bag in which rice is sold, spoke of the importance in knowing the products and figuring out which products would be appropriate for a particular skin type. He noted,

Well, you see when you buy it, well, alright, because is not certain and certain cream will agree with your face you nuh? Because you have certain cream that just don't work with your face and yuh nuh? Some creams can do some bad things to your face but is not everybody. Alright you see like a person who is darker than my color now, and use my cream it just nah go work because him darker than me and maybe the face alone get brown and then it get back black.

Well, you see when you buy it (products), well, alright, certain creams will not agree with (be suitable for) your face. Understand? Because there are certain

creams that just will not work with your face. Some creams can do some bad things to your face, but it doesn't happen to everyone. Alright, a person may have darker skin than I and, use my cream and it just doesn't work for him since he is darker than I am and maybe the face will get brown and then it will get black black(emphasis).

Lisa, who has been bleaching her skin for about five years, and who appeared to have the lightest complexion, as well as the most obvious skin damage of all the participants, explained in great detail,

yuh use two products yuh use a cream an yuh use it wid a gel an it depends on di size a di cream yuh caahh buy like if yuh buy a big jar a cream yuh use half a dat yuh can use three gel mix half a dat an yuh mix it up yuh jus use anything like a spoon or suppm an yuh jus mix it togeda an yuh use dat now an yuh base yuh skin wid that when dat dun now yuh use three odda gel mix wid half . Some woman even go harder that dat yuh nuh but when mi jus a bleach mi use to go, mi use to do it more than that an dat mi a do now caah yuh have dis thing weh yuh put inna a it name volume 40 something fi bleach hair It change the colour a di hair, so wen u use dat now ... Yeah man it meck yuh come faster, but if yuh already bleach out yuh nuh really need that yuh jus use the normal cream and a gel some people use the so so gel but the so so gel yuh nuh meck it come faster BUT it vein up yuh skin an bum up yuh skin as yuh see my own bleaching thing fit mi Yeah it buss up yuh skin if yuh use the gel an di cream or bump up yuh skin or eventually yuh nuh ova di years but it teck longer to come

You use two products, a cream and a gel and it depends on the size of the cream you buy. For example, if you buy a big jar of cream, you use a half of it to mix with three different gels to mix with that and you use anything like a spoon or something to mix them together. And, you use that to base your skin and when that is finished you use three other gels to mix with the other half. Some women go even harder (increase the intensity, but when I just started to bleach, I used to do it more than that and now I do not have to because you have this thing called Volume 40 (peroxide) for hair bleaching, when you use it now... Yeah! It makes you come faster (achieve faster results), but if you are already bleached out, you do not really need that. You would just use the normal cream and a gel. Some people use the gel by itself, it works faster BUT, it will make the veins in your skin show more, it will give you bumps, and as you see my own bleaching thing suits me well. Yes, it will cause your skin to burst open if you use the gel and the cream together, or it will give you bumps eventually, over the years, but it will take longer to make you have the desired effect.

The findings suggest that the *bleachers* and *toners* follow similar routines to achieve the desired result, lighter skin. They emphasize the need for vigilance in selecting products that are appropriate for one's unique skin type to avoid common problems associated with inexperienced and improper skin bleaching. In describing the process, they suggest that much of the skill learned for bleaching is gleaned by observing others and by trial and error. For the most part, the practice, as described by the participants is similar for both *bleachers* and *toners*, with variances based on intensity and frequency. *Bleachers* tend to apply more frequently, rub for longer periods, use more potent products and stop for shorter periods of time. There is also some discrepancy between the opinions of the ideal temperature in which bleaching is most effective. However, there is congruence with the description of the practice and the rituals associated with same.

Rubbing Rituals

All participants explained that the process of bleaching or toning was one that had to be managed carefully. They each spoke about the intermittent nature of the practice, where the frequency would be based on individual preferences, primarily intent.

Kay clarified,

But I do mine now and then. Like I rub two days, then I don't rub the next two days then I rub a next three days. You understand? So I always have mine under control, because if I continue, I am a light skin person already, when putting it on me, it really show, it really affect me very fast to me, so I try not to get too white, so that you can see I am BLEACHING BLEACHING!

But I rub now and then. For example I will rub for two consecutive days, then for the next two days, I do not rub, then I will rub for three days after that. Do you

understand? So, I will always have mine (rubbing process) under control, because, since I am already light-skinned, when I use it, it becomes really obvious and it really works fast. So, I try not to get too white so that you can see that I am really BLEACHING (repeat for emphasis).

Fabulous who has been bleaching for about 11 years described the process as a science. She stated that the process was very personal and that it would vary depending on her social circumstances at the time. She said,

Well most likely mi do it two times a day cause morning and evening, sometime if me have a likkle plan and mi waan come up very fast extremely fast mi do it like 3 time a day.

Well, more often than not, I do it twice per day—in the morning and in the evening. However, if I have a little plan and I want to come fast (lighten fast), I do it sometimes three times per day.

When asked what kind of plan would influence her to do it more often than usual, Fabulous chuckled and grinning excitedly she said,

Like a dance coming up or something whey mi know whey like looking brown out mi do it like three time a day. And den sometime mi cyan bother because mi have sweaty skin and the moment if mi know me ah go oout mi cyan put it on because me sweat a lot. Yeah so if me lose that time from in the morning mi come home back in the afternoon and put on back the morning one wha mi miss and den now bathe again and put it on back in the evening or in the night before mi go to mi bed.

Like if a dance (dancehall party) is coming up or something for which I would like to look brown for, then I will do it maybe three times per day. And then on the other hand, sometimes I can't be bothered because I have sweaty skin and the moment I know I am going out, I cannot put it (products) on because I sweat a lot. Yeah, so if I miss the chance to put it on in the morning, I go home in the afternoon and apply what I would have in the morning and then later I would bathe again and reapply in the evening or at night before going to bed.

Responding to the obviously interested and inquisitive look on my face Fabulous eagerly continued, taking the opportunity to distinguish her practice from that of other *bleachers*.

Mek mi tell yuh how it go. You mix up you thing, you rub it on to you skin, when you apply it to you body right when you put on your cover up clothes like during the daytime when the sun is out because the sun is the problem with the bleachers. The sun tends to strip the skin and darken the skin so whenever you have on your product right, and you have on your product fi avoid the sun rays some of the products actually come with sun screen agents some don't. Now you have to cover with your long sleeve shirt your sweaters, you haffi wear jackets, your jeans jacket or sweaters in the day. Some people say when you sweat more it come quicker but I don't believe in that. I believe the time is more colder you come more quicker to me. So you put on your socks or your stockings, yeah you can put on your stockings under your pants right just to block out the sun and you cream on and you bathe again and in the night you don't really have to put on no long sleeve or no socks or whatever. You just put on your normal clothes and yeah. Another thing, sometimes at home I will put it on my face like a mask and sit in front of the fan and mek the fan yuh nuh, and everything absorb and then I take a walk because I don't really walk with it on my face because I have sweaty skin so it will sweat off and all of that. But most people place it on their face and go outside on the road with it and stuff like that. You mix then you apply and you stay naked for a while and you let the fan blow on the cream on to you so your body absorb the moisture till you feel dry like everything fade, like everything just fade away.

Let me tell you how it works. You mix your products, you rub it on your skin and just as you apply it to your body, and you put on your "cover up" clothes like in the daytime when the sun is out because the sun is the problem with the bleachers. The sun tends to strip the skin and darken the skin; so, whenever you have on your products, you have to avoid the sun rays. Some products actually come with sunscreen agents, some do not. Now, you have to cover with your long sleeve shirt, your sweaters, you have to wear jackets, your jeans jacket or sweaters in the day. Some people say the more you sweat, the faster it works, but I do not believe in that. I believe the colder it is, the faster it works—to me. So, you put on your socks or your stockings under your pants, right? Just be sure to block out the sun when the cream is on. When you bathe again at night, you do not really need to put on long sleeves or socks or whatever. You just put on normal clothes and yeah! One more thing, sometimes while I am at home, I will put the products on my face and wear it like a mask and sit in front of the fan and allow the fan to help everything absorb and then I take a walk because I don't really walk with it on my face because I have sweaty skin so it will sweat off and all of that. But most people place it on their face and go outside on the road with it and stuff like that. You mix your products then you apply them, stay naked for a while allowing the fan to blow the cream on your body to absorb the moisture until you feel dry as if everything has faded away.

When asked if at any point she would wash the product off, Fabulous laughed at my ignorance. She appeared to have difficulty in containing herself, disbelieving my blatant unawareness. When she composed herself she said,

Noooo! Wash off what? You wash you face before and you bathe before and you apply it just like a lotion to your body. Your entire body rub you back, sometimes you can't reach your back so you haffi bend you nuh (laughing) do acrobatics, fi try reach u back, eventually it will circulate because yuh nuh you body just absorb it and whatever. And then now you put on back your clothes and whatever and do your normal day to day business and it's not a problem.

No! Wash off what? You wash your face and bathe before you apply it, just as you would apply a lotion to your body. You rub entire body, you rub your back, and sometimes you can't reach your back so you have to bend, know what I mean? (Laughing) Do acrobatics to try and reach your back, eventually it will circulate because your body will just absorb it and whatever. And then, you put on our clothes and whatever and do your normal day to day business without a problem.

Brown Man, while he concurred with Fabulous about the process, in terms of frequency, he offered a different perspective on the ideal temperature for the bleaching process to be effective. He said,

When I was doing it, I used to rub two times a day; before school and before bed. It good to do it in the morning cause the sun cause you to sweat and dem say the sweating good for it. Mi nuh really know why, but dem say it better you put it on and inna di sun, so it better you put it on and den go play football dan if you put it on and inna di house. It work better when you sweat it out.

When I was doing it, I would rub twice per day, before school and before bed. It is good to do it in the morning because the sun causes you to sweat and people say sweating is good for bleaching. I do not really know why, but they say it is better to put on the products and go in the sun, for example going out to play football (soccer) than outing it on and remaining indoors. It works better when you sweat.

There is some discrepancy in the reports from the participants about the way in which the skin needs to be treated, in relation to temperature, when the creams or bleaching products are applied. As indicated earlier, Fabulous reported staying naked in front of a fan for the cool air to help in the absorption and Brown Man reported that sweating would speed up the process. However, the need to cover the skin to protect it from the sun was consistently reported. Kayja, the retailer, clarified that the process of covering up the skin was mocked and termed “bokkle up.” She said,

Bokkle up like, bag, dem put on bag over dem body, socks an long sleeve, cover dem face, can’t come inna di sun enuh, but, so mi say it nuh mek yu hot? Dem say yes it mek dem sweat an a dat dem want, cause when dem sweat, it mek dem come faster, mek dem skin come faster,

Bottle up, like bags. They put (plastic) bags over their bodies, they wear socks and long sleeves, they cover their faces because they cannot go in the sun. You understand? So I ask them if it doesn’t make them hot? They say that it makes them hot and sweaty and that is what they want, because when they sweat, it makes them (come faster) get lighter skin faster.

The findings suggest that the bleaching process requires a certain level of skill and expertise. Interestingly, Dr. Persadsingh, in explaining the bleaching practice in Jamaica referenced the fact that there are areas on the body that have less body fat, and would not lighten, even if you used bleaching creams on those areas. These included the knuckles and the toes. Fascinatingly, his medical expertise is shadowed by the *bleachers’* expertise. Fabulous, when describing her bleaching process said,

Yuh have a product for the hair that bleach the pigment of the hair called Volume 40, you have volume 40, volume 20, you have different volume. I use that and that give you fast action. What it do now, it tends to burn the skin when it penetrate. But mi ah tell yuh, yuh see like the knuckles and like my toes, mi use that thing on it called Volume 40 that bleaches the hair, HEEEEY! Mi ah tell u

man, it bleach out mi knuckles and within no time it mek dem blend in with your skin.

There is a product which bleaches the hair pigment called Volume 40, well there is also a Volume 40 and a Volume 20, and you have different volumes. I use that and it gives you faster action. What it does is that it tends to burn the skin when it penetrates. But, I am telling you, you see like the knuckles and my toes, I use that thing on it that is called Volume 40(hair bleach), hey (shout and emphasis). I am telling you man, it bleaches out my knuckles and within no time it makes them (color) blend in with the rest of your skin.

When I suggested that the dermatologist told me that the knuckles are among the most difficult part of the body to bleach and that they would not change color, she responded in quite a matter-of fact way saying,

Eehh heh? When you use the Volume 40 it change the color of it! And you look so all in one! (smiling)Yeah. But the Volume 40 now it kinda froth up because you know it have in hydrogen peroxide so that is a strong thing so, it kinda burn the skin. So when it on the finger and if it get inside the finger nail it burn yuh know them way they? So I nuh really use it, but yuh have some people dat use it on them whole body and mix it with the cream dem too to bleach but I don't do that.

(Exclamation—oh yeah?) When you use the Volume 40, it changes the color of it (knuckles and toes)! And your color is well blended! (smiling) Yeah. But, the Volume 40 will foam because as you know it contains hydrogen peroxide and if it gets under your fingernails, it will burn. Understand? So, I do not really use it, but some people use it on the entire body and they mix it with the creams too and bleach their skin, but I do not do that.

Summary

According to the *bleachers* and *toners*, the practice is different for everyone and it requires skill and knowledge of the products and of how to use them. The participants suggest that based on their acquired expertise, they will avoid any side-effects or negative consequences that may be associated with their bleaching/toning. Based on the rituals and their learned expertise, skin bleaching is a manageable and personal cosmetic

practice. In the next section, I describe some more unique characteristics of the bleaching phenomenon in Jamaica.

The Nature of the Bleaching Practice

This section details the participant's responses which describe the nature of the bleaching practice. It provides supporting ideas under subthemes describing the intermittent, time consuming and laborious, costly and addictive nature of bleaching.

Intermittent

From all accounts, whether from someone who is bleaching or toning, bleaching is not a continuous process, and in some cases, neither is toning. Based on the participants' descriptions, the intermittence of the practice was a common theme.

On one hand, the intermittent nature complicates statistical data collection for government and other interested stakeholders such as doctors, dermatologists and social scientists interested in studying the phenomenon. On the other hand, the issue of sporadic bleaching/toning as reported by the participants is a means of controlling the process and the effects of bleaching.

According to Banks, he has worked out a strategy for the process, and while it may not work for others, he has proven that this is ideal for him. He stated,

Awright, me dweet fi a week, an when mi see mi face a get light, mi stop, when mi see mi a get too brown, mi stop, an den start back, like all two weeks or so. When you stop yuh start get back normal complexion, caw memba say di sunlight nuh too gree so start get back dark again. An if you well bleach out, like yuh face well brown out...

Alright, I do it for a week, and when I see that my face is getting light, I stop and when I see that I am getting too brown (light-skinned), I stop and then I start again in about two weeks or so. When you stop (rubbing) your complexion begins to return to normal. Remember the sunlight does not work well with the skin while you are bleaching so you will start to get dark again and if you are well-bleached, or if your face is very brown (light)...

Sharon also commented on the intermittent nature and explained that along with the quality of the products, this was the key to preventing the skin from becoming too white and from experiencing the negative side effects of bleaching. She said,

You haffi know how and when fi bleach yuh nuh. You nuh see some people bleach so till dem cut up? Dem tear, dem skin burst. Yeah! Yeah! Pure ah dem suppm gwaan u nuh? It can damage yuh skin yuh nuh? You know, me know bout myself and my rubbing. Me know how to control myself and so yuh haffi know not to do it everday? NO!! Every other day or maybe every two days. Mi nuh waaan white like you! (laugh) People all ah use cheap ghetto cream and mash up dem face caw dem nuh know how fi dweet and stop and dweet and .

It is imperative that you know how and when to bleach. Don't you see some people bleaching until it cuts their skin? Their skin tears and bursts open. Yeah! Yeah! That is what is going on! Do you understand? It can damage your skin, did you know? You know, I know about myself and my rubbing. I know how to control myself and so you have to know not to do it every day. No (emphasis). Every other day or maybe every two days would be appropriate. After all, I do not want to be as white as you are!(laugh) People are even using cheap ghetto creams and are destroying their face because they do not know how to do it ,to pause for a while and to resume, then pause and resume and so on.

Time Consuming and Laborious

At the time of the interview, Shem reported that he had not bleached for about three months. When asked if he had intentions to resume, he alluded to the amount of effort required for the routine of bleaching, characterizing why it is an intermittent process for him. He said,

I don't know you nuh. When mi complexion get too dark I might go back and do it again. The thing is cause basically sometimes is like you nah memba yuh ah go put on this cream tomorrow or put on this cream the next day, so is like is a contest, so is like you woulda get up and brush your teeth every morning or brush your teeth every evening, it come in like that. You woulda get up in the morning, wash your face and den put on your cream, yeah, so ah basically dem ting deh. Every day you can do it three times a day or you can do it two times a day.

I really do not know. When my complexion gets too dark, I might go back and do it again. The thing is sometimes you forget that you are going to put the cream on your skin tomorrow or even the next day. It is like a contest, it is like getting up and brushing your teeth every morning or every evening. You would get up in the morning, wash your face and then put on your cream, yeah, it is basically like that. Every day you can do it three times or sometimes two times per day.

Stacy expressed that she stopped rubbing because of her examinations at school and that she had other priorities. She said,

Mi did have exam an mi did also sick an mi tired so mi did jus ease up but mi, mi tone that's why cause exam did a worry mi. Caahh rub right yah now e nuh an have dem things deh pon mi head. Mi nuh have the time 162id at yah now cause it tek time yuh nuh?

