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Critical Analysis 1

People typically judge someone to be beautiful based on how they physically and or internally appear. In actuality, beauty can come in numerous shapes and forms and from a variety of viewpoints. Physical characteristics that are regarded as elements of beauty include size, shape and hair qualities. Beauty also includes aspects of human nature. Social media, families, politics, religion and society at large all play a role in defining what is considered beautiful. These elements help determine what is and is not appropriate. One sense of identity and belonging may be influenced by beauty, and it may also have an impact on one's self worth and sense of who we want to be. A person's appearance, including their smile and figure, can convey rank and power.

The need to uphold the ideal standards of beauty set by society is one reason why an individual spends a lot of money on cosmetics as well as to keep their youthful appearance and cover up their insecurities. One would frequently face discrimination and judgment if they did not have a certain appearance or conform to the ideal standards of beauty set by society, which would leave one feeling inferior and in lacking self-confidence. People frequently strive to alter themselves as a result of this.

Moreover, in the reading of *Whiter* by Nikki Khanna, she used personal experiences to demonstrate the struggles and difficulties that many people faced as a result of colorism. A

person's unfair treatments and judgment based on their skin tone and other physical characteristics is referred to as colorism. In the reading, light skin and Eurocentric traits were seen as symbols of high social class, good fortune and intelligence as well as indicators of femininity and beauty. This social norm made it challenging for women with darker skin tones and often they were subjected to unfair treatment. In contrast, for lighter complexion women, they were highly praised. Also, it was less challenging and better opportunities were presented to them. Subsequently, darker complexion women altered themselves in an effort to blend in with the society standards and be perceived as more.

One beauty practice commonly used is skin bleaching. Skin bleaching/ whitening is a large industry (Senthilingam, Munsu & Offiong, 2022). Today, skin bleaching practices are often utilized throughout the world to lighten dark spots and other skin imperfections. This technique often involves the use of skin creams and soaps. African, Caribbean and Asian groups utilize skin bleaching products most frequently (Adamu, 2019). In order to make the skin appear lighter, skin whitening involves uses products and ingredients containing hydroquinone to lessen the skin's melanin content (Madormo, 2022) Also, it contains Vitamin C, which is an antioxidant known to reduce the growth of melanin in skin cells (Madormo, 2022). Skin whiteners also include glycolic acid which is an exfoliator that helps in brightening the skin by removing dead skin cells (Madormo, 2022). A variety of products sold by numerous global corporations, such as proctor and gamble, shiseido, Beiersdorf and Unilever, are promoted as "skin whitening products", these remedies are frequently described as treating dark spots or uneven skin tones (Senthilingam, Munsu & Offiong, 2022). Due to the association between skin whitening and beauty, a large population uses them.

Practices of skin whitening have their origins in the wealth and status in white supremacy and colonialism in the past. In times of slavery, slave owners and supporters claimed that slavery was natural order and that Africans were inferior which made it acceptable to treat them inhumanely (Cobian 2021). This shows that European skin tones were valued over African American skin tones. Women in Europe painted their faces and arms with lead paint during the Victorian era to simulate an incredible pale complexion (Zarelli, N.d). In order to give herself a ghostly appearance, Queen Elizabeth I produced arsenic skin wafers which were bits of poison (Allen, 2022). White women valued being white since it was a means of communicating purity (Allen, 2022). If one had a lighter skin tone, one was more likely to have access to opportunities that were only available to people of European descent, such as greater privileges, high social standing, better employment opportunities & getting married (Adamu, 2019). Whiteness came to be associated with everything that is civilized, virtues and beautiful (Adamu, 2019). Darker complexions were disregarded and undervalued. When examining skin bleaching in the African diaspora, colonial powers and countries were utilizing commodity racism to promote products (Allen, 2022). In the 1950s, people began bleaching their skin in an effort to get privileges and power that came with being white (Allen, 2022).

Skin bleaching practices has its roots in white supremacy and colorism although skin bleaching practices are now primarily used for beauty purposes to remove dark spots and imperfections. The change of one's look was greatly influenced by society and society standards. People sought for lighter skin because it was associated with power, prestige and to be accepted.

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