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The colour order: race and colour perception in South Africa

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Table of Contents

Synopsis:

Introduction: Colourism etc…….....pg. 4

One: Mechanisms of Looking ……..pg. 19

Two: Glamour globalized……..……..pg. 40

Three: Team Light Skin, Team Dark Skin……pg. 66

Four: Value Added Colour……pg. 86

Conclusion: White Supremacy in the age of White Supremacy…pg. 107

List of figures……..pg. 115

Appendices……pg. 124

Bibliography…….....pg. 126

The Colour Order: race and colour perception in South Africa

Synopsis:

This paper will be an analysis of the covers and contents of the South African editions of *Glamour* magazine from September 2014 to August 2015 and *True Love* magazine from September 2014 to August 2015. The analysis will consider the effects of: globalisation; globalised culture and consumption; and perceptions of race and skin colour, (specifically the notion of colourism) in South Africa.

Colourism is a prejudicial system that renders value and perpetuates social hierarchies along perceived tonal difference in skin colour. It has been asserted by writers like Deborah Gabriel and Nicole Fleetwood that this value system exists within communities of people of colour and is perpetuated by mainstream media, but maintains a somewhat obscure presence. I will consider the mechanisms that inform this colour system and will show how globalisation works to facilitate colourism. Finally, I aim to explain how skin colour extends beyond the body and define the effects of global cultural interaction, showing that colourism is not simply about skin colour and tone, but about economic, social, and political realities.

Introduction: Colourism

Colourism, as a term was developed by Alice Walker in a collection of essays, articles and reviews called, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens; Womanist Prose*[1], the term has come to be used across the world as the term for intra-racial skin colour discrimination. It is discrimination or prejudice based on skin tone; people in black and other communities of colour are treated differently based on the social weight attached to skin colour. At an intra-racial level there tends to be greater concern with skin tone rather than ethnicity or supposed racial markers, as people of different races can have the same skin tone and people of the same race can have different skin tones. With racism the skin tone of individuals can be the same, they can be two people of different racial groups but have the same skin colour; they will be treated differently and will face prejudice based on their actual or perceived racial status. With colourism, where the individuals are of the same 'race', but have different skin tones; the darker skinned individual is treated differently and more likely to experience negative prejudice.

When I refer to black people, I refer to people of African descent who visibly appear 'black' by skin colour and 'phenotype'. 'Black' is often used as a racial classification for people of African descent, and by those who identify as black in the Diaspora. The dynamics of being 'black' and blackness differ depending on context, society and region. In America for instance, black people and blackness is not defined by skin colour and phenotype alone,

1 Walker, A. (1983). *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens; Womanist Prose*. San Diego: Harcout Brace Jovanovich

but by relation to being African American, consequently, the 'one drop rule'[2] that states that any individual with any African heritage is in fact black, a legacy of American slave laws. Whereas, in South Africa, black people and blackness is generally defined by skin colour, phenotype, language and cultural or ethnic background, individuals of mixed heritage are classified as 'Coloured', regardless of their personal identification. Hair texture is historically an important marker that designates Blackness, especially in South Africa; the Apartheid regime used the 'pencil test'[3] to classify individuals as either black or Coloured. In this paper, I use the definition of Black[4] and Blackness as used in South Africa.

Many communities across the world are affected by colourism; societies with colourism tend to have a history of colonisation and heavy influence from European countries. The majority of the African continent, Australia, North America, South America, East and South Asia all exhibit colourism and colourist ideology. Latin American nations, like Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Peru, have written into law in subtle and explicit ways for the people of those societies to live and act to the ideology of colourism. Most countries in Latin American are pigmentocracies[5], societies with hierarchies based on skin colour and skin tone. It is through colourism that some of the nuances and effects of global structural racism and white

2 Danielle, B. (2013). *Is It Time to Do Away With The 'One-Drop' Rule?* Retrieved from, http://www.clutchmagonline.com/2013/07/is-it-time-to-do-away-with-the-one-drop-rule/

3 Erasmus, Y. (n.d.). *Racial (re)classification during apartheid South Africa: Regulations, experiences and the meaning(s) of 'race'*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from, http://yvonneerasmus.co.za.

4 I will also use brown synonymously when discussing nuances of black and blackness, as well as to refer to other non-black people of colour.

5 Lynn, R. (2008). *Pigmentocray: Racial Hierarchies in the Caribbean and Latin America*. Augusta, Ga.: Washington Summit Publishers.

supremacy are made visible. In different regions of the world, colourism can be described as a particular form of structural discrimination in communities of colour towards individuals due to the darkness of their complexions. People considered to be light skinned also face prejudice due to the social meanings and attributes related to light skin, often those with lighter skin need to defend their skin tones, they have to justify their 'Blackness' and their place in Black communities. It is assumed that for light-skinned individuals, life is a little easier, that they face less racism and are at the receiving end of more opportunities than their darker-skinned counterparts. In reality, light-skinned people even though they may have some privilege, face additional prejudices that challenge their authenticity in the black community.

Some shades of brown are perceived as more desirable than others, and in most cases it is the lighter shades of brown that are considered more valuable. There are times when colourism is experienced interracially. For instance, white people perceive the skin tones of black individuals as much darker than black people do, and they are more likely to see a black person they perceive as light-skinned more favourably. There is a widespread belief held by some scholars who have studied colourism, like, Richard E. Hall who believe that colourism is only a problem encountered by people of colour. This is not true, white people also implement and perpetuate colourism. The logic behind colourism differs depending on the ethnicity or racial identity of the community. There is no consensus about where the end and beginning of the colour spectrum, or line, is. Or what a person should look like. This

arbitrariness is important as it renders colourism deliberately, and confusingly, subjective.

Colourism has the capacity to stratify within an already marginalised community, those with lighter skin will feel alienated within their own communities for something beyond their control, their skin colour, and outside of their communities they will still face racial discrimination for being black. They have to face more discrimination, even from those who are meant to be accepting of them. This discrimination and prejudice can lead some black people and people of colour to high levels of depression.

Light skin is so desired that bleaching creams continue to have high sales across the globe. Women in Nigeria and South Africa have reportedly suffered mercury poisoning after using bleaching creams.

Although, racism and colourism exist side by side they are not identical; they manifest and function on different levels, colourism is often subsumed by racism, making it less clear and at times not as visible. The difference between colourism and racism can often be seen as; colourism being social meanings associated with gradations of skin colour and racism is social meaning attached to racism.[6] Colourism is the result of centuries of dominant oppressive racist structures that designated prestige, beauty, intelligence, and the finest form of humanity to white people. Colourism is also closely linked to gender and class[7] because of sexism and misogynoir[8] (racist sexism faced by black women in society and in mass media), colourism tends to

6 Gabriel, D. *(2007). Layers of Blackness: Colourism in the African Diaspora*. Imani Media. London.
7 Bashi, V. *(1998). Racial categories matter because racial hierarchies matter: a commentary*. Ethnic and Racial Studies, Vol. 21, No. 5, (September 1998), .p.959-968).
8Hamilton, T. (2014). *Explanation Of Misogynoir*. Retrieved From, http://www.gradientlair.com/post/84107309247/define-misogynoir-anti-black-misogyny-moya-bailey-coinedv

impact black women more than Black men. Skin tone is also used as an indicator of class and socio economic position, where Colonisation, Apartheid and Slavery's social order placed black people and other people of colour in ascending class and socio economic brackets due to the lightness of their skin tone. Anyone lighter skinned experienced benefits and privileges above darker skinned people, especially among black women. Thus colourism affects black women most pertinently, Amit Singh, in his article *Why is Society's Idea of Beauty So Often Either 'White or Light'?* illustrates the intermingling of race, skin tone, gender and socio economic status, while simultaneously showing the meanings associated to the skin colour and skin tone of women. Singh refers to a particular expression in Brazilian society that can be found in varying ways in other societies and in the mass media.

> In Blogueiras Negras popular article, *Brazil's new primetime show "Sexo e as Negas "* serves the white gaze, they remind us of a popular Brazilian expression that "has its roots in slavery and has remained practically unchanged – "White women are for marriage, mulatas are for fucking and black women are for work.[9]

Although black men and men of colour experience both colourism and racism, they are exempt from some of the ridiculous associative sexist associations to skin tone. Patriarchy, for centuries has indoctrinated women into believing that all a woman should be concerned with is a pleasing men,

9 Singh, A. (2015).*Why is society's idea of beauty so often either 'white or light'?* Retrieved From, http://mediadiversified.org/2015/01/06/why-is-societys-idea-of-beauty-so-often-either...

to please the men who embody a hegemonic hyper-masculinity, men that embody rigid notions of masculinity as pertained to race and complexion, notions that reside in white supremacy and anti-Blackness. So if men prefer lighter skinned women, all women should fit that image. This breeds a complex for those women who are not part of that image. Women in society are often valued for how they look, and both dark skinned and light skinned women are vulnerable to that ideology. My research is primarily on, how colourism as a system, is most successful when it is experienced by black women and disseminated towards black women.

Colourism is a system of organisation, a system that designates human value, it can determine what kind of job a woman or a man can get. It can determine how people are perceived, what they are associated with. It also promotes privilege in some and denies others their rights. Colourism is more than beauty politics; it is a reflection of systematic and institutionalised oppressive strategies. It is about power. By this logic to be beautiful is to be powerful, and whiteness or lightness is beauty, therefore to be powerful is to appear close to whiteness.

It would be impractical to discuss colourism or skin colour without acknowledging the history of racial discrimination and skin colour categorization in South Africa. In South Africa, discrimination on the basis of skin colour is not new; the system of privilege based on the lightness of a person's skin has been deeply established in South African society.[10] Skin colour has been and is still used as a means of identification, as a way to

10 Polgreen, L. (2003). *For Mixed-Race South Africans, Equity is Elusive*. Retrieved from March 3, www.nytimes.com/2003/07/27/world/for-mixed-race-south-africans-equity-is-elusive.html

racially differentiate individuals. Not only does South Africa have to deal with the legacy of the British colonial system, when the Dutch gained power, they introduced a new form of oppression, the Apartheid system. The Apartheid system initiated a number of acts that allowed for the stratification of individuals with dark skin and placed value, at different levels on individuals with light skin. One of the acts, The Population Registration Act[11] established in 1950, divided people into four groups; Black, White, Asian/Indian and coloured. People would be placed into these racial categories based on a number of tests.

The most obvious identifier in these tests would be skin tone, this would include the 'eyelid test' that checked the skin tone under the eyelid. When skin tone alone was not adequate the tests became more obscene; there was the 'pencil test' for hair, as well as the 'ruler test' for the physical features of the face.[12] The ruling white minority placed value on individuals depending on how black they were. It was better to be 'coloured' than it was to be black, and so on with other races; whiteness was positioned first and other 'races' were ordered along colour lines in order to create a hierarchy, being dark skinned meant being at the bottom of the scale. For instance, within an oppressive system for all people of colour, people of South Asian descent, 'coloureds' (or mixed race people depending on perspective) and South-east Asians experienced economic and social privileges during Apartheid, and many continue to enjoy these privileges today with little scrutiny. This

11 Erasmus, op. cit.
12 Mnthali, L. (2010). *Separating Strands: The Apartheid of Hair in South African Society*. Retrieved from, http://www.clutchmagonline.com/2010/07/separating-strands-the-apartheid-of-hair-in-south-african-society/

chromatic ordering not only resulted in intra-racial discrimination, but also established persistent anti-black rhetoric from non-black people of colour. There were advantages to not being black, to not being dark skinned, and to some degree this is still the same today. The racial categories developed during the Apartheid regime are still being used today, the choice is between the White, Black, Coloured, Indian and other box on monitoring forms; the only difference is that now we get to choose for ourselves. The same racial categories designated to individuals during Apartheid without choice for the individual are still used today on official records and items of identification. This history of racial categorizing plays an important part in how race and skin colour is perceived in South Africa now.

South Africa has a unique economic structure; it quickly joined the world market after the abolition of Apartheid in 1994. It has attributes of a first and a third world nation; it is still a developing economy. The country has both the very poor and the very rich. The country is still struggling to catch up to the wider stream of the global economy but, the scale and speed at which South Africa; a somewhat new economy is growing is hurried. The wealth distribution of this economy is extremely unequal. In the race to participate in the global market, images and products that are produced locally have been adjusted to emulate the images and products with a worldwide market, and in turn 'foreign' images and products are adjusted to some degree to suit the consumers of South Africa. South Africans now consume similar products to those available in wealthier Western countries; South Africa is playing a part in global consumption.

Globalisation has only intensified colourism. As a result of globalisation, many beauty ideals and practices are being circulated easily to other parts of the world. Due to the increasing globalisation of business and media, the same beauty and fashion brand names are being consumed globally. Magazines like *Vogue, Cosmopolitan, ELLE* and *Glamour,* which originate from the West; the United States of America and Europe, have all expanded their markets to other global regions. The trends in beauty and fashion magazines have a significant role in influencing and manipulating different cultures on beauty ideals, on what is perceived to be beautiful.

For comparison and analysis I will interrogate the magazines, *Glamour* and *True Love*. Both magazines contain a large amount of pages of editorials and advertisement, especially international advertisements. These advertisements and editorials are leading forces in the spread of a 'globalised beauty ideal'. Companies that advertise in magazines tend to use standardised or similar images and advertising messages which disregard difference in appearance, aesthetic preference and culture in larger society; they adopt supposed multi-cultural tactics, which are fairly hegemonic, ignoring the economic, social, political and racial differences in each region.

The advertisements in these magazines sell symbolic ideals that represent a particular lifestyle; the advertisements sell the idea of an improved self-image. The majority of these images have Northern and Eurocentric aesthetics; they are mostly designed and made by Europeans or individuals of European

descent, "[…] the fashion industry is primarily driven by Western fashion and cultural trends. What this tells us is that female beauty is essentially white."[13] Although, sometimes even people of colour, whether out of preference or otherwise, choose to perpetuate Eurocentric aesthetics: lighter skin tones; straighter noses; straight hair etc. This has a lot to do with the editorial teams of magazines and their publishing houses. In South Africa, unless the magazine is historically black owned and targeted towards black people, the editorial teams remain largely on the pale side of the spectrum, the editors of the major women's magazines in South Africa are mostly white; *Marie Claire, ELLE*, and *Glamour* all have white female editors, Aspasia Karras, Jackie Burger, and Pnina Fenster respectively. In 2012, *Cosmopolitan*, nominated Sbu Mpungose as its first and only black editor, but after nine months Mpungose resigned without any stated reasons.

The most important part of a magazine tends to be the cover, the image on the cover must grab the reader's attention, and it makes the consumer want to buy it. Women's magazine covers are often highly criticised for their lack of diversity, they tend to show mostly white women. And while some magazines place images of some women of colour on their covers, they tend to be international actresses, models and celebrities, or they have a particular look, an ambiguous blackness, they are light skinned and have phenotypical features that gravitate towards Caucasian features or are similar. Black women, that buck this trend, are rare on magazine covers, the tendency is to not represent black women in constructive ways by their absence. The lack

13 Singh, op. cit.

of racial diversity on the majority of magazine covers, in fashion and beauty advertising is a highly debated topic in South Africa and the rest of the world, in the April 2010 issue of *ELLE,* its fourteenth birthday issue, Alek Wek was its cover star. The issue's headlining article debates racial diversity on magazine covers in South Africa. Titled, *Do black covers sell?*[14] The article explored the misconception that black covers do not sell; that is that magazines that feature black cover stars do not sell. *Glamour* too, came under fire for celebrating their first local black cover in South Africa, both magazines were criticised for making excuses for racism and continuously lauding Western beauty ideals.

Filmmaker, Ava DuVernay and Television writer Shonda Rhimes, have brought up how important it is that black women are represented, and that they are also represented positively and constructively. This means showing images of black women that are not restricted to stereotypes, images that show a vast range of appearance, showing black women in their diversity; this includes, most importantly variety in skin tone.

Glamour[15] magazine has been published in South Africa since 2004; and has a large readership. The current editor is Pnina Fenster and the magazine is targeted towards:

> […] the country's most vibrant market: upwardly mobile, acquisitive, urban women aged between 16 and 34. With 54 per cent of the

14 Unknown. (2010). *Do black covers sell?* Retrieved from, www.elle.co.za>tag>elle-magazine-south-africa/
15 *Glamour*, Retrieved April 16, 2014 from condenast.com/brands/glamour/

readership being young black women, the magazine reflects South Africa's rapidly changing demographics.[16]

By the end of 2015 *Glamour* had published a hundred and thirty four editions of its magazine in South Africa; it took ten years for a local black woman to be on the cover of the magazine. In November 2014, Bonang Matheba became the first ever local black woman on the cover of the magazine, and it is worth bearing in mind that this only happened after she became the first local black woman to become the 'face' of *Revlon*.[17] Bonang Matheba is also one of the very few faces of colour that has appeared on the cover of *Glamour* magazine[18]. This seems inconsistent with the demographics of South Africa and the magazine's mission statement, if 54 per cent of the magazine's readership is black, and about 70 per cent of the population of South Africa is black. The magazine should have more covers depicting women of colour, and particularly more local black women on the covers. At present the covers do not reflect the demographics of South Africa, or the magazine's statement.

True Love[19] however, from the publication's beginning, has only had black women on its front cover, it is a magazine created for black women in South Africa. It has been publishing editions for forty four years. The magazine distributes in South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe. *True Love* also has an east

16 Ibid.
17 Andrews, N. (2013). *Bonang Matheba Named Face of Revlon.* Retrieved from, http://www.oprahmag.co.za/fashion-beauty/beauty/bonang-matheba-named-face-of-revlon
18 Maivha, M. (n.d.). *After 100+ issues, Glamour SA has first-ever local, black cover star.* Retrieved from, http://www.women24.com/TVAndGossip/CelebGossip/After-100-issues-Glamour-SA-has-first-ever-local-black-cover-star-20141121-2
19 *True Love*, Retrieved April 16, 2014 from www.truelove.co.za

African edition that is distributed in Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda. The magazine does not seem to cater to a particular age group, and the women on the covers tend to be diverse in age and appearance. Most important is the fact that *True Love* covers depict 'local' women.