I had exams and I was sick and tired so I eased off on the toning. That is why I stopped; I was worried about my exams. I cannot rub wile I have these things on my mind. I do not have the time for that now, because it takes time you know?

Fifty also commented on the necessity of bleaching in a intermittent way because of the time involved in the process, he explained that he has to negotiate with his skin color based on the time he has available to him. He said,

Bleaching is a thing you can't too do everyday still you nuh? Can't too do it every day. Me see some man do it every, cause remember me a work and me inna the sun you see it? If me well bleach out me can't go get fi work you see me? Yeah. Me do it and stop more while pon a level, get all me soap more while cause you see if you nah use the bleaching cream, you can use the soap and it still change you color right now. Di soap ah di said wid di cream you nuh. You have the soap fi di cream dem. Me woulda say me do both tone and bleach. You know why? Cause me have mi time when mi tone, mi have mi time when mi bleach. Mi woulda say both, to me, me do both. It depends pon how much time me have too yuh nuh. Mi bleach when mi have more time fi play with, and when all a dance a come up soon an mi waan fi look yeah!

Bleaching is a thing you shouldn't really do every day. Shouldn't do it every day. I see some guys doing it every day, but remember I work and I am in the sun. Understand? If I bleach out my skin too much, I cannot go to work. Understand? Yeah! I do it and stop most of the time on a certain level. I get the soap

sometimes because even if you are not using the bleaching cream, you can use the soap and it still changes your skin color right now. The soap is the same as the cream. Understand? You have the soap that go along with the creams. I would say I do both toning and bleaching. Do you know why? Because, I sometimes tone and sometimes I bleach; I would say I do both. It depends on how much time I have too. I bleach when I have more time on my hands. Understand? I bleach when there is a dance coming soon and I want to look yeah!

The participants report that the bleaching process, despite being intermittent, requires time and effort for the bleachers. The process requires purchasing various bleaching products and as such participants report incurring several costs.

A Costly Endeavor

According to the *bleachers and toners*, the bleaching practice is expensive. Remarkably, Dr. Persadsingh noted that while many of the patients he sees are employed, some are unemployed but they still find the money to get the products to bleach their skin. Interestingly, notwithstanding the expenses, the items remain accessible as retailers of the products have used creative ways to sell their products.

Kayja explained that instead of selling the items as they are purchased, she would open the containers and re-package smaller portions and sell them to the customers. She described this process as “retailing” and explained that since people would not be financially able to purchase the items otherwise, this was working well for her.

Fabulous, who is unemployed, suggested that the products were not overly expensive. She explained that it would not be particularly expensive if you were only bleaching your face area. She suggested that over time it could be costly, if you were bleaching your entire body as she was. Yet, she noted that if she had more money she would spend even more on her bleaching habit. Her complaints primarily focused on the

increased cost of the products over the past few years. On the other hand, she explained that she loved her bleaching so much that she would buy the products regardless of cost.

She said,

Mi love it gone to bed! The way mi love my bleaching memba me have my money an as mi get my money mi buy my stock.

I love it (bleaching) gone to bed (colloquial expression for very much)! The way I love my bleaching, take note, as soon as I get money, I go buy my stock of products.

While the *bleachers* complained about the cost of the items, there was a sense of pride with reference to using expensive products. Sharon made fun of people who were using “cheap ghetto creams” and she scoffed at the idea of people using other home-made concoctions to bleach. She exclaimed that even though there was a 300% increase in the cost of her products, she made fun of people who were using curry and other cheap things to lighten their skins. Curry, a popular blend of spices used in preparing some traditional Jamaican meals has a orange-yellow color from turmeric, an essential component.

The costs of the products have increased over time because of the many police raids which have removed many of the products from the public domain. With the supply decreasing coupled with the illegal nature of the products, the costs have increased, much to the dissatisfaction of the participants. Banks alluded to the importance of the bleaching products and deemed them as being necessary and suggested,

“When you need it, it nah go expensive.”

“When (Because) you need it, it will not be expensive.”

In spite of the rising costs and decreased accessibility, the participants explained that they would do what was needed to acquire the products as they have come to rely upon them.

An Addictive Habit

A consistent theme expressed by the *bleachers* was that they enjoyed bleaching and that it was not easy to stop even after pausing for a while. Kay (who claimed to be toning) explained that she has stopped in the past because the process requires so much effort and that she cannot be bothered with continuing. On the other hand, that period of cessation does not last. She said,

Some of the time, me just can't bother and mi just stop. And then again when mi see mi face start get bump up again mi move. That is the way. When you stop you nuh is like you face literally, you nuh really want to get too white so you stop. And while you stop the bumps them start fi come back and fi get it off you start and whooo me? Me nuh like see bump inna my face so when me stop fi all a month or so and me see the bumps dem, mi run back fah my cream again. You understand?

Sometimes I just cannot be bothered and I just stop (rubbing). However, when I see my face starting to get bumps, I start again. That is the way. When you stop, it is because you do not want your face to become too white so you stop (bleaching). When the bumps start to reappear and to get them off you start again and you ask yourself "who me?" I do not like to see bumps in my face so when I stop bleaching for a month or so and I see the bumps (acne), I run and get my cream again. Do you understand?

Fifty had similar sentiments, explaining that stopping was hardly a valid option for him because it meant that his skin would become even darker than it was before he started bleaching his skin. He said this of his skin when he stopped bleaching,

It get black! (Laughing) It get jet black! Jet, jet jet jet black, you see if black so now and me go bleach, and me go stop, mi get blacker than how mi did stay before. Yeah man! Blacker than how me did stay before! So that is why me nuh,

me is a man, true me hardly stop, you see when me stop mi stop fi good mi just do it an gi it a break and den just touch it up again and yeah.

It gets black! (Laughing) It gets jet black! Jet, jet jet jet (repeated for emphasis) black, You see, since I am so dark already and if I stop bleaching I will get blacker than how I was before. Yeah man! Blacker than how I was before! So, that is why I hardly stop bleaching. You seek when I stop forever, I should just be able to do it and give it a break and then just touch up (lighten up) again and yeah!

Shem concurred, explaining that while the skin would get darker than before it was first exposed to the bleaching products, there would also be a problem with bumps on the face. He said,

Alright when you stop now is like you skin get dark back and probably extra darker than when you were before. And probably you might get some likkle bumps too and probably you never see them bump there before dem come pon you face after.

Alright, when you stop (bleaching) it is like your skin gets dark again and probably even darker than you were before. And, probably you will get some small bumps too and probably you would have never seen hose bumps on your face before but after you stop bleaching you may get them.

Banks also stated that he did not think he needed to lighten his skin, yet he offered contradictory remarks suggesting that his face would be “spoilt” if he continued to lighten his skin. He said,

No, mi no tink mi need it but more time when yuh see yuh a get too black, yuh seet, yu haffi say yo! Hol on, mi can't jus spoil mi face dem way de; yu jus tone up back likkle bit again an look fresh an clean.

No, I do not think I need it, but often when you notice that your face is getting too black, you have to say Yo! Hold on! I can't spoil my face like that so you tone again a little so you can look fresh and clean.

Raquel, unlike the other *bleachers* and *toners*, explicitly spoke of the addictive nature of the bleaching process; she explained that despite being too busy to bleach her skin she finds herself doing it repeatedly. She said,

It just become like is a addiction, mi a go tell yuh di truth Mi stop sometime because mi caaah badda, like mi caah badda fi a get up a rub di cream pon mi skin every minute or sometime because mi even too busy even fi rub it pon mi skin and a next time mi jus say cho! An start back again.

It is like an addiction, I am telling you the truth. I stop sometimes because I can't be bothered, like I cannot be bothered to get up and rub the cream on my skin every few minutes or sometimes because I am too busy even to rub it on my skin and then again I say Cho!(Cho is a colloquial expression of disgust/exasperation) and I start again.

Summary

As the participants describe the bleaching process, the characteristics of the process become evident. Both *bleachers* and *toners* report the intermittent, time-consuming, laborious, costly, yet addictive nature of the bleaching phenomenon in Jamaica. Their responses indicate that bleaching/toning requires commitment on various levels—financial, time and effort.

In the next section, I present the participants' perspectives (retailer, *bleachers*, *toners*, dermatologist, MOH Official) on the function and purpose of bleaching (and toning) in Jamaica. I also discuss the findings as they relate to the desire to bleach/tone because of the benefits they perceive or experience from bleaching (and toning) their skin.

The Motivation for the Bleaching Practice

I asked each participant in the study a simple yet obvious question, "Why do you bleach your skin?" Before proceeding with an answer, those participants who claim to be

toning (Sharon, Stacy, Keisha, Kay, Mikey Spent Shell, Shem, Banks and Rice Bag) and those who are bleaching (Lisa, Fabulous, Brown Man and Fifty) clarified their positions. They each (*toners*) insisted that I should be clear on what they were actually doing and not be confused between toning and bleaching as they are distinct practices. Within this section, I present the reasons for bleaching/toning as put forward by the retailer of bleaching products, the participants based on their admission—whether *toning* or *bleaching* their skin, followed by the perspectives of the dermatologist as well as the official from the Ministry of Health (MOH).

Retailer's Perspectives

Kayja, from very early in the interview emphasized her innocence to the bleaching phenomenon in Jamaica. She admitted to her knowledge of the practice but only as it related to her selling the products. It was very important that I understand that she was neither bleaching nor toning her skin because she was already naturally brown-skinned. In other words, she was already light-skinned and so did not need to bleach her skin. At several times during the interview, she reiterated that the people who bleached wanted to look like her. She seemingly boasted of her light skin tone and highlighted that although she was already light-skinned, she was often encouraged to bleach her skin. When specifically asked to describe her skin color, of which she was extremely proud, she said,

Okay, my skin color: I'm brown an, mi nuh even know my skin color, ha, mi nuh even can find nuh words weh...I'm...light brown, caw mi wouldn't say mi brown, I'm light brown. Natural (emphasis) light brown, an people still encourage mi to bleach. In which me love my color weh me have, mi nuh feel like mi shoulda brown like dis an still bleach, but mi love my color weh mi have. My color a di beauty, caw right now a it dem a run dung...so a di beauty dis, my

color. Dem say black a beauty but a my color a beauty cause a my own a sell. Right, so mi love my color.

Okay, my skin color: I am brown and, I do not even know my skin color. Ha! I cannot find the words... I'm light brown, because I wouldn't say I'm brown, I am light brown. Natural (emphasis) light brown, and people still encourage me to bleach. I love my skin color; I do not feel I should be as brown (light skinned) as this and bleach my skin. My color is the beauty because that is what they (bleachers) are running after. So this is the beauty, my skin color. People say black is beauty, but my color is beauty since it is my skin color that sells. Right, so I love my skin color.

Kayja's perspectives show the way in which light skin color (being brown) is idealized as the marker of real beauty in her community. Although she starts these comments with an element of modesty, suggesting that she did not know how to describe her skin, she quickly shifted course. She soon spoke emphatically of her light skin, bragging that she did not need to bleach. While she admitted to already having light skin, Kayja indicated that she was constantly still being encouraged to bleach her skin, suggesting that although she had light skin, it was still a relative and subjective matter and that others thought she should bleach to acquire an even lighter skin tone.

Another interesting point to note from Kayja's comments was that there is indeed a message professing that dark skin color is beautiful. She was readily able to dispel the idea that black skin is considered beautiful. She highlighted that idea was mere lip service because it is her skin color that remains popular. She further explained that it (light-skin) is the thrust for bleaching. She commented that since light skin is in such high demand, bleaching cream sales have drastically increased and continue to grow in popularity. This demand for light skin and the skin lightening products such as gels,

creams, lotions, soaps, and serums has made a lucrative business for Kayja who has been selling bleaching products for about four years.

In making the decision to sell the bleaching products, Kayja explained that it was not a difficult task. She highlighted that in the community where she lived, many people were trying to earn money with many entrepreneurial ventures and when she received some money from an aunt in Canada she wanted to do something different from everyone else. She reported that when she thought about what she wanted to do, in order to not waste the money, she first thought of selling hair products (wigs, extensions etc) then she decided on and started selling costume jewelry. She decided on selling bleaching products when she realized that it was the most popular fashion trend. She said,

mi say mi ah go buy some bleaching cream caw mi know dis wi work cause a it a run di market. First mi start wid three a everything, no really every an everything but three a di most popular ting like di Neprosone gel, the IKB, the lemon gel, G& G, Maxi Light, mi start wid three, three ah those tings.

I thought I am going to buy some bleaching cream (to sell) because I know this will work since it is running the market (high demand on the market). First I started with three of each kind, well, not three of each kind, just three of the most popular ones like the Neprosone Gel, the IKB, the Lemon Gel, G&G, MaxiLight, I started off with three of each of these.

According to Kayja, she analyzed the market and found that bleaching products would prove to be a wise investment as skin bleaching was a popular and fashionable trend. Her motivations are obviously to capitalize on the popularity of the bleaching trend and to earn money from it, despite the illegal nature of the business.

As a retailer of the products, she explained that while she may not be in full support of people bleaching their skins, she would keep selling the products as she had bills that needed to be paid. Further, she clarified that she has in the past discouraged people from bleaching, if she noticed that they were overdoing it and causing severe problems to the skin, but soon admitted that she would not be insistent as she needed the business.

Bleachers' Perspectives

On the other side of the spectrum are the users of the products, the *bleachers*. The reports from the *bleachers* as they relate to their reasons for bleaching are varied. While there were participants who said they did not know why they lighten their skin, other reasons vary from being merely a fashion trend or cosmetic ritual to wanting to drastically change their skin color from being too black.

Lisa, in discussing her reasons for bleaching started by saying she was beautiful even before she started bleaching and would command the attention of lots of men, regardless of whether she was bleaching or not, so she was unsure why she started bleaching her skin. She said that if you were ugly, bleaching was not going to change that. She said,

Mi wonda why me bleach an when me black things did a guan fi mi inna a certain financial more than when mi bleach now. Suh if yuh black an look good yuh look good, if yuh brown an look good yuh look good, if yuh choose fi bleach I feel seh dat is a choice dat i made an mi neva meck it out a beauty caahhh if yuh ugly an yuh black a bleach yuh still a go ugly an brown it nuh meck no difference .

I wonder why I bleach because when I was black, things were happening for me, even more so financially than now that I am bleaching. So, you are black and your look good, then you look good, if you are brown and you look good, you

look good, if you choose to bleach, I feel that is a choice that I made and I did not make it for beauty reasons. Because, if you are ugly and you are black, and you bleach you will be brown but still be ugly—it makes no difference.

So, with Lisa insisting she did not start bleaching for beauty purposes, I asked her to tell me what reason she had for bleaching. She laughed and said,

Honestly, mi start bleach mi face, meck mi tell yuh how it start basically cause mi nuh have a “WHY” Why mi bleach yuh nuh mi start bleach mi face, going to this party one time watching back di video, dem video the party, watching back di video mi a say no man how mi face brown so an mi body black so an mi did fat an basically mi neva like how mi fat, mi neva like how mi fat, an mi seh yuh know weh mi a go do, mi a a go jus go pon diet an bleeaacccchhhh (emphasis) out mi skin is like just sitting down mi loose mi job caahh di bar weh mi did a work wid lock down mi nuh have nutten fi do so mi jus say cho yuh know weh mi a go do mi a go stay inna a mi yard an bleach out an go pon diet an dats how it start yuh nuh , is like not me saying cho mi ugly an mi wahh brown or whatever or mi nuh look good it was nothing like that and from dat now it just become like is a addiction , mi a go tell yuh di truth.

Honestly, I started bleaching my face; let me tell you basically how it started because I do not have a reason. Why do I bleach? I started bleaching my face and then I went to a party and they videotaped the party. I was watching the recording and I said “no, how is it that my face is so brown and my body is so black?” And, I was fat; I did not like how fat I was and I said to myself, I know what I am going to do. I am going to go on a diet and bleach (emphasis) out my skin. I was sitting down at home since I lost my job—the bar I was working at was closed and I had nothing to do. I said, ok, you know what I am going to do? I am going to stay home and bleach out my skin and go on a diet. That is how it started; it’s not as if I said, oh I am so ugly and I want to be brown or whatever, or that I do not look good. It was nothing like that and from then it is just like an addiction, I am telling you the truth.

Although declaring that she did not consider herself ugly or too dark, Lisa’s comments suggest that she was unhappy with the way she saw herself on the videotape from the party and so she started to bleach her entire body and feels addicted to it.

Like Lisa, Fabulous admits to getting the same amount of attention from men with her original complexion as she does when she bleaches her skin. Fabulous explains

that looking good to her is very important and her bleaching is only one thing that she does to make sure she continues to look good. She explained that it helped to make her even more unique and beautiful. She said,

Looking good is very (great emphasis) important to me. Very important! Mi go inna di glass like 24-7 (laugh). Me is a girl like this wha nuh have much eyebrow but yuh know mi shape it up and use mi eyebrow pencil. Mi nuh really wear makeup on a daily basis but mi eyeliner is a everyday thing. Mi going to mi bed mi put on back mi eyeliner and stuff like that. YEEEEES!!! I don't go without mi eyeliner. As mi tell yuh, less eyebrow and mi eyelash. I do my eyelashes myself. Yes! I put on my eyelashes myself. Right now I don't have any original eyelash because them thin out because of the false eyelashes I wear like every day. Yeah, but otherwise I'm beautiful anyway. It is so important to me because it makes me feel good when I am looking good and it mek other people look, admire me looking good.

