

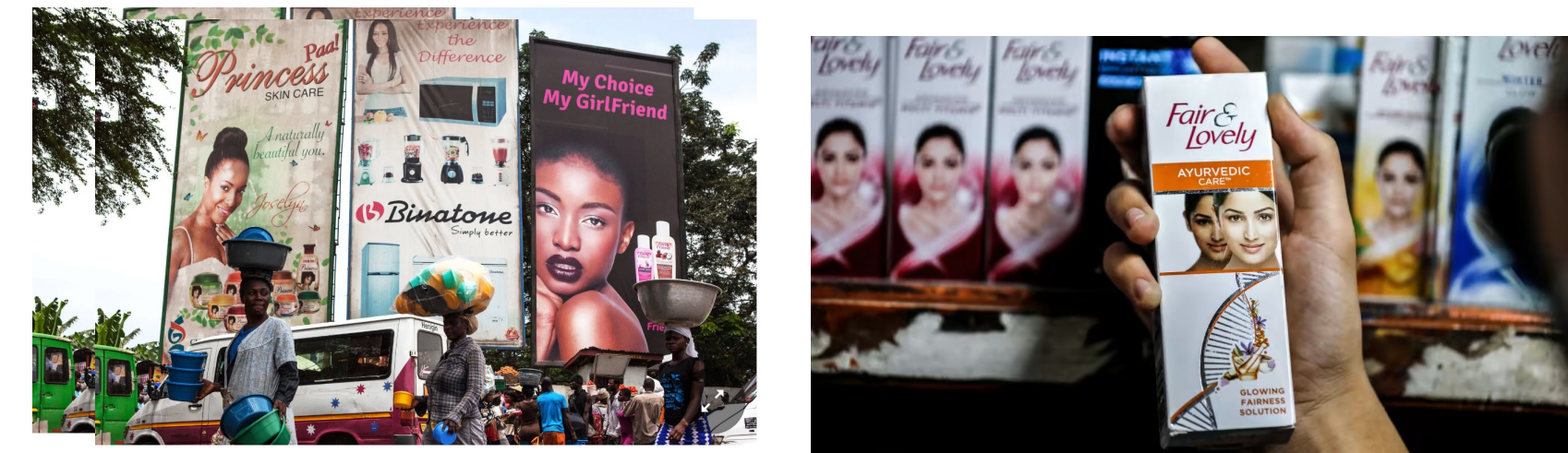
The Psychosocial Impact of Colorism on Female University Students in Ghana



PRESENTER:

Patrice Le Goy, Ph.D, LMFT

- BACKGROUND:
- Colorism is discrimination based on skin tone and is derived from colonialism, white supremacy, and socio-economic capital
  - Within the same ethnic group, lighter-skinned people attain:
    - More advanced educational levels, professional positions, and higher wages
    - Increased likelihood of marriage
    - Lower rates of expulsion and suspensions among schoolchildren and shorter prison sentences for adults
  - Privileges received by those with Eurocentric features has led to the worldwide phenomenon of skin-lightening product usage with **\$8.6bn (USD) spent worldwide in 2020**
  - Products are often illegal and unregulated and may contain dangerous ingredients such as mercury, hydroquinone, battery acid, and bleach
  - The present phenomenological qualitative study examined the use of these products, the pressure to have Eurocentric features, and the psychosocial impact of these factors in Ghana and around the world



- METHODS
1. Skin tone scale self-evaluation and open-ended interviews conducted in person with 15 female University of Ghana students
  2. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and data was analyzed with MAXQDA

- RESULTS
- Two key themes emerged – Motivations to Change Skin Color and Motivation to Maintain Skin Color with 10 subthemes

Banning skin-lightening products doesn't work.

Holistic intervention programs need to address the psychosocial realities of skin tone privilege, utilize resilience-building factors, and emphasize self-worth.

Motivation to Change Skin Color (NEGATIVE SELF-IMAGE)

- Social Media/Celebrity Capital
- Social Appeal
- Skin Color Discrimination
- Economic Considerations
- Lighter Skin Attractiveness Stereotype
- Ignorance and Denial about Negative Effects



Motivation to Maintain Skin Color (SENSE of RESILIENCE)

- Social Support
- Consciencism
- Religious Beliefs
- Detrimental Effects



CONCLUSION:

Government bans and shaming practices against skin-lightening are ineffective because:

- They do not acknowledge the psychosocial factors that encourage people to desire lighter skin

To address this issue, holistic programs should be designed that:

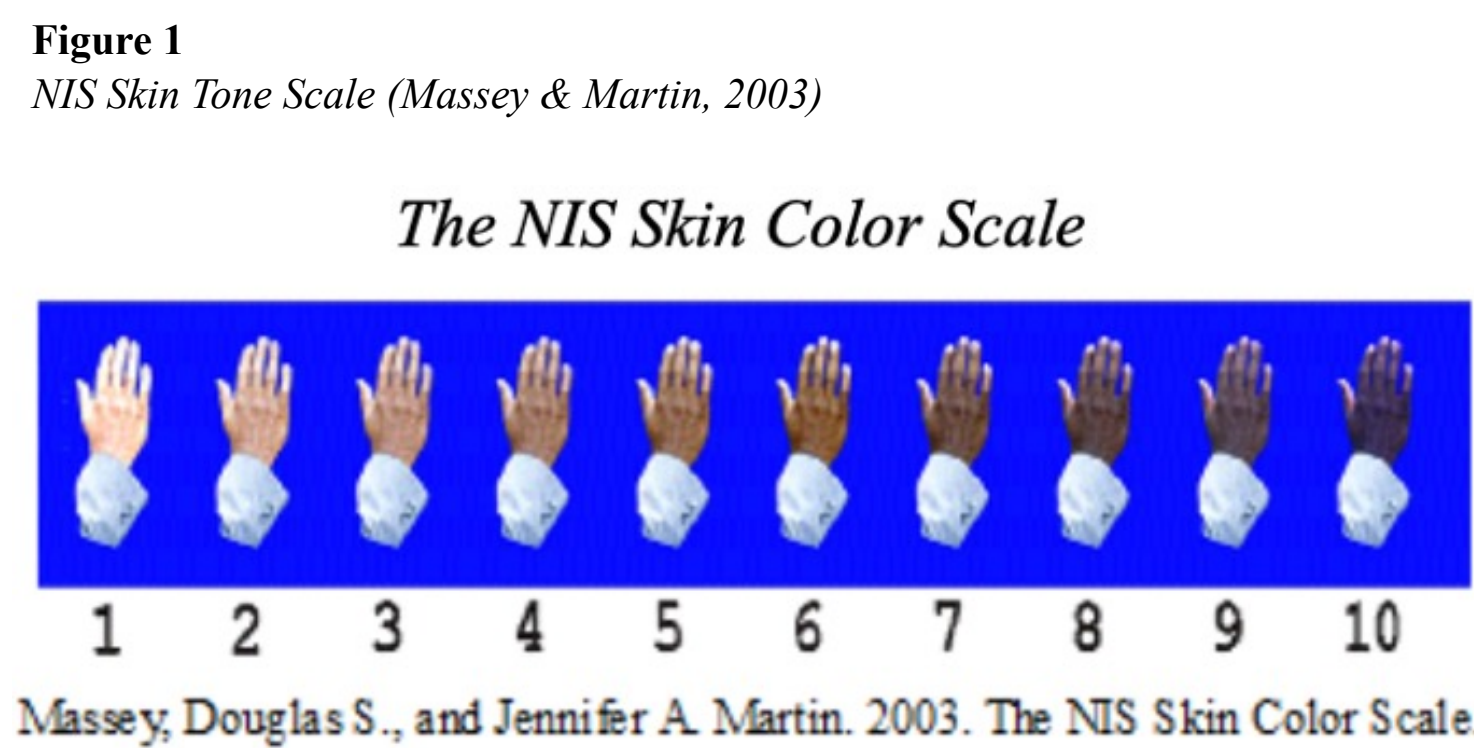
- Acknowledge the realities of colorism
- Draw on factors that can instill pride and self-worth among those who may consider using these product or who may suffer from low self-esteem due to their skin color

TABLES & FIGURES

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant Number	Age	Skin Tone Number
#1	25	5
#2	22	4/5
#3	24	5
#4	25	8
#5	25	3
#6	25	5
#7	20	4
#8	22	7
#9	25	8
#10	22	3
#11	23	4
#12	23	8
#13	21	6
#14	24	7/8
#15	21	8



REFERENCES

Dadzie, O. E., & Petit, A. (2009). Skin bleaching: Highlighting the misuse of cutaneous depigmenting agents. *Journal of the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology*, 23(7), 741–750. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-3083.2009.03150.x>

Hunter, M. (2016). Colorism in the Classroom: How Skin Tone Stratifies African American and Latino/a Students. *Theory Into Practice*, 55, 54 - 61.

Lartey, M., Krampa, F., Abdul-Rahman, M., Quarcoo, N., Yanson, P., Hagan, P. G., Tettey, Y., Gyasi, R., & Adjei, A. (2017). Use of skin-lightening products among selected urban communities in Accra, Ghana. *International Journal of Dermatology*, 56(1), 32-39. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijd.13449>

Monk, E.P. (2019). The color of punishment: African Americans, skin tone, and the criminal justice system. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 42(10), 1593-1612. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2018.1508736>

Ryabov, I. (2019). How much does physical attractiveness matter for blacks? Linking skin color, physical attractiveness, and black status attainment. *Race and Social Problems*, 11(1), 68-79. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1008/s12552-018-9245-1>

Sagoe, D., Pallesen, S., Dlova, N. C., Lartey, M., Ezzedine, K., & Dadzie, O. (2019). The global prevalence and correlates of skin bleaching: a meta-analysis and meta-regression analysis. *International Journal of Dermatology*, 58(1), 24–44. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijd.14052>

Global Industry Analysts. (2022). *Skin lighteners. World market report*. <https://www.strategy.com/market-report-skin-lighteners-forecasts-global-industry-analysts-inc.asp>