The magazine turned 40 in 2012 and re-launched itself, although it still remains somewhat the same, additional editorial content was created, for example it added pages for international celebrities, a sex column, street style and fashion and beauty polls. This was due to the increasing pressure for the magazine to keep up with the changing times and the increasing globalisation of beauty and beauty trends. The magazine changed to meet the supposed expectations of its readers who are a part of, and consume global culture.[20] What remains is the magazine's commitment to only publish South African editions with South African Black women on the cover. The magazine generally takes on the same premise in the different regions it is distributed in Africa.

Today the world is contesting mainstream images and the tendency to be biased against people of colour, magazines like Vogue, ELLE and Harper's Bazaar, especially have been criticised for not being able to accurately capture dark skin. These magazines are regularly accused of either making the people of colour on their covers too light skinned or too dark skinned. In my research I look at the history of photography and its role in the spread of colourism.

20 Anonymous. (2012). *True Love* turns 40. http://www.mediaupdate.co.za/News/Article/46673/True-Love-turns-40

Between 2012 and 2013, the artists, Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin conducted and presented a project that investigated the idea or "[…] radical notion that prejudice might be inherent in the medium of photography itself […]"[21], that the technology was not designed for people with dark skin.

The title of the project, *To Photograph the Details of a Dark horse in Low Light*, was a racially coded expression used by the Kodak company to describe the new film stock the company developed in the 1980's to address their then current film stock's inability to photograph dark skin.[22] This project provides a glimpse into the history of photography and its direct impact on race and skin colour perception in South Africa.

I will be using Glamour magazine, True Love magazine and *To Photograph the Details of a Dark horse in Low Light* to show that racist ideology is present in mainstream images and that colourism is disseminated in images that may initially seem trivial and superficial.

It is neither new nor radical to point out how particular visual material has perpetuated certain beauty ideals and racial ideology, what is important here is that even in the most inconsequential images, there are individuals, darker-skinned black and other darker-skin toned women of colour who feel

21 Broomberg, A., & Chanarin, O. (2013). *To Photograph The Details of A Dark Horse in Low Light*. Retrieved from, from http://www.goodman-gallery.com/exhibitions/311
22 Broomberg, A., & Chanarin, O. (2013). *To Photograph The Details of A Dark Horse in Low Light*. Retrieved from, http://www.broombergchanarin.com/installations/dark-horse-installation/

left out of the equation. The system, the spectrum does not value or account for them. They are always at the bottom of the scale or they are not there at all. When dark-skinned women are presented, they are placed outside the normal, they are fetishised or exoticised, they are analysed and objectified; they are treated as an 'other'.

This alienation is sustained by contemporary market globalisation. Globalisation is working to facilitate a homogenisation of beauty and the proliferation of colourism; the consistent growth of global distribution of Western beauty ideologies, through mass media and Western beauty products advertised in magazines, has resulted in an apparent homogenisation of beauty to the point where it appears that alternate images of beauty are unwelcome. A small range of attractiveness is being sold and resold on a daily basis. The vast majority of the people in the world are people of colour, and yet, images and products consumed globally are Western dominated, and most significantly white, these show and illustrate who or what is beautiful. The media and corporate world sell similar images of 'beauty' across the world and in these images and products, racism and colourism proliferate. Globalisation is enabling and encouraging colourism; it is the global projection of Western beauty ideals that allows colourism to persist. Skin colour goes beyond its bodily limits, and the way it is projected and perceived in mainstream media illustrates the effects of a global cultural interaction and its relationship with people of colour.

One: Mechanisms of Looking

> In the history of photography and film, getting the right image meant getting the one which conformed to prevalent ideas of humanity. This included ideas of whiteness, of what colour — what range of hue — white people wanted white people to be.[23]

Writers Dodai Stewart and Maz Ali have tackled the inherent bias towards people of colour and black skin that is present in photography and filmmaking; they have already established the role of photography and film in reinforcing racist and colourist imagery and ideology. The way we 'see' or 'view' and the mediums through which we see are already coded and fixed up in a way that reifies the 'normal', that is whiteness. Although the technologies that capture images of people have greatly improved over time, there still remains 'difficulty' in capturing skin that is not 'white'. Much of the technology developed to capture images of people was designed and calibrated for the best representation of white skin. Whether this was a deliberate omission of all various brown people from their research on how to capture skin tones, or not, no one knows for sure, but there is presently no guide that comes with this technology to aid image makers (photographers, filmmakers etc.) in capturing the various skin tones of all humanity. Most cameras are sold with a little booklet that shows the different images one could capture. One could capture images of people, images of plants, and

23 Dyer, R. (1997). *White: Essays on Race and Culture*. New York: Routledge.

images of landscapes; but they do not delve into the particular needs that each image will require depending on the subject, especially if that subject is a non-white person. It should be that all skin tones, across the spectrum, across all racial categories should be and could be photographed or filmed well, but this is not so.

Because of this, darker skinned people are sensitive to mainstream images of themselves and others who look like them. The negative images of black people in mainstream media are an overload, and they do not reflect the reality of black people regardless of the shade of brown. Stock images and mainstream images in advertising, on television and other visual media show 'normal' living, and being, limited to white people or lighter skinned people. There is a disjuncture between the images the world is being shown, and what the world actually looks like. The world is made up of people with a great number of skin tones, most of them are various shades of brown and this is not reflected in mainstream media. In instances where darker brown people appear on film and in stock photographs, there tends to be something off, their deep brown skin tones often appear grey, washed out and muddy, it takes an 'experienced' photographer or cinematographer to capture the nuance of darker brown skin tones. Photography has a role in the perpetuation of colourism, given that the photograph is a primary component of magazine publishing.

In chapter three of Richard Dyer's *White, The Light of the World* addresses at length the biased history of photography and film, especially its preservation and maintenance as the norm. Using examples of 'popular' western film and

photography as well as other visual material, Dyer shows how the media of light, photography and film were designed and calibrated to represent the white body, to make it look bright, ideal and white. He brings forward specifically the light and lighting used in photography and film, how

> The photographic media and, a *fortiori*, movie lighting assume, privilege and construct whiteness. The apparatus was developed with white people in mind and habitual use and instruction continue in the same vein, so much so that photographing non-white people is typically constructed as a problem.[24]

Dyer makes comparison between two actors in a number of films, one black and the other white, he shows how they are lit differently and appear differently because both the lighting techniques and the filming technologies are made and calibrated for the white body. The technologies of that time and those of today make and maintain that what is filmed or photographed without 'difficulty' is a normal face: a white face.

> The assumption that the normal face is a white face runs through most published advice given on photo- and cinematography. This is carried above all by illustrations which invariably use a white face, except on

24 Dyer, R. (1997). The light of the world; Lighting for whiteness. In *White: Essays on Race and Culture.* New York: Routledge. pg. 89.

those rare occasions when they are discussing the problem of dark skinned people.[25]

Dyer further illustrates how movie lighting in turn is racist because it is designed and ordered to face the white body. In instances where the people of different skin tones are present in a scene, one dark, one light, the lighting will favour the lighter skinned person. The lighting creates a hierarchy, and those who are dark are not lit well, are presented oddly, or are erased altogether and that '[…] very process of hierarchisation is an exercise of power.'[26]

The use of the white female face as the benchmark for testing and using new photographic and film technologies, where white women are given the ultimate privilege leaves no room for black women and women of colour in mainstream images. Practices in the film and photographic industry developed the image of the ideal white woman, one who as Dyer states '[…]is bathed in and permeated by light […]In short, they glow.'[27] Dyer shows how the practices of lighting in film and photography encouraged the development of make-up and cosmetic products that emulated the glowing, shininess of the mainstream image of white women. Through advertising and the sale of beauty products, many women were sold the ideal of white womanhood. This ideal was sold to both white and black women, except that black women were sold products that appealed to them specifically, and even when the beauty products not invested in white beauty ideals by

25 Ibid., pg. 94.
26 Ibid., pg.102.
27 Ibid., pg.122.

being toned for black skin; the difference was futile, when the mainstream image in film, photography, advertisements, and beauty products remained white for women.

Dyer's focus is on whiteness, its production and maintenance in western visual culture. It is a discussion that highlights whiteness and is not a comparison of white against the non-white. He frames his analysis of whiteness, its production and maintenance within the history, culture and technological development that made whiteness the standard of normality. Beauty and power has always resided in the western representations of people, most strongly in the image of the white body. He does not explicitly point out the negative impact of this historical whitewashing or whitening of humanity on black people and people of colour. His analysis does not move beyond the western visual sphere and even within it, he leaves out the impact of this whitewashing on people of colour in the west. Dyer does however, successfully point out that photographic and film technologies, these media of light, these mechanisms of looking, are not neutral. These technologies are not exempt from history, culture and social order; these mechanisms of looking influence the practice of these technologies and who it favours, even today.

Dyer's *White* turned attention to the study of whiteness and its representational power in society. Dyer frames the discussion of whiteness around the historical ways that whiteness has been represented; he questions the pervasive yet invisible nature of whiteness and makes visible the technological conditions that have made whiteness the standard of power,

and beauty. To note, black people and people of colour have long held everyday knowledge about the ways in which whiteness functions, especially for those that exist in white-dominated societies. While remaining invisible, whiteness has historically propagated knowledge about behaviour and social conduct for black people and people of colour and it marks borders of inclusion and exclusion, it clearly shows, without being explicit the position of the 'other', the non-white and especially its supposed direct opposition, blackness. Whiteness in mass media images, works to create a particular social order. It is a manifestation of white supremacy; relation to whiteness is negotiated in various ways, colourism is one way of achieving proximity to whiteness.

To Photograph the Details of a Dark Horse in Low Light.

In 2013, two artists Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin conducted a project that brought to light "[…] the radical notion that prejudice might be inherent in the medium of photography itself." The project and subsequent exhibition was an investigation of the Polaroid ID-2 camera and the Kodak film stock sold prior to the 80's as tools that were engineered with white faces in mind. The Polaroid ID-2 has, or had, a boost button that increased the flash and made it possible for the camera to capture black skin. This camera was used fairly prominently during the apartheid regime to take photographs of black people for the 'dompas', the pass-books required for movement during apartheid.

To Photograph the Details of a Dark Horse in Low Light was the title of the exhibition that resulted from the exploration of the Polaroid ID-2 camera and the Kodak film stock that they had acquired on eBay, the stock had expired in the 50's or the 70's. The title of the exhibition is a phrase developed by the Kodak Company to describe or allude to the capabilities of the photographic film released in the 80's. This new film stock was developed in response to consumer complaints about that current film stock's inability to capture dark objects, dark wood furniture especially, was difficult to photograph. This response was not, by the way, to address the camera's lack of awareness for the skin of black people or other people of colour. The company developed 'better' film for rendering the different gradations of brown due to economic pressure that came from their professional accounts. Some of their biggest clients were chocolate producers; they were frustrated with the film's inability to render the dissimilarity between chocolates of different darkness. Other complaints came from furniture manufactures who were disappointed over the film's lack of consideration for the different wood grains and various browns of their furniture.

In an attempt to 'subvert' the camera and the Kodak film's racist overtures, the artists Broomberg and Chanarin, while in South Africa focused their lenses on the diverse fauna and flora of the country instead of taking images of people with the film. This was part of their exhibition at the Goodman Gallery in Johannesburg; the exhibition also presented large prints of the Kodak 'Shirley' reference cards used historically as the baseline for lighting 'normal

skin'. The Kodak Shirleys where named after the first woman to model for the company's test cards. Also included in the exhibition was,

> […] a series of these partly exposed, haphazardly cropped proto-images, originally printed as test strips. The grey tones, grain and texture of black and white photographic chemistry are foregrounded in these outsized 'darkroom' experiments."[28]

These test strips were developed using the 'parameters' set forward by a family friend, a Dr. Rosenberg, who had been an amateur photographer and an anatomist. The series called *Strip Test*, was an exploration of colour through black and white monochrome, it also included a series of portraits in frontal and profile mode of anonymous individuals taken in the style of studio photography. This portrait series shows most suitably the inherent racial bias in the film and process; it shows how the camera as a tool can be used to capture a subject in particular ways and it turn define the subject according to that representation.

Broomberg and Chanarin made two trips to Gabon on commission to photograph a number of Bwiti initiation rituals using the old Kodak film stock, from this apparently, only a single frame could be reclaimed. This singular 'successful' image was a colour picture consisting of mostly hues of purple and black was not of a person, but a plant.

28 Broomberg, A., & Chanarin, O. (2013). *To Photograph The Details of A Dark Horse in Low Light*. Retrieved from, from http://www.goodman-gallery.com/exhibitions/311

The artists explored these materials in attempt to reveal the camera and film's real objectives. Broomberg and Chanarin were in a way attempting to speak to the pervasiveness of white supremacy, the way that the camera and film have been used to remove or misrepresent black people and other people of colour in its gaze. This erasure and misrepresentation aided in controlling the history of the appearance of those who were not white and in many ways ordered and shaped the perception of black people and people of colour, but most importantly it rendered value: not being seen, is not being valued.

Broomberg and Chanarin are concerned with the limitations and possibilities of photography and its process. They have frequently posed significant questions concerning the way photography is expected to be and what it should contain, whether it can ever really portray any truth, or if fated to endlessly project particular ideology and agendas in whatever spheres it circulates. They are concerned from their perspective, with the relationship between the creation of the photographic image and the consumption of the photographic image. *To Photograph the Details of a Dark Horse in Low Light*, as stated in a press release was,

> […] a wide ranging meditation on the relationship between photography and race…leading viewers through a convoluted history

> lesson; a combination of found images, rescued artefacts and unstable new photographic work.[29]

The exhibition, an attempt to challenge and address the traditional concepts of documentary, portrait and ethnographic photography, endeavoured to make the viewer consider or question what is being represented in photography, and to highlight photography's relationship with colonialism, racism and the representation of those considered 'other' from a western perspective: black people and other people of colour. When they brought the project to South Africa they consciously chose not to photograph portraits of people, to avoid reiterating the racist imagery produced by the Polaroid ID-2 camera. They chose instead to focus on the diverse fauna and flora of the country to show the camera's possibilities, but given that the original thought had been about considering the processes of using the camera. Could they not have used it to attempt to capture black people and their skin accurately?

> According to South African born Broomberg, the ID-2 has a flash-boost facility, enabling photographers to take detailed, reliable photographs of black faces - something that proved notoriously difficult with Western film stock, which was developed largely for a white audience.

29 Anonymous. (n.d.). *New show explores racism in photography: Can photo artists Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin undo South African legacy?* Retrieved from, http://uk.phaidon.com/agenda/photography/articles/2013/january/28/new-show-explores-racism-in-photography/

> Black skin absorbs 42% more light. The button boosts the flash exactly 42%," Broomberg explained to The Guardian newspaper. "It makes me believe it was designed for this purpose".[30]

If the camera is capable of capturing different shades of brown skin tones, as the artists have recognised, why not use it to show its ability to represent black people? If the camera can capture and render various gradations of brown skin tone, why not prove it? They could have shown that the Polaroid ID-2 camera can and could have been used to take better photographs of black people in South Africa and that the camera was manipulated to distort the image of black people during apartheid. To not make those portraits is erasure, to not produce those multiple representations of black people, to not show those possibilities, to not actively invalidate the traditionally white supremacist processes of image production is just the same, if not, worse than an inaccurate representation that the artists are claiming to abhor. This decision disregarded and ignored the major effect white supremacist and racist overtures inherent in the camera, the film stock, their processes and the images produced have on the realities and perception of black people and other people of colour. It removed black people and other people of colour from the narrative, it diminished them. The implication is that they are not important enough to consider. The exhibition and its various components was another unsuccessful attempt to unbalance the prevalence of white supremacist constructions of humanity from a white and western perspective.

30 Smith, D. (2013). *'Racism' of early colour photography explored in art exhibition*. Retrieved from, http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2013/jan/25/racism-colour-photography-exhibition

Broomberg and Chanarin are white South African born artists with a huge western oeuvre and to some degree this reflects in their work, they too participate and contribute to the maintenance of the rules and bias inherent in the medium that they insist on questioning.

Although both Dyer's *White* and Broomberg and Chanarin's *To Photograph the Details of a Dark Horse in Low Light* shed light on the problem of film and photography in rendering accurately the skin of people of colour and black people, they both still remain concentrated on a perspective that insists on the black/white binary that plagues the questions of representation. Whiteness is still their focus, and that means they inevitably reiterate the ways of looking that they claim to want to disrupt. What they fail to acknowledge is the impact this development of photographic and film technologies has on black people and other people of colour; the failure of the technologies, the failure of the people who use them, and those who critique them, to recognise and account for the numerous shades of brown that make up black people and other people of colour. Why not shift perspective for a broader, richer critique of these mechanisms and their methods? Dyer, and Broomberg and Chanarin concentrated on the past of photography and film, they fail to realise or note that 'film' and photography in the digital age still works the same way or in familiar ways that carry the same racialised, white supremacist overtures. Not much has changed. There is still bias against brown skin tones in these mechanisms, and this aids the perpetuation of colourism.

Photography and film in the digital age.