Looking good is very important to me (emphasis). Very important! I look in the mirror 24-7 (laugh). I am a girl like this, I do not have full eyebrows, but I shape them up and I use my eyebrow pencil. I do not really wear makeup on a daily basis but I wear my eyeliner every day. Even when I am going to my bed I put on back my eyeliner and stuff like that. Yes! (emphasis) I put on my eyelashes myself. Right now, my original eyelashes are gone, because of the way in which the false eyelashes which I wear every day have thinned them out. Yeah, but otherwise, I am beautiful anyway. It is so important to me because it makes me feel good when I am looking good and it makes other people look at me and admire me when I am looking good.

When Fabulous was probed for a specific reason for bleaching her skin, she spoke of other people who bleached their skin, to include people who were naturally brown-skinned (light-skinned) called browning. When asked why she thought they bleached their skin, despite being already brown, she added,

Mi nuh know why dem bleach same way. But mi know why me bleach. Because me like it! An mi jus look unique when mi bleach. An mi have a different wha mi woulda say now? Mi look different when me bleach. Like me is not me. You understand? When mi bleach mi have a unique look. Mi look totally different from when mi originally not bleaching. An mi like it. An me like look different.

I do not know why they bleach just the same (if they already have brown/light skin). But, I know why I bleach. Because I like it! And, I just look unique when I bleach. And I have a different, what would I say? I look different when I bleach. It's as if I am a different person. Do you understand? When I bleach, I have a unique look. I look totally different from before I started bleaching and I like it. I like looking different.

From all indications, the responses of the participants who admit to bleaching their skin seem to relate to the idea that they are bleaching for reasons related to fashion, beauty or their skin color looking different and unique.

Toners' Perspectives

Keisha commented that it is important to look good at all times and “A skin color carry the beauty” “*Beauty is in the skin color*” so that was the main reason she provided for using skin lightening products. Although Keisha claimed to be toning her skin, when she described her reasons for rubbing, she used the word bleaching as opposed to toning. She said,

Well, nowadays you have to really fix up yourself. Even if nothing not going on, you have to fix up yourself. You have to look decent all the time. Cause we are all woman. So we have to look appropriate at all times. Well it depend too on what you use on your skin. Well if you born with that natural complexion it nuh really mind. As long as you skin clean off, u nuh? ah it carry yuh off. I like those things you nuh! I like, I like, I like those things! I like it. You know likkle bleaching and likkle rubbings. I like it!

Well, nowadays you have to really fix up yourself (make yourself look good). Even if nothing is going on (not doing well financially or socially), you have to fix up yourself. You have to look decent all the time; especially since we are women, we have to look appropriate at all times. Well, it depends too on what you use on your skin. If you are born with that naturally light complexion, it doesn't really matter, as long as your skin is free of blemishes. Do you understand? That is what makes you look good. I like those things, you know? I like! I like! I like those things! I like it! You know a little bleaching and little rubbings (products). I like it!

When probed for a reason why she liked bleaching she commented that she liked it because it was fashionable. She exclaimed,

Well, for fashion! I like it for fashion. Tone down you skin and give you a different complexion. You nuh? That's about it.

Well, for fashion! I like it for fashion! Lighten your skin and give you a different complexion. You know? That is about it.

Rice Bag who has been using skin lightening products explained that the main reason he started using the products was to remove spots and bumps from his face. The added benefit to a blemish-free complexion is the extra attention from women. He made the point that when he started to use the products, it was not his intention to lighten his skin. He explained that his aunt purchased the products for him and he realized that they were having a lightening effect on his face. When he stopped using the products, the bumps came back even more prevalently than before, and his skin was darker than before so stopping is not a viable option for him. Another reason he put forward for bleaching/toning is that he likes the unique color of his skin from the products. He said,

Well alright, well, yeah I like how it just change the color of you skin and it is a different color, but I don't think it really brown, to me it just change the skin. To me, it just look like a next color, but some people say it look brown. But I don't see it as brown.

Well, alright, well, yeah I like the way it changes the color of my skin and it is a different color. I do not think it is really brown; my opinion is that it just changes the skin. To me, it simply looks like another color, but some people say it looks brown; but I do not see it as being brown.

Banks, a self-proclaimed *toner*, explained that he tones his skin primarily to attract females. He admits that his toning makes him look good and has even caused his girlfriend and mother to be jealous of him because he now has lighter skin than they do. According to Banks, while his mother doesn't bleach, his girlfriend is actively bleaching her skin, and he believes that they begrudge him and do not like it when his skin becomes too light. When asked if his mother bleaches or would bleach her skin, Banks explained that she would have no need to do that because the practice is for young people who are fashionable.

Sharon, in justifying her reasons for lightening her skin tone was very direct in explaining that skin color has nothing to do with beauty. Instead, she posited that everyone is pretty in their own ways. She suggested that a woman's hair and how she dresses would determine her beauty. She explained that while skin color had nothing to do with beauty, she said,

Skin color nuh have nutting fi do with it. Jus true me nuh too like nuttin too black Black is corruption (snicker) Ah people say it ah nuh me say so. Black people, you know say dem corrupted? Bad mind and corrupted and dem nuh good and mi nuh waan look like dem. So ah bleach mi haffi bleach it out.

Skin color has nothing to do with it (beauty). It is only because I do not like anything (anyone) whose skin is too black. Black is corruption (snicker). That is what people say; it's what people say, I am not the one who says that. But, do you know that Black people are corrupt? They are evil and corrupt and they are not good and I do not want to look like them, so I have to bleach out my skin.

Sharon's comments reflect her desire to disassociate herself from Black people. Despite saying that other people make the remark that Black people are corrupt, she continues to

offer her own hatred for having black skin. She affirms that she believes that Blackness is associated with corruption and evil and does not see her own contradiction.

On the other hand, she goes on to say that she was born beautiful and that she did not have to rub in order to look good. Despite separating herself from the negative things people say about Black people, Sharon's true feelings emerge when she describes her spouse. When asked if he was dark skinned, Sharon exclaimed,

No man! Him brown like you. Him a coolie. Wha mi ah do wid one black man? Mi nuh like dem when dem too black. (laugh)

No man! He is as brown-skinned (light-skinned) as you are. He is and Indian. What am I doing with a black man (emphasis)? I do not like them when they are too black (laugh).

Sharon's views reflect the idea that dark-skin is not attractive and as such she and others like her (those who have dark skin) are bleaching their skin to become more beautiful.

Dermatologist's Perspectives

When asked about the reasons his patients give for bleaching, Dr. Persadsingh explained that patients were not very responsive. Essentially, they were not in the habit of explaining why they bleached their skins when they visited the dermatologist for complications related to their bleaching habit. Understandably, the bleaching practice is an emotive subject which remains taboo among many and, therefore, is not discussed socially. Many people who are bleaching their skin remain silent on the matter and are often uncomfortable discussing the issue. He said, "Nobody gives me any reason, nobody knows why they bleach." While he did not have any substantial reasons as to why his patients were bleaching, he offered his views on the matter,

We think or we used to think that it was due to poor self image but researchers show that people who bleach have a higher self image than people who don't bleach. I think it's all tied up with the existence in Jamaica of a post colonial society of two cultures, an English culture which is white, foreign, powerful, rich, and an African culture which is pervasive, it is poor and inhabited by black people, very little opportunity for people, where poverty is pervasive. They look up to the white people and they denigrate things that are African. They enjoy the food and the music but they denigrate it too and so there is this aspiration, aspiring to the white culture.

Dr. Persadsingh referred to the idealization of the dominant culture. He speaks directly at the response of the ex-colonial people who are seeking to alter themselves in order to assimilate to the White culture. In effect, Persadsingh speaks of the two distinct and opposite cultures on the island and suggests that the people who bleach their skin belong to one culture and desire acceptance in the other. His views are congruent to those of the Ministry of Health official.

Ministry of Health Official's Perspectives

As the main representative for the government, for the educational efforts targeted at the bleaching phenomenon in Jamaica, the Director of Standards with the Ministry of Health had this to say on her beliefs as to why people bleach their skin.

One of the things, one of the reasons you get most frequently is because they want to look good "I want to look good." And you ask- you don't even hear: I want to look better, "I want to look good." And you ask them, "don't you think you're beautiful the way you are?" And they'll tell you, "no miss, no ma'am." And you'll ask, "Who told you you're ugly?" And they'll say that sometimes their own relatives.

Essentially, as she relates her experiences with *bleachers*, indicating the reasons she has heard *bleachers* offer for bleaching their skin, she took the opportunity to explain her views on the matter. She continued,

This is something that started early, and this is something which had nothing really to do with how the child looks, a perfectly beautiful person; a child does something, you know, and the adult is scolding and the adult says, “You so ugly,” you know that sort of way, “you so ugly.” So the child is not able to filter and to understand that this has nothing to do with how I look. This person is retaliating because I have done something which is displeasing and the easiest thing for them to say to me is, “you so ugly,” you know that sort of way, and so that, this is internalized and so they grow up feeling that I am ugly, I am ugly, and then later on they make a correlation between how they look, the color of their skin and this ugliness. And remember we living in a world where you have prejudices and you hear, you have these stories about blacks being, you know, so in their minds they see that white is best; if I’m white I’m beautiful, if I’m black I’m not, so what is the closest thing to, to bleach, you know, to become clear. So I think this is usually the most, the most, they say, can’t forget the sad, almost like it has become sad. If you were dark skinned and you were not bleaching you weren’t saying nutten (are not “with it”)

Osbourne spoke at length about bleaching as a socio-cultural issue in which it is considered a cultural value associated with looking good, popularity and fitting in with the crowd. She spoke specifically of the role of the many dancehall parties which are popular and play an important role in inner-city culture. She articulated,

you know you have these inner city parties, I don’t even know their names, they will have these inner city parties and Monday night is this and Tuesday night is this and all of that, and I mean, ladies are going to these parties and if you, if you, if you haven’t bleached then, I mean, you don’t belong, you know, you are not a part of the gang, really you are an outsider. How can you be an outsider in your own community? You have to belong so you need to bleach and, so it goes, it, it’s a socio-cultural thing to them, the bleaching goes with a kind of dress and it goes with a kind of talk, goes with a kind of walk and dancing.

She tried to offer a broader perspective on the issue of bleaching and suggested that the matter was not a superficial one which could be rectified in isolation by an effort of the Ministry of Health. She suggested that the issue was a profound one and that it would require work from several groups to adequately address. In trying to pinpoint a reason why people bleach their skin she said,

You know, it, it's just a lot of factors which you find which are complicated, and unless I, I think- in retrospect when I'm thinking about it- the issues are so deep they are not necessarily just ministry of health problems, I think, yes you have a public health problem here but I also see a social problem and so there is the need for social intervention, there is the need for educational intervention. I think several government agencies should be looking at, at this problem, there is a lot, a lot of things, I think causing the way they are and I think that, that this is the sad, sad part because it is difficult, difficult you know, you see someone who has a bright future, but is dark skinned and all of that, and so they see that all of these, all of these things about you are, are negative because you are dark skinned.

On the other hand, Thomas-Osbourne suggested that the people who bleach saw bleaching as a way to increase their chances in various ways, particularly for women.

She said,

They think, if I go up town I'm going to improve my chances; I might even meet a man who is more interested in... (deep sigh)- the issues are so complex, you know, they're really very complex so I don't think that from, from our standpoint, from the ministry's, standpoint we would have been able to address all of the factors which, which really drive them to bleaching but in terms of actually saying to them it is illegal because you are using an illegal product to do so and then getting these other persons as I said before to talk to them and also to also show them the result, you know, of what could happen I think we were able to make an impact.

According to Mrs. Thomas-Osbourne, the *bleachers*, especially women, view their practice as a means of becoming more beautiful. In fact, she suggests that it will help them increase their social capital and assist them in moving across class lines, possibly getting a man from "uptown." She laments that the situation is a sad one and that the efforts and response to the phenomenon should be one that focuses on the depth and magnitude of the issue and not just the legislative issues.

Summary

In summary, there is some apprehension among participants to admit the real reasons for lightening their skin. The perspectives presented by the *bleachers*, *toners* and the retailer have a similar theme—one that suggests the reason for lightening the skin is related to beauty or fashion trends. There is also the idea that bleaching or toning gives you clean, acne-free, blemish-free, flawless skin. This is typically described as a cool complexion with a unique color. There is also some mention of motivation to achieve a unique skin tone—one that others may describe as being brown.

For the men who are bleaching or toning, there is consensus that they become more popular with women since they have started lightening their skin. Fascinatingly, there is mention of women being jealous of the men who are successful at lightening their skin. The main feedback from the women who participated in the study is that men are not to bleach or tone their skin as it is more cosmetic in nature and is more suitable for women. Interestingly, two participants (Keisha and Sharon) who claim to be toning as opposed to bleaching used the term bleaching to describe their process when discussing their reasons for lightening their skin. There was a sense of urgency to bleach out or lighten their skins and to not be associated with anyone or anything being too black.

Deeper analysis of the participants' (both *bleachers* and *toners*) comments show that the reasons provided are superficial and there is some insight into the way in which beauty is idealized as having light skin. There is mention of the negative way in which dark skin is perceived and as such an encouragement for people to bleach their skin. The

focus however, based on the admission of the participants is that bleaching is a trend, relates to looking good and staying with the in-crowd.

The dermatologist and the MOH official's perspectives reflect more critical thought into the bleaching practice in Jamaica. According to the MOH official and the dermatologist, the reasons for bleaching go beyond fashion or beauty trends. Their comments speak of a deep-seated sense of denigration for dark skin and an elevation of light skin and other Eurocentric ideals in the country, resulting in the need for individuals to lighten their skin as a means of ascribing to this beauty ideal.

In the next section, I present the findings related to the participants' responses and reactions to the government's efforts to ban bleaching in Jamaica. The theme explores the defiance to the government's opposition, their reaction to the educational campaigns and the concept of responsibility that the participants express towards their children as it relates to the bleaching phenomenon in Jamaica.

The Government's Efforts to Ban Bleaching

According to Mrs. Thomas-Osbourne, the Director for Standards and Regulations, the responsibility falls on her unit at the Ministry of Health to establish and enforce national guidelines which act as health standards. These standards convey the expectations for facilities in both the private and public sectors. The inspectorate, as part of the Ministry's Pharmaceutical and Regulatory Affairs Department, noticed on routine visits of shops and street side vendors that many products being sold as cosmetic items were in fact skin-bleaching products. Because cosmetics fall under the national guidelines as well, there was closer inspection to these products when they were found to

contain steroids. At this time, the government started taking note of the bleaching problem.

Mrs. Thomas-Osbourne said that in 1998, closer observation of the chemical composition of the products caused an alarm. She said that the presence of steroids in the products would cause them to be classified as drugs and in keeping with the law, would require that they be sold based on prescriptions coming from registered physicians as prescription drugs in pharmacies with registered pharmacists. With this information, the inspectorate arm, in conjunction with the national police force began seizing the products, under the auspices of the Jamaican Food and Drug Act of 1964, Regulation 75. Essentially, the bleaching products with their steroid components were on the market as illegal drugs being camouflaged as cosmetic items.

The government's early efforts to seize the counterfeit products were hampered by the crafty ways in which the manufacturers were making and distributing the products. Mrs. Thomas-Osbourne emphasized that they would face a "recycling" problem because a certain product would be eradicated from the market and shortly it would reappear on the market with a different name, slightly different formulation and packaging.

She provided the example of one of the earlier products called *Movate*, whose chemical composition included Clobetasone (one of the most potent corticosteroids) and Betamethasone (a moderately potent corticosteroid). After doing one of the earlier dragnets and clearing *Movate* from the market, in later searches they found that *Movate* had reappeared on the market with a new composition, free of steroids. Sneakily, there

were other products on the market emerging called *Movate E*, then *Movate M*, then *Lemonvate* and then *Lemonvate Gel*, each with *unacceptable* levels of steroids. This problem, along with the persistent influx of various “cosmetics” on the market, persuaded the government to classify this as a public health problem.

Mrs. Thomas-Osbourne explained that in about 2005, the larger government (outside of her department) realized that the products had become part of a lucrative business targeted at “vulnerable” persons. She clarified “vulnerable” this way,

They are the ones—many of them are from inner city communities which are the poorer communities so you can see just how they have played these persons. We’ve seen very dark skinned persons become very light and, now, I am looking at you and can tell that you are naturally clear skinned, if someone else who had bleached was sitting beside you immediately you would see the difference. It’s an unnatural clear skin, clear color that you get, so what we did was to have a campaign which brought a number of stakeholders on board.

These stakeholders in the educational efforts included physicians, dermatologists (including Dr. Persadsingh who was interviewed as part of this study), journalists, and popular radio-personality, Dr. Leachim Semaj. Essentially, work was always being done to address the problem of bleaching in Jamaica, but it became more visible in 2003 and culminated in 2006 or 2007.

The visible efforts with other stakeholders, according to Mrs. Thomas-Osbourne, took the form of a large educational campaign where they visited schools and had a number of presentations at community libraries all over the island. She said this of the presentations and target audiences,

These presentations were about: how we see ourselves? and how is it that we do some of the things we do? and how we see ourselves versus how we should see ourselves? We went to high schools, and we did high schools separately from,

you know, primary schools because the language you use is really different. The interest is different. In high school, for example, you find upper school children using them. In primary school the message was more prevention because they had not started, so you were sensitizing; don't buy these things and don't use these things. You are beautiful the way you are and that's the message you have to learn. You have to tell people that they are beautiful and you have to believe you are beautiful. That's the primary school message. In high school you are saying: you don't need to use these things; you need to stop using them. And how do you get them to stop? You have to, you have to sell them an argument- I mean these are difficult, this is the difficulty- you have to sell them an argument they will buy and that is where someone like a Leachim Semaj came in because he is a professional and influential. We also had well known dermatologist (Dr. Persadsingh) working along with us and talking to them as well. And so we went to, you know, Portland, St. James, all over and you would have them come in, I mean some of them came in buses, they organized themselves, I mean, they had sponsorship because it was, it was a costly thing but we felt it was worthwhile.

In terms of success of the efforts, Mrs. Thomas-Osbourne explained that she is not convinced that the problem has been eradicated, but she believes there has been an increase in awareness of the problems related to skin bleaching. She said,

Once we started this thing (campaign), we actually had dermatologists reporting that yes they had seen persons, and they had pictures, graphic pictures, you know, and these were shown. So usually when we went it was a team of presenters which also included a dermatologist and you saw facial tissue which had broken down. One of the, the side effects, one of the permanent side effects you get is the hypertrophy where the, the skin, the tissue becomes very thin. You lose the cell, so it becomes really very thin and as you can imagine it is then easily damaged. You're very sensitive to sunlight so your skin is very easily burnt, you're prone to skin cancers from the sun, you know, and that sort of thing. So we had physicians reporting that yes they had seen these cases; some of them where, the damage was permanent, they couldn't do anything for them. Some of these persons as well, who could tell their, their personal story, and this again you know that this is powerful when you have the person who is so, damaged telling their story.

Although admitting to not having any statistics related to the actual burden on the health system, nor to measure the success of the campaigns, she said,

In terms of the burden- and we really never did look at what the exact burden was but we knew we had physicians saying yes they were seeing them (*bleachers*), we knew we saw actual patients, cases. I think many of them were treated more privately than in our own hospitals but this tended to be where they would go first than in our own hospitals, but yes in hospitals, in our major hospitals like a KPH (Kingston Public Hospital) and so a few persons will go there. It's interesting, we had women on television saying to reporters, "we nah stop bleach, an if we get sick we go a doctor." (*we will not stop bleaching, and if we get sick, we will go to the doctor*). The irony of it is that these people say they won't stop, and if they get ill they go to the doctor or they come to a public hospital. So the burden of care is now placed on the health system, and again that was, that was another perspective, another public health issue for the Ministry of Health.

Further, in trying to pinpoint and measure the level of success, she commented,

I suspect it really is still a big business; it's really very big, but I suspect that there's been a dent because I'm not seeing, we're not seeing as much as we did earlier. We're not seeing the actual product and in fact I don't think we're seeing as many persons with bleached out skin, I mean, you just used to see them all over; you still see a few of them but I think the message really has been going out, and I mean if the products are not there also it means that the activity is going to decrease. So I'm not saying that they are not there but the frequency with which we are seeing them I, I don't think it's as bad as before.

As Mrs. Thomas-Osbourne pointed out there is still work to be done and work continues with customs agencies at all points of entry—post offices, shipping ports, airports etc. but it is still very difficult to monitor or control.

Notwithstanding the challenges, she believes that the regulations are indeed helping to sensitize people. Her hope is to

Break the back of it out there, I think the greatest achievement yet would be for persons to see the product on the market and decide to make the conscious choice not to use the bleaching products not because it is illegal or not because they can't get the products but because it is something bad.

She described an experience she recently had at a church event with some youth and as they described how they felt adults viewed them she said,

I tell you it was very revealing. So these are some of the things which came out, from my learning because I really did learn a lot because I remember once I cried because a child said, “miss I’m ugly,” and I’m saying but why are you ugly? I said “look, look at how beautiful you are,” but she did not see that she was a beautiful child. I wouldn’t necessarily say she was abused at home but because of what they hear adults say, because of how they are treated, and sometimes even in the classroom, I mean teachers here now are mean to the classroom children. For example, they have a bunch of children giving trouble in class and sometimes, you retaliate in a way that’s not right. I don’t know if it’s happening everywhere, but when you see a child going to school and you’re saying; no one has told you you’re pretty? And she’s saying no and you know she’s not told she is pretty at home, she’s not told she’s pretty at church, she’s not told she’s pretty in school, so this is what you’re saying to them, I’m saying to them, “ you are beautiful, God made you beautiful and God made everything.” I’m saying to them, “look, if all of us were white can you imagine how boring the world would be?”

Her hopes are that the practice will be eradicated and even though she said she is not fooling herself into thinking that their job is done, their focus has shifted to other social problems. She remains hopeful and confident that in her role she has made a difference.

All *bleachers* and *toners* admitted to having some awareness of the government’s efforts to eradicate bleaching from the island’s shores. Their reactions were very interesting and all seemed to share a common theme. They all shared the idea that bleaching was a personal decision and that the government had no right to make an attempts at banning the practice.

Reactions to the Government’s Efforts: Defiance

Before Lisa would feel comfortable in participating in the research study, she had to be convinced that I was not a police officer or someone else from the government who

was trying to put a stop to bleaching in Jamaica. She remains very angry with the government for interfering in her personal life and was adamant that she would only talk to me if I did not have anything to do with any further bans on her beauty products.

She admits that she is puzzled about why the government would want to get involved in things as simple as cosmetics. She said she would tell this to the government,

Listen! Nuh put the government inna a diss yuh nuh. Why? Yuh have a whole heap a odda things fi worry bout more than bleaching yuh nuh? An if I have my body an I meck a choice what I want to do wid my body I don't understand yuh caah choose what I want to do wid my body .

Listen! Do not get the government involved in this. Why? You have a whole lot of other things to worry about other than bleaching. Do you understand? And, if I have my body and I make a choice to do what I want with my body, I do not understand! You cannot choose what I want to do with my body.

I mentioned that I thought that the government's fear is that bleaching is dangerous to which she responded,

Dangerous fi who, him or me? But is me choose fi use it, is a choice that I made!

For whom is it dangerous? Him? Me? I am the one who chooses to use it; it is a choice that I made!

When I asked Lisa if she knew what the dangers of bleaching were, her response came quickly. She said,

Of course! Basically them say skin cancer it can cause, cause dem say it go through yuh pores an go inna yuh system so yuh cahh live an whatever failure but come on people have cancer an dem neva bleach yet from dem barn, dem have skin cancer, a man who smoke neva have lung cancer, a man who neva smoke a cigarette have lung cancer, soooo we are aware a it, It deh pon di box, it deh pon di bottle. Yeah we can read it have di caution an yuh read it , an dat is a choice weh yuh meck so di government need fi come look fi gun man , yuh see di crime weh a guan inna di country, tell di government fi sort out dat an leave bleaching alone. Yuh see if everybody di a bleach an nah fire gun we wudda have a betta society.

Of course! Basically, they say that it can cause skin cancer, because they say it can go through your pores and go into your system. So you can't live and whatever other failures will happen, but come on, people have cancer and they never bleached since the day they were born. They have skin cancer; a man who has never smoked a cigarette can have lung cancer, so we are aware of it. It is on the box, it is on the bottle, Yeah! We can read! It has the cautions and we can read it! And that is a personal choice that you make, so the government needs to come and look for gun men. Do you see the crime we have going on in the country. The government needs to sort that problem out and leave bleaching alone. You see, if everyone was bleaching and not firing any guns, we would have a better society.

Lisa's responses as they relate to the government's interference in their personal choice accurately reflect the responses of all the *bleachers* and *toners*. For each, especially Lisa, who complained that the products have become harder to access and more expensive, there was a sense of anger towards the government for interfering and for directing its limited resources to bleaching when it should be focused on real problems such as crime.

Interestingly, all *bleachers* and *toners* seemed to share a sense of responsibility with their rubbing. Whether this responsibility emerged as a reaction to the government's efforts to eradicate the practice or not, they all commented that they would not want their children to rub.

Reactions to the Government's Efforts: Sense of Responsibility

While each explained that overall, they would prefer if their children did not use the products, there were some notable differences. Lisa who has two daughters, ages 16 and 12, for example suggested that bleaching is a personal decision that they would only be able to do as adults. She said,

No dem nah go bleach! Because dem is a child basically when dem reach di age adult dem can meck di decision if yuh want to or not but dem unda age dem nuh have the age right now fi meck dem own decision base on weh dem waahh do wid dem hair only as far as that dem can tell mi say boy mi waah dread locks

dem hair, that is not fi dem choice at fi dem age wen dem reach di age a consent like dem waah fi dread locks dem hair weh mi caaah do bout that.

No they will not bleach! Because they are children and when they reach the age of adulthood they can make the decision if they want to or not. But they are under aged and they are not of the age to make those decisions on their own based on what they want to do with their hair for example. All they can really say now is, boy, I would like to lock my hair, but that is not their choice at their age. When they reach the age of consent, for example, if they want to lock their hair, what can I do about that?

On the other hand, Banks, who does not yet have children, explained that he would not want any of his children to bleach, regardless of their ages. He spoke of wanting to be a good example for his children and said,

Well mi nuh want dem a falla weh me do, the fifty percent weh say it bad...an di nex fifty percent weh say it awright, well if she go pick up- caw dem a say it ban, dem a ban it an ting so if she go pick up which part me leff off now it a go look a way say me nah set no example fi my daughter den, caw me know say it wrong an yet still mi a mek she still a dweet, so mi wouldn't wah she a dweet, fi go it woulda wrong.

Well, I do not want them to follow what I do; the 50% of people who say bleaching is bad, and the next 50% who say it is alright, well if she picks up the habit...remember they say it is banned, they banned it and so on, so, if she picks up where I left off, it will look funny. It will look as if I did not set any example for my daughter then, because I know that it is wrong and yet I still allowed her to do it. So, I would not want her to do it, for her to do it would be wrong.

Kay shared similar sentiments, acknowledging, as Banks did, that what they are doing is wrong yet they continue to do it. She emphasized that she would not want her daughter to bleach, but was conflicted by her decision to continue to bleach her own skin. She said,

Mi nah go mek true wha u do, u really mek u child follow still. At the same time, is like I am telling her to do right and I am doing wrong. So, me will eventually stop in time to come, but...

I am not going to allow my child to follow me because I am doing it. At the same time, it would be like I was telling her to do right and I am doing wrong. So, eventually, I will stop in time to come but...

Fabulous, whose daughter is only six-years-old, thought her daughter would not want to bleach because she was very dark so there would not be any point in bleaching. She was also convinced that she would be able to prevent her daughter from bleaching her skin. She said it was funny that her daughter at age six was very aware of what was happening with her bleaching her own skin, but that it would not affect her daughter. She conceded that when she became an adult she could make that decision but said,

Shi nuh ready fi no bleaching yet. She ah just six year old. Wha kind of bleaching she ah go bleach? And mek mi give u a drama. Mi sen my daughter ah shop and she tell me say, she ah bleach too she can't go inna di sun like how u cant go inna di sun(laugh). Tell she ah tell me say di sun too hot. Plus, she darker than me yuh nuh so wha kinda bleach she waan bleach? No sah. Mi nuh think my daughter ah go do dat. No sah. But if she want ah fi har decision.

She is not ready for any bleaching yet. She is only six-years-old. What kind of bleaching would she be doing? And let me tell you a story, I sent my daughter to the shop and she told me that she is bleaching too so she cannot go in the sun just as I cannot go out into the sun. She told me the sun is too hot. Additionally, she is darker than I am so what kind of bleach would she want to bleach? No sir! I do not think my daughter will do that. No sir! But, if she wants to bleach that is her decision.

When I asked Fabulous what age she thought would allow her daughter to bleach she offered, “Well when she grows up, meaning 21, adult; but she can’t” When I mentioned to Fabulous that she started bleaching in high school she plainly said,

Dat a me, she cyan try dat! She cyaaan try dat man! Mi nuh think she woulda try dat.

That’s me! She cannot try that. She cannot try that man! I do not think she would try that.

Fifty expressed the hope that if and when he had children that they would not want to bleach their skin. He also admitted that he knew how much pressure they would face to bleach their skin when they are in high school. With that, he said he would approve of their bleaching when they turned 16 or 17 years old. Despite that approval, however, he made it clear that he would monitor their bleaching because they are school-aged children and that he would not want them to overdo it.

Summary

As early as 1995, the Jamaican government noticed that there was a large quantity of cosmetic products on the market with a higher than 2% content of steroids. This qualified these products as drugs which would require a prescription. During the time period spanning 1995 to 2003 there were several dragnets to remove the products from the market but the government realized that there was an influx of them on the market which were being targeted at people in the inner city. Since 2005, the government embarked on a series of educational presentations which sought to raise awareness of the dangers associated with the products and to encourage individuals to love their own skin. Some of the phrases they used during the campaign, with the intent on them becoming

catch phrases, included: *Don't Kill the Skin, Bleachers Beware! And Real Men Don't Bleach.*

Although there are no statistics available to quantify the incidence of the problem, nor to measure the success of the educational campaign, the products are not as easily accessible, they cost more and the participants were all aware of some of the dangers related to bleaching. Despite the awareness however, there is a feeling of anger towards the government for investing time and other resources in trying to ban bleaching. For the participants, bleaching is a personal decision and the government's interference is misdirected. They believe the government should spend their time and efforts on real problems such as crime.

All *bleachers* and *toners* expressed a hope that their children would not bleach their skin. Their responses signified a sense of responsibility to their children with reference to their bleaching. While there were responses that indicated a desire that their children not bleach at all, there were responses which suggested bleaching was a personal decision which could be done upon reaching adulthood. There were also responses that suggested that although they were actively bleaching, they knew it was wrong and would not want their children to follow their example. Essentially, although the reactions to the government seem negative and defiant even, there is an awareness of the dangers related to bleaching and a sense of responsibility in bleaching as it relates to their (*bleachers* and *toners*) children.

Cultural Artifacts

To complement the primary source of data (participant interviews), and as a method of triangulation, I reviewed the text of five popular songs which make specific reference to light skin color and/or bleaching in Jamaica. Transcripts (in the native tongue) of each song may be found in Appendix I. Following the analysis of these songs, photographs of public signage reflective of skin color privilege and bleaching are presented.

Songs

The popular songs analyzed in this study were: *Love Mi Browning*, by Buju Banton (1992), *Dem ah Bleach*, by Nardo Ranks (1992) *Mi Bleaching Fit Me*, by Lisa Hype (2009a), *Mi Proud a mi Bleaching* (2009b), also by Lisa Hype and *Mi Nah Rub*, by Queen Ifrica (2007).

Love Mi Browning

Browning is a term of endearment used to describe women with light-skin color or those having a fair complexion. Mark Myrie, whose stage name is Buju Banton, sings of an unspoken yet shared idea that females with light skin in Jamaica are considered attractive and therefore most desired. Buju highlights the preference for brown skin women in the song showing how female beauty is constructed on the island. He highlights how skin color intersects with the colonial constructions of beauty and femininity.

In the song, Buju declares his love for light skin women and indicates how much he values his browning over his material possessions. The chorus of the rhythmic and catchy tune says,

Me love me car me love me bike
 Me love me money and ting
 But most of all, Me love me browning
 Love me car Me love me bike
 Me love me money and ting
 But most of all, me love me browning

I love my car; I love my bike (motorcycle)
I love my money, and (my) things
But most of all, I love my browning
Love my car, I love my bike
I love my money and (my) things
But most of all, I love my browning

The song gained Banton popularity, and although the song was met with controversy, it remained a popular musical hit.

Dem ah Bleach

Nardo Ranks, also in 1992, released a single called *Dem a Bleach* in which he criticizes Buju Banton for singing of his love for brownings and therefore causing the bleaching fad. He suggests that Buju is the reason for the desire to get brown skin. He sings this song using a popular and catchy tune,

Bwoy, true Buju Banton tell the girl dem bout browning,
 All a di girl dem a run go shop go bleach
 Caw dem want brown skin
 All a the girl dem
 Dem a bleach
 Dem a bleach out dem skin
 Dem a bleach fi look like a browning
 Dem a bleach
 Dem a bleach out dem skin

Dem a bleach fi look like a browning

*Boy, since Buju Banton told the girls about browning
 All the girls are running to the shops to bleach
 Because they want brown skin
 All of the girls
 They are bleaching
 They are bleaching out their skin
 They are bleaching out their skins to look like a browning
 They are bleaching
 They are bleaching out their skin
 They are bleaching to look like a browning*

While Nardo Ranks offers the critique of the bleaching practice, he lays the blame squarely on Buju Banton for singing the song earlier that year (1992) speaking of his love for light-skinned women. Nardo blames the bleaching fad on Banton's song but he does not consider that the women's desire for brown skin or Buju's love for brown skin is part of the deeper psyche in the nation.

Mi Bleaching Fit Me

Lisa Hype, now known as Lisa HYPER, released a song called *Mi Bleaching Fit Me* (Hype, L., 2009a, track 6) in which she criticizes those who are passing judgment on her for bleaching her skin. She mocks those who suggest that bleaching can give skin cancer, and she retorts that smoking can give lung cancer and so she wants to be left alone. According to Lisa, more people smoke than those who bleach their skin, and since her bleaching is expensive (suggesting high quality products and a sense of immunity to the side effects), she should be left alone and focus should turn to smokers.