Many photographers and filmmakers today often proclaim how 'difficult' it is to capture the various brown tones that belong to the majority of the world's population. A point to note: it is mostly white photographers and filmmakers who make these claims. But the fault cannot be in the skin, it has to be in the technology and its practitioners. The way filmmakers and photographers are taught to use these technologies influence this bias. Recently, a friend of mine approached me on behalf of a colleague. Her colleague needed at least three black people of different shades of brown to photograph, so that in future she would not have difficulty photographing black and brown people. She claimed that she needed variety in her portfolio; she was losing out on a large part of the market because her portfolio was not 'diverse'. This is a photographer who is based and trained in Johannesburg, in South Africa, where the majority of the population is made up of black people. She had established her photographic studio, providing services for clients, and it is only because she was 'losing business' that she thought it necessary to learn how to capture brown skin tones. It had not occurred to her that the version of the world in her produced images was not a complete reality.

It is true that historically and presently, the technological tools of film and photography made it difficult to capture black skin and the skin of people of colour. Most people will use the tools as they are, some could be taught or cameras calibrated to suit their subjects, but most did, and do not accurately capture black people and people of colour. Filmmakers and photographers have to make adjustments to compensate for a lack of good lighting for

black actors during filming or post production. Ava DuVernary, in her critique of the production team's lighting of *Boardwalk Empire*'s Chalky White, states the concerns that she has with the way that the technologies are used to incorrectly create images of black people and people of colour.[31] Syreeta McFadden, a photographer, has noted and spoken about her relationship with the technologies she uses. Mcfadden began her photographic career shooting on film, and she quickly discovered her distaste for film because of its limitations when she wanted to capture brown skin. The result was never accurate; there was always in some way a distorted image. Part of the problem '[…] had to do with harmonizing the basic components […] film speed, aperture […] light.'[32] But the image never worked, she did notice '…that the lighter you were, the more likely it was that the camera-the film- got your likeness right.'[33] This was when she was filming in colour, in grayscale the results were a little better, she '[…] could capture blackness without producing a distortion of it.'[34] Here she had control. Unlike Mcfadden most photographers do not have this control; they used film technology and processed images with the pre-sets provided to them, pre-sets that did not suit the subject of the images. It is only through experience and unlearning that she is now able to capture brown skins well in her images. Even when Mcfadden moved from film technology to digital, digital photography, though a little less difficult, presented similar issues.

31 McFadden, S. (2014). *Teaching the camera to see my skin: Navigating photography's inherited bias against dark skin*. Retrieved from, http://www.buzzfeed.com/syreetamcfadden/teaching-the-camera-to-see-my-skin#.upZg1455j
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.

> Yet these tricks we tried, using shutter speed, grain, noise, high ISOs to push film to recognize the full light spectrum, often meant sacrificing a smoothness to our portraits. In the analog universe, we're talking about grain. In the digital universe, this effect is noise. The images therefore couldn't offer the same glossy polish that photos of white people already displayed.[35]

Digital cameras are widely used today. A majority of the cameras on the market are digital. Professional and amateur photographers are equipped with digital cameras, but so are most people with cell phones, tablets, personal computers and other multiple functioning digital technologies. Digital photography is still grounded on the pre-sets and ideologies of technology that were present in film photography. Many black people and people of colour have had difficulties with digital cameras, without adjustments there can be glitches. At times the digital camera is not able to capture darker skin, or the sensor cannot recognise the contours of an East Asian face.

> Even today, in low light, the sensors search for something that is lightly [coloured] or light skinned before the shutter is released. Focus it on a dark spot, and the camera is inactive. It only knows how to calibrate itself against lightness to define the image.[36]

35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.

It is evident that when it comes to darker skin tones photography has a problem. Photographic technology has pre-sets, it was designed with white skin in mind, and its difficult relationship with darker skin tones is not at all surprising. These same technologies and mechanisms developed in the west are disseminated and proliferate in other parts of the world without alterations or modification to suit the different regions. It is not at all surprising that the way most societies sees black people and people of colour across the world is in large part informed by images circulated through the mass media. The images captured using these biased technologies are often produced at the hands of biased individuals. Even images that black people try to capture of themselves are pre-controlled, because of the biased technology used. The mechanisms of looking are unfriendly to non-white skin, The images encourage particular perceptions of brown skin tones, the distorted, erased, and malformed images that often have grey, muddy browns leave a negative impression. Had the technology been developed with the inclusion of the range and wide spectrum of all skin tones from the beginning, the narrative might have been different.

For a while an image of a couple has been circulating online. The woman is black and the man is white. The image itself is a composition of four pictures of the couple attempting to take a selfie[37] together. A selfie is a photograph that one takes of oneself, with a smartphone or webcam and the photo is then shared with friends and the public on social media.[38] When she is lit properly in the picture, he disappears in the light, when he is lit properly she

37 Selfie. (n.d.) Retrieved From, http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/selfie. *informal*
38 Ibid.

disappears into darkness. The camera is quicker to capture his likeness, even though it is a camera on a cell phone, this just goes to show how problematic the technology is. It is only probably through multiple tries or with a proper camera that they will be able to take a proper picture together.[39] Yes, cameras in the digital age are a little better than film technology, there are more options, but not much has changed.

> The advent of digital post-processing has made [colour]-balancing any photograph easier […]dramatically rebalancing a photo is as simple as a click of a button[…]But these features only do a photographer good if they know how to use them.[40]

In films, the narrative is the same; the technologies of motion pictures too have a similarly difficult relationship with brown skin tones. Historically the same pre-sets and methods that appeared in still images are present in motion pictures as well. Older films with black and brown people, demonstrate this easily, but so too do recent films. There is still something odd about how brown skin tones appear on screens. Because the same calibration, the same pre-sets are being used for making films and television programmes:

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[39] See figure 10. for actual photograph.
40 Cima, R. (2015). *How photography was optimised for white skin color*. Retrieved from, http://priceonomics.com/how-photography-was-optimized-for-white-skin/

> Shirley showed up in other stages of photography, too. Photography studios and film production crews had Shirley cards while they fine-tuned their [colour] filters and lighting. The models in these photos would hold black, white, or [coloured] pieces of paper- further datapoints as to whether the balance and exposure was set correctly. TV crews would often use live models, called "colour girls" […] the colour girl was always white.[41]

In America and South Africa, from the nineties onwards, there was an introduction of television shows and films that featured primarily black and brown casts, but even when the mainstream image attempted to be more inclusive, the same methods of looking and calibration, the same mechanisms and technologies were used, and this resulted in distorted, flattened images that suggest that brown skin is something ugly, the same dated images and perceptions of brown skin tones have prevailed.
In South Africa, colonialism and Apartheid played a significant role in the way South Africans viewed people of different 'races' and skin colour, it produced and maintained systems of looking which lasted decades and persists today. Although the country is now twenty two years into democracy and the racialised, segregationist and white supremacist system has apparently been dismantled, the primary mainstream image of humanity is still white. With a majority of the population being black, 'coloured' and Indian; there is a cultural hegemony in South Africa, a legacy of colonialism and Apartheid

41 Ibid.

that quickly accounts for the proliferation of white images in mainstream media. The processes of selection for images that represent humanity locally are not neutral either. They are similar to 'western' images if not, exact reproductions. Who you see on magazine covers, who gets access to consumer products first in South Africa are white people. The majority of the country's population is black, but consumer products, both tangible and intangible are marketed using white people. Whiteness has dominance in mass media and business. Black people and people of colour are treated and relegated to minority status, as peripheral groups, when in reality it is the opposite. They are too often added in as afterthoughts, to show diversity. Stock images, advertisements and magazines covers in South Africa have a tendency to mainly feature hegemonic imagery that feature a limited number of people of colour to fuel the image of 'diversity' or the myth of the rainbow nation. An ideal image of a colour blind society developed and propagated during South Africa's entrance into a supposedly democratic and non-racial state. Inevitably, South Africa's entrance into the world market immediately after Apartheid and its increasing global cultural interaction has influenced society greatly. The interaction of ideology and the concepts of race and skin colour, from both South Africa and the West are operating together in a tenuous democratic country rampant with racial tensions, high economic disparities and shaky politics.

Post-Apartheid, South Africa has only been openly participating in the global market for twenty two years, and is catching up to the wider stream of the global economy. Globally, America has cultural dominance that pervades

all aspects of life, including the politics of beauty. Global capitalism is directly related to its capability to sell goods, but also ideology that sustains high levels of consumption. With the increasing globalisation of media, major brand names of beauty and fashion literature are being read globally. Magazines such as *Glamour* and *Cosmopolitan* and *ELLE* have all expanded their markets from Europe and North America to Africa and Asia; all these brands are on the market in South Africa. They sell the same ideas sold in the West by adopting supposed multi-cultural tactics, even though they are essentially the same hegemonic, white-centric strategies that too often ignore the economic, social, political and racial differences in South Africa. It is contemporary globalisation that is working to facilitate homogenisation, the ideas pushed through the window of a global worldview inform the perception of race and skin colour. They aid in cultivating an inferiority complex within black people and people of colour.

Popular culture is for the most part consumed globally, and even though there is a mix of global and local culture, in the entertainment and beauty industries, American culture still dominates. Entertainment and beauty products are adjusted to local conditions, and although they may look different, unique, local, they are the same products being sold in most parts of the world. Corporate advertising and marketing shapes and influences consumer desires and preferences, these desires are shaped locally by inherited cultural and social norms of colonialism and Apartheid. These cultural and social desires are assimilated into products and are adapted so that they fit both the local and international market. Black people and

people of colour, on top of blatant racism, encounter their own forms of 'beauty' discrimination and estrangement in efforts to access, or heighten, the attributes they believe will provide access to 'whiteness' and its privileges of success, beauty, and happiness.

Colourism is not evident everywhere or to everyone; even where it is present it is usually recognised by black people and people of colour because it points out their difference to the supposed 'normative'. What is most perplexing in South Africa is that in reality black people are the majority; they are the normal, but the 'standard' or the 'normal' image in mainstream media does not adequately represent black people. There are also other people of colour in South Africa whose numbers surpass white people, yet a majority of the time they are completely left out.

The 'normative' many times means images confirm the prevalent ideas of what people should appear to be, the dominant visual representation of humanity; most of these images in South Africa are largely in appearance, quite 'white'.

Two: Glamour Globalised

> There is an explicit correlation between the emergence of so-called 'international looks' and the opening up of the economy to multinational corporations from the west.[42]

This chapter will primarily be a comparative analysis of *True Love* magazine and *Glamour* magazine. I will analyse twelve covers and some content of the South African edition *of Glamour* and the South African edition of *True Love* from the month of September 2014 to the month of October 2015. Both *Glamour* and *True Love* are marketed to women in South Africa as beauty, fashion and lifestyle magazines. Women's beauty and fashion magazines are influential, persuasive sources of social and cultural values that are easily internalised. They are culturally significant. Magazines have a direct relationship with the economic and political positions of its audience; taking into account the race, age and gender of the readers. Many of these magazines were fashioned with the objective of supposedly serving women's needs, or as teaching tools for women to successfully navigate society. In addition to the fashion and beauty advertisements within the pages, magazines are directly linked to the idea of the female body as a site of pleasurable visual consumption. For beauty or being beautiful is apparently

42 Alibhai-Brown, Y. (2010). *Priyamvada Gopal in Why are Asian women aspiring to Western ideals of beauty?* Retrieved from, http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/fashion/features/why-are-asian-women-aspiring-to-western-ideals-of-beauty-2136868.html

essential to women, their pleasing appearance is important socially and professionally.

Mainstream Western media, in the forms of films and television, is the greatest peddler of the principle of beauty. Magazines and advertising help to propagate idealised beauty standards. Today the media function as an aspirational object that presents readers with 'picture-perfect' lifestyle and images to choose from. These images and ideas are an invitation to visualise, to copy, or emulate, the ideal self. Women's beauty, fashion and lifestyle magazines are products themselves and these lifestyle magazines dedicate a lot of space to the dissemination of products that foster these beauty ideals. "Magazines are 'meta-commodities'- commodities in themselves and also sites used for the dissemination of other commodities."[43] The consumers, the women who read these beauty and fashion magazines are viewing a distorted and highly constructed reality. What they are consuming and internalising are the for-profit beauty ideals that are created for and based on an economic model that thrives on creating glamourous unattainable ideals and desires.

The female body is often presented in two ways on the covers and in the content of these beauty and fashion magazines: as a perfect and ideal body, and simultaneously as a damaged body in need of constant improvement or repair. Together with these presentations of seemingly contradictory images of the female body are advertisements for products or merchandise that

43 Beetham, M. (1996). *A magazine of her own? Domesticity and desire in the women's magazine,* 1800-1914. London: Routledge.

promise to repair these apparent deformations and lead the consumer towards a more perfect or acceptable body. It is here that the pervasive, unrealistic body and beauty ideals are further normalised and circulated. There are often eerily homogenised images based on oppressive, power-loaded ideals of whiteness. These pervasive unrealistic images and products that propagate ideal beauty and body generate in the consumers a continuous cycle of pursuing an 'unattainable' ideal that results in internalised worthlessness, a devaluing of the self, while invoking moments of pleasure and excitement from the consumption of ideal images and reparative products. South Africa's entrance into the global capital market after the dismantling of the Apartheid regime introduced, on a wider scale, the numerous multinational and primarily western corporations and magazines to its changing and supposedly democratic society. And while many magazines were being disseminated during apartheid, many of the popular magazines catered primarily to white audiences. There were however some magazines for a black audience circulating on a smaller scale. *True Love* is one of those magazines. There are also magazines in circulation now that were introduced closer to and after the dismantling of the Apartheid regime, like *Cosmopolitan*, *ELLE*, and *Glamour*.

At present most women's lifestyle magazine covers reflect similar trends in global media; they are rampant with consumer culture, competing values, proliferating limited choices provided by multinational corporations and show the ubiquity of advertising. Photographs are the frontrunners on magazines

covers, the cover lines, and overall colour scheme all comply to the photograph. Covers usually have a large title with the model at the centre; at times the model overlaps the title. The model is for the most part in a full body pose and the poses tend to be unusually expressive, with odd postures and body positions that leave the body open to scrutiny. The cover has colour lines, text advertising the content of the magazines, in several colours along with the photograph, these are positioned around the model or at times they go on top of the models body. The cover lines are intense, bright persuasive advertisement for the issues' content, and they often compete with similarly vivid and colourful photographs.

Global capitalism and consumerism in post-apartheid South Africa.

Women's lifestyle magazines are actively involved in capitalist production and consumption as well as in the circulation of collective meaning and the production of identities for their readers. Despite the growing consumer culture, women's lifestyle magazines in some ways are still not considered as valid sources for social and cultural material; they often seen as insignificant, superficial objects that encourage the obsession with beauty. But they do well in this country; most women's magazines are able to circulate huge numbers in South Africa. Magazines are entities of prevailing consumer culture. They are a marketing tool for an extensive choice of consumer products and they are sites of influenced highly constructed material. They tend to take on didactic and aspirational positions on their covers, in their editorials, feature articles, profiles, advertisements and other segments of the

magazines. They legitimise and institutionalise socio-cultural trends and confirm social figures, TV and radio personalities as role models, often they are influential in the dissemination and commodification of new cultural material.

Magazines had an essential role in establishing cultural and consumption patterns in South Africa as television had a fairly late entrance into South African society. Television was introduced in 1971; the majority of cultural material and advertisements were circulated through magazines. Now, the majority of South Africa is no longer removed from the consumptive middle-class values that are proliferating throughout mass media. Mass media promotes the trends and ideology of dominant cultures globally and inevitably South Africa adapts to the catalogue of the dominant cultural systems. Western culture, particularly American culture, is negotiated, and while some elements are rejected, much of it is adopted according to the specific needs of South Africa's growing middle-class population. Magazines are very much a part of this culture. In magazines marketed specifically to black people, traditional meanings and cultural institutions are reformulated alongside current institutions, events, images and trends. In South Africa, as in American society:

> […] racism, sexism, and classism continue to persist in the world's most powerful economic nation precisely because of the continuance of the

> colonialist-capitalist economic system that breeds hatred of people of [colour]."[44]

It is obvious that the way the consumer capitalist culture functions in America continues the oppressive structures of the past, and its society continually demonstrates that "Capitalism is an intrinsically racist and anti-Black system principally because it was founded of the backs of Africans […][45] , its success is depended historically and presently on the continual domination, degradation and subjugation of black and brown bodies,

> […] It is imperative to bear in mind that capitalism developed as a logical extension of slavery and colonialism, in which Black and all indigenous non-European life was essentially devalued and dehumanized by all sectors of European society.[46]

Most Black South African consumer magazines are published in English and are intended for black audiences. They are instrumental in establishing new praxes of social, cultural, and behavioural norms for their audiences disseminated through largely middle-class lifestyles, products and activities. There is a growing dominance of middle class consumer culture alongside a growing black middle class. Given that the majority of the black population

44 Kunnie, J. (2000). *Is Apartheid Really Dead? Pan-Africanist Working-Class Cultural Critical Perspectives.* United Kingdom: Westview Press. p. 134
45 Ibid., pg. 83.
46 Ibid., pg. 58.

in South Africa is below the poverty line, it is a point of note that the dominant culture in a society does not require that all members of that society be able to participate in it on the same level. Poverty in South Africa restricts participation in high consumption but it does not automatically inhibit participation in consumer culture.