She glamorizes the bleaching practice suggesting that since she earns a lot of money, she can bleach all she wants and that people are criticizing her because she

bleaches and specifically because she is proud of her decision to bleach. She goes on further to suggest that her bleaching makes her happy and critiques of her bleaching are merely jealous “haters.” This is because she purports that her bleaching suits her well, it makes her look good and while cigarettes bring cancer, bleaching results in beauty.

Proud Ah Mi Bleaching

Another popular song by Lisa HYPER in 2009-2010 that glamorizes or romanticizes the bleaching phenomenon in Jamaica is *Proud Ah Mi Bleaching* (2009b, track 6). In this song, HYPER echoes similar sentiments of *Mi Bleaching Fit Me* where she makes specific reference to the critique that others are making of her because of her bleaching. She says,

I am beautiful in every single way
 Words can't bring me down
 Ah (*I'm*) Lisa Hype
 I am beautiful no matter what they say
 Words can't bring me down

She uses the words of Christina Aguilera’s hit *Beautiful* (2002), to flaunt that she is proud of her bleaching and touts that her bleaching is a luxurious because her skin-bleaching products are expensive. She mocks those who are not experts in bleaching and as such would fall victim to negative side-effects.

Unlike those however, she boasts that she is pretty, has fame and no shame in the fact that she bleaches her skin. She shows off that bleaching can help women get the right spouse; it can make you beautiful and fashionable. She lists the products used and suggests that girls from both Jamaica and the USA are bleaching (Portmore, Jamaica and

Brooklyn, New York etcetera) and with that popularity, if you are bleaching your skin correctly, you will be “brown and white” within two weeks.

Mi Nah Rub

Like Nardo Ranks, Queen Ifrica (2007, track 17) puts forward a critique of the bleaching practice. She uses herself as an example of a beautiful Jamaican woman who does not have light skin who is not bleaching her skin. She suggests that her complexion is better than ever and that having brown skin is not for everyone. She indicates that Jah (God) has made everyone perfect, so there is no need to bleach. The chorus of the song attacks the popularity of the bleaching fad. She says,

Ah nuh everybody a rub, ah nuh everybody a rub
 Not because Grace and Jack and him Granny a rub
 Nuh mean so everybody a rub.

Not everyone is rubbing, not everyone is rubbing (bleaching)
Not because Grace, Jack and his grandmother are rubbing (bleaching)
Does not mean that everyone is rubbing (bleaching)

Queen Ifrica suggests that although skin bleaching is a popular trend, not everyone is bleaching. She makes fun of the practice, and suggests that bleaching is a means of showing ingratitude to God for your skin color. She critiques bleaching as a part of the “Babylon” system—here she makes specific reference to the colonial mentality which privileges light skin over dark skin.

Signage & Party Flyers

In this section I present photographs of public signage and dance hall party flyers reflective of skin color issues and by extension, bleaching.



Figure 4.1 *Public Signage: Pretty Girls Only*



Figure 4.2 Party Flyer: *Bikini Fetish: Beauty on the Beach*

This flyer is for a dance hall party titled *Bikini Fetish: Beauty on the Beach*. This shows the way in which female beauty is depicted and advertised. Note the light skin, sexually suggestive pose and demeanor of the models. This is consistent with the notion that light skin is beautiful, sexy and appealing.



Figure 4.3 Party Flyer: Naked

Although an animated picture, this flyer also depicts a similar “pretty” woman on the flyer. Note the light skin tone, long flowing light colored hair. This picture also shows the woman as a very sexual being with a seductive pose. The picture represents the idea that a sexy woman has light skin and a primarily Eurocentric appearance.



Figure 4.4 Party Flyer: Exclusive Celebrity Playground

This flyer advertises an exclusive and elite party event using the picture of light skinned woman. This flyer appeals to the desire of belonging to a certain class and having a celebrity status. With the name of the event and the appearance of the woman

in the flyer, there is a certain appeal and attraction to belong to an exclusive group, one in which light skin color is privileged.



Figure 4.5 Party Flyer: Rock Star Mentality

This party flyer shows a light skinned woman as representation of beauty and fashion with the party title being Rock Star Mentality. This photograph shows a light

skinned woman in a sexually suggestive outfit. Her appearance is consistent with the idea that light skinned beauty and long blond hair is attractive.

Summary

From examining the public signage and the selected pictures from advertisements of dancehall parties shown (Figures 4.1- 4.5), the message that beauty is an important indicator of status in Jamaica is very pronounced. The images show beauty being portrayed through light skin. There are very sexually explicit pictures revealing somewhat Eurocentric values, particularly through light skin, long hair (often blonde) and the messages are consistent—to be considered as an attractive or beautiful woman, light skin is ideal.

Although none of the figures make specific reference to bleaching, the promotion of light skin as a value is evident and by inference, bleaching one's skin in order to achieve this is light skin tone becomes a viable option. The notion of beauty then, from all descriptions offered by the participants and from the cultural artifacts, is one that values flawless, light skin and other values such as long straight hair and slim bodies.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter, I present a brief overview of the study, describing the purpose, methodology and research questions which guided the research. I also present a summary of the findings then articulate how the findings relate to the study's research questions. In conclusion, I present the study's implications for policy, practice and theory followed by recommendations for future research.

Overview of the Study

Skin Bleaching in Jamaica: A Colonial Legacy is a qualitative research study set in Kingston, Jamaica. The main purpose of the study was to examine the psychological and socio-cultural factors that influence the practice of skin bleaching in the postcolonial society of Jamaica. Additionally, the study outlined the nation's efforts to combat the skin-bleaching phenomenon.

The research questions were: (a) How does a history of slavery and colonialism influence members of a postcolonial society to engage in the practice of skin bleaching? (b) How does early learning and socialization within a postcolonial society contribute to the decision to practice skin bleaching? (c) What are the benefits—perceived and realized of skin bleaching? (d) What is the role of popular culture and media in the skin-bleaching phenomenon? and (e) What strategies have the Ministry of Health employed to combat the health problem of skin bleaching?

In this qualitative study using the basic interpretive approach, in-depth, face-to-face interviews were conducted with a retailer of bleaching products, a local

dermatologist, a Ministry of Health official, six male, and six female bleachers. Analysis of the audio recorded interview transcripts revealed the following six themes: (a) multiple and inconsistent definitions of bleaching, (b) mixed reviews of bleaching, (c) expertise in managing the bleaching process, (d) the nature of the bleaching practice, (e) the motivation for the practice of bleaching, and (f) the government's efforts to ban bleaching. Cultural artifacts which related to skin color and the bleaching phenomenon were also collected and analyzed.

Discussion of the Findings

The responses from the participants revealed that there are multiple yet inconsistent definitions for the bleaching practice in Jamaica. As the participants presented their personal definitions of bleaching, they introduced the concept of toning. Toning appears to be a less abrasive and less taboo way of describing the skin lightening process. It is merely an attempt by people who are lightening their skin to convince themselves and others that it is not as severe or bad as bleaching. As they presented the concept of toning as a distinct practice from bleaching, there were multiple inconsistencies in the definition of toning. Additionally, the actual practice shows that it is not easy to distinguish between toning and bleaching and describe them as dissimilar practices.

With the taboo nature of the practice, claiming to be toning as opposed to admitting to bleaching is more palatable. Contrasting the two concepts as different practices is comprehensible because of the stigma attached to the bleaching practice in the society at large. The participants' responses show that there are mixed messages

relating to the skin-bleaching practice. There are people in the population who support the practice, some indifferent, and some who are diametrically opposed. With the negative stigma associated with bleaching, several nicknames based on bleaching rituals and *bleachers*' and *toners*' appearances have become widely popular.

Without the use of skin color measurement devices such as reflectometers and reflectance spectrometers (Trainer, 2002) to provide objective readings, relying on the individual perceptions of the participants and the researcher highlights the subjectivity of the discernment process. It also suggests that this is an area that merits further inquiry and study. Previous research shows that the race of the interviewer influences the responses of survey respondents in face- to- face interviews (Anderson, Silver & Abramson, 1988; Hatchett & Schuman, 1975) with interviewers of different races than the participants.

Hill's (2002b) study which used data from the Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality was concerned with the question, "Does the race of the interviewer influence the classification of the skin tone of respondents in face-to face interviews?" Hill's study addressed the issue of cross-racial social perception and it is interesting to note that at the time of this (current) study, there was no evidence of research in the social science literature that explored the issue of skin color judgments among interviewers and participants from the same racial group. The matter is further complicated because as the limited research which exists on the issue suggests, skin color discernment and self-reporting is extremely imprecise (Green & Martin, 1990), prone to bias (Marks, 1943),

and self-referenced (Hill, 2002b). This suggests that further research is needed in this area.

The bleaching phenomenon as described by both *bleachers* and *toners* is a practice which requires significant commitment. This commitment is required because the process, once started, is laborious, time consuming, costly, and addictive. Although consistently described as an intermittent process, participants suggested that they would increase the intensity and or frequency of using the skin lightening products, particularly for upcoming social events, especially in the dance hall. Dancehall music, Jamaica's Reggae descendant, is an influential mainstay in Jamaican inner-city culture; it is an important part of the context of urban lifestyle (Cooper, 2004; Stanley-Niaah, 2004). Like dancehall culture and dancehall music, skin bleaching has had a mixed reception in Jamaica.

The participants of the study, including the dermatologist, retailer and the official from the Ministry of Health, reported that people in the country are divided in their opinions of the practice. From a larger perspective, the reports are that the practice is more widely accepted in communities with lower economic and social status while upper class communities show disdain for the practice. Interestingly, people within the lower class communities express the feeling that the elite are hypocritical in their critique of the practice as they too are bleaching their skin, in the privacy of their dermatologists' offices. The association of beauty with skin color permeates throughout all communities and as such, bleaching is evident among all strata of the country, despite the many negative side-effects.

There are serious consequences to bleaching one's skin, much of which extend beyond dermatology. Skin bleaching has health, emotional, financial, cultural and social consequences. Although each *bleacher* and *toner* acknowledged the potential risks associated with using the skin lightening products, they admitted to continued use the products. In discussing the risks with the participants to include skin cancer, renal complications, legions, neurological complications, irritability, insomnia and memory loss, Cushing's syndrome (Mahe, Ly & Peret, 2005), they all expressed similar sentiments about the intermittence of the practice. As far as the *bleachers* were concerned, due to the intermittence of the practice and their expertise in selecting and mixing the products, they were convinced they would not experience any negative side-effects. From my perspective, the intermittent nature of the practice not only complicates data collection for interested stakeholders, but it also gives the bleachers a false sense of control and power over their destiny. Essentially they believe that they know what they are doing and as such will not encounter any side-effects of bleaching, at least not in the short term.

They were all convinced that they were professional in their mixing and that they had the process under control. *Bleachers* as well as *toners* spoke very critically of others who were bleaching and due to their over exuberance, inexperience with the products, or poor choice in products (cheap) they were damaging their skin or going overboard. The process was described, not only as being costly, but also laborious, time consuming as well as addictive.

Among the adverse effects of topical steroidal use is addiction to the use of the products (Burry, 1973; Hengge, Ruzicka & Schwartz, 2006). While this may explain one aspect of the habitual nature of the practice, the matter is further complicated for the bleachers because once the skin is lightened by the chemicals, if one stops using the products the skin becomes darker than it was before the products were used in the first place. With that, it is understandable that an individual, who is using the products, would not want to stop lightening in order to maintain the light skin color or to prevent the skin from returning to its original color or becoming even darker than before.

Bleaching in Jamaica, as far as the participants in this study are concerned, is a personal matter which relates mostly to the idea of beauty and fashion. While initial responses to the question of “why do you bleach?” tended to begin with expressions of ignorance (I don’t know why I bleach; no real reason), the primary reasons revolved around concepts of being in style or in fashion, looking good (because of being brown) and sophisticated. This was particularly true for the men in the study who admitted that they are often targeted as being effeminate because they were bleaching; they all admitted to be rubbing for purposes of looking good—especially for women. *Toners’* responses tended to focus on looking good, but with an emphasis on having a “cool complexion,” flawless and blemish free skin. Essentially, they wanted their skin to be “cool,” that is, not flushed.

Other efforts to lighten the skin were explained by the desire to look good, to be seen, to be popular and to possibly attract a good mate, or to get a job in an up-town environment. Some participants, particularly the bleachers spoke of the “unique” color

that they get from bleaching and as such find it difficult to stop. The unique color appeared to be a symbol of fashion and style. The findings suggest congruence with the literature on the benefits of having light skin as being more attractive than dark (Herring, Keith & Horton, 2004; Rogozinski, 2000) and as a means of social capital (Hunter, 2002).

Concerned with the problems associated with the bleaching practice in Jamaica, the government, as early as 1995, have taken steps to address the issue. Their first major strategy involved criminalizing the products which were on the market that consisted of more than 2% hydroquinone or mercury. The government's position is that these products are drugs, camouflaged as cosmetics, and have the potential to cause great harm to the populace. They have implemented a system of placing hefty fines on any importer or seller of the products. Members of the local police force continue to conduct dragnets to rid the streets of the products, although they tend to resurface after a short time, often in different packaging and branding. By creating partnerships with the Department of Customs and other agencies at ports of entry, they have reduced the amount of products making their way to the marketplace.

The government initiated a major educational campaign with various stakeholders, aimed at addressing the issue within high and elementary schools as well as in the community. They conducted seminars at libraries, schools and community centers across the island. Unfortunately, the reactions and responses to the campaigns and efforts to curb the practice have been negative. The participants' views show that they remain angry and disgusted with the government. They mistrust the intent of the

programs and feel that the government is simply aiming its attention on the “small man” instead of focusing on larger issues of corruption, crime and violence throughout the country. They suggest that the government is afraid to take on those big challenges because politicians are often in cohort with many criminals. Interestingly, the participants suggested that they have a right to make their personal choice and the government’s efforts are in violation of that right. Indeed, the educational campaigns appeared themselves colonialist in structure. It highlights the paradox in the intent of the efforts and the approach used.

In this regard, the findings suggest that there is a requirement for a concentrated and specific kind of literacy and competency related to adult learning, the media and health. Essentially, a concentrated education effort to address this complex problem and the psychology behind it is needed and not a band-aid to cover up the symptoms. The overarching observation is that the *bleachers* (inclusive of *toners*) subscribe to a kind of a preponderance of thought that dark skin is inferior to light skin and bleaching is a viable and effective way to achieve social status. Society in itself is deficit as it promotes and rewards light skin over dark. Light skin is seen as more attractive and desirable and places pressure on dark skinned individuals who try to attain this ideal.

Addressing the Research Questions

Postcolonialism and social cognitive theory was used to guide the study. Based on the data, concepts were identified that are representative of postcolonialism thought and social cognitive theory. In this section, I present a discussion of the findings as they

relate to each of the major research questions along with a discussion of relevant literature.

The study's research questions were: (a) How does a history of slavery and colonialism influence members of a postcolonial society to engage in the practice of skin bleaching? (b) How does early learning and socialization within a postcolonial society contribute to the decision to practice skin bleaching? (c) What are the benefits—perceived and realized of skin bleaching? (d) What is the role of popular culture and media in the skin-bleaching phenomenon? and (e) What strategies have the Ministry of Health employed to combat the health problem of skin bleaching?

Question One

How does a history of slavery and colonialism influence members of a postcolonial society to engage in the practice of skin bleaching?

In reviewing the multiple sources of data, interviews, observations, and cultural artifacts, the findings of the study suggest that there is a bias in Jamaica for light skin over dark skin. Despite being a nation with a predominantly Black population which gained independence from Britain in 1962, there is an overwhelming preference for Eurocentric characteristics as a marker or indicator of beauty. The nation's history of, and experience with, slavery and colonization remains at the core of this belief and way of life.

Postcolonialism critiques the lingering effects of colonialism on a nation (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2004) despite the end of its colonial period. Slavery and colonization dominated life in Jamaica and impinged its values related to White

superiority on the nation. The research shows that since slavery, light skin color has been considered more attractive and appealing than dark skin (Herring, Keith & Horton, 2004; Rogozinski, 2000; Williams, Lavizzo-Mourey & Warren, 1994). With this positive judgment and preference for light-skin over dark, issues of colorism become apparent (Graham, 1999; Hunter, 2002). Postcolonial cultural analysis indicates that by ascribing beauty ideals to Eurocentric characteristics, slavery and colonialism acted as the force which socialized and influenced Jamaicans to believe that dark skin is unattractive and less desirable.

Postcolonial theory is useful in understanding how colonial power shapes culture and continuity of colonial thought (Slemon, 1991). The findings of the study suggest that there is a continued preoccupation with the idealization of light skin and other Eurocentric characteristics. As a sovereign state, Jamaica is no longer subject to direct control by England, yet the ideology of elevating Eurocentric values and denigrating Afrocentric values remains inscribed on the nation's people. It follows that this unrelenting ideology, perpetuated by slavery and colonialism, plays a role in the decision to bleach the pigmentation from one's skin in an attempt to appear beautiful.

Question Two

How does early learning and socialization within a postcolonial society contribute to the decision to practice skin bleaching?

It can be appreciated that an individual's values are taught, often in informal and non-formal ways, from very early in life. Jamaicans are socialized with the remnants of colonization which continue to lurk in formal systems and informal agents of

socialization. Social cognitive theory is well-suited to elucidate the way individuals use agency to devise ways to adapt in their environment (Bandura, 2002). Agency, an important tenet of social cognitive theory, is the mechanism which individuals and groups use to shape their social future (Bandura, 2002) and in the case of the *bleachers*, the findings show that the practice of bleaching is a way for individuals to fashion their own social and even economic prospects.

The findings suggest that there is an ever-present dogma in the society that suggests that British values are held in higher esteem than Jamaican or African values. This societal condition, shaped by colonial knowledge enabled domination and permits a continued conquest and domination over the nation. This is evidenced by the remaining legacies of imperialism and colonialism which permeates many influential aspects of Jamaican culture such as sports, religion, music, education, social life and language.

Using the lens of social cognitive theory and postcolonialism to examine the skin-bleaching phenomenon, the findings of the study purport that bleaching is used as a mechanism to compensate for perceived physical limitations and to circumvent environmental constraints, a direct act of agency.

From the reported experiences of the *bleachers*, the practice is modeled through observation and interaction, a key component of the social cognitive theory. Interaction with, and observation of, sociocultural milieus set the stage for behavior (Bandura, 2002; 2004). Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner (2007), echo the sentiment that learned behavior is as a result of interaction with the environment. The findings in this study support that viewpoint; they suggest that early learning and socialization, cultural and

economic conditions, as well as the historical context set the stage for observing and learning the bleaching behavior.

Question Three

What are the benefits—perceived and realized of skin bleaching?

Given that beauty is an indicator of social status and social capital (Hunter, 2002), and light skin equates to beauty, it is understandable that people seek ways to attain it. For some, bleaching the skin becomes a viable option. The benefits of bleaching the skin, for *bleachers* and *toners*, extend beyond just beauty. Research by Robinson and Ward (1995) shows that light skin is an asset and there are benefits to be derived from having light skin, and by inference, bleaching. This expands into areas of empowerment (Li, Min, Belk, Kimura & Bahl, 2008) self-image and popularity among peers, courtship and marriage (Hunter, 2002; 2004) housing, economics, education, and health (Herring, 2002; Hunter, 1998; 2005 & Telles & Murguia, 1990) and overall increasing life chances.

Participants who admitted to bleaching or toning their skin commented on the importance of looking good. The responses from the *bleachers* revolved around the idea of bleaching for fashion, beauty or acquiring a unique skin color. While all *toners* spoke of fashion as the reason for their practice, the benefits extended to having a cool, blemish-free and acne-free complexion.

Another benefit to bleaching among the participants is that of creating a sense of belonging, popularity and attractiveness. The idea that bleaching allows one entry into the fashionable and trendy world, particularly that of the dance hall, extends to feelings

of inclusion into a unique social group—the in-crowd. The benefits for the participants in the study are practical; they perceive and therefore experience a positive change in their social standing and appearance. This change, according to the respondents, affords them the potential to attract a spouse, possibly from a higher social and economic class and may open doors to prospective jobs.

While some admit that their intentions may not have been to lighten their skin, they all admit to have benefitted from the practice, some with increased attention from members of the opposite sex, and others with the change in their own personal outlook on life and their reception into an acceptable social standing. The findings support the literature which addresses the privilege of light skin over dark and the way in which beauty is characterized and idealized in a Eurocentric way (Jones, 2004; Leslie, 1995; Nichter & Nichter, 1991; Lindberg-Seyersted, 1992; Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999).

Question Four

What is the role of popular culture and media in the skin-bleaching phenomenon?

The media serves as an effective means of socialization and transmission of popular culture. Mass media and popular culture have an interdependent relationship. Numerous studies have been concerned with the effect of the media on society and whether or not the messages delivered in the media are reflective of society (Hearold, 1986; Wood, Wong & Chachere, 1991; Paik & Comstock, 1994; Baran & Davis, 1995). Researchers have noted several commonly mentioned intended and unintended media effects (McGuire, 1986; McQuail, 1994) which are usually described as cognitive,

affective, or behavioral (Chaffee, 1977; Roberts & Maccoby, 1985). The study of media effects is based on the idea that the content delivered in mass communication has clear effects on people, society and culture in general (Perse, 2001).

Messages communicated through media influence our meaning making process, our ideologies, viewpoints, and positionalities (Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992). The media messages also play a role in forming and influencing public opinion (McCombs, Einsiedel, & Weaver, 1991). Wright (1986) suggests that the media's role in socialization is functional and positive. Notwithstanding, as these countless and influential messages are delivered quickly and are easily accessed by large groups of people (Perse, 2001), they also have the potential to reinforce or lead to misconceptions and gaps in knowledge, (Wartella, Heintz, Aidman, & Mazzarella, 1990) albeit unconsciously (Tisdell & Thompson, 2007).

Given the pervasiveness and influential properties of popular culture portrayed through the media, it plays an important role in the skin-bleaching practice in Jamaica. According to Guy (2007), popular culture is instructive in matters related to race, class, gender, and other forms of socially significant difference. It is equally important to note that television is filled with stereotyped images of women and minorities (Signorielli, 1990).

The opinion that light skin is attractive, and especially more attractive than dark skin, is permeated throughout the media. The songs analyzed in this study are popular songs in the dancehall culture, from very influential artists, and each is reflective of the belief that beauty is linked to skin color. The artists are influential, particularly on the

youth, and their messages are promoted widely on television, radio and the internet. The flyers selected and analyzed also show that there is a preponderance of thought that light skin, long blond hair, and Eurocentric characteristics in general are considered attractive and sexually appealing. This message is extended in mass media, throughout the community, and continues to reverberate among people across all age groups. As a result of this idea that light skin is more attractive than dark skin, the evidence of it being a marker of social status, and that it is a popular fashion trend; some people in Jamaica are bleaching their skin to gain an advantage.

Question Five

What strategies have the Ministry of Health employed to combat the health problem of skin bleaching?

This bleaching trend's increasing popularity attracted the government's attention. Over the past five years the government has invested in several initiatives designed to address the problem. By joining with local dermatologists and media personalities, there were several education efforts to stem the problem. Along with these efforts, there was a ban on the importation and sale of the chemical products, masquerading as cosmetics, which are used in the skin lightening process.

The government's endeavors to curtail the skin-bleaching practice in the island have been met with mixed reviews. There is an obvious increase in the awareness of the dangers associated with the practice, but there is also a sense of antipathy from some. Essentially, *bleachers* and *toners* report that the government is interfering in personal decisions of the Jamaican people and that there are other more pressing social problems,

such as crime and corruption, which warrant their attention. In summary, the success of the programs initiated by the government through the Ministry of Health (MOH) cannot be quantified as there are no statistical records available, however, the agency, up until the time of the interview (June 2010) was confident that the practice is on the decline and that while much work remains to be done, they were pleased with their efforts. Early in 2010, the MOH made the decision to shift their efforts from skin bleaching to focus on other health and social concerns.

On December 29, 2010, Hunter (2010) highlighted in a front page article in *The Gleaner* that the bleaching practice in Jamaica was back into the spotlight for the MOH. She reported, that the Ministry's director of health promotion and protection explained that the government would be increasing its education efforts and amplifying its attempts to clamp down on illegal skin lightening products. The director commented that the 2007 educational campaign had some success, but because there was no follow-up evaluation it was not easy to measure the full result. Additionally, she disclosed that the government was intent on a second education campaign, although there was no mention of a timeframe.

Implications and Recommendations

The practice of skin-bleaching in Jamaica is of social and public health concern. Based on the findings of this study and the literature reviewed, implications and recommendations will now be discussed. The study's findings have implications for the field of adult education, particularly as it relates to national policy, practice, and theory.

Although the bleaching practice is not viewed as undesirable by all Jamaicans, on the whole, the national response has been one of opposition to the practice.

Implications for Policy

The Jamaican government has made an attempt to curb the skin-bleaching practice which poses serious concern to health officials. The existing policy on the skin-bleaching practice makes the sale and use of skin-lightening products with a chemical composition of over 2% hydroquinone and mercury illegal, unless prescribed by a medical practitioner and sold by a registered pharmacist. The health ministry maintains the firm position that the products with these chemical compositions are drugs and would require a prescription for sale. The findings of this study suggest that the government's efforts have reduced the access to these products and have caused an increase in the prices of the products. Unfortunately, while there has been some success to limiting access to these products, they are still relatively available.

A significant amount of resources were used in various educational campaigns to eliminate the skin-bleaching practice among the Jamaican populace. In reviewing the findings of the study, and in particular, reflecting on the expressions of the participants in the study, the main implication for the government's policy is to consider a more collaborative approach when implementing educational campaigns with goals of developing critical health literacy among the population of *bleachers*. This focus must span all age groups in the population with individualized approaches for each group. It is important to use sound adult learning principles to design any education program for adults, especially when dealing with emotive and personal issues such as skin bleaching.

It is anticipated that the study will inform national policy, and based on the outcomes of the study, future approaches may be modified to better educate and hence transform the ideology of the people about skin color and the bleaching phenomenon.

Implications for Practice

The study findings have provided some valuable insights regarding the educational campaigns and overall national efforts to curb the skin-bleaching practice. According to the participants in the study, the overall approach used in the educational campaigns and the banning of the importation and sale of the products was very dictatorial and condescending. They discussed having a heightened awareness, because of the efforts of the government, but reacted negatively to the government's approach. The participants noted that the use of slogans such as "Bleachers Beware!" "Don't Kill the Skin!" and "Real Men Don't Bleach!" have a confrontational connotation and are viewed as scare tactics. In contrast, the government's educational efforts should be more collaborative, grounded in firm adult education principles where there is consideration to social cognition and context.

As an important concept in the field of adult education, situated cognition considers the contexts of real life experiences of the learner as significant (Choi & Hannafin, 1995; Merriam & Brockett, 2007). Central to the study is the context of the social history, experiences and circumstances of the bleachers. Situated cognition pays homage to the social setting within which the learning occurs. Since learning does not occur in isolation (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999), nor is it neutral (Freire, 1990), but it takes place in a partial environment (Cervero & Wilson, 2001), it is particularly relevant

to understand the context of the participants lives within which they learn the behavior of skin bleaching.

The findings in the study have demonstrated that being cognizant of the dangers of skin bleaching and responding appropriately, despite the many social and cultural pressures to bleach, requires a specific degree of health literacy. Kickbusch, Wait, and Maag (2006) define health literacy specifically as

The ability to make sound health decisions in the context of everyday life—at home, in the community, at the workplace, in the health care system, the marketplace, and the political arena. It is a critical empowerment strategy to increase people’s control over their health, their ability to seek out information and their ability to take responsibility. (p.8)

This definition is holistic and practical in its approach to take the social context of individuals into account. It is within this practical definition that the issue of skin bleaching as a health literacy problem is contextualized. In other words, the skin-bleaching phenomenon may be viewed as a health literacy issue. In the case of skin bleaching, health literacy is the ability to understand the dangers of the practice and making the decision to not consider or to discontinue for health optimization.

Using a modified version of Zarcadoolas, Pleasant and Greer’s (2006) multi-dimensional model for addressing health literacy, could prove beneficial to designing and developing a health literacy program to address the skin-bleaching practice in Jamaica. Figure 5.1 graphically shows an amended version of Zarcadoolas, Pleasant and Greer’s (2006) model which could be used to address the skin-bleaching practice as a health literacy concern.

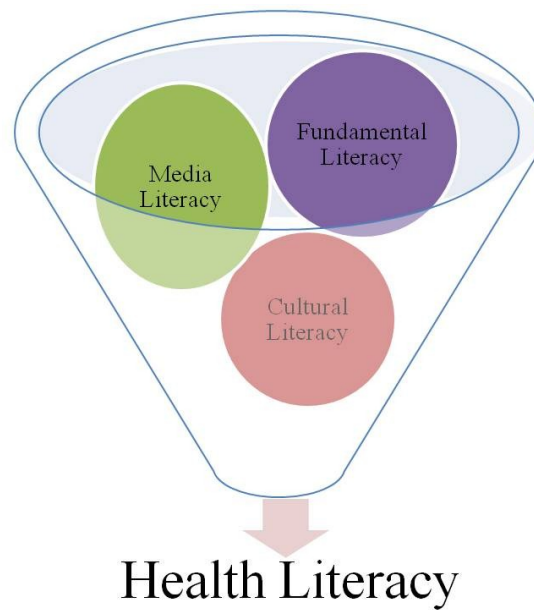


Figure 5.1 Health Literacy Model
Adapted from: Zarcadoolas, Pleasant, & Greer (2006).

In analyzing the skin-bleaching phenomenon in Jamaica as a health literacy issue, it is important to consider the problem in relation to fundamental, media and cultural literacy.

Fundamental Literacy

Traditionally, printed materials are used to communicate health related information, but much of medical information is technical and difficult to understand.

This proves to be even more difficult for low-literate adults. Fundamental literacy is obviously relevant and important since it deals with reading, speaking, writing and interpreting numbers. However, the findings from this study suggest that the educational background for the population of *bleachers* was varied. Therefore, designing adult education programs to address the needs of skin bleachers who are not functionally literate will require creativity.

Designers of adult education courses must keep the literacy and overall educational level of each participant in mind when developing instruction. They must ensure that they find creative ways to deliver the material. Other approaches could utilize visual communication, to include illustrations, pictures and cultural graphics, bearing in mind that people understand health messages in various ways. The content of all communication must therefore be effective but simple. Alternative methods could include videotaped instruction which has been proven to be as effective as other instructional methods and often more effective than printed materials alone (Gagliano, 1988; Nielson & Sheppard, 1988).

Media Literacy

Unfortunately, not all messages in the media are positive; therefore, critical media literacy is essential, especially in this electronic age where the media is proliferated with stereotyped images of women and minorities (Signorielli, 1990), especially those with dark skin (Ducille 1996; Neal & Wilson (1989). The findings of the study, supported by literature in the field of media and communication studies, show that the media is powerful in forming and influencing public opinion (McCombs,

Einsiedel, & Weaver, 1991), influencing meaning making processes, ideologies and positionalities, (Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992). As such, media literacy is important in developing the ability to perform critical analysis of media text (Silverblatt, 2001).

It is important to help *bleachers* develop media literacy so they can decipher the messages that constantly bombard them, especially those related to beauty and skin color. Critical media literacy for *bleachers* includes developing the knowledge, skills and competencies required to decode the proliferation of communication through the media which promotes the ideology that light skin is better than dark skin. For the *bleachers*, becoming media literate will empower them into making the decision not to bleach their skin despite the pressure in the media, especially in the dancehall arena.

Adult education practitioners can find practical ways to incorporate critical media literacy and critiques of popular culture, especially as it relates to colorism and skin bleaching.

Cultural Literacy

Cultural literacy, according to Zarcadoolas, Pleasant & Greer (2006) encourages how cultural practices influence one's health and how people within a culture define a healthy way of living. The authors suggest that when health messages are delivered congruent with cultural beliefs and behaviors, they are more readily understood. For this reason, cultural literacy is very important.

Cultural and personal belief systems based on generational lessons frame the way in which the individual views health as a concept and practice. It is important to consider

the cultural mores and values which have influenced the *bleachers* to engage in the bleaching practice. For example, Jamaicans are not likely to respond favorably to strategies which use scare tactics, as some participants described the government's strategies in the study. Being more sensitive to the cultural needs of the population would include designing and developing a health literacy program or with an approach that considers the culture of the individuals and the historical context of their lives, which goes beyond culture but incorporates socio-economic factors.

Implications for Theory

Since the early 1980s, postcolonialism has developed a body of literature that tries to counter dominant and hegemonic practices by the west over non-western continents, Africa, Asia and Latin America (Young, 2003). The work in this study contributes to this body of literature as the findings highlight inconspicuous ways in which dominant western thought has been deeply inculcated into Jamaica's culture and psyche leaving it impervious to dispel it. This study broadens the discussion and provides an opportunity for more minority scholarship which can speak from a place of experience, marginalization, and therefore, authority. It is through this scholarship that we can advance work in debilitating structures which cripple and stifle pride in indigenous expression and local culture.

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this research point to several areas in need of further exploration. First, the participants' stories should serve as a reminder to educators and scholars across the globe that the remnants of slavery and colonialism are not in the distant past, nor are

they are inactive and irrelevant. The island of Jamaica, despite almost half a century of independence from Imperial England, is still faced with the quagmire of elevated Eurocentric values and denigrated African values. Although the study is set in the Jamaican context, the findings have a global reach and applicability. It reveals specific ways in which the western dominant culture is continually perpetuating the disenfranchisement and marginalization of minority populations, particularly those with dark skin. However, this study did not determine if the extent of the period of independence was a factor in the way in which colonial legacies remained current and poignant. Thus, I would suggest researchers conduct a similar study in countries with a common history of slavery and colonization, but longer experience as an independent country.

Second, the data suggest that there is much subjectivity in discerning skin color; it is a very personal and therefore biased process. Therefore, further research on the influence of interviewer and participants of same race on skin color perceptions is warranted. This subjectivity is an important point to note as it highlights the personal bias as it relates to describing skin color. In other words, the color is indeed “in the eyes of the beholder.” The discrepancies suggest that while the process is interpretative and subjective, most of the bleachers claim to be lighter in color than my assessment of their skin color. Interestingly, this finding generates the following questions for consideration: (a) what would motivate someone to say they have a lighter skin color than someone else would perceive that they have? (b) what would motivate someone to say that they have darker skin color than someone else would perceive that they have? (c) what role did my

(light) skin color play in the classification of skin color on both my part as the interviewer as well as the part of the participants in classifying and labeling the complexions? These questions become particularly relevant as I belong to the same racial group as the participants and have a light skin tone.