Too often in developing nations, development is measured in the ability to own and consume western products, be they technological or otherwise, rather than the capacity to produce them. Likewise, consumer culture is not only about material goods, but also for their value and presence, for the way they promise to assist in practical accomplishments of everyday living. Due to the high economic disparities in South Africa, it may seem absurd that the majority black population, the same demographic with high poverty is actively committed to capitalist consumption. Julian Kunnie in *Is Apartheid Really Dead? Pan-Africanist Working-Class Cultural Critical Perspectives* criticises the country's entrance into the global economy immediately into its new democracy. Kunnie examines the post-apartheid economic climate, in particular, its effect on the majority black population in the country. He argues that the post-apartheid path of capitalism that South Africa took makes it an accomplice in the movement of neo-colonialism. Kunnie most importantly discusses the condition of globalisation and its consequences for the global south. Economic power in South Africa remains primarily in the hands of white capitalists who are closely connected to global capital,

> When the foundational structures of white supremacy, colonial domination, and capitalist hegemony persist, similar to the Western colonial control of the rest of Africa through monetary, commercial, material, military and, cultural means.[47]

He analyses the role in which western nations play a role in the political and economic development of post-colonial and developing countries. Kunnie demonstrates, that very little has changed because the structures that kept black people in positions of subjugation are still in place.

> The essential structures of the white-owned capitalist economy, monopolized landownership, and racial separation with white suburbanization and Black ghettoization remain intact. White capitalist power remains in charge of changes in post-apartheid South Africa […][48]

In 1950 the ruling white party in South Africa established a fixed racial classification on every South African citizen, called the Apartheid regime. This system designated value, place and status with white people at the very top and black people, especially black women sitting at the very bottom of this order. Apartheid played an important role in the way South Africans viewed people of different 'races' and skin colour, and in part oppressive gender structures too were maintained, this resulted and maintained systems of

47 Ibid., pg. 134.
48 Ibid., pg. 46.

looking which lasted decades and persists today. Kunnie notes that a large part of the success and maintenance of this system is through the control of access to the economy:

> In the South African context, race is a foundational and decisive socioeconomic indicator, with whites wielding economic affluence and social influence and blacks basically remaining economically disadvantaged.[49]

Economic power and race cannot be dealt with as separate entities globally, traditionally constructed racial order and racial subjugation is directly linked to the wealth of the white minority. South Africa now, with a unique economic structure that has both the very rich and the very poor with a select few sitting in between, is still in a position where the majority of its economy is still in the hands of white people.

> […] the South African economy in Western capitalist terms, the economy is "white", in that it is essentially controlled by and basically benefits white people, to the peripheralization of the black majority.[50]

Yes, there are white people too, who do not have access to this wealth, but it still remains largely that,

49 Ibid., pg. 56.
50 Ibid., pg. 56.

> […] in South Africa, there is no level playing field between whites and Blacks, between the wealthy and the impoverished, or between the haves and have-nots. Black workers are essentially discriminated against by virtue of their historical role of subjugation by racial capitalism.[51]

Following a constructed unity that does not correlate with reality, there has been argument for a colour blind attitude that may address the structures of a racist history. The concept of the rainbow nation developed towards South Africa's entrance into democracy is an idealistic concept that is meant to incorporate a free and equal nation that has eliminated apartheid structures from its core. This outlook however, is dismissive of the structural effects of apartheid that are still evident in the layout of South African cities and all institutions in the country. The spatial arrangement and socioeconomic structures of apartheid are still present and are sustained today. The position of the rainbow nation ignores the effects of an unchanged economy,

> To argue for non-discrimination, "[colour]-blindness," and equal treatment of all does not take into consideration that, the very structures of South African society are hostile to Black workers and that black workers are not equal with white industrialists. These respective groups do not possess putatively egalitarian proportions of social and economic power.[52]

51 Ibid., pg. 82.
52 Ibid., pg. 82.

Although, Kunnie is concentrated on the effects of this unchanged economy on a larger a scale, he does point to the fact that for the majority black population discrimination continues in microscopic scales across the broad economic spectrum. White people in South Africa still continue to have better access to education, health facilities, and products. Black people in large parts are still excluded from parts of the mainstream economy, industries and social spaces, and this is revealed most assuredly for black women. Women's lifestyle magazines are another smaller part of the economy in South Africa; they mirror the general political and economic position of the country.

The key to the success of global capitalism is its ability to put all countries into the same economic model, and this inevitably means that all cultures are indoctrinated into believing the same hegemonic ideas of beauty and existence. The global culture, especially the global culture of beauty conveys to other parts of the world implicitly, that in order to be considered, there must be assimilation, a full embrace of the western body, the overtly westernised image of beauty.

Glamour and *True Love* magazines.

Women's lifestyle magazines are a relatively elite form of popular media read by middle class and higher income populations; they utilise and disseminate the global ideological positions of beauty. They project western commercial understandings of femininity and teach and show who is beautiful, and how to attain that beauty. They offer eerily homogenised images of the beautiful

or the normal. Primarily the symbols of these teachings and these images are white women. The material women's lifestyle magazines promote, even in magazines directed at a black female audience, show images of typical middle class life as desirable, they promote a culture in which leisure and consumption go together, especially the pursuit of beauty.

What sets black women's lifestyle magazines apart from other magazines is merely the fact that they are for black women. Very little differs from their more 'diverse' counterparts, both offer and provide commentary on political, financial, domestic and beauty issues as well as human interest stories, while marketing a range of western commodities that would aid in the improvement of a changeable and improvable middle class life; they emulate the patterns, layouts and trends of global magazines to suit the local. The first pages of the magazines are abundant with beauty advertisements, selling lipstick, perfume, foundation from the world's leading brands in cosmetics. It takes just a glimpse to notice the extreme glossiness of the images in both the advertisement and the editorials; a hundred per cent of the images are photo-shopped, retouched and tweaked in some way. Cosmetic advertisements are typically entirely altered, the skin tone, complexion and colour is often painted over to unreal smoothness. 'Imperfections', what most consider to be reality are covered up with colour, shine and retouching.

International advertising is a major driving force for the globalisation of beauty, with companies using standardised images and advertising messages which ignore difference in appearance and taste. When the

primary photographs of magazine editorials and advertisements are manipulated so that skin tone is adjusted, features are smoothed it is easy to see how colourism is quietly propagated, given that the photograph is the primary component of magazine publishing. When this tweaking and these adjustments are made on black women particularly, it is obvious. A slight adjustment in light or brightness of the image, the skin tone changes, and a deep brown skin tone can be presented to the world on the glossy magazine pages as a mid-brown. Here appears to be a bias against black women and other women of colour, lighter skin tones, slightly straighter noses, and straight hair, aesthetics which are quite Eurocentric prevail on these pages. At times the much darker skin tones are contrasted against white skin tones; there is a continuous encouragement of visual difference. Advertising within the beauty and fashion magazines exacerbates colourism. For instance, juxtaposing a light-skinned black woman with a white woman in an advertisement for foundation/make up communicates that, the black woman represents all black women and the white woman represents all white women. Although, there is a range of tones provided, a colour spectrum for the foundation in the advertisement, it is always limited to the darkest brown that the foundation brand has produced. When dark-skinned women look at this advertisement they are always at the end of the spectrum, or they are not there at all. This 'bottom of the pack' handling or absence demarcates their difference. It is not a simple 'Black', 'White', or 'Coloured' method of categorizing used in the Apartheid regime, but something more subtle, using colour tones, to categorize, to render value.

Representation in mainstream media is also a major contributing factor; it is either that there is not enough diversity in film, television, and magazine covers or that the images that are meant to be diverse are not diverse enough. Worldwide, images of white women or women passing as white dominate magazine covers, television and film and if they are black, or of colour they tend to be white washed, racially ambiguous with paler skin tones, slightly straighter noses, straight hair. They are anglicized, removed as far away from blackness as possible, although there are some exceptions. Every once in a while a dark skinned black woman is broadcasted across mainstream media as the face of beauty, the likes of Iman, Naomi Campbell, Grace Jones and Alek Wek have been the faces of dark skinned beauty. Most recently Lupita N'yongo is that face. These women are propagated across mainstream media as rare beauties with beautiful dark skin, undoubtedly, contrasted as the polar opposite of white women who dominate mass media. They tend to voice the tension between Western and African beauty ideals, but they are not present in large numbers, even in regions where the majority of the women are black.

Beauty and fashion magazines play an important role in influencing different cultures to learn about beauty ideals and what is perceived to be and in the face of global influences, the globalised consumerist beauty and gender ideologies propagated by multinational corporations through mass media, it is often difficult for both local and international magazines in South Africa to counter the hegemonic power that creates and adjusts systems of oppression to suit white capitalist agendas. The images propagated by most

mainstream magazines, although they cannot always be called racist, they are definitely colourist. They encourage colourism.

Founded much later into the Apartheid regime in 1972 by a black woman, *True Love* is a magazine for South African black women. This is reflected by the cover models of the magazine. Since its establishment the magazine has only had primarily local female black cover models. Most of them are actresses or television presenters that are present on local television and in most local media. *True Love* is primarily read by black women and has been subject to two re-launches, one in 1995 and another in 2012; both launches were to suit the current social, economic and political climate of the country. *True Love* presents images of stereotypically middle class lifestyles and it encourages a culture of leisure and consumption. At times, the magazine has an accompanying publication on hair. There is also a stand-alone publication for weddings called *True Love* Bride published every September that is part of the brand extension. *True Love* and its affiliate publications are available for download and there are websites for the magazines. The content of the versions for download tend to be the same as the physical copies.

Glamour magazine was introduced to South African women in 2004, ten years after South Africa's entrance into democracy. *Glamour* magazine was founded in 1939 in the United States of America as Glamour of Hollywood. *Glamour* South Africa is part of the larger global *Glamour* brand which includes its annual *Glamour* Women of the Year Awards. *Glamour* magazine is currently published in fourteen countries. The magazine provides 'the very

latest in Hollywood gossip, lifestyle and beauty…' and is 'is one of South Africa's leading women's beauty, fashion and lifestyle magazines'[53]. The magazine's perspective on women's lifestyle is largely from a western capitalist understanding of femininity that is being disseminated in developing and culturally varied countries across the world. The women on the covers of *Glamour* are predominantly white or international. At times, if the cover does not feature a white local or international star, the woman of colour is most likely an international actress or pop star. It took ten years of publishing in South Africa for *Glamour* to publish a magazine with local black cover. Bonang Matheba was *Glamour* South Africa's first local black cover star in December 2014, this in a country where the majority of the women are black. Like *True Love*, the magazine is available for download and has a website; content for the download version is the same as the physical copy. In *Glamour*, black women and other women of colour are pushed to the periphery; they are features to show diversity.

Both *True Love* and *Glamour* have a typical appearance that is synonymous with women's beauty and fashion magazines. Women are depicted climbing up the ladder of consumerism; emphasis on how others, especially men in particular, perceive women's bodies is emphasized. The images in these magazines are objectified media portrayals of women; it is the visual presentation of women's bodies beside content that emphasizes the importance of appearance and heteronormative sexuality. Alongside this is a

53 GLAMOUR, op. cit.

torrent of globalised rhetoric that not only sells local and global commodities but also disseminates symbolic images and culture.

As readers consume the content of the magazines, seamlessly they begin to reflect on themselves, they internalise and incorporate what they see in to their lives. Women's magazines are selling body dissatisfaction and body ideals with unrealistic doctored images of women. It has been established that media exposure to the 'ideal' body and awareness of societal pressure regarding appearance is internalised, this exposure is related to the development of problematic eating patterns, self-objectification and dissatisfaction. For black women, in order to participate, to conform to these global ideals of beauty, they have to do much more than change their body, or buy the products.

Magazines feed of the ideals and agendas of beauty and fashion advertisements. What appears on television, in films and other mass media is reiterated twice as much in glossy print. This means that the dominant images in these magazines are of white women, light skinned black women and lighter skinned women of colour, all this does is cultivate an inferiority complex in darker skinned women, women who are not constructed as the global ideal of beauty., Even when darker-skinned women are present they are edited to suit globalised beauty ideals, and here manifests a colourist system that not only encourages darker-skinned black women and other women of colour to attain mainstream standards of beauty, to some degree it actually makes them want to alter their natural appearance.

Analysing the twelve issues of *Glamour* and *True Love* from the months of September 2014 to the month of August 2015 has resulted in the following deductions;

All the cover models of the magazines are women[54]. All of the cover models are involved in the entertainment industry in multiple ways, local, and international television, film, fashion or radio.

For *Glamour*;

1. 3/12 of the featured covers are black women.
2. 1/12 of the featured covers a local black woman.
3. 2/12 of the featured covers are local.
4. 10/12 of the featured covers are international.
5. 2/12 of the featured covers are international models.
6. 8/12 of the featured covers are international, specifically American actresses.
7. 2/12 of the featured covers are black international actresses, namely Lupita N'yongo and Kerry Washington.
8. 1/12 of the featured covers is a local black presenter, radio and fashion personality, Bonang Matheba. The first for the magazine.
9. 1/12 of the featured covers are under the age of twenty.
10. 11/12 of the featured covers are between their twenties and mid-forties.

54 Refer to appendix A on pg. 126 and 127 and attached magazine covers.

11. 11/12 of the featured covers are wearing straight hair. Bonang Matheba is wearing a weave, It is not clear whether Kerry Washington's hair is a weave or not.
12. 1/12 of the featured covers, Lupita N'yongo, has short 'natural hair'.
13. The covers of *Glamour* are generic but are all a little different depending on the cover star. The colour of the title, the lighting, the background are all different, but this may be due to the fact that the majority of the cover images feature international stars, their cover images are sourced from the international editions of *Glamour*.

For *True Love;*

1. 12/12 of the featured covers are black women.
2. 12/12 of the featured covers are local.
3. 7/12 of the featured covers are actresses on local television shows.
4. 6/12 of the featured covers are television personalities who both do radio and acting.
5. 12/12 of the featured covers are between their twenties and mid-forties.
6. 8/12 of the featured covers are wearing straight haired weaves.
7. 4/12 of the featured covers have 'natural hair'. Two short and two long 'natural hair'.

The covers of *True Love* are all generic, eerily homogenised, except for the February 2015 issue, the titles are all red. The women on the covers all seem to have been photographed in front of the same white background; depending on the lighting it appears a bit grey on some covers. What is the most obvious are the skin tones of the women on these covers; they are

similar, with the exception of a few with different lighting. Most of the women on the covers of *True Love* appear on South African television almost every day, their skin tones on the magazine covers are very different to how they appear on television.

For comparison of some of the content, I selected the October 2014 issues of both *Glamour* and *True Love*. *Glamour* has a total of one hundred and forty five pages and is smaller in size compared to *True Love*; this is because it is supposed to be a size that fits a woman's handbag. *True Love* has a total of one hundred and eighty six pages and is the standard size for most magazines. The focus here is the advertisements and the number of black women in the magazines.

The October 2014 issue of *Glamour* features Lupita N'yongo as the cover star, the caption under her name hails her as "The new face of beauty". In the magazine there are;

1. 47/145 pages of advertisements.
2. 49/145 pages that feature black women.
3. 7/47 of the advertisements feature black women (celebrities).
4. 1/145 pages feature a fashion editorial with a black woman.
5. 4/145 pages feature black local celebrities.
6. 6/145 pages feature Lupita N'yongo with a fashion editorial and a cover article.
7. 1/145 pages feature an Indian woman.
8. 0/145 pages feature images or articles that feature other successful black women.

The October issue of *True Love* features Bonang Matheba as the cover star. In the magazine there are;

1. 59/186 pages of advertisements.
2. 88/186 pages feature black women.
3. 27/59 advertisements feature black women.
4. 10/186 pages feature black local women (celebrities).
5. 18/186 pages feature black women in beauty and fashion editorials.
6. 6/186 pages feature Bonang Matheba in a fashion editorial and a cover article.
7. 7/186 pages feature images and articles of other successful black women.

There is a huge difference between the covers that feature Bonang Matheba, she appears on the December 2014[55] issue of *Glamour* and the October 2014 issue of *TrueLove*[56]. Matheba is wearing white on both covers, but the backgrounds are different, on *Glamour* it is pink and on *True Love* it is white, her posture on the latter cover is more natural. What is most noticeable is the difference in skin tone, on the *Glamour* cover she appears to be a few shades lighter, and on *True Love* she is a little grey. Neither one of the covers capture her skin accurately. On the *True Love* covers it is difficult to tell whether the women's skin tones on the covers have been lightened or darkened, but what is noticeable is the unnatural grey of their skin tones present in these representations of them.

55 Pg. 133 - 136, Glamour magazine covers,
56 Pg. 137 – 140, True Lov emagazine covers.

In both magazines, besides the pages with advertisements feature beauty, fashion and lifestyle snippets rampant with glamourised glossy images that are related to the subject line. All the women in the images are airbrushed and Photoshopped, they are all wearing make-up. Attached to these images are articles that boast the alleged value and prestige of these products. Expensive creams and potions, make-up and hair products will help you look like someone else, usually some celebrity who is either on the cover of the magazine or one who is in it. Words like revitalise, radiate and brighten proliferate in the advertisements for beauty products in these pages. 'Brighten' is particularly used to sell face creams that help women get rid of blemishes, the word is synonymous with the word 'lighten', because what the products do is in fact literally lighten dark marks and blemishes. Often the same product that sells in India as whitening or lightening product is sold in South Africa as a brightening product[57]. These claims in the advertisements are on the covers and within the pages of the magazines. In reality, one would not be able to achieve 'beauty' from buying a particular product. There is plenty of celebrity centred nonsensical advice on the ways to achieving this unreal standard of beauty; often they are promoting a product. Inevitably women are conditioned into buying these expensive products, because they will make them look or feel better, because these products sell the unattainable. The content and topics of the magazine reiterate the messages in the advertisements. You need money to be able to attain beauty, to obtain this elusive commodity.

57 Figure 1 and 2. . Pond's sells their 'flawless radiance' cream in South Africa and the same or similar product is sold in India as a 'white beauty' cream.