Studies have addressed the issue of cross-racial social perception in interviews (Hill, 2002b) but this study on *bleachers* has revealed a gap in the literature on skin color judgments among interviewers and participants from the same racial group. This is significant because skin color discernment and self-reporting is extremely imprecise (Green & Martin, 1990), prone to bias (Marks, 1943), and self-referenced (Hill, 2002b). This is important as individuals make judgments based on skin color and interviewing dynamics among participants and interviewers of the same racial group may reveal some interesting insights.

Third, study findings have shown that the idealization of Eurocentric standards of beauty and cultural capital is promoted in the media. There are some interesting insights about the relationship of popular culture as an agent of socialization, and its role in perpetuating dominant, hegemonic cultural values and practices. Further research is needed on the matter of responsibility and censorship of the media as it relates to messages which are transmitted that perpetuate social and health concerns, outside of the traditional alcohol or tobacco abuse.

Fourth, findings from the study have indicated that an indigenous space, the dancehall, originally considered as a space of opposition to colonialist views and thought, is now the site of promotion of such values, that is, light skin as an ideal marker

of beauty. Based on the precepts of social cognitive theory, which consists of interaction with the environment, and of postcolonialism which critiques colonial domination and legacy, studying these indigenous spaces and how they act as major influential spaces in the environment would be useful.

Fifth, while there is research on identity development on a global basis, and even identity development in minority populations, a thoughtful study on identity development among populations with experience with skin-bleaching and a history of African slavery and European colonization would be particularly insightful and interesting. This could serve to inform other studies which seek to understand some of the experience of peoples of the African Diaspora.

Concluding Thoughts

This study shows that the bleaching practice is a complex one. It emphasizes the importance of not judging the *bleachers* and *toners* but underscores the importance of working towards a grassroots education model that is collaborative in nature and highlights the beauty in all, regardless of skin color or shade.

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APPENDIX A
SAMPLE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
(Dermatologist)

Interview Protocol

Skin Bleaching in Jamaica: A Colonial Legacy

Interview Questions – Dermatologist

Incidence

1. Tell me about the incidence of skin bleaching in Jamaica
2. When did the practice begin in Jamaica?
3. At what point did the incidence become a health issue?
4. Why do you think people bleach?
5. What rationales have your patients given for bleaching their skin?
6. Are there any scientific reports on the incidence of skin bleaching in Jamaica?
7. At what age do individuals usually begin to bleach?

Products Frequently used in Bleaching

8. What products are most frequently used for skin bleaching?
9. What are the active ingredients of these products?
10. Do you know how accessible these products are in the marketplace?
11. Are these products useful for anything other than bleaching the skin?

Medical Issues and Bleaching

12. Describe the typical skin bleacher that you treat in your practice.
 - a. Gender
 - b. Age
 - c. Skin Color

- d. Rural/Urban resident
 - e. Socioeconomic Status
 - f. Level of Education
 - g. Marital Status
 - h. Occupation
 - i. Employment Status
 - j. Any other demographic indicator you can think of?
13. What is the typical age of your patient who bleaches his/her skin?
14. What other demographic information do you collect on your patients who bleach their skin?
15. What health risks does skin bleaching pose?
16. What dermatological risks does skin bleaching pose?
17. How long after bleaching starts do you typically see patients with ailments related to bleaching?
18. How are these ailments treated?
19. What does the treatment entail?
20. How long is the expected treatment period?
21. How much does the treatment cost?
22. What percentage of your patients bleach their skin?
23. What percentage of your patients do you treat for bleaching related ailments?
24. What is the most popular treatment you offer to patients who bleach?
25. What part of the body is most commonly bleached and affected?

26. Is there a safe way to bleach?
27. Could there be a medical reason for bleaching one's skin?
28. Do you prescribe bleaching agents to any of your patients? If so, for the treatment of what ailments?

Jamaican Government's Position on Bleaching

29. Do you work for the Jamaican government?
30. What is the Jamaican government's position on skin bleaching?
31. There is reportedly a ban on the importation and sale of bleaching products. Do you know what precipitated this? Do you know how this is enforced?
32. Are you aware of any educational campaigns or programs that deal specifically with public education on the dangers of skin bleaching?
33. If so, were you involved in any of them?
34. What are your thoughts on these campaigns?

Personal Position on Bleaching

35. What is your position on bleaching?
36. Do you know anyone personally—other than patients who bleach their skin?
 - a. Family?
 - b. Friends?
37. What do you think will it take to decrease the incidence of skin bleaching in Jamaica?
38. What do most Jamaicans think about the practice of skin bleaching?

APPENDIX B
SAMPLE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
(Bleachers)

Interview Protocol:

Skin Bleaching in Jamaica: A Colonial Legacy

Interview Questions – Skin Bleachers

Participant Background, Educational History, & Employment Status

1. Where were you born? Raised?
2. Where do you live now?
3. What is your age range?

<input type="checkbox"/> 18-25	<input type="checkbox"/> 26-30	<input type="checkbox"/> 31-35	<input type="checkbox"/> 36-40
<input type="checkbox"/> 41-45	<input type="checkbox"/> 46-50	<input type="checkbox"/> 51- 55	<input type="checkbox"/> over 55
4. Gender:

<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female
-------------------------------	---------------------------------
5. How would you describe your skin color?

<input type="checkbox"/> Black	<input type="checkbox"/> Very dark brown	<input type="checkbox"/> Dark brown
<input type="checkbox"/> Medium brown	<input type="checkbox"/> Light brown	<input type="checkbox"/> Very light brown
6. Marital Status:

<input type="checkbox"/> Married	<input type="checkbox"/> Common-Law	<input type="checkbox"/> Single	<input type="checkbox"/> Divorced	<input type="checkbox"/> Separated
----------------------------------	-------------------------------------	---------------------------------	-----------------------------------	------------------------------------
7. What is your educational background?

<input type="checkbox"/> Less than High School	<input type="checkbox"/> Some High School	<input type="checkbox"/> Graduated High School
--	---	--

Some College Graduated College Other, please
describe

8. What is your spouse's (if applicable) educational background?

Less than High School Some High School Graduated High
School

Some College Graduated College Other,
please describe

9. What is your mother's educational background?

Less than High School Some High School Graduated
High School

Some College Graduated College Other,
please describe

10. What is your father's educational background?

Less than High School Some High School Graduated High
School

Some College Graduated College Other,
please describe

11. What is your employment status?

Employed Self-Employed Unemployed

12. What is your occupation?

Beauty Ideals (culturally appropriate term—good looking)

13. Describe your idea of beauty.

14. Describe what a good-looking woman looks like.
15. How would you describe your beauty (good looking)? Explain.
16. How do you think you could become more beautiful?
17. How beautiful do you think other women believe you are? (If female)
18. How beautiful do you think men believe you are? (If female)
19. How important is beauty (looking good) to you?
20. Why do you think looking good is important?
21. What does the term browning mean to you?
22. What does light skin represent in a woman?
23. What does dark skin represent in a woman?
24. What does light skin represent in a man?
25. What does dark skin represent in a man?
26. Is there a relationship between having light skin and being white? If so, what is it?

Personal Skin Bleaching

27. What does it mean to bleach your skin?
28. What is the difference between toning and bleaching?
29. What other terms do people use to describe bleaching?
30. Do you bleach your skin?
31. How old were you when you first bleached your skin?
32. How long have you been bleaching?
33. How did you learn to bleach your skin? Who taught you to bleach your skin?

34. What products do you use to bleach?
35. Why do you use these particular products?
36. What parts of the body do you bleach?
37. Describe the bleaching process.
38. How often do you bleach your skin?
39. How many tubes of each product do you use on a monthly basis?
40. Where do you get these products?
41. How much money do you pay for these products?
42. How do you pay for these products?
43. How does your skin feel after you use the products?
44. Has your skin changed since you started using the products? How?
45. Have you ever stopped bleaching your skin? What happened?
46. Have you ever used other products to bleach your skin?
47. What other products have you used?
48. Why did you stop using them?
49. What are the BEST bleaching products (If these do not match with those the respondent uses, ask why?)
50. How much do the BEST bleaching products cost?
51. Do you know where they are made?
52. Why do you bleach?
53. What benefits do you think you will gain by bleaching your skin?

54. Earlier you described the ideal of beauty as _____. Will bleaching help you get this ideal of beauty?

Information on Bleaching

55. What information have you ever seen, heard, or received about the benefits of bleaching?

56. What information did you receive?

- a. How and where did you receive it?
- b. From whom?

57. What information have you ever seen, heard, or received about the dangers of bleaching?

- a. How and where did you receive it?
- b. From whom?

58. What do you think about the songs in the media about bleaching?

59. How do they make you feel?

Prevalence of Bleaching

60. Do you know other people who bleach? Who?

- a. Family?
- b. Friends?

61. How do you know that they bleach?

62. Why do you think these people bleach?

63. Are these people mostly women or men?
64. How can you tell the difference between someone who bleaches and someone who does not?
65. Generally speaking, who do you think bleach more—men or women?
 - a. Why?
66. What do you think about the practice of skin bleaching?
67. What do most Jamaicans think about the practice of skin bleaching?
68. Why do you think people bleach?
69. What is the future of skin bleaching in Jamaica?

APPENDIX C
SAMPLE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
(Retailer of Skin-Bleaching Products)

Interview Protocol

Skin Bleaching in Jamaica: A Colonial Legacy

Interview Questions – Retailer

1. How long have you been selling skin-lightening products?
2. Do you make good money from selling the products?
3. What are your BEST skin lighteners?
4. What makes these products the best?
5. How much do they cost?
6. Are they the cheapest?
7. Which are your most expensive?
8. Where are these products made?
9. Which products are MOST POPULAR with your customers?
10. What makes these the most popular?
11. How much do they cost?
12. Where are they made?
13. How often do you have to restock your supplies?
14. What is the BEST way to lighten skin?
15. Who buys the products more? Men or women?
16. Do children buy them too?
17. Who uses the product more—men or women?
18. Have you ever used any of these products?
19. Why do you use these products?

20. How often do you use these products?
21. How much money do you spend on these products each week? Month?
22. How does your skin feel after you use these products?
23. How has your skin changed since you started using these products?
24. What would happen if you stopped using these products altogether?
25. Have you ever tried other skin lighteners?
26. What other products have you used?
27. Why did you stop using them?
28. From where do you get your products?
29. What information have you ever seen, heard, or received about the benefits of skin bleaching?
 - a. From where did you get it?
30. What information have you ever seen, heard, or received about the dangers of skin bleaching? If so, what information did you get? From where did you get it?
31. Have you ever seen, heard, or received any information about the government banning these products?
 - a. From where did you get it?
32. Why do you think people lighten their skin?
33. What do you think most Jamaicans think about skin bleaching?
34. What do you think is the future of skin bleaching in Jamaica?

APPENDIX D
SAMPLE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
(Ministry of Health Official)

Interview Protocol:

Skin Bleaching in Jamaica: A Colonial Legacy

Interview Questions – Ministry of Health Official

Government's position on bleaching

1. What is your position with the Ministry of Health (MOH)?
2. When did you begin working for the Ministry of Health?
3. What is the mission of the Ministry of Health?
4. What is the purpose of the MOH?
5. How is the MOH organized?
6. How is it funded?
7. What is the Jamaican government's position on skin bleaching?

Incidence

8. Tell me about the incidence of skin bleaching in Jamaica
9. Do you know when the practice began in Jamaica?
10. At what point did the incidence become a health issue?
11. There is reportedly a ban on the importation and sale of skin-bleaching products in the country.
 - a. What precipitated this?
 - b. How is this ban enforced?
12. What specific products have been banned?
13. Why were these specific products banned?

14. Bleaching products are readily available. How do you think the products are getting into the country?
15. Are there any reports outlining the effectiveness of the implementation of the ban?
16. Are there any reports outlining the incidence of skin bleaching before the ban?
After the ban?

Educational Campaigns

17. Describe any governmental programs initiated that deal specifically with public education on the dangers of skin bleaching?
18. What reports were available outlining the incidence of skin bleaching before the implementation of such programs?
 - a. After its implementation?
19. Would you describe the MOH initiatives on curbing the practice successful?
20. Are you able to provide the public with educational materials on the dangers of bleaching?
21. What materials are you providing?
22. How are the messages getting out to the public?

Personal Position on Bleaching

23. What is your position on bleaching?
24. Why do you think people bleach?
25. Do you know anyone that bleaches?

- a. Family
 - b. Friends
 - c. Co-workers
26. Are you able to provide the public with educational materials on the dangers of bleaching?
27. Generally speaking, do women tend to bleach more than men? Why?
28. What do most Jamaicans think about the practice of skin bleaching?
29. Do attitudes about the practice of skin bleaching vary by:
- a. Gender?
 - b. Age?
 - c. Rural/Urban living
 - d. Socioeconomic status
 - e. Level of education
 - f. Marital status
 - g. Any other demographic that you can think of?
30. What will it take to decrease the incidence of skin bleaching in Jamaica?

APPENDIX E

SAMPLE INSTRUMENT TO OBTAIN INFORMED CONSENT

(Dermatologist and Ministry of Health Official)

INFORMATION SHEET
Skin Bleaching in Jamaica: A Colonialist Legacy

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you as a prospective research study participant information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research.

You have been asked to participate in a research study about skin bleaching in Jamaica. The purpose of this study is learn more about the practice of skin bleaching in Jamaica and what the government has done about it. You were selected to be a possible participant because you are in some way involved in or affected by the skin-bleaching practice in Jamaica.

What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to be interviewed. This study will take approximately 2 hours of interview time. Your participation will be audio recorded.

What are the risks involved in this study?

The risks associated with this study are minimal and are not greater than risks ordinarily encountered in daily life.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, there will be a greater understanding of the skin-bleaching phenomenon in Jamaican society.

Do I have to participate?

No. Your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without your current or future relations with Texas A&M University being affected.

Who will know about my participation in this research study?

This study is confidential, and the records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only Petra Robinson and Dr Mary Alfred will have access to the records.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be audio recorded. Any audio recordings will be stored securely and only Petra Robinson and Mary Alfred will have access to the recordings. Any recordings will be kept for 1 year and then erased.

Whom do I contact with questions about the research?

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Petra Robinson, 876-379-3379 (Jamaica) or 979-402-1535 (Texas), petra1@tamu.edu

Whom do I contact about my rights as a research participant?

This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact these offices at (979)458-4067 or irb@tamu.edu.

Participation

Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions and received answers to your satisfaction. If you would like to be in the study, please contact Petra Robinson at 876-379-3379 to make arrangements for an interview.

APPENDIX F

SAMPLE INSTRUMENT TO OBTAIN INFORMED CONSENT

(Bleachers and Retailer of Skin-Bleaching Products)

INFORMATION SHEET
Skin Bleaching in Jamaica: A Colonialist Legacy

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you as a prospective research study participant information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research.

You have been asked to participate in a research study about skin bleaching in Jamaica. The purpose of this study is learn more about the practice of skin bleaching in Jamaica and what the government has done about it. You were selected to be a possible participant because you are in some way involved in, or affected by the skin-bleaching practice in Jamaica.

What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to be interviewed. This study will take approximately 2 hours of interview time. Your participation will be audio recorded

What are the risks involved in this study?

The risks associated with this study minimal and are not greater than risks ordinarily encountered in daily life.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, there will be a greater understanding of the skin-bleaching phenomenon in Jamaican society.

Do I have to participate?

No. Your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without your current or future relations with Texas A&M University being affected.

Will I be compensated?

You will receive a pre-paid calling card valued at J\$1000. Disbursement will occur upon completion of the interview.

Who will know about my participation in this research study?

This study is confidential, and the records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only Petra Robinson and Dr Mary Alfred will have access to the records.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be audio recorded. Any audio recordings will be stored securely and only Petra Robinson and Mary Alfred will have access to the recordings. Any recordings will be kept for 1 year and then erased.

Whom do I contact with questions about the research?

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Petra Robinson, 876-379-3379 (Jamaica) or 979-402-1535 (Texas), petra1@tamu.edu

Whom do I contact about my rights as a research participant?

This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact these offices at (979)458-4067 or irb@tamu.edu.

Participation

Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions and received answers to your satisfaction. If you would like to be in the study, please contact Petra Robinson at 876-379-3379 to make arrangements for an interview.

APPENDIX G
SAMPLE INVITATION LETTER TO PARTICIPATE
(Dermatologist)

Email Content to Dermatologist

Good Day,

My name is Petra Robinson and I am a Jamaican doctoral candidate at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas. I am pursuing my PhD in Adult Education and Human Resource Development and my dissertation study is in an area closely related to your field of work. I am very interested in learning more about the skin-bleaching phenomenon in Jamaica.

The purpose of my research study is to examine the psychological and socio-cultural factors that influence the practice of skin bleaching in a postcolonial society.

Additionally, the study will outline Jamaica's national efforts to combat the skin-bleaching phenomenon. I am conducting a qualitative study and am very interested in interviewing you as a leading dermatologist with experience in this area.

My hope is to learn more about your professional experiences with the phenomenon. I am making preparations to conduct interviews and would love to be able to interview you. Please advise of your availability and willingness to participate in this study.

APPENDIX H
SAMPLE INVITATION LETTER TO PARTICIPATE
(Ministry of Health Official)

Email Content to Ministry of Health Official

Good Day,

My name is Petra Robinson and I am a Jamaican doctoral candidate at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas. I am pursuing my PhD in Adult Education and Human Resource Development and my dissertation study is in an area closely related to your field of work. I am very interested in learning more about the skin-bleaching phenomenon in Jamaica and the government's efforts to combat the phenomenon.