There appears to be a bias against women of colour, in particular, black women and their physical representation. Lighter skin tones, slightly straighter noses, and straight hair, aesthetics which are Eurocentric are all seen or perceived to be desirable and acceptable for black women in mainstream media. Even in magazines primarily for black women like *True Love*, black women's skin tones on the covers and in the magazines are rarely consistent; they are always different, lightened darkened etc. Personal identities are erased to make them more appealing, attractive, and palatable. This has therefore led to international advertising becoming a major driving force for the globalisation of beauty, with companies using standardised images and advertising messages which ignores difference in appearance blatant cultural erosion encouraged by adapting multiple cultural identities and taste.

Women's beauty, fashion and lifestyle magazines in South Africa have overly materialistic images and articles that rely on western global ideals of beauty, rampant consumer culture fuelled by an efficient global advertising industry that sells a particular lifestyle and products that promise the improvement and elevation of the self. Although they do come with some words, magazines are images first; they are commodities that simultaneously sell themselves and other products that represent a particular lifestyle, the products that sell the idea of an improved self-image. Unless you are looking elsewhere, the glossy pages of these magazines offer very little choice, what you see is what is already chosen, by editors, art directors, inevitably the latest beauty and lifestyle products chosen by multinational corporations.

The 'standard' or the 'normal' image in beauty, fashion and lifestyle magazines does not adequately represent black women and other women of colour, at times they are completely left out. At face value *Glamour* is 'diverse', but the diverse images are peculiar. Black women are present in the magazine, but minimally. This is expected for an international magazine, a magazine with a global approach and it is expected that the black women who appear in *Glamour*, for the most part will fit the image of the global ideal of beauty. But there is something to note that also speaks to the peculiarity of the reality in *Glamour* magazine and other magazines in South Africa with this global approach. They are meant to represent all women on their covers and within the content of their glossy pages. Although black women are the majority in South Africa, and there are other women of colour in the country, but they do not appear in *Glamour* magazine, they are largely invisible. With *True Love*; a magazine for and about black women, other women of colour are not expected on its pages. The magazine is not trumpeting diversity; its explicit audience is black women.

It is apparent that Photoshop and airbrushing are used to smooth and enhance, but when it is used to modify the various differences in a racial group, it must be supporting a racial ordering. The way skin colour is categorized in magazines could be the source of this system. The images produced are more than mere pictures. Magazine imagery and photography are employed as tools that perpetuate colourism. More specifically, the obvious Eurocentric ideals in the magazines render only women who have been constructed to fit these ideals as beautiful, this

causes entire groups of south African women to perceive this as an obvious lack in themselves, they are unaccepted, and unworthy of consideration. Magazines are part of the fashion and beauty industry, which is belligerently monochromatic; they are over-saturated with ideas and images of the desirable versus the undesirable, the acceptable versus the unacceptable. The communicative nature of the images from magazines like *Glamour* and *True Love*, demonstrate that what is contained in the images is one way in which classification is maintained, the way the system of colourism is perpetuated. There is a safe space in the representational position, a middle brown, which shows up more prominently on magazines aimed at black women. Even though, the magazine is supposed to be representing black women across the spectrum.

Beauty and fashion corporations capitalise on the insecurities of women and through advertisements they also influence the content of the magazines. This promotes an element of cultural programming that maintains white, hegemonic beauty ideals. The globe is not only populated by white people, in fact the majority of people in the world are of colour, the majority on the African continent are black, the majority in South Africa are black, beauty and fashion magazines should adequately reflect the women in their respective regions. Misrepresentation of non-white women, fetishisation and definite stereotypes continue to persist. Supposed historic breakthroughs, like the first cover of a magazine featuring a local black woman in South Africa should not be celebrated. It does not make sense in a country where the majority of the women are black. There should not be a limited range of skin

tones on the women on the covers of the magazines disseminated in this country. We are highly visual creatures and it is in these images of the magazines where the appearance of a colour system that consciously renders value can be found. In the global cultural beauty standards white is right, lighter is better and dark is relegated to degradation and exoticisation even on and in magazines. Beauty, fashion and lifestyle magazines are entities that aid in the reinforcement of colourism in contemporary South Africa.

Three: Team Light Skin, Team Dark Skin

> Here is a difference. Black/Brown/Yellow face is used to humiliate. White face is packaged in a bottle, marketed as a key for success and labelled Fair and Lovely. And it sells.[58]

In this chapter I discuss the influence of social media and online trends. There contains on social media a lot of ideas and images that continue the perpetuation of colourism and colourist ideology. At the moment one of the world's most culturally significant platforms is the internet, especially social media. Social media plays a large role in the type of numerous cultures that are consumed and shared. Information is readily available on social media but then so are a large number of consumables, especially advertisements. Information that is consumed on these platforms is supposedly coming from across the world. This information is rarely monitored or controlled and social media as a platform allows and provides people with anonymity. Individuals are allowed to post, tweet and say anything. It has become much easier to have discussions or become part of conversations that cross borders, continents, cultures and demographics. In their own ways, the internet and social media are globalized.

Different types of social media are the main ways in which people interact with each other now. This is interaction beyond everyday relations, the interaction beyond the individual's relationship to society. The manner in

58 Anonymous. (n.d.). Retrieved from, brownpeopleproblems: http://intersectionalfeminism.tumblr.com/post/63841641693/brownpeopleproblems-here-is-a-difference

which a lot of society today realizes its aspirations is in part from the ideas and realities that are represented to us by and through social media. Social media can provide the raw material and even the tools to understand our society beyond our immediate experiences and to some extent the tools to participate in society.

People can become part of larger conversations by tagging, snapping or hash tagging. The hashtag[59] which originally belonged to one particular social site, Twitter, is now used across all social media sites. You can hashtag on Twitter, Tumblr, and Instagram as well other social media platforms. The hashtag immediately connects individuals to larger conversations, movements and exchanges.[60] People feel like they are part of the same world, they follow trends, they eat the same things, buy the same things, this is because social media has the ability to influence different people from different cultures to absorb and acquire lifestyle ideals as well as what is perceived to be attractive and acceptable. Our sense of belonging, of being part of a wider community, a society, a culture, more and more are facilitated through social media. Capitalism has made it possible for social exchange itself to become a commodity, or for it to be attached to the sale of goods. The internet is now a shopping catalogue; social media is a shopping catalogue. Social media is owned by and proliferated by commercial companies that target audiences and successfully shape consumer patterns. That means there is interaction between what people are

59 Hashtag. (n.d). Retrieved from, http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/hashtag
60 Ibid.

consuming on social media and the sort of conversation and exchanges they are having.

Although the internet and social media are supposed to be accessible all over the world, it still remains in the hands of the 'West'. Out of the 7.2 billion population of the world, only 2.08 billion people use social media. Even though, East Asia owns 27% of global social media, majority of the world's population use Facebook, Twitter and Instagram; social media sites developed in the United States of America.[61] The prevailing conversations, ideas and content come mostly from the more developed or first world nations. That means that when there is activity on these social media the conversation is dominated by western voices and western ideas. The images and ideas on social media platforms are very western and mostly American. American popular culture pervades all media including social media. Discussions and exchanges on colourism, beauty ideals and blackness are generally from a western perspective, to be more specific, they are frequentlyAfrican American. There are moments when others from other regions of the globe can and do enter these conversations but due to the current world order in mass media, the American voice on social media dominates. At times the ideas are not always sourced from that side of the world, but it only takes a quick trend search on these sites to see that most ideas come largely from American media and culture.

Social media is responsible in some way for shaping and transmitting popular culture, it also replicates and reiterates societal values and norms. Ideas

61 Anonymous, (n.d.).*How Social Media is Used Globally #Socialography* Retrieved from, http://linkhumnas.com/socialography

about skin tone and skin colour prevalent in society are emphasised and echoed online. Online, on social media sites, colourism is practiced in abundance; there is increased conversation, and more control of the conversation by the users. The posts[62] or exchanges tend to be negative and are rooted in stereotype that is associated with skin tones and skin colour. They promote division and competitive activity based on skin tone, and a lot of people participating in these exchanges may not be aware that they are contributing and participating in one part of structural racism. The majority of the people participating in these conversations are young black men and women, they are also mostly American. Colourism has always been perpetuated through various forms of media and is simply a reiteration of what is happening in society at large, but the nature of social media has changed the ways colourism is experienced.

Hashtags like #teamlightskin[63], #teambrownskin[64] and #teamdarkskin[65] exist on social media and are quick to spread, they are also usually attached with messages and images that come in memes[66] or gifs[67] and they promote and perpetuate colourism. On Twitter they are expressed with one hundred and forty characters or less, on Facebook there is no word limit, on Instagram they are mostly image based. #teamlightskin is designated to those that have a variation of light skin and #teamdarkskin is designated to those who are the

62 Posts are the items placed on various social media, via text image or video.
63 #teamlightskin. (n.d.). Retrieved from, http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=%23TeamLightSkin.
64 #teambrownskin; while this has not been defined as yet, it follows #teamlightskin and #teamdarkskin, as a skin tone range that would sit somewhere in the middle, a definite brown.
65 #teamdarkskin; the opposite of #teamlightskin, this hashtag does not have an entered definition, but it is common on Twitter and other social media sites. See, https://twitter.com/hashtag/teamdarkskin
66 See figure 3. For example of a meme.
67 A GIF is an image file that is compressed to reduce transfer time. The proper pronunciation of the acronym is a soft "g" sound: like JIF. It can also use multiple images for animated effects (animated GIFs). Retrieved from, http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=GIF

opposite. Whereas #teambrownskin is left to those who vary in their blackness but are neither light skinned nor dark skinned, they sit in the middle. These hashtags are self- segregating and damaging, they are formed alliances between individuals who identify with certain skin tones.
A number of these tweets, memes and social media messages sound ridiculous and naïve,

> "Being a light skin tone has its advantages #teamlightskin'[68]

> "If u darkskin I can't wife u only light skin girls #Teamlightskin date #Teamlightskin not no light and dark"[69]

> "#Teamlightskin but sun gonna have us dark at the end of summer :/"[70]
> "Do yall really take a look at how dark Kenyans are? They make me not want to rep #TeamDarkskin"[71]

> "#honestyhour I think all women r beautiful but im more attracted to #teamdarkskin but dey evil women thou lol."[72]

Attached to these texts are the anxieties, sexual desires and superiority associated with skin tone. Skin colour is viewed as social capital, especially by women. A lighter skin tone means you are beautiful, and are therefore

68 Anonymous. Personal communication via Twitter.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.

elevated above the ordinary. It can also mean that you are exempt from the negative stereotypes that are associated with a darker skin tone. Individuals with colourist views consider those who are light skinned to be more sexually desirable and more attractive than those who are dark skinned, they are held up as the standard of beauty in communities of colour. Colourism also mirrors white supremacy in some ways but on a larger scale it cannot be equated; there is skin privilege.[73]

Lighter skin can mean better education and job prospects, and in media the dominant images reflected are of light skinned black people. This leaves out the majority of black people, especially black women to feel inferior, to have fewer opportunities. This is due to the racial hierarchies created by the Slave Trade in America and in South Africa, Apartheid, and old and new colonialisms. Racial hierarchies in those periods were used to justify supremacy, exploitation as well as the unequal distribution of resources and land.[74] It is the remnants of these dominant systems that has created colourism. Others have argued with little evidence that colourism was present before the periods of slavery and colonialism, even if this is true; there is no doubt that the legacy of slavery and colonial racial hierarchies, strengthened colourism. Experiencing colourism opens up avenues; individuals can find a way to survive in that system of oppression, they can seek affirmations with their own or create a space for that. Others want to assimilate, and assimilation can often lead to very damaging solutions, like skin bleaching.

73 Is not the same as white skin privilege and maybe should not be compared, it is highly debated, and some even consider light skin privilege in communities of colour to be mythical.
74 Kunnie, J. (2000). *Is Apartheid Really Dead? Pan-Africanist Working-Class Cultural Critical Perspectives.* United Kingdom: Westview Press.

Another hashtag that has been quite present on social media is #yellowbone[75]. This too is influenced by African American colourist narratives in a lot of media, the word 'yellowbone' is originally American but it has been absorbed into South African everyday language. The influence is evident and dominant on social media; it also comes from music, film and television. The term has entered into South African film, television and music. Although there is language here that is colourist, that is present in the many languages in South Africa, it is not as established or widespread as 'yellowbone'. Some examples of the uses of 'yellowbone' on Twiiter,

> "Basking in the sun and thinking I'm gonna lose my #yellowbone"[76]
>
> "Tjooooo how hawt was that red lipped #Yellowbone ko the VIP suites! #SomeonesPerson"[77]
>
> "My greatest achievement was dating a #yellowbone back in 2012"[78]

'Yellowbone' is generally known to refer to a black person who is light in complexion, who has a lighter skin tone. This individual is either mixed race or just black. There is a distinction, being black in America is different from being black in South Africa. In American the One Drop Rule[79] states that as long as

75 The word is rooted in slavery in America and was mostly relegated to light skinned black people who were the offspring of forced sexual acts on slaves by their masters. 'high yellow' or simply 'yellow' was used specifically for those who classified as black but were extremely light in complexion and 'high' refers to the social hierarchy which put light skin at the top and dark skin at the bottom. The word is widely used in Hip hop music to describe a light-skinned black woman.
76 Anonymous, personal communication via Twitter.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
79 Danielle, op. cit.

an individual has a drop of black blood they are essentially black, so there is no limit to blackness in appearance, regardless of hair texture and facial features. Whereas in South African there is a clear distinction between black and non-black; people who are mixed race are considered coloured in South Africa. Coloured people in South Africa consist of three mixed race populations who were given more social privilege than other, unmixed, indigenous African groups. There were certain advantages in becoming classified as 'Coloured'. For instance, Coloured people did not have to carry a *dompas*[80], an identity document designed to limit the movements of the non-white. Whereas, blackness and being black is often viewed purely, if there is a mix with other races an individual is classified as 'coloured' not black, and in appearance too there is a limit according to skin tone, hair texture, ethnicity and culture. Both these ways of perceiving blackness can have odd variations that differ from person to person. Apartheid South Africa emphasized the differences in skin colour in rather strict ways, there was a defined idiosyncratic hierarchy and this affected the way people view skin colour. The results of this hierarchy were long-lasting. Today the views are just the same, this is reflected on social media and in everyday conversations; a lighter skin tone is better valued and often venerated.

80 Poplak, R. (2015). *The Dompas 2.0: Apartheid's big comeback attempt gets serious. Retrieved* from, http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2015-03-19-the-dompas-2.0-apartheids-big-comeback-attempt-gets-serious/#.Vq83SdWUcQ8

It is also evident that the issue of colourism affects women most intensely, because women are judged on appearance more than men are. There are socially constructed relationships between skin tone and gender.

> Sexism and racism work together to transform beauty into a form of social capital. Because white skin is personified as the beauty ideal, lighter skinned women are seen as more beautiful than darker skinned women. Beauty functions as social capital because it has an impact on the type of job a woman can secure as well as the social and economic status of a marriage partner.[81]

In South Africa sexual and street harassment can be extreme. Women experience numerous moments of harassment throughout the day, for black women some of this harassment will involve skin tone. 'Hey darkie' or 'black beauty' are phrases that complete strangers, men, shout out to describe skin tone of dark skinned women. Depending on how they are said and how the women respond, these can be negative or positive. Mostly they are negative and dark skinned women can often be ridiculed by men for their skin tone. 'Yellowbone' is shouted out to those that have a lighter skin tone and it too can be negative or positive depending on how it said and how the women respond. There is the insinuation that the 'yellowbone' is more attractive and sexually available. 'Yellowbones' are more often offered front seats in a taxi so that they can be available to the driver. There is a

81 Gabriel, op. cit., Pg. 19.

fetishisization and hypersexualisation that happens to these women with light skin because of their distance to blackness, the possibility that their skin tone carries with it wealth and prestige. There is too the same with those women with dark skin, their womanhood can be seen as more authentic, because of their closeness to the idea of a pure African woman. There are nuances in gender roles that distinguish the standards of attractiveness and skin tone on men and women. A darker skin tone in men can be viewed positively or as attractive, whereas for women there tends to be conditions to accepting women as attractive if they are dark skinned. Is she pretty? Where is she from? Because if you are dark, pretty and attractive you must be from elsewhere, you are exotic, different from regular dark skinned women.[82] You are desirable besides the fact of your darkness. That is colourism, and that is how it functions.

> But whatever label is used, it remains a pernicious, internalised form of racism which involves prejudice, stereotyping and perceptions of beauty among members of the same racial group, whereby light skin is more highly valued than dark skin.[83]

82 This applies both in America and in South Africa.
83 Gabriel, op. cit., pg. 5.

The Yellowbone Factory[84]

Although it seems at times like it has little impact, because it is quite superficial, fleeting and constantly in-flux, social media still has enormous effect. The expressions and ideas that float around social media do not sit in a vacuum and they do have an influence. If the hashtags #teamlightskin #yellowbone et al, are used they do perpetuate and endorse colourism. At just about the time that 'yellowbone' was spreading and becoming increasingly popular in South Africa, especially on social media, radio and television, numerous events that attempted to mirror online media and other media began to occur. These events where directly related to the term 'yellowbone' and the #teamlightskin hashtag, they aided in furthering the term's reach and brought the 'yellowbone' ideal to real society. Night clubs and other social venues hosted 'yellowbone' or 'Light Skin vs. Dark Skin parties and events which allowed individuals only of a certain skintone or a hue within the 'yellowbone' spectrum free entrance into an event. It helped if your friends were or are 'yellowbone' too. Some are even offered VIP status. This prerequisite or rule for entrance into these events applied mostly to young women. To a large degree a lot of these events were emulating similar events that were being hosted in America.