The purpose of my research study is to examine the psychological and socio-cultural factors that influence the practice of skin bleaching in a postcolonial society.

Additionally, the study will outline Jamaica's national efforts to combat the skin-bleaching phenomenon. I am conducting a qualitative study and am very interested in interviewing you as government representative who was instrumental in the "Don't Kill the Skin campaign."

My hope is to learn more about your professional experiences with the phenomenon. I am making preparations to conduct interviews and would love to be able to interview you. Please advise of your availability and willingness to participate in this study.

APPENDIX I
TRANSCRIPTS OF SONGS FOR ANALYSIS

Love Mi Browning- Buju Banton (1992)

I say this one dedicated to my browning
 Big up and test cuz ya no stop canceling
 Respect to the maximum from shoes down to the ground
 Buju Banton love the article caan dun
 Hear me now!
 Lawd have mercy

[Chorus:]
 Me love me car Me love me bike
 Me love me money and ting
 But most of all, Me love me browning
 Love-a me car Me love me bike
 Me love me money and ting
 But most of all, Me love me browning

[Verse 1:]
 Pamela and Dawn, Suzette and Karen
 I wonder what the old viper dem thinking
 Dem a plan and dem a con and dem a scheme
 'Cause dem waan mash up we and mi browning
 But all the rumors dem a spread, anna pack up her head
 My Lorna I'm not listening
 'Cause you know when she alone, ah mi must come back home
 To her inna de evening
 'Cause me ah knowledge very close, how me love her the most
 And me not hurt her feelings
 So all de talk dem a talk, all the chat dem a chat
 My Lorna not leaving (that's why)

[Chorus]

[Verse 2:]
 Woman don't worry yourself
 'Cause everything crisp and clean
 Yah no say
 Next month ah come
 And you must get de ring
 Go in front of the pastor and get him blessing
 No make it ((burn?)) for all a dem
 And get the bad feeling cuz
 Dem a said dem are your friend, But run de whole a dem
 Cuz dem is too deceiving

Dem a talk behind you back, an waan borrow yu frock
 To wear about this evening
 But dem a lay down your clothes, sure we are gon propose
 Cuz dem is too conniving
 And if dem come back again, Then dem you know are no friend
 Cuz you nuh like a news carrying

[Chorus]

All de girls up in de place
 Uh di no big up yuh chest
 De news carry ting a full time
 It-a no get no rest
 New year now unu fi deal wit di progress
 Buju pon de mic and all the girls-a tek set

[Chorus]

[Verse 3:]

Pamela and Dawn, Suzette and Karen
 I wonder what the whole tribe uh dem thinking
 Dem a plan and dem a plan and dem a scheme
 'Cause dem waan mash up me and mi browning
 But all the rumors dem a spread anna pack up her head
 My Lorna not listening
 'Cause you know when she alone, ah mi must come back home
 Anytime me touch evening
 'Cause me ah knowledge very close, how me love her the most
 And me not hurt her feelings
 But no matter what dem say, but no matter what dem do
 My Lorna not leaving

[Chorus]

[Verse 4:]

Woman don't worry yourself
 'Cause everything crisp and clean
 Yah no say
 Next month ah come
 And you must get de ring
 Go in front of the pastor and get him blessing
 No make it (burn?) for all a dem
 And get the bad feeling caw
 Dem a said dem are your friend, But run de whole a dem

Cuz dem is too deceiving
Dem a talk behind you back, an waan borrow yu frock
To wear about this evening
But dem a lay down your clothes, sure we are gon propose
Cuz dem is too conniving
And if dem come back again, Then dem you know are no friend
Cuz you nuh like a news carrying

Love Black Woman- Buju Banton (1992)

A who dat?
 A me man!
 Who?
 Buju Banton man, the same yute wey do the Browning song man
 Hear wha we tell the girl dem say
 Caw we love dem cyan done
 From shoes tongue down to grung
 Here mi now

Chorus
 We nuh stop cry fi all Black woman
 Respec all the girl dem wid dark complexion
 Buju nuh stop cry, fi all Black woman
 Whole heap ah tings a gwan fi unnuh complexion

Black is beauty, unnuh color is one in a million
 Have it from birth a natural sun tan
 Smooth like a velvet
 True unnuh use yuh lotion
 Tek tek tek care ah yuh complexion

Wha dem a do?
 Wha dem a try?
 Wha di whole a dem a plan?
 Don't get it wrong, caw we love Black woman

Chorus
 We nuh stop cry fi all Black woman
 Respec all the girl dem wid dark complexion
 We nuh stop cry fi all Black woman
 Nuff tings a gwan fi unnuh complexion

Some waan know ah wey yuh get it?
 Ah wey yuh buy it from?
 True some light skin dem want fi buy tan
 Woman, nuh badda worry unnuh intention
 Whedda unnuh black or brown
 Unnuh a Buju right hand

Go and spread it across the nation
 Say unnuh have the backitive of Buju Banton
 Caw

Chorus

We nuh stop cry fi all Black woman
 Nuff tings a gwan fi unnuh complexion
 Buju nuh stop cry, fi all Black woman
 Whole heap ah tings a gwan fi unnuh complexion

I am Black
 I am proud
 Follow Buju Banton and shout it out loud
 Black will always stand out inna crowd
 You are like the silver lining behind the dark cloud
 Whey me sing...

Chorus

We nuh stop cry fi all Black woman
 Nuff tings a gwan fi unnuh complexion
 Buju nuh stop cry, fi all Black woman
 Whole heap ah tings a gwan fi unnuh complexion

Black is beauty, unnuh color is one in a million
 Have it from birth a natural sun tan
 Smooth like a velvet
 True unnuh use yuh lotion
 Tek tek tek care ah yuh complexion

Wha dem a do?
 Wha dem a try?
 Wha di whole a dem a plan?
 Don't get it wrong, we respec Black woman

We nuh stop cry fi all Black woman
 Nuff tings a gwan fi unnuh complexion
 Buju nuh stop cry, fi all Black woman
 Nuff tings a gwan fi unnuh complexion

Some waan know
 A whey yuh buy it?
 A whe unnuh get it from?

True some light skin dem want fi buy tan
 Woman, nuh badda worry unnuh intention
 Whedda unnuh black or brown
 Unnuh a Buju right hand

I am Black
 I am proud
 Follow Buju Banton and shout it out loud
 Black will always stand out inna crowd
 You are like the silver lining behind the dark cloud
 Whey me sing...

Chorus

So stop cry fi all Black woman
 Nuff tings a gwan fi unnuh complexion
 Buju nuh stop cry, fi all Black woman
 Whole heap ah tings a gwan fi unnuh complexion

Whether you Black or Brown
 We all are one
 Let's join together, people hand in hand
 Follow this yute whey name Buju Banton
 I am slim and of dark complexion
 Love fi see the girl dem when dem pretty and strong
 Whether dem a Browning or Black woman

Dem Ah Bleach- Nardo Ranks (1992)

Bwoy true Bujū Banton tell the girl dem bout Browning
 All ah the girl dem a run go a shop go bleach
 Caw dem want brown skin
 All ah the girl dem...

Chorus
 Dem ah bleach
 Dem ah bleach out dem skin
 Dem ah bleach
 Fi look like a Browning
 Dem ah bleach
 Dem ah bleach out dem skin
 Dem ah bleach
 Fi look like a Browning

Gal mi honor yuh caw yuh nuh bleach out yuh skin
 Yuh nuh use no chemical fi look like nuh Browning
 Gal mi honor yuh caw yuh nuh bleach out yuh skin
 Yuh nuh use no chemical fi look like a Browning

90% of the girl dem join the system
 Every girl nowadays dem want brown skin
 True Bujū Banton tell the girl dem bout Browning
 Every gyal she dem want the color ah di punkin
 So dem run gone a shop fi buy brown skin

Chorus
 Dem ah bleach
 Dem ah bleach out dem skin
 Dem ah bleach
 Fi look like a Browning
 Dem ah bleach
 And dem ah bleach out dem skin
 Dem ah bleach
 Fi look like a Browning

Mi say gwon Black girl, cause a you run the place
 And look how you nice wid yuh beautiful face
 Nuh true yuh nuh brown that is no disgrace.
 Caw tell dem Black girl say a yuh run the race

Chorus

Dem ah bleach
 Dem ah bleach out dem skin
 Dem ah bleach
 Fi look like a Browning
 Dem ah bleach
 And dem ah bleach out dem skin
 Dem ah bleach
 Fi look like a Browning

Gal mi honor yuh caw yuh nuh bleach out yuh skin
 Yuh nuh use no chemical fi look like nuh Browning
 Gal mi honor yuh caw yuh nuh bleach out yuh skin
 Yuh nuh use no chemical fi look like a Browning

No mi know this likkle girl from St. Catherine
 A long time mi nuh see har cause she was schooling
 One time she did tall and did have black skin
 Now she get fat and she have brown skin
 Mi say wait deh likkle bit, yuh did deh a foreign?

She say, no Nardo Ranks ah the chemical mi using
 Ah it mi really use and tun Browning

She ah bleach
 She ah bleach out har skin
 She ah bleach
 Fi look like a Browning
 She ah bleach
 And she ah bleach out har skin
 She ah bleach
 Fi look like a Browning

Mi say black it ah di color ah di African skin
 So tell mi how some gyal want brown skin
 Everyday dem get up dem join the bleaching
 True dem want the color ah di punkin

Dem ah bleach
 Use the Nadinola you know
 Dem ah bleach
 Use the Ambi and yu know

Dem ah bleach
 Tek the facial and yu know
 Dem ah bleach
 When mi check it out, mi know
 Dem ah bleach

Dem ah bleach
 Dem ah bleach out dem skin
 Dem ah bleach
 Fi look like a Browning
 Dem ah bleach
 And dem ah bleach out dem skin
 Dem ah bleach
 Fi look like a Browning

But mi honor yuh caw yuh nuh bleach out yuh skin
 Yuh nuh use no chemical fi look like nuh Browning
 Gal mi honor yuh caw yuh nuh bleach out yuh skin
 Yuh nuh use no chemical fi look like a Browning

Mi say, jump around yuh nuh bleach out yuh skin
 And hold up unnuh hand yuh nuh bleach out yuh skin
 And, Jungle girl, yuh nuh bleach out yuh skin
 And Tivoli girl, dem nuh bleach out dem skin
 And Rema girl, dem nuh bleach out dem skin
 And Dunkirk girl, dem nuh bleach out dem skin
 Mi say hold up yuh hand and wine an ting
 And mek dem know you have yuh natural skin

Cause some a leach
 Dem ah bleach out dem skin
 Dem ah bleach
 Fi look like a Browning
 Dem ah bleach
 And dem ah bleach out dem skin
 Dem ah bleach
 Fi look like a Browning

Mi Nah Rub- Queen Ifrica (2007)

My complexion is better than ever
 I'm not going to bleach it out
 So it's better, yes it's better than ever
 Brown skin is not for everyone
 So you should stop bleaching.
 It means that you don't love yourself.

God made you perfect
 So don't judge yourself
 The person who is telling you that black isn't in again is insecure
 So don't follow them.
 I'm not going to bleach
 I don't care if that's the trend
 I'm proud to be black
 As a matter of fact
 I have no white gut.
 Without teaching me anything wrong
 You want me to die
 Lose my colour because you think it's too strong
 Side effect is cancer
 That's one that I know.
 I don't want to look like a purple dragon

Alright then

Not everyone is rubbing
 Not everyone is rubbing
 Not because Grace and Jack and his grandmother are rubbing
 It doesn't mean that everyone is rubbing

I can see you on the corner with your thuggish ways
 But I can't understand why you went and bleached your face
 I loved you when you were black
 I'm not lying
 But when I see you I just feel like crying
 In all my life I have never seen
 Skin that was blacker than asphalt get paler than Michael and Billie Jean
 Its like you're always celebrating Halloween
 It might look like things are good now
 Brown skin, and glistening
 Everybody saying WOW
 But wait until tomorrow

The beginning of your sorrow
 When your brain starts to melt
 Leaving your tomorrow in a hard rot

(Not everyone is rubbing
 Not everyone is rubbing
 Not because Grace and Jack and his grandmother are rubbing
 It doesn't mean that everyone is rubbing)X2

How do you think the Almighty feels when he knows that he won't recognize you on
 Judgement Day.
 The voice sounds the same
 But you don't look the same
 You're not going to have anyone but yourself to blame
 Release yourself
 Burst the mental chain
 Don't mix any more toothpaste with the banana's stain
 You can't walk in the sun anymore
 You become a vampire
 Your skin burns like when gas is mixed with a tyre
 But all is not lost
 All you need is prayer
 Remember self-destruction is between yourself and God
 So don't follow the devil
 That's just killing yourself
 Be strong and don't let the devil tempt you.
 Yes, only Babylon is trying to cramp you
 Don't be ungrateful to the Father
 Don't try to go around the yard of life and death
 Which one do you rather

Alright then

Not everyone is rubbing
 Not everyone is rubbing
 Not because Grace and Jack and his grandmother are rubbing
 It doesn't mean that everyone is rubbing. Brown skin...

Bleaching Fit Me- Lisa Hype (2009)

Lisa Hype, Lisa Hype
 Unno say bleaching can gi you skin cancer
 My gyirl you ah smoking, unno say smoking can gi you lung cancer
 L-oww mi uh

My money tall mi can bleach all mi want
 True mi say bleaching
 Dem say mi ah hothead
 A nuh mi make some gyal suffer from blackhead
 It go well with mi hair, mi nuh carry maphead
 All who no like mi bleaching drop dong and dead
 Mi say bleaching
 Dem say mi ah hothead
 A nuh mi but make some gyal suffer from blackhead
 It go well with mi hair, mi nuh carry maphead
 All who no like mi bleaching drop dong and dead

Ah which west gyal ah talk bout cancer
 When you bleach beauty is da answer
 More cigarette can gi you cancer
 More people smoke dan dem bleach you no ponga
 Mi bleach rich, mi nah look like panda
 Mi naffi ask and mi naffi wonda
 Mi protein fi do so ah who sponsor
 Cause nuff ah unno ah favour di cookie monsta

My money tall mi can bleach all mi want
 True mi say bleaching
 Dem say mi ah hothead
 A nuh mi but make some gyal suffer from blackhead
 It go well with mi hair, mi nuh carry maphead
 All who no like mi bleaching drop dong and dead

(Your body smooth)
 It no tamper with
 Mi skin nah fock no man like nah sharp ratchet
 Any ting mi say mi lyrics can back it
 Mi bleaching song haters cyaan stop it
 You wan tell mi wha fi do with my body
 Nuff gyal out dere bleaching ah dem hobby
 Mi skin clean it no look like photocopy
 So l-oww mi make mi bleach ah it make mi happy

My money tall mi can bleach all mi want
 True mi say bleaching
 Dem say mi ah hothead
 A nuh mi but make some gyal suffer from blackhead
 It go well with mi hair, mi nuh carry maphead
 All who no like mi bleaching drop dong and dead

Mi say bleaching
 Dem say mi ah hothead
 A nuh mi but make some gyal suffer from blackhead
 It go well with mi hair, mi nuh carry maphead
 All who no like mi bleaching drop dong and dead

Ah which west gyal ah talk bout cancer
 When you bleach beauty is da answer
 More cigarette can gi you cancer
 More people smoke dan dem bleach you no ponga
 Mi bleach rich, mi nah look like panda
 Mi naffi ask and mi naffi wonda
 Mi protein ah do so who sponsor
 Cause nuff ah unno ah favour di cookie monsta

My money tall mi can bleach all mi want

Proud Ah Mi Bleaching- Lisa Hype (2009)

I am beautiful in every single way
 Words can't bring me down
 Ah Lisa Hype
 I am beautiful no matter what they say
 Words can't bring me down

Aye,
 Mi proud ah mi bleaching cause mi cream it dere
 Mi nah hide, no, bout my doctor cream
 Look how mi face it pretty have fame and no shame
 Make skin episode with immediate care

So fool fassy fassy use Maxi light
 Dey cyaan wear shorts ah day
 Dey cyaan wear shorts ah night
 Ah bleaching make her get Mr Right
 Cause when night come she look fair and white
 Dis ah fi gyal ah where a dance at night
 At six o'clock dem ah hide from sunlight
 Mix clovate and buy yuh plain right
 By two weeks say yuh skin brown and white

Some gyal whey ah bleach an nah rich
 And some whey ah do it and say dem nah do it
 Mi no all bleaching tricks in di streets
 Mi ah bleachin pro, my girl you nuh see it
 Portmore girls have di Aloederm cream lock
 Brooklyn girls have di extreme like dat
 Phat farm gyirls waan white by Christmas
 Dem say it easy fi do, dem have di money like dat

So fool fassy fassy use Maxi light
 Dey cyaan wear shorts ah day
 Dey cyaan wear shorts ah night
 Ah bleaching make her get Mr Right
 Cause when night come she look fair and white
 Dis ah fi gyal ah where a dance at night
 At six o'clock dem ah hide from sunlight
 Mix clove 8 and buy yuh plain right
 By two weeks say yuh skin brown and white

I am beautiful in every single way

Words can't bring me down
Ah Lisa Hype
I am beautiful no matter what they say
Words can't bring me down

VITA

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 Equity and Social justice in education and the workplace
 The effects of postcolonialism on culture
 Professional development for faculty
 Workforce training and development
 Women's and gender studies

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