This brings forward the 'space' the term 'yellowbone' came from and where it can be found. The 'yellowbone' parties were held at nightclubs and events that play mostly commercial hip-hop music, whether it is local or international. 'Yellowbone' shows up a lot in the lyrics of commercial hip-hop and it

84 Anonymous. (n.d.) *The Yellowbone Clinic*. Retrieved from, http://yellowbonefactory.blogspot.co.za/p/skin-renew-products.html

becomes part of language, generally in South African society it is easily used to describe a desirable light skinned black woman. Hip-hop music did and does play a role in spreading colourist views and ideas. A lot of the lyrics contain misogynistic imagery as well,

> Three redbone bitches and they all dykes
> Said her girl is on the way, she a yellowbone [85]

> Yellowbone passenger they see it, they say oh boy [86]

> Yellow errthing this time, you know what I'm talkin' 'bout?
> Yellow rims, yellow big booty, yellowbone [87]

> My bitches choosy never fuck without a rubber
> Sweet yellowbone thing I call a honey mustard
> Pussy like a sea shell.[88]

This is not to say that skin tone bias was not present in South Africa before the influence of American media, the combination of the influence from music, film, television, and the increasing relevance of social media aided in rapidly spreading the 'yellowbone' phenomena. Social media exacerbated and

85 Thomaz, C, J. (2010). *Black and Yellow,* (Recorded by Wiz Khalifa).
86 Khaled, M. (2010). *All I do is win.* (Recorded by DJ Khaled, Ludacris, Snoop Dogg, Rick Ross and T-Pain).
87 Davis, R. (2009). *Lemonade.* (Recoreded by Gucci Mane).
88 Gang,R. (2013). *Tapout.* (Recored by Lil Wayne, Birdman, Mack Maine, Nicki Minaj and Future.)

popularised yellowness. There was an increase in conversation, South African hip hop too adopted the 'yellowbone' term.

Some realised the increasing desire for young black women and other women of colour to become a certain skin tone and they capitalised on it. The Yellowbone Factory was established by Neo Mabita at some point between 2013 and 2014. The Yellowbone Factory, based in Sandton, specialises in giving young women of colour the skin tone they desire, they do not only cater to black women. Although they are primarily a skin bleaching clinic, they do provide options for darkening skin as well, they offer services according to the client's needs. On the website or more precisely, the blog, it is stated that the company not only offers 'yellowbone' results but also slight changes to skin tone; a shade of brown lighter or more, as well as a shade darker or more. The company, if we one may call it that, has an official statement that they provide to prospective clients on the blog.

> There are many misconceptions, a lot of scary preconceived ideas and too much misinformation when it comes to the world of skin lightening. People use skin lightening products for a host of reasons, some medical, some aesthetic and others, purely for experiment.[89]

They also manage to explain and justify why the processes they offer are needed and how 'The effect of the experience' will better serve their clients.

89 Anonymous. (n.d.) *The Yellowbone Clinic*. Retrieved from, http://yellowbonefactory.blogspot.co.za/p/skin-renew-products.html

> Lightening, whitening or de-pigmenting your skin can, may and most likely will change your life in ways that you never imagined. You are innately aware of the difference you will receive in terms of how people perceive and accept you once you look the way you wish to look. This is the primary reason why you wish to undergo a treatment to lighten, whiten or de-pigment your skin.[90]

The Yellowbone Factory and its founder seem to understand the privileges of light skin and the negative experiences of those with dark skin, because colourism is not just light skin being preferred. It is darker people not being deemed fit enough for the public image so they are relegated to the background. It is when darker skinned people to marry light so they do not have dark skinned children. It is darker skinned people as more dangerous, dirty and ugly or darker skin being viewed as something good when mainstream media acknowledges it, 'dark skin girls are popular now though.'[91] They provide a way out, an existence without the negative ideas associated with dark skin.

The Yellowbone Factory presents skin bleaching as something that is a choice or preference and completely disregards the influence of colourism, colourist ideology and global beauty standards. Though not the first company in the world to provide skin bleaching services, it is one of the few in South Africa to

90 Ibid.
91 Anonymous, (2014). *30 Light skin Privileges Light Skin Blacks have that Dark Skin Blacks Don't* Retrieved from, http://bougieblackgirl.com/colorism-30-privileges-light-skin-blacks-others-dont/

have been public about its services. The Yellowbone Factory is very much present in the public. When it began to be advertised openly on university campuses it gained attention. It was most present on the University of Witwatersrand's campuses, hundreds of posters and fliers were spread across campuses offering mostly female students the opportunity to alter or bleach their skin tone for a price. Quite quickly the company began to provide its services to students who could afford the procedures. Soon enough social media caught to The Yellowbone factory's hype and in early 2014, the 'clinic' was trending on South African Twitter. There were plenty of reactions from Wits students about the company's presence on campus, some positive but mostly negative. Most of the students were offended and it brought in to light the lack regulation on material that is circulated on campuses.

Vuvuzela[92], the Wits campus newspaper caught up to The Yellowbone Factory's presence and they published an article on it.[93] There was too an attempt to remove the posters and fliers off campus but they had already had their impact. The Yellowbone Factory had gained some popularity. Given the media's portrayal of black women and the lack of a diverse blackness in their representation it is no wonder there is persistent colourist ideology in social media as well, this also means that colourism also remains in society and communities of colour.

92 Vuvuzela, Retrieved from, http://witsvuvuzela.com/
93 Ndebele, N. and Sethusa, P. (2014). *The "Yellow bone Factory" hits Wits.* Retrieved from, http://witsvuvuzela.com/2014/03/07/the-yellow-bone-factory-hits-wits/.

Xenophobic Colourism

Attitudes towards skin tone also cross the beauty line in South Africa, there are used to mark difference; they are used to identify how African individuals are. Phrases like '…the deeper in Africa you go, the darker the skin…'[94] are used way too easily towards those with a darker skin tone in South Africa to mark their foreignness.

Recently in South Africa due to the increasing number of immigrants entering the country there have been numerous occurrences of extremely violent xenophobic attacks. It has however been pointed out that there is a specific foreignness that is being attacked; black African foreigners are at the receiving end of this xenophobic violence. This is something that can be attributed to a number of attitudes that are present in the South African psyche towards other black African nationals. Apartheid and colonialism managed to instil a deep anti-blackness in South African society and it also promoted tribalism and ethnic division as well as prioritising whiteness and Eurocentric beauty ideals. Post-apartheid South Africa, although democratic, managed to develop the 'Rainbow nation' colour blind rhetoric that ignores the nuanced and distinct divisions in South African society that needed to be overturned. This rhetoric homogenises South African people and black people in particular. Tribal and ethnic loyalties were set aside in order to pursue liberation for all. You only have to refer to the eleven official languages recognised to see South Africa's ethnic diversity, but these different ethnicities and cultures are not entirely united. There are nuances

94 Colloquial phrase.

attached to respective ethnic groups, stereotypes and prejudices too. A lot of these can be attributed to apartheid's encouragement of tribalism and ethnic prejudice. Different ethnic groups were relegated to particular 'homelands' within South Africa, the Zulus in Kwazulu-Natal, the Xhosas in the Eastern Cape etc. This resulted in not only interracial group and colour prejudice, but also prejudice against Africans from outside the country. Ethnic identity further intensifies distinguished separation within a society that is still divided.

Certain ethnicities can claim certain traits and deny others that they deem undesirable. Skin colour and skin tone are traits that are part of tribalist[95] ideology. It is often heard that individuals can be identified as belonging to a particular ethnic group or tribe because of their skin tone. For instance, Zulu, Xhosa and Tswana girls are light skinned and so on. To have very dark skin can be questioned, because there is a belief that South Africans tend to be lighter skinned that other Africans. Individuals have been told that because of their dark skin, they do not look South African, because dark skin is far too African for South Africa. Being too dark to us South Africans means that you must be from another African country, further up and much closer to the equator; South African black people are only so dark.

Many who have experienced xenophobia in subtle, and not so violent ways experience it based on different things, for others it is language and for many others it is also based on skin tone. Every once in a while an individual experiences denigration at the hands of a xenophobic fellow South African.

95 Tribalist rhetoric and behaviour was always present but it is fuelled by the divisions in apartheid, which still permeate everyday interactions.

For in South Africa, some believe that once you are darker than 'medium' brown or the "coffee" colour, you must be a foreigner. Fuelled by racial prejudice and Eurocentric or western beauty ideals, the association of darker skin with a more African-ness and a more blackness keeps and perpetuates colourism. To deduce someone's nationality, ethnicity or culture from skin tone must not be a factor, but it is, it used to distinguish people in varying degrees and shades of "black" as foreign in South Africa.

Colourism is oppression within oppression and as long as institutional, structural racism continues, so will colourism. It will affect people in different ways because of their environment and experiences, but as long as the media continues to portray darker skinned people in a negative way and light skin or white skin is venerated, it will endure. Colourism is not occurring in isolation within racial groups, the internalisation of whiteness as the beauty ideal, as most desirable has led individuals into pursuing unattainable standards that are structured and maintained by white supremacy.

Much of the time mainstream images are not usually considered as having a large impact on people's lives, but they matter to individuals. When individuals do not see themselves reflected or represented, they find ways to and strategies to exist, or to insert themselves into the picture. Deborah Gabriel points out the pervasiveness of whiteness and white supremacy in the media and imagery that maintains structural racism and colourism.

> Whiteness and white supremacy is also reinenforced using the powerful medium of cultural imagery. Therefore virtually anyone of significance is racialised as white.[96]

If not white they are white-ish, closer to white and away from blackness. This operates in a world that supposedly multicultural, diverse and colour blind. Gabriel further illustrates the fact of whiteness as the norm on a global scale,

> How can white be the normative in a multi-cultural society where all races are supposed to be equal participants? That they are not reflects the fact that white supremacy is at work, not that black and other non-white groups are inferior.[97]

The presence of colourism and its maintenance in South Africa is due to the many stereotypes associated with dark skin that were developed in colonial and apartheid South Africa. Darker skin in the past and the present is associated with negative stereotypes and carries negative connotations. This reads across society, in the media and it is also part of a larger structural, hierarchical system of privilege and racism, a structural discrimination towards darker skinned people. South Africa is not unique. Colourism is a global issue rooted in anti-blackness and white supremacy, depending on which part of the world it is manifesting it will have its own boundaries of definition.

96 Gabriel, op. cit., pg. 77.
97 Gabriel, op. cit., pg. 81.

Increasing globalisation and the spread of western/Eurocentric media that perpetuates anti-black beauty ideals and anti-blackness, privileges white and light skin over darker skin in the global beauty industry, strengthens and preserves colourism.

Four: Value Added Colour

> I think many of us often forget how much 'mainstream' images matter to individuals. When we don't see ourselves reflected in our shared imagination, we develop resistance strategies to survive, protect and in the best of cases, insert ourselves into the narrative.[98]

This chapter explores the many ways colourism appears in the media that has influenced an ongoing visual practice. Colourism makes its rounds in mainstream media in spurts and is too often provoked by the celebration of a dark skinned woman who entirely deviates from the western ideal of beauty. For a few years, the conversations about colourism have remained on the discursive circuit. Although present, these discussions that attempt to combat or address colourism are often thin and counterproductive, they are frustrating, especially given that colourism is intrinsically linked to gender and station in society. Popular culture and media is not separate from society, often it is a mirror to society.

Although, colourism does not always occur within racialised groups, too often colourism is approached as an intra-racial mental problem or a phenomenon, but it is the pervasiveness of white supremacy that is the cause of colourism. Racism and colourism exist side by side but are not the same, they function on different levels. Colourism is often rendered rare and exotic, incomprehensible even, something that happens to those dark skinned

98 hooks, b. (1992). *The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators*. pp. 207-220. In *bell hooks, Black Looks: Race and Representation*. London: Turnaround.

women over there. When in reality it is a worldwide issue that affects black people and many people of colour. The hierarchy in colourism is the same or is similar to the one that directs colourism, light skin is valued over dark skin, and European facial features are prized over African features and bodies. Colourism does not fit the traditional model of racial discrimination; it is assumed that all recognised as black are facing the same discriminations and that all those recognised as white are enjoying the same white privilege regardless of place or position in society. Colourism reveals the hierarchies of privilege and disadvantages within racialised groups across the world.

There is plenty of evidence that proves that light skin is privileged elsewhere in east and south Asia, and in South America. Whiteness in these regions as ideal does not always manifest itself with the aesthetics of people of European descent. It can be represented by bodies with pale skin that are non-European[99]. There has been argument for the existence of colourism and intra-racial prejudice before colonialism but the success of the white supremacist project cannot be dismissed or removed from this issue. Nearly five centuries of countless atrocities across the globe, continuous subjugation and debasement of black people and other people of colour, particularly women, cannot be ignored as the source of the prevailing colourist and racial positions that maintain the global beauty idea of today. Dark skin is often linked to African heritage and indigenous heritage, it is seen as undesirable, and it is not just skin colour that is used as the only catalogue of identification; facial features also contribute to the perception of skin colour.

99 For instance in Japan and other East Asian countries, whiteness is represented by other East Asian people with very pale skin.

This is not coincidence, historically constructed, biased doctrine rendered darker skin and African features to be seen as less than human, unwanted and unattractive.

Colourism has been widely present as social hierarchy in countries like, Brazil, Colombia and Cuba, in other scholarly materials and studies these societies have been named pigmentocracies[100]. A number of South and Latin American nations in the early twentieth century went through a whitening campaign, as a form of nation building. Pigmentocracies[101], the social hierarchies based on skin colour, the hierarchies are inherent and operate visibly in these societies; they strengthen distinctions of class, gender, religion, and ethnic origin. Members of these societies use skin colour as the primary parameter in judging other members of their society.

In India, the traditions of caste systems that are overtly colourist keep women from better marriage prospects, and employment opportunities. Many women and men aspire to be lighter skinned in Indian society. Lightening creams or more specifically 'fairness' creams as they are mainly advertised in India are explicitly on the marketplace, for instance Fair and Lovely[102] for women, and Fair and Handsome[103] for men are sold and advertised in Indian mass media today. Beauty companies capitalise on this anxiety in Indian society and make millions off of these products. They use popular Indian actors and actresses to sell these products. Ironically, the same companies

100 The word pigmentocracy has come into common usage to refer to the distinctions that people of African descent in America make in their various skin tones, which range from the darkest shades of black to paleness that approximates whiteness.
101 Lynn, op. cit.
102 See figure 4. Hindustan Unilever, subsidiary of the Anglo-Dutch company Unilever.
103 See figure 5. Emami Limited is an Indian company that disseminates a number of goods across India.

that are selling lightening or fairness creams in India explicitly are also selling 'brightening, creams in many countries like South Africa, even though these countries have made lightening or bleaching creams illegal. The product is usually the same, the name changes slightly, and maybe the amount of a few chemical compounds, but it is the same product.

Brightening creams have been sold worldwide to women in the pursuit of elusive beauty ideals. Millions are made every day by companies still selling these creams. The skin bleaching industry is a billion dollar industry. During apartheid, the Krok brothers[104] created the skin bleaching cream, AVIVA.[105] The Krok brothers manufactured a skin bleaching cream that they sold primarily to black women. This was obviously the prime opportunity to capitalize on the colour categorisation that governed society in South Africa during apartheid. In the hopes of survival and elevation in the racial pecking order of apartheid South Africa, black women flocked to purchase AVIVA, even though the ingredients of the product had grievous and deadly side effects. Consequently, on the institutionalised system of insecurity constructed by white supremacist beauty ideals, the Krok brothers made millions that they managed to invest into numerous ventures after the dismantling of apartheid, this includes the Gold Reef City Casino and Resort as well as The Apartheid Museum. It is no surprise that entities like the Yellowbone Factory and many others are at work in South Africa today.

104 Anonymous. (2015) Super rich Solly Krok in trouble over loan. Retrieved from, http://www.fin24.com/Companies/Property/Super-rich-Solly-Krok-in-trouble-over-loan-20150104
105 Ribane, N. (20016). *Lighter is fairer.* Retrieved from, http://mg.co.za/article/2006-05-02-lighter-is-fairer

Given the ubiquity of western beauty ideals in the production of images of the world, black women and too often darker skinned black women, appear every once in a while in film and television, but in roles of servitude, as the maid, the slave, the best friend, they appear in subjugation or as afterthoughts, reiterating historical depictions. Recently, Viola Davis and Lupita N'yongo have won awards for their performances in mainstream films, namely *The Help*[106] and *12 Years a Slave*[107], but they won awards for playing a maid and a slave. Both actresses have spoken out about the plight of black women, in particular, dark skinned black women and their general invisibility on mainstream platforms. Even within black cinema dark skinned black women occupy precarious roles and positions of subjugation in mass media, the same positions that they have been sitting in throughout history. Simultaneously subjugated, oversexualised and sexually disempowered, as O'Grady states 'She is Jezebel and mammy, prostitute and female eunuch, the two in one'.[108]

Although now visible on the mainstream, it can be argued that the visibility of black women is still problematic, black women still play much more secondary roles in film, television and in other popular culture. Most of the black women who do appear in the mainstream are the ones that appear more palatable, like Halle Berry, Beyoncé and many others. It is easy to think of these women as symbols of the inclusion of black women into the larger visual sphere, but they do not represent the different black women all over

106 T. T. (Director). (2012). *The Help*. United Kingdom: Touchstone Home Entertainment.
107 McQueen, S. (Director). (2014). *12 years a slave*. France: Video France Télévisions distribution.
108 O'Grady, L. (1992). *Olympia's Maid: Reclaiming Black Female Subjectivity*. In: Raven, A. et al. (1994) New Feminist Criticism: Art, Identity, Action. New York: Icon, 153 – 170.

the world, they represent a beauty ideal, centralized on whiteness, which many black women can never be. It is rare to see darker skinned black women, like Viola Davies and Lupita N'yongo in the mainstream, and this is where colourism thrives.

The visibility of black women, a highly marginalised group, is not inherently a 'privilege' or the indicator of a changing worldview. Skin colour, specifically the skin tone of the visible black women plays a role in how she is perceived. Similar to historical representations, this visibility can mean hypersexulisation, objectification, commodification, stereotype and structural exclusion. Race and gender are binary aspects in the social and cultural marginalization and discrimination of black women, and that includes colourism. This creates a binary between black women and white women, white women represent the inherently good parts of womanhood and are elevated as the ideal face of beauty and black women are the opposite. Between this binary is a scale that includes other women of colour, but with black women being at the very end of the scale, the most debased. Where black women are stereotyped, hypersexualised, masculinised and desexualised, seen as objects of hyper-desire, sexual use and disposal simultaneously. This has been termed Misogynoir[109], quite recently by Moira Bailey to address the misogyny faced by black women in society and popular culture. Misogynoir comes from nearly everyone but can come too from black men. Here anti-blackness[110] is internalised, and it can often be proliferated by colourism, mirroring external

109 Hamilton, T. (2014). *Explanation Of Misogynoir*. Retrieved From, http://www.gradientlair.com/post/84107309247/define-misogynoir-anti-black-misogyny-moya-bailey-coinedv

110 Hamilton, T. (2014). *Anti-Blackness And The Myths Of "Monoracial Privilege" & The "White/Black Binary"*. Retrieved from, http://www.gradientlair.com/post/77254727896/anti-blackness-monoracial-privilege-myth-white-black-bin

oppression, the image of beauty is itself an anti-black construction and is often reinforced with misogynistic rhetoric. Although men experience colourism, it is at a diminished level. Skin colour like hair colour, length, and texture are all gendered. Body weight too, is gendered. There are nuances and intersections within these standards of beauty. Men must be tall, women short, men can be accepted if they are dark skinned, but not dark skinned women. Colourism, like all western beauty standards is rooted in white supremacy and historical, biased constructions of humanity.

Visibility in the discourse of art history.

In the discourse of art and art history, when faced with paintings that feature black female bodies there is always some awkwardness for the black female students. For instance, Manet's *Olympia*, 1863,[111] as well as Jean-Leon Gerome's *Grande Piscine de Brousse, 1855*[112] and *Le bain maure (The Moorish Bath), 1870*[113] are paintings that appear frequently in art and art history courses, they have black women serving, subjugated, and they are contrasted by white women being seen. These are often the first images of black women that art and art history students encounter. Often just voyeurism from a male gaze, these paintings seem to be merely excuses to stare at women in their private spaces, but the white women's bodies are always represented as the ideal and when present, the black female bodies act as

111 Figure 6.
112 Figure 7.
113 Figure 8.

direct contrasts or as figures of servitude to the white female body, completely overlooked.

The two women's bodies in all three paintings are a nude study of the female body in difference, both are very present but there is directly, a dramatic contrast between them, which is their skin colour. They are also marked by the different roles they are performing in the images. The white body advances towards the viewer, elevated as the ideal of beauty and the black woman performs the role as servant to the white woman. The white woman's skin glows and is prominent in its vividness against the darkness of the black woman's skin. The black woman acts as prop, or in servitude, she disappears next to or in a sea of white bodies.

Artist Lorraine O'Grady, in her essay, *Olympia's Maid: Reclaiming Black Female Subjectivity*[114] makes evident that for centuries the western visual cultural paradigm has incorporated the black female body as the embodiment of "otherness".[115]

> Kaleidoscopes of not-white females, Asian, Native American, Latina and African, have played distinct parts in the West's theatre of sexual hierarchy. But it is the African female who, by virtue of [colour] and feature and the extreme metaphors of enslavement, is at the outermost reaches of "otherness". Thus she subsumes all the roles of the not-white body.[116]

114 O'Grady, op. cit.
115 Ibid.
116 Ibid.

O'Grady centres this argument on her analysis of Manet's *Olympia*, with particular attention to the role of the maid who sits in the background with a bouquet of flowers in offering to the 'white' *Olympia*. The black woman is in the background, and in some reproductions of the painting she almost blends into the background or disappears completely, she is just another object in that scene. Like the black women in Jean-Leon Gerome's *Grande Piscine de Brousse, 1855* and *Le bain maure (The Moorish Bath), 1870,* the black woman is almost invisible, submissive to the white women, basically serving in adoration of the white woman. O'Grady states how black women '[…] have always already been spoken and our bodies placed at the binary extreme, that is to say, on the "other" side of the colon.'[117]

Another theme she addresses is the black female body in this imagery is always partly or entirely covered and secondary to that of the white woman, she suggests that it may be that the black woman could be protecting herself '…from the centuries-long assault…' on and against the black female body or that it may be, she is '[…] cooperating with the West's construction of not-white women to not be seen.'[118] This imagery contains an explicit hierarchy between the bodies of white women, black women and other racialised female bodies, and black women always seem to be sitting at the extreme end in darkness. Compared to Manet's *Olympia*, Gerome's paintings are kinder to the skin tone of the black woman, in *Le bain maure (The Moorish Bath), 1870,* the skin tone is of the black woman is richer and

117 O'Grady, op. cit.
118 Ibid.

iridescent, but on a body that is masculinised and designated for servitude. Too many representative images of black women and men in the discourse of art history are painted with the same tone of ugly muddy brown that is *Olympia*'s maid. Why that colour, that specific unflattering tone?

Here clearly evident is the place were black women encounter a compacted blackness, in complete opposition to a vibrant whiteness of the white woman. The millions of images created in the western imagination of dark skin as something to be hated, shown continuously in slavery and inelegance. This is the image of dark skin that has been carried out historically and is the same that still lives today, present in film, television, print and global mass media. This imagery has not changed it is continuous, in the larger visual sphere, which one could say originates and deviates from western art, black women, especially dark skinned black women and other women of colour are at the margins.

True Love[119] magazine is an example of a space for affirming representation for black women and also a place for resistance to the primary representations of black women, but in a system structured to facilitate the erasure or negligence of black female bodies, there are limits to its success and power. In reality, black women have to search, they have dig through store shelves in the hopes of finding items that match their skin tone. When they do not find it, they accept that they are not the norm. Most beauty companies and brands, unless they are specifically targeted at black women offer numerous foundation shades for white women and a few dark ones in

119 *True Love*, op. cit.

the caramel and lighter ranges labelled as dark. In the fashion industry, many models have to bring their own make up and do their own make up, because the make-up artists do not have the makeup for the black models or the skills to put make up on a black face. Although some beauty companies have begun to sell more shades of brown for, they still fail to realise that black people come in more shades other than just caramel, mocha chocolate and mahogany. There is a vast spectrum from dark to light that represents the multiplicity of skin tones among black women and other women of colour. Today, major cosmetic companies have all attempted to make their products more inclusive, the beauty and fashion industries are emerging as a unique instrument for discussion by tweaking and changing the concept of 'nude' as a colour. Nude has always been described and portrayed as a beige tone and many are attempting to dismantle that image as the norm, as a nude, because it only applies to a small percentage of the women in the world.

Dismantling dominant beauty myths and treacherous beauty ideals, especially colourism requires advocates. Articles, films, documentaries, dedicated to combating colourism have been on the rise. They advocate simplistic self-help solutions to a historically and systemically maintained system of debasement. They often fail in their attempts to address colourism; these approaches fail to critique in sustainable ways the insidious nature of this issue. Many do little more than document the extent of colourism and its implications, they raise awareness but that is usually the end of it.

Dark Girls[120] *2012* is a documentary film by director Bill Duke, about colour, race and gender; it brings forward the subject of colourism. *Dark Girls*[121] puts dark skinned women's experiences of prejudice as perpetuated by other black women and by men. But it shows dark skinned women in pitiful positions and as 'uglier', miserable women full of self-hate, there needed to be a broader representative conversation across the spectrum. The perspective from men too is shown, they provide commentary on the preferences 'I just prefer light skinned women.', 'Dark skinned women just look wrong next to me'. When asked to validate these statements they stumble and struggle when asked to justify their preferences. This is indicative of the larger phenomenon of anti-blackness and how white supremacy, internalised racism and colourism influence dating preferences.

Duke's following to *Dark Girls*, *Light Girls*[122] also misses the mark; the film approaches the issue of colourism from the perspective of light skinned black women, it is meant to explore the privileges and disadvantages of light skin, in some way to be an exact opposite of *Dark Girls*[123]. It is supposed to be an opportunity for light skinned black women to tell their experiences of colourism and prejudice, but instead it appears to be that the same dangerous stereotypes that fuel colourism and the light skin vs dark skin debate are reiterated and perpetuated. Many have commented on the detail that both *Dark Girls*[124] and *Light Girls*[125] documentaries do not mention,

120 *Channsin Berry, D and Duke, B.* (2012). *Dark Girls*. USA: Urban Winter Entertainment and Duke Media Production.
121 Ibid.
122 *Channsin Berry, D and Duke, B. (2015). Light Girls. Urban Winter Entertainment and Duke Media Production.*

and that is white supremacy, this invalidates the entire debate presented in both films. Colourism is isolated from racism and the broader worldwide white supremacist project, but skin colour discrimination is not individual intent; it is a result of shared cultural norms informed via cultural interactions, it is a product of socially produced constructions. It is more than an issue of dark skinned women just being 'comfortable in their own skin'; it is an element of global programming that is received everyday under the system of white supremacy.

Projects like *Dark Girls*[126] and *Light Girls*[127], inadvertently run away from the discourse of colourism as a part of white supremacy by making statements like 'we are all black' or simplifying the issue to 'dark skinned versus light skinned' and making it seem like black people, especially darker skinned women are complicit and responsible for colourism. There are benefits afforded to light skin women, the disparities between their life experiences and those women with darker skin tones are astonishing, from who moves up the corporate ladder to who you see featured in films, mainstream and independent is very telling. There are also disadvantages to being a light skinned black woman, even though they may experience some privileges in society. The solutions offered here are apparently common sense solutions that are obvious, but they do ignore the social dimension of colourism and structural racism. The issue of colourism is psychologised and the solution directed back to the individual. However, presenting colourism in the form of

a documentary legitimizes the issue, places it in reality and attention is called to a much more pervasive and often unacknowledged form of structural racism; it is a more effective way to bring light to the issue, other dealings of colourism in popular black centred mainstream films and entertainment.

It is not just on film, television and magazines that colourism appears, it occurs in literature as well, even though literal images might not be shown. In reading a lot of fantasy, science fiction and other fiction, so often the darker skinned characters are the ones with the evil magic and worst intentions, they are often the bad guys, the villains. Darker skinned characters are often looked upon with suspicion, or they are set apart as different because of the darker skin or non-Caucasian features. Characters are defined by the markers that deviate from whiteness, rather than a more nuanced way to describe them. When there is an attempt often skin tones are compared to food, furniture or other desirable objects, too many times there is always an element of fetishism. It is assumed that unless someone's race is not explicitly specified, they are white. White is seen as 'raceless' and every other colour or ethnicity as 'raced', it is Eurocentric and encourages racist and colourist imaginations.

Even though comic books are synonymous with images, similar issues are present. For instance, Ronald Wimberley's short essay *Lighten Up*[128], about his interaction with an editor who requests that he change the skin tone of a comic book character, brings forward the issue of colourism from a different perspective. His experience made him being to question how something as

128 Wimberley, R. (2015). '*Lighten Up*'. Retrieved from, https://thenib.com/lighten-up-4f7f96ca8a7e#.acpq29wgq

simple as the colour of a character on a comic book page ties identity and colourism. Wimberley uses hexadecimal values as colour id's to give his essay greater visual impact and shows how the colour choices made are an integral part of the art making process. He veers slowly from comic books to other parts of the western paradigm of art, using specifically, Manet's *Olympia* as an example; he proves to the viewer that colourism is not just in comics, it is in the larger visual sphere.

In response to mass media's lack of diversity and the colourist and Eurocentric beauty ideals perpetuated, a number of art practitioners have been producing artworks to counter or bring light to the perpetuation of colourism. Patrice Renee Washington's *Homogenized (Value Study #2)*[129], *2011* is an example and Ng'endo Mukii's *Yellow Fever, 2013*[130], is another example. But what is different about *Yellow Fever* compared to many others is that it is from the perspective of an African society, specifically Kenya. *Yellow Fever* is an animated film made when Mukii was researching the way 'indigenous' people have been represented in media over time. In the film Mukii addresses modern media and the way it influences self-image in Kenya, particularly the effects of colourism on young girls.

129 Figure 9.
130 Mukii, N. (2013). *Yellow Fever*. Retrieved from, *https://vimeo.com/ngendo*

Value Added Colour[131]

Skin colours, and matters of skin tone, are central to the bigger discussions of race in the lives and experiences of the millennial generation who are living in a supposedly post-racial society. Phrases like 'colour-blind society', 'rainbow nation' and 'non-racialism', are meaningless and frustrating because they are said in a world where colour does matter. These phrases and ideas ignore the different lived experiences of many individuals depending on skin tone. My interest has always been on the impact of colourism on black women. Being a black woman and being a woman of colour are two different things. Some of the struggles faced are common but are not the same. Anti-blackness and colourism from other people of colour is there too. *Value Added Colour*[132] is an exhibition that aims to prove that the way colour, in particular skin colour, is mediated by the mechanisms of looking that are coded and calibrated to reinforce what is already normal, that is, white skin and not black and brown skin.

In the very beginning of the project I too, fell into the trap of the documentary, I interviewed black women in my surroundings, putting them at the forefront of my work, in an effort to bring forward the issue of colourism in my visual practice. But I was soon faced with the realisation that I was reiterating, re-establishing colourist looking and colourist methods, I seemed, whether intentionally or not to be pitting the dark skinned women against the lighter skinned women, the film also was too didactic, there always needed some sort of explanation. The responses to my short documentary were

131 See attached exhibition document for *VALUE ADDED COLOUR, 2015.*
132 Ibid.

reflective of this. It was here that I had to reconsider my approach to colourism, the material I was to produce should not debase, or replay the same categories I had every intention of negating. I removed the body in the work and removed Whiteness as the point of departure.

The choice to not have the body present in the work is an intentional one, the body physically in representations is explicit, and it requires explanation. Too often it requires explanation to those that do not see the workings and pervasiveness of colourism, that is, for the most part white people. I abstracted the skin colours, and presented them as just gradations and studies of brown tonalities in no particular order, this way the work sits in a place that may require no explanations or what at times seem like invasive interrogations, the work remains easily understood and perceived by those who the work is for and about. The shades of brown in their variations allow some subject matter to be recognized because there is a relationship between these brown squares, these gradations of brown with popular culture and mass media. Given the significance of race and colour in larger society, why would skin colour gradations not be important?

It was my intention to make work that does not reiterate stereotypes, and so while I do provide contextual material, the work stands alone. I carefully considered allowing others to play a part in the associations established when faced with the work, without forcing my own or those associations already conditioned in society. I created a series of gradient silkscreens with white text, in varying degrees of brown without order, as well as large scale square paintings, combinations of a single solid hue of brown directly on the

wall and a number of brown hues in stripes on the canvas. I also presented varying hues of brown on different screens in video format, in the digital works the hues of brown are sourced from hexadecimal values. I present on different monitors, the same brown square, by varying the screens, these shades of brown change. The only work that referenced something out side of colour explicitly was a digital video of the world map in horizontal stripes of brown ordered according to the populations of the globe. The works were made with the intention of making an impression, I wanted the work to be large, to have more authority on the body in space, to almost envelope it. It seems to me that the colour is more powerful, more intense in large scale, the hues of brown are richer, vibrant and attractive as they are and as allusions to skin tones in the work.

Using a range of browns from dark to light, each variation of the browns is an offering for changeable interpretation that makes meaning around these brown hues never really fixed, they can be appreciated only for their formal structure or as a chromatic allusion that aims to bring to light colourism as a pervasive system of looking. I used different mediums to facilitate perception and meaning. Where it is no longer about the hues of browns themselves, but how the audience looks at these browns, the mechanisms and conditions of perception that are historically constructed to only accept paler shades as attractive.

To contextualise the exhibition, a statement was necessary, not only to support a visual practice but to ground the work in the primary concern of the project, that is colourism,

Products of mass media, images from television, advertisement, film, social media and the images presented online can perpetuate the manifestation of a colour system that renders value and maintains social hierarchies "[…]that is, a system of ordering the world, a discourse of differences which institutes a regime of looking.[133]

These mediums can be said to be tools or mechanisms of looking that "[…] sustain the system of chromatism[…][134]" a system that encourages visual difference.

There is a disjuncture between the images the world is being shown and what the world actually looks like and it is that colour, that skin colour presented in these different media that continuously informs hierarchies in society are formed and renders value. It is not in the mechanism itself, but in how the mechanism of looking is calibrated, by who and for whom. This produces hegemony in the mainstream images we use to see ourselves and others.

It should be that all skin tones, across the spectrum are represented without fault, but because there is an attachment of value to skin colour and an informed practice in representing skin colour and these mechanism of looking that we use are calibrated to suit a limited colour range, they are mechanisms of control that maintain a colourist mode of looking.

133 Crooks-Seshadri, K. (2000). *Desiring Whiteness: A Lacanian Analysis of Race.* New York: Routledge.
134 Ibid.

> Light and pigment are related, the mechanism of looking, the media used informs how we perceive that colour, but so too do the preconceived notions associated with colour, more specifically skin colour. There are conditions of colour perception already in place that teach and show us to look in particular ways.[135]

The experience of these colours presented in the work is influenced by the texture, material, surface, and opacity. It is influential; its elusive nature might tempt the removal of essentialist, prejudiced views for more relative socially conscious ones. It is clear from my perspective that colour is not innocent, there is a relationship between colour and race, for black people, especially black women colour is implicit. It is difficult to look at colour purely formally when it has been used historically in much subtle ways to determine value. Presented in my work is a fixation with colour and skin colour that is grounded in the inaccuracies of representations in mass media. When reading, looking at the representations of people, it is understood and construed that these representations are accurate. But what happens when those representations do not correlate with reality? These colours in the media have meaning where for others meaning is not held, they inform and influence the lives of black women and other people of colour all over the world. Black women are not free from the fixed confines of colour and skin colour; they are too often defined by these parameters and limitations of their skin colour.

135 See attached exhibition document for *VALUE ADDED COLOUR, 2015.*

> [Colourism] attempts to fix a scale of blackness based on dominant structuring principles of the field of vision and through an understanding of the black body as a visibly identifiable body, even in traces.[136]

To be black, to be of colour, can be to see colour, even one's own skin colour as the enemy, because the historically biased dominant visual structure has taught black people to look at themselves that way. For black women,

> [Colourism] structures a relationship between the perception and marking of skin [colour] and a performed embodiment. In part, the subject understands the [colourist] paradigm and assesses value in relation to the hierarchy; and a [colourist] gaze frames her understanding and perception of the actions of others marked through this system...In particular the workings of [colour] gradations as a measure of the subject's value.[137]

136 Fleetwood, N. (2011.) *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
137 Ibid.

Conclusion: white supremacy in the age of white supremacy

Primarily, this thesis is concerned and intensely devoted to a particular way in which black women continue to be marginalised, through colourism. Colourism plays a large role in the numerous beauty myths that plague black women and women of colour across the globe, it creates disparities in wealth, employment, politics, and societal position. Moving from different modes of popular visual representations in mass media, I demonstrate how the effects of global cultural interaction facilitate and perpetuate colourism for black women in South Africa. In South Africa, the dominant group, (the wealthy, mostly white), not the majority group (black people, lower on the economic scale), has more access to power, wealth, education, and prestige, they control the images of humanity, the images of beauty disseminated to all South Africans. Achieving or gaining social and economic capital is essentially controlled by the dominant group, by those with the most capital. The whiteness or blackness of individuals is defined by those with institutional power and black people, especially black women, have never held that type of power, the power to decide, and when they do, it is limited within the rules and definitions of the dominant group.

Colourism, a system of ordering between black and white from the bottom of the colour spectrum: dark, to the top: light, distributes social and economic power to those who sit at the top of the order. It is by this logic that those who look more like the dominant group, those who are light skinned; (those higher up on the scale) can assimilate and acquire some of the same power. No

black person could ever be considered white, even if they are light skinned or they straighten their hair, they will remain visibly black, their beauty will never fit within the Western ideology of beauty propagated by the dominant group. Because the dominant group has that power, socially and institutionally, they have control, the non-dominant groups have no choice but to gravitate towards the dominant views and ideals of beauty which too often are racist and colourist.

The 'standard' or the 'normal' image in mainstream media does not adequately represent all black people and people of colour, at times other groups are completely left out. Reality is produced in the image, normalisation, including 'visual prejudice and racism' is cemented in the image. As evidence throughout history a system of inequality is disseminated through images; there is too much of the homogenized imagery that erases nuanced representations of blackness in the mass media. The 'norm' may mean images that conform to prevalent ideas of what people should appear to be, the colour of their skin, their hair etc. Most of these images in South Africa are largely in appearance, 'white'. Similarly to much of the world, mass media is extraordinarily pervasive in South African society. Because it is persistent and readily accessible, it consumes most everyday lives. Undoubtedly the most commanding source of information in this age, the media barrages society with notions and images that inform and disseminate meaning, that show what is beautiful and what is not. In a country where the majority of the women are black it does not make sense for major magazines to feature a small number of black women on covers and pages. There

should be more black women on the covers of magazines, in a range of skin tones present in the spectrum that is black women in the magazines circulated in this country.

The consumption of most ideas and products is through the visual material available, it is in this visual material present in magazines, television, film and online where a colour system that consciously renders value can be found. In the global cultural beauty standards disseminated in the aforementioned aspects of mass media white is right, lighter is better and dark is relegated to degradation and exoticisation. Mass media, but more successfully, beauty, fashion and lifestyle magazines are objects that facilitate the strengthening of colourism in South Africa.

Colourism and its maintenance in South Africa is in part a result of the many stereotypes associated with dark skin that were developed in colonial and apartheid South Africa. Although, it has been argued that colourism might have been present pre-colonial settlement, there is little evidence to support this, the pervasiveness of whiteness and white supremacy as a result of colonialism and apartheid cannot be ignored. Darker skin, throughout history is associated with negative stereotypes and carries negative connotations. This is illustrated across society daily, colourism in the media is prevalent and it is also part of a larger structural, hierarchical system of privilege and racism, a structure of discrimination towards darker skinned people.

Even though black women are represented in mass media, too often the image does not correlate with reality. Here appears a bias toward black women and women of colour with particular skin tones and this causes many

women to strive for very specific standards of beauty. Colourism, a system which reinforces racist attitudes and discrimination based on skin tone is perpetuated in mass media. This is what happens when those representations do not correlate with reality? The colours, particularly skin colours in mass media have meaning where for others meaning is not held; they inform and influence the lives of black women and other people of colour all over the world. Black women are not free from the fixed confines of colour and skin colour; they are too often defined by these parameters and limitations of their skin colour. One could argue that black is black and there is no difference between light skinned women and dark skinned women, but colourism plays a role in what is accepted and encouraged in the mainstream visual sphere. Colourism is oppression within oppression and the increasing globalisation of media has only amplified the problem. Contemporary globalisation deeply entrenched in the west, and rampant with western beauty standards is facilitating homogenisation and is encouraging colourism.

Colourism is often seen as global psychological phenomenon, as something that only occurs individually and is not part of a larger system of oppression. The idea that colourist ideology is a problem produced and perpetuated by black people and people of colour seems illogical given the history of continuous racial ordering in the world through mass media. Colourism must be removed from the idea that it only functions intra-racially, it is not separate from the dominant visual sphere, past and present. Colourism is much bigger

than individual experiences, and the standards of beauty present in mass media are directly linked to colourism, racism and white supremacy.

The system of colourism is often hard to critique because too many mask it as personal preference and not as a result of the dominant visual sphere that places the white ideal at its peak. Often in response to these standards women go to the extremes to attain this ideal beauty, this includes skin bleaching, but these responses are only products of our society. Our media perpetuates this particular ideal toward black girls and black women; it is an ideal consumed continuously from a young age. How can anyone be condemned for being susceptible to a system so ubiquitous? Colourism and sexism are symbiotic, although black men and men of colour do experience colourism, they still have male privilege. Colourism has different consequences for different sexes/genders, but more significantly it has a dilapidating effect on both light skinned and dark skinned women, there are disadvantages for both dark skinned and light skinned black women. And what of those that sit in the middle, the black women who are neither dark, nor light?

Colourism maintains the notion that 'lightness' is synonymous with upward social movement, and desirability. After generations of blatant difference in skin tone between the haves and the have-nots, the associations based on skin colour and skin tone are widespread and successful.

Colourism can express itself through the opportunities available to an individual in terms of their career and social position, it can also influence the level of racism experienced; darker skinned black people can experience

more severe racism, because lighter skinned black people are perceived as less threatening.

The skin bleaching industry, with products that vary from soap, shampoo to lotions; has rising sales for skin lightening/bleaching products that are proliferating across the globe. Colourism and its many present-day faces within black communities and other communities of colour are proof that white supremacy and racism are operating in exactly the way they were planned to.

Most attempts to combat colourism encourage an 'oppositional gaze' [138] when it comes to colourism, but not every black woman is equipped to do that. The social and economic disparities, which include access to alternative media and levels of education, influence the development of an 'oppositional gaze'. Social media for some is especially inclusive as space for the negotiation and countering of colourist narratives, the immediate access to mass media is helping to combat colourism and racism. Most black girls and women access media that is immediate to them and in this media whiteness is the dominant visual sphere. Awareness to colourism demands that viewers be deliberate, socially aware and proactive with the images they consume, but this also applies to those who are responsible for creating those images. This means doing everyday things in slightly new ways, tweeting, posting selfies, listening to music, watching films and television and reading magazines with consideration and attentiveness, but very few are

138 hooks, b. (1992). *The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators*. pp. 207-220. In *bell hooks, Black Looks: Race and Representation*. London: Turnaround.

equipped with knowledge to do this. And so dominant attitudes toward the west, their beauty standards deeply entrench themselves and are cemented in the consciousness. How can black women be encouraged to thrive on their own standards of beauty in a system that does not allow them to do so? Glimpse of encouragement that lament at the development of self-esteem and the creation and idolisation of black women's own ideals are useless in a system of domination that permeates all aspects of their lives.

Challenging the validity of colourism is important, but showing the subtle ways in which it is functioning in mass media throughout history is just as important, because it is the dismissal of popular culture as frivolous, insipid and meaningless that makes its effect so powerful. South Africa is not unique, around the globes colourism flourishes, it is believed that the lighter the skin tone the more beautiful, intelligent and wealthy one is. Colourism is a global issue entrenched in anti-blackness, racism and white supremacy, depending on which part of the world it is manifesting it will have its own boundaries of definition. Increasing globalisation and the spread of western/Eurocentric media that perpetuates anti-black beauty ideals and anti-blackness, privileges white and light skin over darker skin in the global beauty industry, strengthens and preserves colourism.

Offered here in this thesis, are the demonstrations of the manifestation of a colour system that renders value and perpetuates social hierarchies, although limited, the thesis can lead toward more nuanced and sustainable understandings of colourism, agency within social media and other

alternative media is increasingly leading other black women and women of colour to tackle colourism across the globe.

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Pond's 'white beauty', sold in India. .

Fugure 2. Pond's 'flawless radiance', sold in South Africa.

Figure 3. A meme, disseminating colourist ideology.

Figure 4. Fair and Lovely.

Figure 5. Fair and Handsome.

Figure 6. Edward Manet, *Olympia*, oil on canvas, 1863.

Figure 7. Jean-Leon Gerome, Le bain maure, oil on canvas, 1870

Figure 8. Jean-Leon Gerome, Grande Piscine de Brousse, 1885.

Figure.9. Patrice Renee Washington, *Homogenized (Value Study #2), 2011.*

Figure 10. Image of couple trying to take a selfie with a smartphone.

Figure 1. Pond's 'white beauty', sold in India.



Figure 2. Pond's 'flawless radiance', sold in South Africa.

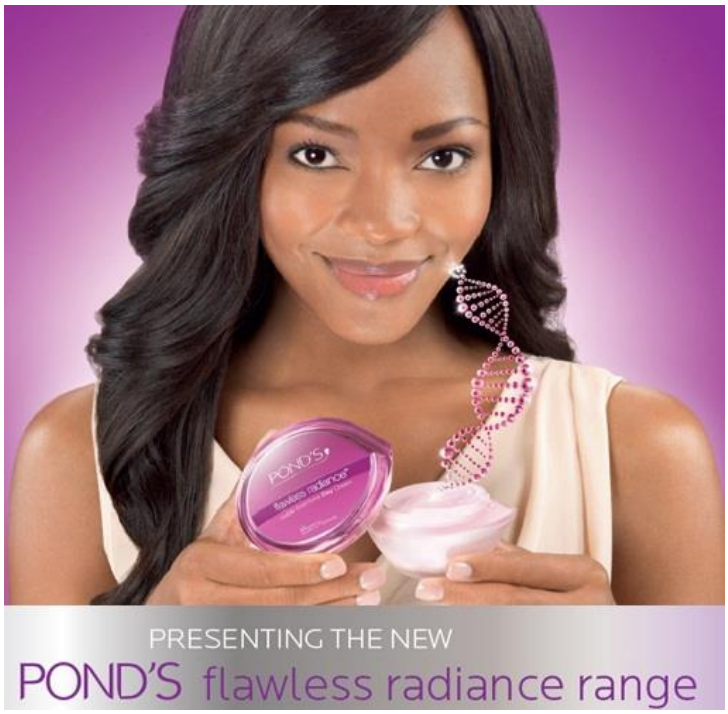

Figure 3. A meme, disseminating colourist ideology.

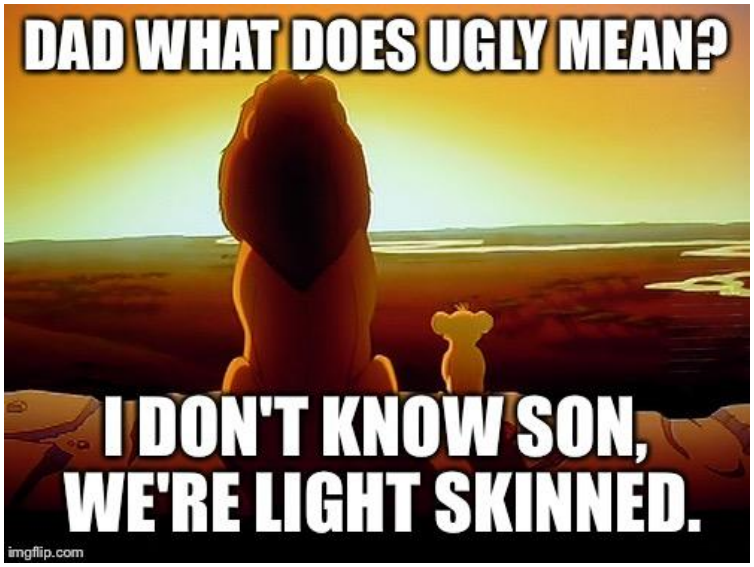

Figure 4. Fair and Lovely.



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Figure 7. Jean-Leon Gerome, *Le bain maure*, oil on canvas, 1870



Figure 8. Jean-Leon Gerome, *Grande Piscine de Brousse*, 1885.

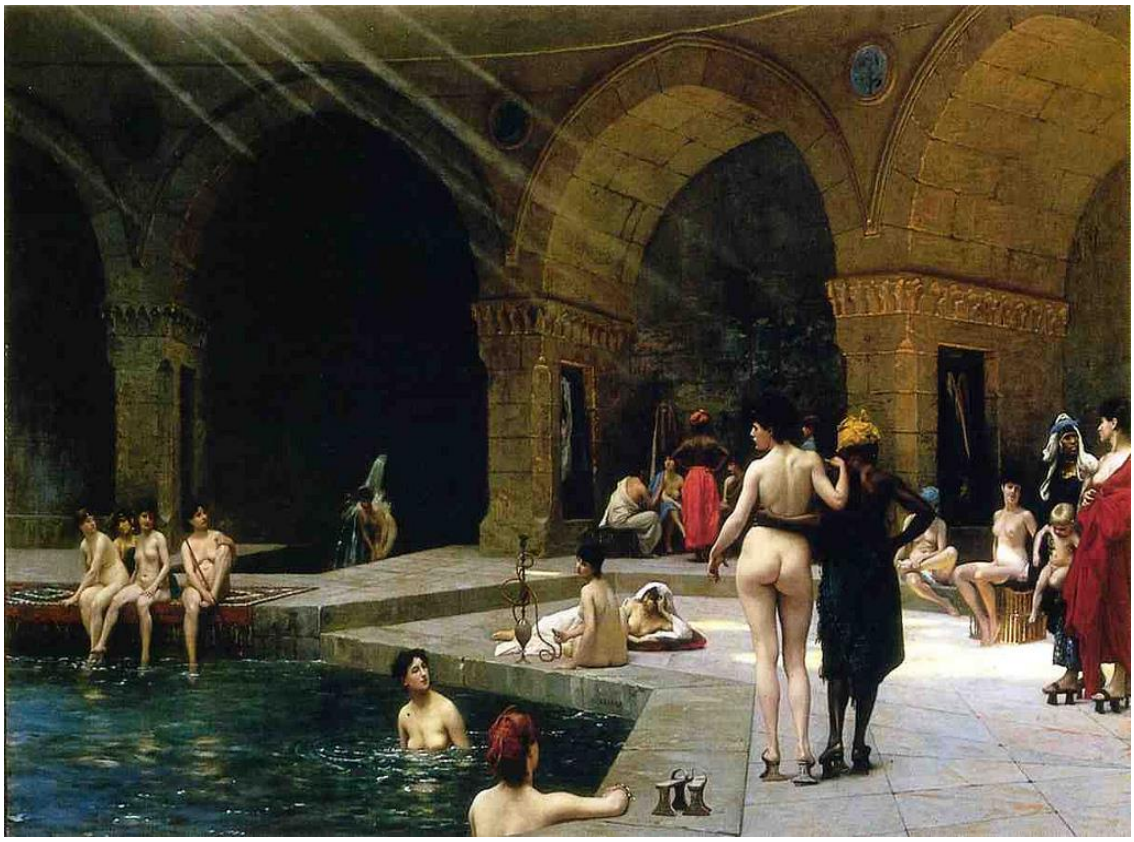

Figure 9. Patrice Renee Washington, *Homogenized (Value Study #2), 2011.*



Figure 10. Image of couple trying to take a selfie with a smartphone.



APPENDIX A

GLAMOUR magazine covers reviewed.

2014 September

2014 October

2014 November

2014 December

2015 January

2015 February

2015 March

2015 April

2015 May

2015 June

2015 July

2015 August

APPENDIX B

True Love magazines covers reviewed.

2014 September

2014 October

2014 November

2014 December

2015 January

2015 February

2015 March

2015 April

2015 May

2015 June

2015 July

2015 August

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